



BRENDA REISS
Transformational & Forgiveness Coaching

Five Stages of Radical Forgiveness



Stage 1: Telling the Story

When we begin the forgiveness process, we will be thinking, acting, and feeling like a victim. Whether we have been betrayed, abandoned, cheated on, or lied to, abused, hurt, or whatever, we will have a strong need to tell our victim story and have it witnessed and validated.

Someone needs to say to us, "Yes, I get that this happened to you, and I see that you were hurt. I feel your pain and you are entitled to your feelings." Clearly, this is a very important step and plenty of time should be given to it.

Stage 2: Feeling the Feelings

This usually happens as soon as we start telling the story, but sometimes we've been so darn good at suppressing our feelings, that they might not come up right away. But watch out for strategies that you might be using to prevent them arising, like making a joke, giving excuses or reasons why the person did what they did, watering it down, or giving spiritual interpretations (the "spiritual bypass" strategy). It is very important to allow ourselves to have the feelings without judging them. You cannot heal what you do not feel.

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Stage 3: Collapsing the Story

In this step, we begin to take the energy out of the victim story by recognizing that our story is somewhere in the region of 90% interpretation. When we begin to separate the facts from the interpretations, the story itself begins to collapse and the pain is reduced. Another part of this "collapsing the story" stage is to exercise the virtues of compassion, understanding, and mercy towards our perpetrator. We try to find a way to understand what might have caused them to do the things they did, and then to cut them some slack. We still believe this person has victimized us, so we are not yet at the Radical Forgiveness stage, but it takes us in that direction. And, having reduced the amount of energy attached to the story, it is preparing us for the shift in perception that Radical Forgiveness requires.

Stage 4: Reframing the Story

This is when we try to open up to the possibility that there may be a different way of looking at the situation, or at the very least being willing to see that there might be more to it than meets the eye.

The Radical Forgiveness reframe is our way of "trying on" the new paradigm and exploring what it might feel like to adopt the new ideas. In that sense then, Radical Forgiveness is a "fake-it-till-you-make-it" proposition. The process of reframing the story involves being open to the possibility that what happened, far from being tragic, was in fact exactly what our soul wanted to experience. It was absolutely essential to our spiritual growth— and that the people involved were our healing angels.

It's that shift in perception that changes our consciousness. That's why a sense of peace is often experienced instantaneously, or at least very soon after having done the reframe— even though we are still only faking it, really.



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Stage 5: Integrating the New Story

Once we have been able to reframe the situation, it is necessary to integrate that change at the cellular level. That means integrating it into the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual bodies so it becomes a part of who we are. This can be done with a few minutes of breath work, or by writing, drawing, dancing or walking with the story. Using the voice is also helpful, since this is where our energy gets stuck the most, so telling this new story out loud to yourself is essential.