

Can you forgive and forget?

“They’re telling me forgiveness is the key to every door”

By Jill Matlow, Feature Writer, Wall Street Dead aHead Family Member



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

Forgiving and forgetting. Forgiving but not forgetting. We’ve all been there. When you’ve been wronged, be it personally or professionally, it’s not so easy to “forgive and forget”. As much as I’d like to think I’m that person that doesn’t hold grudges or can forgive easily, I’ve noticed that I do tend to give certain people a pass and others not so much.

I was put to the test on my birthday last November. It was a big birthday, think “parts A and B and a supplement” age (I know, I can’t believe it either!), and I was feeling a little sensitive regarding this milestone birthday. A very close friend of mine—we’ve known each other for over 40 years—completely forgot my birthday. Not a text, phone call, email, birthday card...you get the picture.

What made matters worse is just weeks earlier, he was in town to visit his son and the only time our schedules “synced up” was when he was heading to Penn Station and had a few minutes to spare. Anyone who’s ever been in that neighborhood in NYC usually avoids it at all costs unless they’re catching a train or attending a show at MSG.

But there I went, traipsing over to Penn Station, to see my good friend.

So you can imagine how I felt when only weeks later, he would completely blow off my birthday. I hesitated to say something but with the advice of another friend who told me to “*give him the benefit of the doubt*” I decided to text him and say that I was disappointed not to hear from him on my big day and that I hoped everything was okay.

He felt awful. He had been through an incredibly tough few months at work (he's a lawyer) and completely spaced. He told me I deserved better than that. We had a great phone conversation and when I walked out of my apartment building that evening, there was a box of gourmet chocolate-covered strawberries waiting for me.

I wish more people would forget my birthday!

But on a more serious note, even if he didn't send the strawberries, I still would have forgiven him. He is (and continues to be) a great, loyal friend and too important to me. I chalked it up to the sensitivity I was feeling around my milestone birthday.

So why is it that we can forgive some, but not others? How much does someone have to "wrong us" before we decide we can no longer forgive them? According to psychologist Carl Jung: *"He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us."*

I wanted to see if there was any merit to this statement. Knowing everyone has a story to tell, I couldn't wait to hear from these WSDaH Family members, who I knew wouldn't disappoint me (and I'd never forgive them if they did). Let's see who has the power to forgive and what we can learn from their stories...

"When I think of the word forgiveness, two people in my life immediately come to mind. One is a former business partner of 16 years. The other is a long-time friend who cut me off a few years ago.

I've come to terms with the business partner. When people say a business divorce can be as ugly as a marriage, they're right. I've moved on—but when someone offends you and your family, that part lingers.

The old friend is different.

He was like a brother to me. Years ago, he started a relationship with a woman who quickly became the center of his world. Honestly, I was happy for him. It was later in life, and he seemed to have found real love. They got married quickly, and I stood beside him as one of his best men, along with his brother.

Not long after the wedding, things shifted.

His wife began setting boundaries about who he could and couldn't spend time with. Adam and I were his oldest friends, but he followed her lead. I never fully understood why we were cut off. Maybe we represented a part of his past she didn't want carried into their future.

I reached out—calls, texts, emails. Silence. Months passed. And as we all know, time is our most valuable currency.

Eventually, I stopped trying.

More than four years went by. One night, Adam and I were at a live music show and his name came up. On impulse, we called him from a different number. He answered. The conversation was warm at first, familiar even. But by the end, it was clear: he was walking a tightrope. There were pressures—work, two young kids, a marriage he was trying to protect.

In that moment, I told Adam I forgave him.

Not because it didn't hurt. It did.

Not because I understood it completely. I still don't.

But because sometimes forgiveness isn't about the other person deserving it. It's about recognizing that people change, circumstances change, and control shifts in ways we don't always see from the outside.

Who am I to force a relationship with another grown man if he's choosing a different path?

