

How to Forgive Someone who has Hurt you Badly:

Sometimes I sit and wonder: What does it take to truly forgive someone who hurt us? Not just say the words, but to feel peace when their name is mentioned, to wish them well without flinching, to move on without secretly hoping they'll suffer as we did.

I thought about this recently while reflecting on the Prophet's life (May the peace and Allah's blessings be upon him). His life was filled with people who tried to hurt him, betray him and even kill him. And yet, the mercy he showed them is something most of us can't even show to those who merely annoyed us.

Ikrimah was the son of Abu Jahl - a man the Prophet called the Pharaoh of his nation. Ikrimah fought against the Muslims, resisted the truth, and tried to destroy what the Prophet (May the peace and Allah's blessings be upon him) built. And then there is the story of Hind bint Utbah ibn Rabiah. She was a noble woman of Quraysh, the wife of Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, and the mother of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. She didn't just oppose Islam. She mutilated the body of Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib out of hate. Hamza was not just the Prophet's beloved uncle, but also his foster brother and one of his fiercest defenders. His loss at Uhud wasn't just a personal tragedy but was also a wound to the Prophet's soul, a grief so deep that he wept over it for the rest of his life. Hind tore through flesh and chewed his liver in rage.

How does a heart recover from that?

And yet... years later, when both Ikramah and Hind came trembling to the Prophet - broken, regretful, unsure if they would even be accepted, the Prophet didn't mention their past. He didn't humiliate them. He didn't say, "You remember what you did, don't you?" No. He forgave. He opened his arms. He told the people not to insult their families, lest their hearts be hurt. He didn't just forgive but he protected their dignity.

How does one arrive at such purity? What kind of soul feels sorrow deeper than most, and yet still chooses mercy? We usually struggle with this. Is it even remotely possible for us to reach such heights? There are so many layers of ego, pain, pride, and who knows what else, we would have to peel back just to begin.

But then we should remind ourselves. We were told to take the Prophet as our model. Not because we would match him, but because we are meant to try. At the very least, we need to understand the journey. **How does a person become like that? What does it take?** That question alone is worth sitting with.

Why Reconciliation is Important in Islam

In our deen (RELIGION), relationships are not side matters. They are not optional or secondary. They are central to who we are. How we treat people, how we forgive, how we reconcile - these are acts of worship. They are extensions of our faith.

The Prophet (May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: *"Shall I not tell you of something more excellent in degree than fasting, prayer, and charity?" They said, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "Reconciling between people, for indeed spoiling relations between people is the shaver (of religion)." - (Sunan Abu Dawood 4919, Tirmidhi 2509)*

Because the damage caused by broken ties, silent grudges, unseen bitterness, years of avoidance doesn't just distance hearts. It erodes souls.

Allah says in the Quran:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you—when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. You were at the brink of the fiery pit and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so that you may be rightly guided. –Surah Al Imran, 3:103)

But Why Is It So Hard?

And yet... it's hard? Even when we know all this. Even when we love the idea of peace. Reconciliation can feel like climbing a steep mountain with no end in sight. We start, we stop. We hope, we hesitate. Why?

The underlying pain and emotions

Studies in neuroscience show that negative experiences imprint themselves more deeply than positive ones. It's called the *negativity bias*. It's not weakness. It's biology. Our minds replay the hurt because they are trying to protect us. That's why someone can apologize, and we still feel like it wasn't enough. That's why the heart hesitates even when the head says, “Move on.”

So, forgiveness isn't always blocked by pride. Sometimes it's blocked by pain. And to move past that pain requires more than intention. It requires a lot of self-healing. Real healing. The kind that allows us to look at the memory and not feel torn up again. The key to remember is that it's not done overnight. That simply doesn't work. But it can be done with time, with dua, and by coming near Allah. It also involves honest conversations that let us process instead of bury.

That's how the sting begins to fade. By bringing the wound into the light of Allah, by giving it time instead of forcing it, and by allowing ourselves to speak and feel instead of burying everything, we slowly loosen pain's grip. Little by little, the memory remains but it no longer masters us.

