

FEELINGS AND FORGIVENESS LETTER

In this exercise, you are asked to write a letter of feelings and forgiveness to the perpetrator or other important people connected with your childhood abuse or neglect. You have been given this assignment because you have already done much hard work. You have been able to identify, verbalize, and work through many of your thoughts and feelings surrounding the childhood abuse or neglect. At this point, you are now much stronger emotionally and are ready to offer forgiveness to the perpetrator or significant others associated with your experiences of childhood abuse or neglect.

Before you begin to write the actual letter, please respond to the questions that follow. These questions will help you organize your thoughts and feelings before you write the letter to the perpetrator or significant others. You may find that some of the questions do not apply to you; therefore, leave these items blank. Space is also provided for you at the end of this assignment where you may express any additional thoughts or feelings you may want to include in your letter. Feel free to write down whatever thoughts or feelings come into your mind as you respond to these questions.

1. What impact has the experience of childhood trauma had on your life as an adult?

2. What feelings did you have as a child toward the perpetrator of the childhood abuse or neglect that you suffered?

3. How did the abuse or neglect make you feel about yourself as a child?

4. How do you feel about yourself as an adult now that you have worked through some of the pain associated with your childhood abuse or neglect?

5. What are your present feelings toward the perpetrator of your childhood abuse or neglect?

6. What are your feelings about other significant people in the family who witnessed the abuse or neglect but did nothing to stop it?

7. What changes have occurred within you that make it possible for you to consider forgiving the perpetrator or other significant persons?

8. What, if anything, has the perpetrator or other significant persons said or done that has allowed you to consider forgiveness of them?

9. Why are you choosing to begin the process of forgiveness toward the perpetrator or other significant others?

10. How would you characterize your present relationship with the perpetrator?

11. How would you characterize your relationship with other family members?

12. Use the space below to express any other thoughts or feelings that you have about your childhood trauma, yourself, the perpetrator, family members, or the future.

13. Review your responses to the questions and then write your letter on a separate piece of paper. Be sure to include your recollection of the facts of the abuse or neglect, how the experience made you feel as a child, how you feel toward yourself as an adult as a result of the traumas, how you have felt toward the perpetrator, your current reason for wanting to begin the process of forgiveness, and what type of relationship (if any) you see in the future with the perpetrator and other family members. Even if the perpetrator is deceased or unavailable for any relationship in the future, writing this letter can still be very beneficial in terms of your own growth and freedom from bitterness. Bring the completed letter to your next therapy session to review it with your therapist. You will have several options to consider about what you want to do with the letter: You may want to destroy it; you may want to save it; you may want to share the letter with the perpetrator or other significant persons through sending it or reading to them in person. Your therapist can help you reach your decision about these options.