



Forgiveness 1: What is Forgiveness?



Opening Affirmations:

Before we begin our Soul Talk, we want to remind you that we are coming together to learn from one another. This means that this is a safe place to share our ideas and questions. Please take the hand of the person to the right and left side of you and share one of two possible affirmations:

“I am happy to share my ideas with you.”

[or]

“I respect and honor you and your beliefs.”

The Heart of the Soul Discussion: What is Forgiveness?

1. Everyone has experienced a time where their feelings have been hurt. Everyone has also experienced a time where they’ve needed to apologize to someone else for hurting them. In order to accept an apology, we must first forgive. What does it mean to forgive?

(Go around the circle and invite each person to share.)

- To forgive can simply mean apologizing or saying you’re sorry.
- Forgiveness can be letting go of a painful feeling.
- To forgive can be making peace with the person who hurt you.

2. Often, people have a lot of different feelings come up around the idea of

forgiving someone. Has there ever been a time where you had to forgive someone? Or maybe, a time where you had to ask for forgiveness from someone else? What happened? How did that experience make you feel?

(Go around the circle and invite each person to share.)

- We can feel nervous before forgiving someone, but afterwards we feel like a giant weight has been lifted off of our shoulders.
- Beforehand, we can feel like we're not ready to forgive or to receive forgiveness. But afterwards, we feel like the relationship with the person is even better.
- We can feel scared about how people might react, only to realize that everyone involved feels happier.

3. With forgiveness, there are SO many different feelings that come up. When people forgive others, they can still hold onto a lot of angry and hurt feelings. How do you let go of those painful feelings and replace them with happiness and joy?

(Go around the circle and invite each person to share.)

- We can choose to focus on why we like that person.
- Because joy makes us feel better versus anger which makes us feel worse.
- Some people would pick an activity that makes them feel better, such as painting, playing a sport, music, or writing because it's a way to release negative feelings.

Activity - Option 1: "The Apple"

Materials needed:

Apple

Knife

Cutting board

Plates or Napkins

Directions:

- Start out with a shiny apple and pass it around for the kids to feel and look at.
- Explain that the apple represents the everyone's feelings.
- You can then ask the kids how it feels when someone hurts our feelings, allow time for the participating kids to tell their personal stories.
- Once the apple comes back to you, slice into it with your knife. Explain that this is sometimes how it feels when our feelings are hurt.

- Slice the apple evenly according to how many people are in the group.
- Ask the kids if we can put the apple back together (Of course, we cannot put the apple back together).
- Explain that once our feelings have been hurt, we can't automatically go back to the way it was before. That hurt, just like the cut in the apple is always there.
- Pass out each slice of the apple and have the kids eat it, ask how the apple tastes.
- Now ask if they *knew* what that apple would taste like when it was still a whole apple.

We are like the apple! We can learn from the hurts in our lives and we have the opportunity to take those hurts and grow sweeter and better. In the same sense, had we not cut into the apple, we would have never discovered how sweet and juicy it was.

Follow Up Discussion:

Have everyone sit in a circle and talk about a time they learned something positive from a difficult situation. If you need to, start the conversation with an example. (For instance, “a friend and I once had a disagreement, but once we talked about it, we found out that the whole thing was a big misunderstanding. Because of this disagreement, we got to know one another better and take better care of one another's feelings.”) Now that we have started to discover what it means to forgive and ask forgiveness, we can start using these tools in our day to day life. Sometimes we can hold on to hurts for a long, long time. Now we can start working on how to let go of the bad feelings and focus on the good.

Story Time – Activity Option 2

[In order to complete this activity, your group will need a copy of one of the suggested books. Our library has a collection of books dedicated to each Soul Talk which is updated constantly! You can visit our library at the link below. Search for the Forgiveness section.] https://spiritualplaydate.com/spiritual_playdate_library

Since our Soul Talk was about *What is Forgiveness?*, we are going to read a book out loud. As you listen, start to think about how this story relates to what we just spoke about.

Calming Exercise - Meditation

[Invite the group to find a relaxing position, take a mat or towel, if you are working on a hard floor. They may sit or lie down to be comfortable. Speak slightly slower in a soft, soothing tone throughout, pausing briefly between sentences. You may play soft, instrumental music in the background while reading the meditation script]

Welcome to our Meditation Time: The time where we relax and connect to the spirit in and around us. I invite you to put a cushion on the floor, and to sit cross-legged, with a nice tall back and your hands relaxed in your lap. Quietly do that now, as we begin our meditation. *[Wait until the group is settled, then read the meditation script]*

Close your eyes and let your muscles relax into the floor. Take a slow, deep breath in, all the way down to your belly ... you feel your belly rise as you think 1, 2, 3. Feel your belly fall as you slowly breathe out, thinking 1,2,3. Breathe in — 1, 2, 3 ... breathe out — 1, 2, 3. Keep breathing in and out slowly and steadily. *[Pause.]*

We've discovered that forgiveness is a release. A release of negative feelings and energies around a person or a situation. Forgiveness is like putting down a very heavy weight, because that's what anger, hurt and resentment feel like – weights around your neck. When you release them, you feel lighter and happier. Imagine that right now. Imagine how good it would feel to put down a huge boulder. *[Pause.]* Feel the lightness in your body. Forgiveness is not forgetting something that has happened to you, but deciding that the person or situation will not make you feel bad any longer. Forgiveness helps you move forward, feeling better. You can make the decision to forgive any time. You don't have to be weighed down by hurt and pain. You can let them go, like letting a kite fly on the breeze. Take a moment to imagine that the kite takes any feelings or hurt or resentment away ... flying higher and higher into the sky, until you can't see it anymore. *[Pause.]* Forgiveness is something you give ... to yourself, to a situation, to another person, so you can be free.

Now let's take one more deep breath in – 1, 2, 3. And one more deep breath out – 1, 2, 3. Now slowly open your eyes, and let your body reconnect with this space and the people in it. We end our meditation feeling at peace and knowing that Forgiveness can set us free.

[Optional: Turn off music] [Optional: Say: Please return your cushion to its starting place]

Closing - Choose One:

Closing Affirmation - Option 1:

Turn to the person to your right, look them in the eye and say “I am happy I could share this time with you and hear about your beliefs.”

Closing Prayer - Option 2:

The light of God surrounds us

The love of God enfolds us

The power of God protects us

The presence of God watches over us

Wherever we are, God is and all is well