Forgiving myself

Taking responsibility without punishing yourself for life.

Name _____ Date _____

Guilt has a job. It tells us we have acted against our own values, and it pushes us to put things right. Once we have listened, it has done its work. Punishing yourself for years does not help the person you hurt, and it does not make you a better person. Forgiving yourself is not letting yourself off. It is taking responsibility, and then allowing yourself to carry on.

What I did, or did not do. In plain words, without excuses and without insults.

What I knew and could do at the time

What I know now that I did not know then

The part that was mine

The parts that were not

Other people, circumstances, chance

Who was affected, and how

What I have done to put it right, and what I could still do: say sorry, repair it, or do some good elsewhere

What I have learned, and what I do differently now

What I would say to a friend who had done the same and felt as I do

A sentence of forgiveness to myself. Write it even if you do not fully believe it yet.

If what happened involved serious harm, or the guilt will not ease, bring it to therapy. Some things are too much to work through alone on a page.

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