**The Many Shades of Forgiveness**

Janice L. Lundy, DMin, MPC

No one can deny that we are living in heart-wrenching times. Each day it seems there is some new account of harm that causes suffering to countless numbers of people. Fires, stabbings, bombings, from one corner of our precious earth to the next, the news of trauma assails us. Our hearts naturally grow heavy with such revelations. How it possible to carry our sorrow appropriately but not close our hearts to those who may be responsible for the harm?

Our spiritual traditions advocate that we should forgive those who do wrong. And yet despite our mostly generous and loving hearts we may balk at this divine command. We dig in our heels saying, “I will not and cannot forgive *this* thing.”

Lack of forgiveness is a particularly debilitating mind-state. It prevents us from experiencing the possibility of healing, reconciliation and ultimate peace. Holding tight to our hurts, we seal off our natural flow of love and compassion. Such a perilous mind-state, long held, can harden our hearts permanently and true respite can never be found.

Many years ago, one of my dear teachers, Sylvia Boorstein, shared a powerful prayer in a class I was taking from her on Metta, or Lovingkindness. She named it as “A Buddhist’s Forgiveness Prayer.” I do not know the exact source of it or who created it. But no matter, I loved it immediately because it seemed to cover all aspects of forgiveness in one fell swoop: forgiveness of self, of others, and, most importantly, acknowledging our tender humanity when we know it would be wise to forgive but we’re not yet ready.

In these uncertain times, may we consider using this inter-spiritual prayer as a focal point for heart-opening meditation. Let us use it to let go of ill will and to heal burdensome wounds so peace can be found within us and between us.

"If I have harmed anyone in any way
either knowingly or unknowingly
through my own confusions
I ask their forgiveness.
If anyone has harmed me in any way
either knowingly or unknowingly
through their own confusions
I forgive them.
And if there is a situation
I am not yet ready to forgive
I forgive myself for that.
For all the ways that I harm myself,
negate, doubt, belittle myself,
judge or be unkind to myself
through my own confusions
I forgive myself."

Bio:

*Dr. Janice Lundy is the co-founder and co-director of the*[*Spiritual Guidance Training Institute*](http://www.spiritualguidancetraining.com/)*which provides education and certification in interfaith and interspiritual direction. She is an interfaith/interspiritual guide herself, the author of several spiritual formation books including*[*Your Truest Self: Embracing the Woman You Are Meant to Be*](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B002MRS5CY/ref%3Ddp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1)*and*[*My Deepest Me*](https://www.janlundy.com/new-book.html)*. She is also the creator of the Pure Presence® method of compassionate listening. She is currently Visiting Professor of Spiritual Direction at The Graduate Theological Foundation. She resides in Michigan, USA.*

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