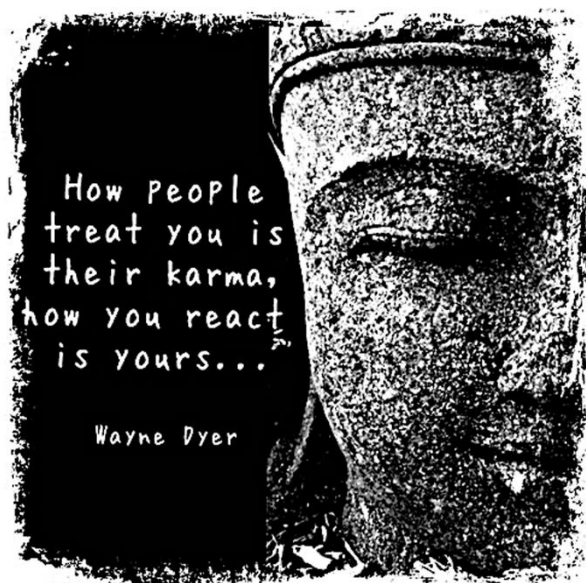




The 3 Myths of Forgiveness

'How people treat you is their karma, how you react is yours' Wayne Dyer



'Forgiveness' is such an important part of being able to recover from psychological problems and live a healthy and enjoyable life. Yet 'Forgiveness' is often misunderstood, causing unnecessary harm to ourselves and others.

In Ancient Greek scrolls that would later lead to the modern Christian Bible, the word for forgiveness was '*Aphieami*' which means '*to leave behind and move forward*'. Therefore forgiveness, as described by notary religious figures such as Jesus, means to simply leave behind past hurts and move forwards with life – nothing more and nothing less. Let me share the 3 unhelpful myths about forgiveness that I encounter in my work as a Psychologist:

1. Forgiveness & Rituals

The Myth: *To forgive someone you need to speak to them face-to-face and utter the words "I forgive you..."*

The Fact: Forgiveness is an internal 'letting go' process and does not necessarily need to be spoken out to another person nor does a particular phrase need to be used. This is not to say that in some cases these rituals aren't helpful, but rather they are not essential in order to experience the healthy benefits of forgiveness.

2. Forgiveness & Reconciliation

The Myth: *To forgive someone you must allow them back into your life and restore the relationship to how it was before the hurtful event occurred...*

The Fact: Forgiveness is not about reconciliation. Reconciliation is more of a risk management decision. To reconcile or restore a relationship with someone who has hurt you is a 'risk management decision' and should never be confused with the process of 'letting go of past hurts and moving forwards with life'.

3. Forgiveness & Consequences

The Myth: *When you forgive someone, they are exonerated or pardoned from the mistakes of the past and are no longer accountable for the consequences of their actions...*

The Fact: Forgiveness is not about necessarily stopping consequences for bad behaviour. Pardoning someone is not a core part of the forgiveness process whereas no longer holding onto the emotional pain and blame towards them is.

Forgiveness In Practice: Healthy Mindsets

Healthy Mindsets are the key to effectively applying Forgiveness in your life. Acceptance of what has happened and any injustices that have occurred. Responsibility to make the most of your life and let go of past hurts and injustices. And Encouragement – to stay positive and allow yourself the space and time to recover from past hurts and move forwards in life!