'I want to but others won't' - how do we fix that?

One of the hardest places to be is in the middle - when your heart is ready, but the other person won't respond. When you reach out and are met with silence or resistance. And the mind says, "See? That's why I didn't want to try."

But here's the thing. The Quran doesn't ask us to succeed. It asks us to try. وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

“Repel evil with what is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity will become as though he were a devoted friend.” (Surah Fussilat, 41:34)

This verse reveals a spiritual law that responding to harm with ihsan (what is better) has the power to transform the emotional dynamic between people. It's not saying this always happens in every situation,

but it's showing us what Allah can cause to happen when we act from a place of sincerity and moral excellence.

And sometimes, reconciliation doesn't mean resuming the relationship. It means making peace with what was, and being at peace even if the other person isn't ready to join you. The reward is still there. The healing still counts.

Healing takes longer than offense

We know about the power of words. A word takes one second to say. But its echo and impact can last years. A harsh comment, a moment of betrayal, an act of humiliation don't just bounce off. They settle in the heart and take root.

And then we want a single apology to uproot it all?

It doesn't work that way. Emotional wounds are like physical ones. You don't get cut deeply and expect to heal in a day. The nervous system needs to feel safe again. That safety isn't built by one good gesture. Rather, it's built by *consistency*. By showing up again and again. By not just saying sorry, but living like you mean it. By being patient when trust is slow to return.

And if we are on the receiving end, i.e. if someone apologized and we are still struggling, we don't need to fake healing. But we should keep moving. Slowly, steadily. Because healing is a responsibility too. It's not about forgetting. It's about remembering without bitterness.

That's how the heart begins to feel safe again. When we stop expecting instant fixes and start honoring the slow pace of trust, we give healing the space it needs to do its work.

Emotional exhaustion - it's just not worth it

And then there are times when it's not about pride. It's not even revenge. It's just... fatigue. We are tired. Tired of the drama, the conversations that lead nowhere, the emotional energy it takes to manage fragile relationships. And in that exhaustion, we quietly say, "It's not worth it."

Psychology refers to this as *ego depletion* - the burnout that comes from prolonged emotional strain. And that's real. It's not weakness. It's being human.

In moments like that, we don't need to force ourselves to act before we are ready. We need our space to breathe, to reflect, to gather our strength. But even in that space, we need to remind ourselves that Allah and His Messenger (May the peace and Allah's blessings be upon him) encouraged us to reconcile, especially with those closest to us. So we rest, but we don't retreat forever. We honor our need for healing, while still keeping Allah's pleasure in sight. And when the heart is ready again, we return - lighter, clearer, and with better intentions.

We can't do it without Allah

And here's the deepest truth of all. We can't truly reconcile hearts without the One who created them. We can try all the strategies, say all the right things, send all the right messages... but hearts don't open unless Allah allows them to.

The Quran tells us:

وَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً مَّا أَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

“And He joined their hearts. Had you spent all the riches of the earth, you could not have joined their hearts, but Allah joined their hearts. Indeed, He is All-Mighty, All-Wise.” (Surah Al-Anfal, 8:63)

Take the example of the two tribes of **Aws and Khazraj** during the Prophet’s time. These tribes were soaked in blood feuds for decades. They had killed each other’s leaders, slaughtered each other’s sons. No amount of diplomacy could heal that. But Islam did. The Prophet (May the peace and Allah’s blessings be upon him) witnessed a miracle not in the sky, but in the hearts of men who once swore to destroy each other.

If Allah could join their hearts, can He not join ours? If He could put love between blood enemies, can He not restore affection between friends, siblings, spouses, and parents?

But this means we have to ask Him. Sincerely. Not just, “Make them come back.” But, ***“Ya Allah, soften both of our hearts. Clean me before I point to them. Heal me before I accuse them. And if reunion is good, bring it with barakah. And if it’s not, grant me peace anyway.”***

Because at the end of it all, it’s not just about who was right. It’s about who let goes first. Who stepped into light. Who became more beautiful through the storm.

