

Special Issue

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The Eid holiday is a time of reflection, giving, caring, forgiving, forgetting differences we may have had with others, and letting go of any animosity that may have happened during the previous year. It is a time to show acceptance, and open our arms to include others into our circle—including those who may have offended us in the past.

As good as it sounds, that’s not always easy to do. It is difficult to forgive people for major injustices, but oddly enough, sometimes it can be easier to forgive others for big things versus forgiving them for little things. The big things should only happen once (so we tell ourselves), but those small things! Small things like a family member being late again, a friend who never returns our phone calls, someone who doesn’t return the borrowed item, or that person who never has a kind word to say about us. Those small things happen over and over, and make us sometimes do and say things that we later wish we hadn’t.

It has not always been easy for me to be tolerant and forgive either, but I have learned over the years that forgiveness is a choice, and more about the state of my heart than the outcome of a situation. It is choosing everyday to give the same gift of forgiveness that I receive when I am forgiven for my failings, and to be understanding of differences in others, as I am understood in mine.

I hope the true stories, quotes, and articles about acceptance, tolerance, and forgiveness in this special edition of *Motivated* will be an inspiration, and that they will contribute to making this Eid one of the happiest occasions ever.

Happy Eid!

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*



Forgiving on Eid

By Sadaf Farooqi, adapted excerpts

Eid is a time for believers to forgive others the wrongs they have done to them, intentionally or by mistake, just as they themselves want God to forgive their sins in His infinite mercy.

◆ Do you remember that girl who initially seemed sincere, but leaked your secrets to the whole class at school, and to whom you have not spoken since then? Hug her on Eid!

◆ Do you remember that aunt who mocked your dress in front of everyone at a party, making you the butt of their cruel jokes for the night? Go, meet and greet her on Eid.

◆ Do you remember that colleague who made you do all the project work but then snidely took credit for it, with the boss bypassing you for a promotion? Send him a personalized greeting on Eid.

No matter how hard it may seem, it is possible to get rid of grudges and move on, forgetting the bad others did to us despite still feeling the hurt and pain, and meeting them as if nothing sour ever happened.

The best Companion of the Prophet (PBUH), Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, was

incensed when he discovered that one of his male relatives, whom he helped financially, had partaken in slandering his daughter, A'ishah, one of the Prophet's wives, by fabricating a lie. Indignantly, he vowed to stop all financial help to him because of this.

As an incentive to Abu Bakr for forgiving his relative who slandered his daughter A'ishah, God asks him whether he himself would not like all his sins to be forgiven. Responding to God's question, Abu Bakr said, "Yes, I want my sins to be forgiven."

The same also applies to us as believers. If we would like to be forgiven by God for the sins we have done, we should also develop the ability and strength to forgive others and move on from past grievances.

Let your relationships flourish after being born anew this Eid. Start by giving food to the less fortunate on the night before Eid. Then move on to forgive and embrace everyone on the first day of Eid, especially those against whom you have harbored bitterness in the past.

Try it. Give and forgive! ◆

8 Ways to Forgive and Forget

By Karen Salmansohn, adapted reprint



Letting go of anger and bitterness can work wonders for both your attitude and your health, not to mention your relationships. Here are eight empowering strategies for embracing forgiveness and liberating yourself from anger and bitterness—even in the most challenging situations—starting today!

Ṣāy ā Prāyēr

Whenever angry feelings about a person who's harmed you enter your mind, pray for this person to find their way back to a happier place.

Fōcus ɔn Grātitudē

Resist seeking happiness from the outside in. Instead, focus on gratitude exercises to bring happiness from

the inside out. When you allow your self-image to be at the mercy of unpredictable events and unreliable people, your happiness will be forever on a chaotic roller coaster ride. Happiness must always be an inside job! When you are tempted to focus on all the ways the world has done you wrong, instead count your blessings by making a list of the five aspects of your life that you

appreciate. It is a good practice to end your day.

Look for the Lesson

Some people consider the bigger your difficulties and misfortunes, the closer you are to enlightenment. Whether you believe this or not, it's certainly cheery to reframe all your life's bad events as tests of your character.

