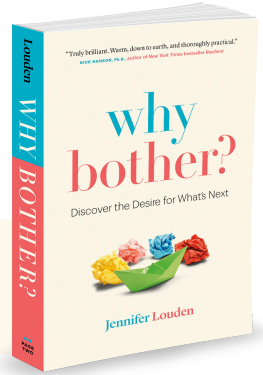


Self-forgiveness Journaling Prompts To Explore

Self-forgiveness can feel so tricky. We might think, “If I forgive myself, I’m just letting myself off the hook” or, “What I did was too bad to ever forgive,” yet research consistently shows that hating on and blaming ourselves makes it much, much harder to learn from our mistakes, to connect to others, and to move forward. It makes it much more likely that we isolate, lash out, and do everything but get our bother on.



I'VE GATHERED A FEW JOURNALING PRACTICES FOR YOU TO TRY.

If when reading the instructions you feel overwhelmed with feelings, consider doing these exercises with professional help.

1: Tell the story of something you are having a difficult time forgiving yourself for. Maybe it's directly related to your “why bother?” mood, or not. Whatever springs to mind is perfect.

Write your story in the third person. Instead of writing “me”, instead write, “he, she, or they.”

Imagine you are writing your story to someone who loves you, utterly and unconditionally. This can be a real person, a spiritual figure, or a character from literature.

You are not telling your story to justify why you did what you did, but instead to explain as factually as possible, giving needed context so your loving person can understand what happened.

Tell only the parts of your story you feel comfortable telling. You can make this as brief as you like.

Read your story but, as you do, imagine it is not your story, but the story of someone you love very much.

2: Make three columns on a piece of paper.

In the first column, do a mind dump of everything you haven't or can't yet forgive yourself for. Anything goes; from getting a divorce to not paying your taxes. But instead of writing, “I'm holding on to” or just the event or action, write, “Jen is holding on to,” or “Jen can't forgive herself for.”

In the second column, write what the cost is of not forgiving yourself for that event or action. Again, use your name. For example, “the cost to Jen is insomnia.” Or, “The cost to Jen is she avoids calling her sister.”

In the third column write down any amends you're willing to offer to yourself, or another person, at this time. If you aren't sure you are ready, write your idea down anyway so you have it for the future. Don't force yourself to do anything.

3: Imagine someone who loves you very much looking at the list you just made. Using the prompt, “What I want you to know is...” record what you imagine this person saying. Try using your non-dominant hand, the one you don't usually write with, for extra insight.

Finally, read your list aloud in a safe space, and after each item say, “I forgive this.”