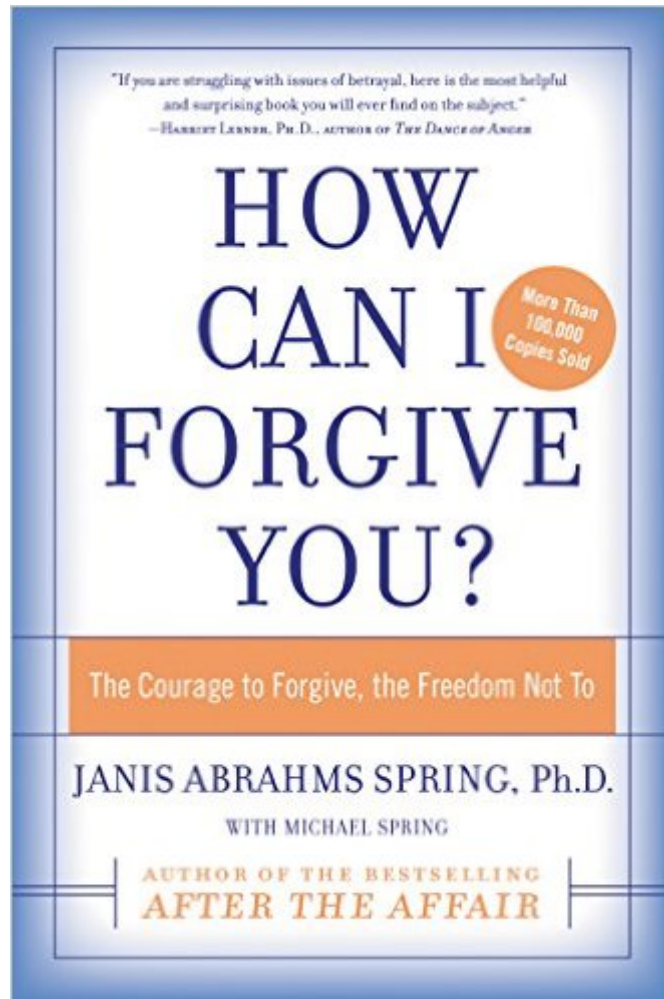


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How Can I Forgive You?: The Courage To Forgive, The Freedom Not To



Synopsis

Until now, we have been taught that forgiveness is good for us and that good people forgive. Dr. Spring, a gifted therapist and the award-winning author of *After the Affair*, proposes a radical, life-affirming alternative that lets us overcome the corrosive effects of hate and get on with our lives "without forgiving. She also offers a powerful and unconventional model for genuine forgiveness "one that asks as much of the offender as it does of us. This bold and healing book offers step-by-step, concrete instructions that help us make peace with others and with ourselves, while answering such crucial questions as these: How do I forgive someone who is unremorseful or dead? When is forgiveness cheap? What is wrong with refusing to forgive? How can the offender earn forgiveness? How do we forgive ourselves for hurting another human being?

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Customer Reviews

This book is fantastic. Instead of the typical "forgive or don't forgive" as being your only two options, it gives you a way to deal with, get over, and release yourself from past hurts. It's not always possible to forgive someone who's hurt you if they haven't shown any effort to repair the damage, and choosing not to forgive them simply poisons your life. This book teaches another alternative, acceptance, and walks you through the exercises needed to "get over" past hurts. One thing I really like is that it also helps you re-examine the things that have happened to you and look at them in an honest, broader scope. Bottom line--I think it's going to dramatically help me heal the numerous past hurts I've been hanging onto once I go through each exercise, and I'd highly recommend it!

I found this book to be very supportive of multiple situations that would require forgiveness, but it was primarily targeted at people dealing with post-affair syndrome. There were a lot of case examples to help you feel like you weren't alone, but it edged on being too many stories and not enough help. The help comes a little later in the book. The best part about this book was simply guiding you to identify what you need from the hurting party in order to grant forgiveness. There are a lot of tips for both parties in a situation, so this is a good choice for people on both ends of an affair, but I do suggest reading "After the Affair" first because the author makes a lot of references.

Dr. Janis Abrahms Spring has written a wonderful book here. She talks about refusing to forgive, which breeds bitterness, and Cheap Forgiveness, which is "an inauthentic act of peacekeeping that resolves nothing." This usually comes about when the hurt party is fearful about losing a relationship with someone who hurt them, or where the hurt person believes quick forgiveness is what's required by their spiritual beliefs. Ultimately, Cheap Forgiveness is a position of weakness. It doesn't build trust in the relationship or heal the hurt person. It just sweeps the offense under the rug. Genuine Forgiveness, according to Dr. Spring, is the most fulfilling type of forgiveness but requires the participation of both the hurt party and the offender. It's a transaction, and is conditional on repentance and restitution on the part of the offender. In other words, the offender has to acknowledge the pain the hurt party felt, apologize genuinely, non-defensively and responsibly, and work hard to regain the trust of the hurt person. Only then can the hurt party offer the offender Genuine Forgiveness -- a vital building block for future relationship between the two. But sometimes the offender is not available to participate in forgiveness. She might be dead, or he might be unwilling to admit that there was a wrong committed or deny that he has any responsibility. What then? Dr. Spring offers a third way -- a beautiful, thoughtful, helpful third way -- Acceptance. This is a path toward healing which the hurt party can travel alone. In her book, Dr. Spring suggests ten steps to get to Acceptance of the offense. By working through each of these steps, a person can learn and grow beyond the pain, beyond the hurt, and move on.

Having just emerged from a Kafkaesque nightmare where I was harassed, slandered and chased out of an intentional community by a sociopathic bully, Dr. Spring's insights are a balm to a tender soul. Having been the target of overt campaign of "shaming, shunning and ostracization" I struggled with many conflicting feelings. The injustice fed into fury and I plummeted into a spiralling anger, resentment and obsessional thinking. I resisted the facile advice of letting go or forgiving the offender. If only I could bring this man to justice, then I would feel better. When I heard Dr. Spring

interviewed on NPR by Diane Rehm I recognized that my desire to "out" my offender would never lead to liberation and healing. I was entrapped in the quicksand of self-isolation and negativity. After reading this book I was able to reconnect with my "inner goodness" and come to that place of "Radical Acceptance." I suspect that I will always feel some pain around this incident in my life, however, by embracing acceptance and the grief this process evokes, I am free to move on and persevere with the aspects of life that nourish me. I will never allow anyone intervene between my heart and my inner goodness. For anyone who has been harmed intentionally or unconsciously by an abuser, bully or offender, this work is manna to the soul.

After reading this author's "After the Affair" several times, this book is a great next step. She gives solid information, with good direction, without being judgemental. Her case histories are also helpful and poignant.

Excellent self-help advice about dealing with betrayal from others. It tells you how you can choose alternatives in responding to betrayal other than total forgiveness. Importantly, a person must accept what has happened (i.e., the betrayal), analyze the situation, recognize and choose from alternatives about dealing with the betrayal, and "move on." Revenge or retribution, a natural impulse, is shown to just be counter-productive and prolong the emotional pain. I have found the information in this book very helpful in my own life.

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