If you feel particularly tested right now, ask yourself what you're being tested for. Patience? Compassion? Resilience? Forgiveness? Open-mindedness? Understanding of others going through similar tests? What strengths must you develop further? Now consciously go out there and develop them!

Maintain Perspective

If you're going through a challenging time, remind yourself that this specific event is merely a part of your life—not your “whole” life. Consciously keep this “slice of life” in perspective, and don't let the event overwhelm you. As the song by Donald Lawrence goes, “The best is yet to come!”

Learn the Lesson

Develop a “student, not victim” mentality. Vow not only to disentangle yourself from emotionally harmful situations, but also to consciously avoid similar situations in the future.

Let Go of Resentment

Keep in mind a fabulous Carrie Fisher

quote: “Resentment is the poison you swallow hoping the other person will die.” Recognize that when you resent someone, you are not only hurting yourself, you're also giving this person control of your emotions—and you don't want to give this person control!

Stay Centered

Recognize that when you respond with hate to hate, anger to anger, bitterness to bitterness, you are ironically becoming part of the problem. Choose to resist becoming like them and instead put in the conscious effort to remain a loving, open, happy person.

Get Revenge Positively

Contemplating revenge? The best kind of revenge is living a successful, happy life. If you train yourself to consistently be more loving in thoughts and actions, your energy will attract more positive people and positive results. As Albert Einstein said, “You can't solve a problem by staying in the same energy in which it was created.” Focus on positive thoughts. ♦

Karen Salmansohn is a best-selling author known for creating self-help for people who wouldn't be caught dead reading self-help. Get more information on finding a loving, happier-ever-after relationship in her book, “Prince Harming Syndrome.”

Embracing

By Jordan Bates, adapted

Diversity:

The Key to a Peaceful World

If there is one cause that every man and woman should support, it is that we must consciously embrace diversity. That is, we must appreciate the richness of difference that exists in our human family, empathize with all types of people, and teach others not to discriminate.

The Beauty of Diversity

The human race is extraordinarily diverse in so many ways. We differ in gender, ethnicity, race, class, religion, nationality, philosophy, and lifestyle. Yet, at a basic level, we are all of the same human species. We experience highs and lows in life, and strive to be happy and fulfilled. Our common pains and joys are what bring us together, but our diversity makes us unique. It is what makes you and me our own special person—one who has never existed and will never exist again.

The Problem

The diversity of our existence is beautiful, but people today are still entangled in a predicament, one that has plagued humanity since the beginning of time: *Discrimination based on difference.*

The list of major tragedies in our history that were caused solely by this phenomenon is overwhelming.—Slavery, the Holocaust, The Crusades, the genocide of the American Indian and Australian Aboriginals. The list could go on and on.

So many people have died or have been deprived of basic rights because of a lack of understanding—an understanding that difference in appearance, belief, or way

of life does not make one person better or worse than another. This problem still exists today.

Nowadays

There are still plenty of apparent examples of discrimination all around us, with wars and genocides happening all over the world. This problem takes less obvious forms as well, and you and I are not immune to its effects.

We sometimes make assumptions that make us judge, avoid, or act awkwardly towards people who are different from us. Here are a few examples.

- ◆ Groups of friends at a college consisting almost entirely of individuals of the same race or ethnicity.
- ◆ People using words like “retarded” or “Down’s” to refer to someone lacking in intellectual capacity.
- ◆ People verbally making fun of others with different dress, customs, or habits than their own.
- ◆ A boss choosing to hire an employee whose name sounds more local than a more qualified applicant’s name.

People often don’t realize that actions such as these are being informed by underlying biases against a group of people. However, the people on the receiving end know it all too well. Minor forms of discrimination happen constantly, all around us.

It’s Bad for Everyone

Consider the unnecessary struggles of those targeted by discrimination. People, just like you or I, feel alienated, bullied, despised, and mistreated every day. Many of them are deprived of basic rights.

Compassion refers to the love for and desire to help all people. Only through compassion can we find lasting joy. Compassion allows us to walk down the street and see only the faces of our brothers and sisters, of other humans living the same life as us.

