



**Azim Khamisa's**

## **Benefits and Myths of Forgiveness**

### **Benefits of Forgiveness:**

- Increased feelings of love
- Enhanced capacity to trust
- Profound stress reduction
- Freedom from the control of events of the past
- Improved physical health
- A tool for enhancing existing interpersonal relationships
- Decreased levels of anger and hostility
- Improved ability to control anger
- More capacity of love and joy
- A calm disposition
- Fulfillment of life

### **Myths of Forgiveness:**

- Forgive and forget
- Forgiveness removes consequences
- Forgiveness is acting as though it did not happen
- Forgiveness is a quick fix
- Forgiveness is a sign of weakness
- Forgiveness is an event
- Forgiveness is pardoning, condoning or excusing the behavior

## **Three Steps to Forgiveness**

**Step One: Acknowledge that you have been wronged**

**Step Two: Give up all the resulting resentment**

**Step Three: Reach out in goodwill and compassion**

The Tariq Khamisa Foundation is dedicated to stopping kids from killing kids and breaking this cycle of youth violence by inspiring nonviolent choices and planting seeds of hope for our children's future.

On January 12, 1995, Azim Khamisa lost his only son, Tariq, to a senseless murder by a 14-year old gang member. Azim reached out in forgiveness to Ples Felix, the grandfather and guardian of Tony Hicks, his son's assailant. Together they formed the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF), pledging to end the epidemic of youth violence that plagues our country.

The purpose of this curriculum is to teach students about the impact of violence with an intention of breaking the cycle of violence. This curriculum is designed to match TKF's six key messages:

- Violence is real and hurts everyone
- Actions have consequences
- You can make good and nonviolent choices
- You can work toward forgiveness as opposed to seeking revenge
- Everyone deserves to be loved and treated well
- From conflict, love and unity are possible

This curriculum is designed to:

- Facilitate cognition and internalization of the key messages, related concepts and learning points.
- Create opportunities for meaningful dialogue to take place.
- Provide an open, safe and positive outlet for emotions raised through activities and discussion.
- Facilitate communication skill practice in an experiential way.
- Empower students to listen, understand, and reflect back what they have to say.

The lessons included in this curriculum were developed for an hour-long class period. However, as an after-school professional, please feel free to modify the assignments as needed to fit your particular time-frame and age group. The class discussions are held within every lesson to encourage students to develop and articulate their own understanding of the key concepts presented in each lesson. The lessons also can create a sense of group identity amongst the class.

We understand that, as an educator, you want your students to acquire perspectives that promote violence prevention. With that in mind, we do encourage you to exercise patience with the students' rights to hold their own personal and cultural beliefs, develop at their own pace, and incorporate new ideas as they see fit. In this way, you model the practices of respect, open-mindedness, and acceptance. Honoring students' voices in class discussions while *gently* offering guidance to illuminate certain points, can often be the most effective way for the students to consider new outlooks. The following techniques may prove helpful in facilitating class discussions:

- When you ask the class a question, give the students adequate time to process their thoughts before selecting individuals to contribute their ideas. While extending this "wait time" to ten full seconds, for example, may feel uncomfortable at first, students often participate more when they know they will have enough time to develop their ideas prior to sharing their answers. This technique is particularly helpful for students who are not completely proficient in English as it offers them increased time for language processing.

- Alternatively, consider implementing the “Think-Pair-Share” protocol to enhance the students’ willingness to participate in class discussions:
  - 1) “Think” – After offering a question to open a class discussion, give the students a dedicated amount of time (i.e. thirty seconds) to ponder their own perspectives.
  - 2) “Pair” – Instruct the students to quietly discuss their ideas with their neighbor for a minute or two. Stroll around the room during this time using verbal and nonverbal cues to convey the expectation that students truly use this time to talk about their views.
  - 3) “Share” – Choose willing students to contribute their refined thoughts to a whole-class discussion.
- When students offer their opinions to the class, avoid responding with your own viewpoints to each individual’s comment. Instead, select several students in a row to express themselves, allowing the conversation to take its own course. When you wish to redirect the discussion, you may offer additional open-ended questions for the class to reflect on.

You may want to reiterate classroom rules and guidelines before implementing these lessons. It is important for the students to feel that this is a safe place to be able to share their thoughts and feelings. Some suggested guidelines for the students to follow are:

1. Participate to the best of your ability (allow them to pass if they don’t want to talk)
2. Offer compliments - no put downs or teasing
3. Maintain confidentiality (what is said here, stays here)
4. Listen with your ears and your heart
5. Be open minded and part of the solution

Most importantly, have fun with each of the lessons because the more you enjoy it, the more your students will. Thank you for participating in helping our youth to learn peaceful, nonviolent ways of interacting and being!

***“Forgiveness”***

*To Forgive* is not to forget.

*To Forgive* is really to remember.

That nobody is perfect.

That each of us stumbles, when we want so much to stay upright. That each of us says things

we wish we had never said. That we can all forget that love is more important than being right.

*To Forgive* is really to remember.

That we are so much more than our mistakes that we are often more kind and caring. That accepting another’s flaws can help us accept our own.

*To Forgive* is to remember.

That the odds are pretty good that we might soon need to be forgiven ourselves.

That life sometimes gives us more than we can handle gracefully.

*To Forgive* is to remember that we have room in our hearts to Begin Again

and Again,

and Again.

*-Author Unknown*

*“A Gangster’s Prayer”*

Heavenly father hear me tonight.  
I need so much guidance to live my life right.  
Sometimes the pressure is so hard to bare.  
I often wonder if anyone cares.  
Heavenly father forgive my sins.  
I want to change, but where do I begin?  
Give me strength to resist the wild life I desire so much.  
Help me get away from nightly gunfire.  
Please God bless my family whose eye silently plead for me not  
to go out as they watch me leave.  
And bless my mother who cries every night worrying if I’ll be  
killed in yet another gang fight.  
Heavenly father, please hear my prayers, Please let me know that  
you are listening up there.  
When will it all end? What’s it all for? To prove I’m down...  
I’m hard core!!!  
Sometimes I even wonder how will I die, by a bullet wound or a  
knife in my side.  
Heavenly father, please hear me tonight.  
Give me the strength to live my life right.  
Please show me the way, show me the light.  
Help give my heart peace, so I don’t have to fight.  
Thank you for your forgiveness and for still being there.  
Most of all, thank you for listening to this gangster’s prayer.

-Anonymous