

The Advantages of Offering Forgiveness

Forgiveness is one of those human traits which can teach us so much about ourselves and how we cling tenaciously to our stories. This is NOT saying there is no validity to our stories and the real mental wounds, whether done to us, or what we have done to others, or the remorse we have over our own thoughts and actions. The problem is that we solidify troubling incidents and the difficult emotions... and we neglect to see who is actually suffering. We perpetuate our own suffering.

Forgiveness fully and openly accepts our own failings, and the harm others inflicted on us. It provides an avenue for releasing anger, resentment, embarrassment, fear, jealousy... whatever emotion we cling to because we have not yet forgiven.

In Buddhist practice, forgiveness doesn't mean we forget the harm that took place. It means we no longer want to live a life burdened with a constricted heart. We don't even have to like another who harmed us, but we can "pardon" their actions and move on with our lives, leaving behind discursive emotions.

We start with **Khanti** (patience). Forgiveness takes time and consideration. The first step is "I don't want to live like this any longer."

Next we develop **Metta and Karuna** for others who may have harmed us, or for ourselves. We are flawed human beings, and we often will never understand fully the causes and conditions that caused others to hurt us, or why we have hurt others.

Finally we practice **Ahisma**, or non-harming. We vow that we will not seek revenge, we will not punish. We live our lives with kindness.

QUESTIONS FOR THE KALYANAMITTA GROUPS

- 1) What is your experience with forgiveness?
- 2) Today, right now, who do you need to forgive? Can you?