Compassion allows us to realize our role in something much larger than ourselves. It allows us to forget our selfish desires and to strive to better the lives of the less fortunate. Truly caring for others fills us with purpose and peace.

Conversely, when our minds are polluted by prejudice, we pick out and focus on differences. We unknowingly waste much of our time criticizing and disliking others. This intolerance within us causes anger and resentment toward others.

Hostility towards others eventually leaves us cold, calloused, and bitter. It causes us to become self-absorbed, caught up in our own struggles and fears.

The Solution

The way to overcome our judgments and to realize real compassion and happiness is to show empathy towards others, to truly, unconditionally accept another person, and to step into their inner world.

Understanding and accepting people from all walks of life is a key to finding peace in our lives. But beyond that, it is of the utmost importance to making the world a place where all can live freely and without fear.

So practice empathy, don’t be quick to judge, and envision life in another’s shoes before you treat them unfairly. ◆



An Extract of Wisdom

By Jane Tilley

Recently, when my dentist extracted one of my wisdom teeth, he told me this interesting fact: “When a tooth is removed soon after it becomes troublesome, the bone it’s lodged in lets go of the tooth easily, but when you allow time to pass, the bone becomes less forgiving. Good bone and bad tooth become intertwined.”

“Less forgiving...,” my dentist said. These words made me see that my soul is much like that bone. When someone does me a wrong, I feel resentment. It’s natural. But as resentment takes root, it takes over, and my soul loses the strength to forgive.

Nowadays, when I’m done a wrong, I’m quick to uproot it, before my good soul becomes too intertwined with bad feelings. ◆

Rubin “Hurricane” Carter

A story of forgiveness

Hurricane Carter, whose story was portrayed in the 1999 film “Hurricane,” starring Denzil Washington, was wrongfully convicted of a murder for which he served 19 years in prison before he was released.

He said he is repeatedly asked if he is bitter. He went on to explain that he had a great boxing career taken from him. He had his wife and children taken from him. He had his freedom taken from him. He was threatened with execution. He had 19 years taken from him.

He went on to say he has lost so much, he could not afford to lose even more. Bitterness would steal from him the quality of life he now has. Being bitter would not hurt the judicial system that locked him up. Being bitter would not hurt the people who testified against him. Being bitter would not hurt anyone but him. Bitterness would keep him from sleeping and ultimately destroy him, because “bitterness destroys the vessel that holds it.” ◆





Teaching Your Child Tolerance

KidsHealth, adapted reprint

The world is a great “melting pot,” a rich blend of cultural traditions. Many people can trace their histories to ancestors who traveled great distances, enduring risk and hardship, to make a home where they would be guaranteed basic freedoms. And for many families these freedoms came with a struggle. The differences (or diversity) enrich our culture, bringing new ideas and energy.

Today, more than ever, kids interact with people of differing ethnicities, religions, and cultures. Classrooms are increasingly diverse, reflecting the communities where families live and work.

A World of Difference

Some parents welcome the fact that we live in an increasingly diverse society. Others may feel more hesitant, especially

if they haven’t had much exposure to people different from themselves. In many countries, kids are way ahead of their parents regarding exposure to cultural differences. Their circle of friends, their schoolmates, and their sports teams are much more varied than those of even a generation ago.

Still, parents can help their kids prepare to live, learn, and work in communities that will become even more diverse. Teaching tolerance is important, because the person who learns to be open to differences will have more opportunities in education, business, and many other aspects of life.

In short, your child’s success depends on it. Success in today’s world—and tomorrow’s—depends on being able to understand, appreciate, and work with others.

About Tolerance

Tolerance refers to an attitude of openness and respect for the differences that exist among people. Although originally used to refer to ethnic and religious differences, the concepts of diversity and tolerance can be applied to gender, people with physical and intellectual disabilities, and other differences, too.

Tolerance means respecting and learning from others, valuing differences, bridging cultural gaps, rejecting unfair stereotypes, discovering common ground, and creating new bonds. Tolerance, in many ways, is the opposite of prejudice.