Life moves forward. And sometimes we forgive people who may not even realize they need forgiveness—because holding on costs more than letting go.”

[Barry Handwerger](#), Vice President, [CFI](#)

“The year was 2008. At this point I had run a Printing Brokerage for 25 years and was really good at my profession. People came to me because I offered something different and creative. I was not an order taker but rather an innovator.

The economy was tanking, but not for me. I had rebuilt my business from the outcome of 9/11 and remained extremely busy. And then in 2009 the brakes were put on. I had several clients that had gone out of business. I figured that I would work harder to make up the difference. But, the money I had lost was growing and eventually reached 6 figures overnight. I spoke with my suppliers and asked them to extend my credit and I would figure out how to pay them over time.

I was living in New Jersey and had two young boys. I did not let them suffer because of my business issues. We made ends meet. Then I decided to ask my dad for a loan of \$80,000 just to help me out. My folks had the money and it would have been no big deal for them to help me in my time of need.

My dad said, ‘No! Go figure this out for yourself’. I could not believe it. I was upset. They lived on Long Island and I turned around and spent 2 hours driving back to New Jersey. I thought, ‘How could he do this to me? I've never asked him for anything. Maybe my Mom will speak to him and my cell would ring with some relief’. But that never happened and I was left with having to ‘figure it out’.

After studying my finances as to which clients I had that were the most profitable, it was determined that those monies came from luxury-based clients. So, I focused on how I could expand my luxury clients. I joined some high end networking groups. Within a 6-month period, I was awarded a catalog by a high-end international jewelry company and the profit not only paid off my debt but also brought me \$84,000 in the black.

Though I was upset with my dad, he taught me a very powerful lesson. The power to succeed lies within us. We just need to micro focus and be persistent at achieving our goals. My family recently got together for a holiday dinner. At the table I said out loud what I've been thinking for the last few years. My dad had given me the best advice because he didn't want me to take the easy way out. Tough love! I apologized to my dad and let him know how I felt back then and how his guidance helped me achieve who I am today.”

[David Drucker](#), President, [high resolution](#)

“What does it mean to forgive someone and why do we do it? It's a profound question when you really stop and think about it. I'd like to share a personal experience where I had a complete turnaround in my understanding of forgiveness.

In 2008 I learned that my wife of 20 years was being unfaithful. To call this a painful revelation does not come close to how crushing this was for me. I hope no one reading this has suffered such mistreatment. I was angry, hurt. Of course I felt cheated and violated. But what was less clear was how I would move forward and with what attitude.

At first my anger and fury prevailed. How could she violate the vows we spoke to each other?! This energy was pervasive. It was dark and it depressed me terribly.

And then one day while talking with my close friend, they shared a story with me of a fellow they knew whose marriage blew up too. My friend told me that this fellow had chosen to forgive their spouse because it allowed them to purge the negativity of a horrible experience and to move forward. Their forgiveness was not to enable the cheating spouse to feel better and be rid of the guilt they were feeling. It wasn't for them. It was for the jilted lover. It was for themselves—a selfish act of releasing the anger, hurt, violation of trust.

This perspective and mindset changed everything for me. I would forgive my philandering spouse for me, as a selfish act to heal MY broken heart and enable ME to move forward.

Since then I have embraced this notion of forgiveness as something I do for myself. And when I want to convey to someone who has wronged me that I understand how or why a situation unfolded as it did, I don't forgive them, I simply say that I still love them.”

[Andrew Akers](#), Senior Advisor, [Urban Investment Partners](#)

In the end, forgiveness is really about you. It's letting go of the hatred, resentment and any other negative emotion that was intertwined in the wrongdoing inflicted on you. In my experiences of forgiveness, I've immediately felt emotionally lighter and never regretted forgiving someone. It takes getting used to but It's a valuable lesson we can all hope to incorporate, especially the older we get.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have to make sure my Medicare premium is paid for this month.