

The Sixty Second Spark™

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Forgive & Forget?

Ever hang on to old resentments and anger at work? Feel like someone betrayed your trust or wasn't treating you fairly? Join the club!

It's the "I'm having a tough time forgiving them" club. Unfortunately, the membership is not always in the best of moods and some lingering bitterness can poison the interactions at club events.

Lately, I seem to keep receiving messages about forgiveness. Must be something I need to work on since I'm so receptive to this theme. I agree that "Forgive and forget" doesn't always feel so realistic when someone has hurt or upset you. I also get that when you hang on to grudges it hurts you most. Hmm, what a quandary!

According to the International Forgiveness Institute, a private, not for profit organization, forgiveness is "turning to the 'good' in the face of wrong doing". An important distinction they point out is that forgiveness is "one person's moral response to another's injustice" while reconciliation is "two parties coming together in mutual respect".

I'm suggesting that you aim for forgiveness at work since that is the part you have total control over. The Institute outlines four phases of forgiveness and they fit nicely into the *SHIFT* format in my book (visit www.ProfessionalParadise.com for free tools to work on *SHIFT*). Here's how it might work:

An angry customer is very rude to you on the phone for something that occurs internally in their company that you don't feel is your responsibility. The person still "takes it out" on you verbally. Time for a Viewpoint *SHIFT*.

S: Stop and take a deep breath

Hang up the phone and breathe. This important first step buys you some time and space.

H: Harness harmful knee-jerk reactions

In this case, your first instinct is to call back and lash out at the customer. You want to explain that you are upset and don't deserve to be treated like that.

I: Identify and manage negative emotions

It's important with forgiveness to recognize the hurt and pain you are feeling. Depending on the "offense", this stage may take a bit of time and energy.

F: Find new options

You need to make a decision to explore forgiveness and let go of your thoughts of revenge. At this point, hopefully you are ready to understand why the other person might have been rude to you. You are empathetic about what they might be going through. This doesn't mean you excuse the person or just brush it off. Instead you decide to view the event differently.

T: Take one positive action

You consciously choose to forgive this customer. You don't have to call and tell him you have forgiven him. This is an internal step. You might find meaning in the process and you start to experience healing. You are able to move ahead without the bitter feelings.

Forgive and forget?
OK, maybe not just yet.

But forgive and forge on!
Why not - you'll be on your way to Professional Paradise today!

Vicki