But does tolerance mean that all behaviors have to be accepted? Of course not. Behaviors that disrespect or hurt others, like being mean or bullying, or behaviors that break social rules, like lying or stealing, should not be tolerated. Tolerance is about accepting people for who they are—not about accepting bad behavior. Tolerance also means treating others the way you would like to be treated.

How Tolerance Is Taught

Like all attitudes, tolerance is often taught in subtle ways. Even before they can speak, children closely watch—and imitate—their parents. Kids of all ages develop their own values, in great part, by mirroring the values and attitudes of those they care about.

Many parents live and work in diverse communities and have friends who are different from themselves in some (or in many) ways. Parents who demonstrate (or model) tolerance in their everyday

lives send a powerful message. As a result, their kids learn to appreciate differences, too.

Of course, celebrating differences of others doesn't mean giving up your own heritage. Your family may have its own longstanding cultural and religious traditions that are something to be proud of. Families can find ways to celebrate differences while continuing to honor and pass down their own cultural heritage.

How Can Parents Teach Tolerance?

Parents can teach tolerance by example—and in other ways, too. Talking together about tolerance and respect helps kids learn more about the values you want them to have. Giving them opportunities to play and work with others is important as well. This lets kids learn firsthand that everyone has something to contribute and to experience differences and similarities.

Things parents can do to help kids learn tolerance include:

- ◆ Demonstrate an attitude of respect for others.
- ◆ Remember that kids are always listening. Be aware of the way you talk about people who are different from yourself. Do not make jokes that perpetuate stereotypes. Although some of these might seem like harmless fun, they can undo attitudes of tolerance and respect.
- ◆ Select books, toys, music, art, and videos carefully. Keep in mind the powerful effect the media and pop culture have on shaping attitudes.
- ◆ Point out and talk about unfair

stereotypes that may be portrayed in media.

- ◆ Answer kids' questions about differences honestly and respectfully. This teaches that it is acceptable to notice and discuss differences as long as it is done with respect.

- ◆ Acknowledge and respect differences within your own family. Demonstrate acceptance of your children's differing abilities, interests, and styles. Value the uniqueness of each member of your family.

- ◆ Remember that tolerance does not mean tolerating unacceptable behavior. It means that everyone deserves to be treated with respect—and should treat others with respect as well.

- ◆ Help your children feel good about themselves. Kids who feel badly about themselves often treat others badly. Kids with strong self-esteem value and respect themselves and are more likely to treat others with respect, too. Help your child to feel accepted, respected, and valued.

- ◆ Give kids opportunities to work and play with others who are different from them. When choosing a school, day camp, or child-care facility for your child, find one with a diverse population.

- ◆ Learn together about different customs, cultures, and holiday and religious celebrations that are not part of your own tradition.

- ◆ Honor your family's traditions and teach them to your kids—and to someone outside the family who wants to learn about the diversity you have to offer. ◆





The Power of Acceptance and Forgiveness

It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.—Audre Lorde

Feelings of worth can flourish only in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open, and rules are flexible — the kind of atmosphere that is found in a nurturing family.—Virginia Satir

Our greatest strength as a human race is our ability to acknowledge our differences. Our greatest weakness is our failure to embrace them.—Judith Henderson

Forgiveness is the fragrance the flower sheds on the heel that has crushed it.
—Mark Twain

To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. In return, you will receive untold peace and happiness.

—Robert Muller

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.

—Author Unknown

Forgiving doesn't mean forgetting, nor does it mean that you've given the message that what someone did was okay. It just means that you've let go of the anger or guilt towards someone, or towards yourself. But that can be easier said than done. If forgiveness was easy, everyone would be doing it.—Author Unknown

True forgiveness is not an action after the fact, it is an attitude with which you enter each moment.—David Ridge

He who cannot forgive breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass.

—George Herbert

Forgiveness is mercy, not justice. Imagine a world filled with individuals willing both to apologize and to accept an apology. Is there any problem that could not be solved among people who possessed the humility and largeness of spirit and soul to do either—or both—when needed?

—Gordon B. Hinckley

