

Exercise 2

Let's take action!

Create a forgiveness list:

In your diary, make a list of all the people for whom you harbor bitter and angry feelings: people who've hurt you at any point in the past. This list can include anyone from your childhood friend Lucy, who broke your favorite doll, to a recent ex-partner. If it makes you feel better, my first list had 97 people, some of whose names I couldn't remember. A client of mine created a list of 180 people. If your list has only a few names, don't worry, that's totally fine. There's no right or wrong, and no ideal number for this list.

Choose 5 people you would like to forgive the most. Choose people you believe have caused you the most pain, and write each of their names on a separate piece of paper.

You're now a detective!

For each of the 5 people, answer the following questions:

Why do I feel so angry and bitter toward this person?

What more could I have done to protect myself?

What did I learn from this situation?

Change roles

You're going to write about the event or situation that made you so angry with this person, but you'll switch roles: pretend you're the other person. Just close your eyes and imagine you're actually this person. What's your experience of what happened? Write it down.

Recover your strength

Imagine this person is sitting across the table from you. Tell them, I choose to recover my strength by forgiving you. I let go of all the pain you caused me. Then write down the first words that come to your mind. When you're done with the top 5 people, you can throw your list in the sea, or burn it. This will be a symbolic act in letting go of your bitter, angry feelings, and toward forgiving these people.