Final Reflection and Closing

At the end, not every connection will last and not every friendship will return. Some wounds will remain sore longer than we expected. But what if the deeper purpose isn’t simply to fix things out there but to fix something within ourselves? Reconciliation is not always about going back to how things were. Sometimes it’s about arriving at a new version of ourselves: softer, wiser, less reactive, more anchored in Allah. The pain pushes us to ask better questions. Am I holding on to my pride or to

peace? Am I waiting for an apology that may never come? Am I secretly enjoying being the victim because it gives me power?

These are uncomfortable questions, but they free us.

And we all know what it feels like to wait for someone to make the first move. But what if Allah is waiting for *us* to make the first move - not toward them, but toward Him? What if the distance between us and someone else is just a mirror of the distance between us and Allah?

The Prophet (May the peace and Allah's blessings be upon him) said, *"Do not hate one another, do not envy one another, do not turn away from one another. Be, O servants of Allah, brothers. It is not permissible for a Muslim to forsake his brother for more than three days."* (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

It doesn't mean we have to pretend everything's okay. It doesn't mean we forget what happened. But it means we cannot live in anger. We cannot normalize coldness. The longer we stay in that place, the harder the heart becomes. And a hard heart sees everything as a threat and nothing as a blessing.

But when the heart softens even a little, everything changes. Words don't sting the same. Silences don't scare us as much. We learn to love from a place of tawakkul, not fear. We learn to let go because we believe in the One who can give us something better.

If you have been hurt, your pain is valid. But don't let it become your identity. If you have hurt others, that's a sign of being human. Use it to heal. And if there's someone you are thinking of right now - someone whose name still makes your heart heavy - start with a dua. Not for them to change. But for your heart to be guided.

Because that's where it all begins. In the quiet places no one sees. In the prayers whispered when you are alone. In the little moments where you choose silence over argument, understanding over blame, softness over ego.

If you are still not convinced about forgiving someone who has hurt you badly, check this Aya of QURAN:

The Ayah (Surah An-Nur, 24:22)

Arabic:

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

English Translation (Saheeh International):

“And let not those of virtue among you and wealth swear not to give [aid] to their relatives and the needy and the emigrants for the cause of Allah, and let them pardon and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”
(Qur'an 24:22)



Context of Revelation

This verse was revealed concerning Abu Bakr As-Siddiq. When Mistah ibn Uthathah, a poor relative of Abu Bakr, was among those who spread false rumors (the Ifk incident) about Aishah (RA), Abu Bakr swore he would no longer financially support Mistah. Then Allah revealed this ayah, reminding him to forgive and continue his generosity, saying “Do you not love that Allah should forgive you?” — Abu Bakr immediately forgave Mistah and resumed his support.



Tafseer from Classical Scholars

1. Tafseer Ibn Kathir:

Ibn Kathir explains:

“Allah encourages forgiveness and tolerance, even towards those who have wronged you. As you desire Allah’s forgiveness, you should forgive others. This verse shows that whoever forgives others, Allah will forgive him.”

He narrates that upon hearing this ayah, Abu Bakr said:

“Yes, by Allah, I love that Allah should forgive me.”
and resumed his charity to Mistah.

2. Tafseer Al-Tabari:

Al-Tabari says:

“Allah commands those with virtue and wealth not to withhold kindness and financial help from relatives and believers because of their sins. Instead, He orders them to forgive and overlook, reminding them that forgiving others leads to being forgiven by Allah.”

3. Tafseer As-Sa'di:

As-Sa'di beautifully summarizes:

“This verse contains a great principle: forgiveness of others brings about Allah’s forgiveness. So whoever wishes for Allah’s pardon should pardon His servants.”

اللَّهُمَّ أَلِّفْ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِنَا، وَأَصْلِحْ ذَاتَ بَيْنِنَا، وَاهْدِنَا سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ،
وَنَجِّنَا مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

“O Allah, bring our hearts together, reconcile between us, guide us to the paths of peace, and deliver us from darkness into light.”