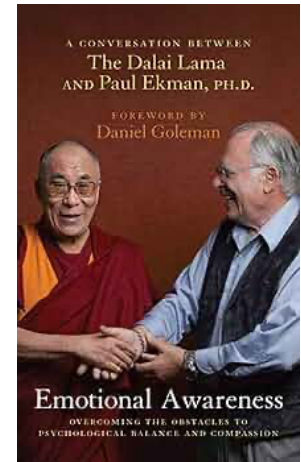


The Dalai Lama's Advice about Forgiveness

in the book *Emotional Awareness, Overcoming the Obstacles to Psychological Balance and Compassion* - a conversation between Paul Ekman, well known for his work on facial expressions & micro expressions, and the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama and psychologist Paul Ekman define forgiveness as a tool for personal liberation, not a means to condone harmful actions.

Through their recorded dialogues, they emphasize that forgiveness allows you to release the corrosive control of resentment, while still holding individuals accountable for their choices.



Their dialogue on forgiveness and emotional awareness / several key concepts:

- **Forgiveness as Self-Care:** Ekman and the Dalai Lama agree that holding onto grudges primarily harms the person holding them. Forgiving someone is viewed as a gift to yourself to avoid suffering.
- **Accountability Remains:** Ekman initially worried that forgiveness might remove responsibility from the wrongdoer. The Dalai Lama clarified that forgiving someone means choosing not to harbor negative feelings, but it does not mean forgetting or accepting what they did.
- **The Bridge to Compassion:** In Ekman's psychological model of compassion, resentment is a primary barrier to helping others. Releasing this resentment is a foundational step that allows individuals to act constructively.
- **Cultural Convergence:** While the Dalai Lama approaches this from a Buddhist spiritual perspective, Ekman maps these concepts onto Western scientific frameworks, illustrating that Eastern wisdom and psychological science yield the same conclusions about healthy emotional balance.

EKMAN: We understand it is good for the person who forgives. But does it not remove responsibility?

DALAI LAMA: No, no. For example, now, we mentally give forgiveness to the Chinese. That means we try not to keep negative feeling toward them because of their wrong deeds. But that does not mean we accept it, what they have done. So, we have little forgiveness against them, as far as their action is concerned.

DALAI LAMA: Forgiveness means not to forget what they have done. But forgiveness means do not keep your negative feeling toward them. **As far as their action is concerned, you use your intelligence. You totally have to take countermeasures, but without negative feeling.**

This is the difference between the kind of forgiveness many of us have been taught (including self-sacrifice, suffering and exhaustion), and the kind of forgiveness the Dalai Lama talked about—which leads to inner peace and strength and compassion not only towards others but also towards oneself.

Giving oneself permission to use intelligence during forgiveness can be a powerful thing.

We begin to understand that our safety, both physical and emotional, matters. How we treat ourselves can be life changing. Letting go of feeling guilty for prioritizing our safety leads to us being surrounded by the supportive and kind people we want in our lives.