

FOR CHARACTER • FOR RELATIONSHIPS • FOR LIFE



## BAGGAGE TRANSFERENCE EXERCISE FOR GROWTH

Are there experiences you have had in the past that hurt you deeply, leaving you with unresolved issues of bitterness or anger? Is it possible those feelings surface when dealing with relationships in the present? This exercise may help you: (1) discover the possible ways your “emotional baggage” is affecting present relationships; and (2) free you to eliminate inappropriate responses to others. Consider the following questions and answer them as fully as you are able:

List below any past experiences you can remember that cause painful memories, emotional responses, resentments or bitterness you still feel are unresolved:



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Review in your mind any childhood events, teenage episodes, friction or arguments with others, legal indictments, or family stress such as divorce, accidents or deaths. Are any of these kinds of experiences lying under the surface of your conscious mind where they might be remembered under certain circumstances? Do any of these things trigger uncomfortable feelings as you think about them?



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### LIFESKILLS



- RESPECT
- ENCOURAGEMENT
- LISTENING
- APPRECIATION
- TRUST
- INTEGRITY
- ORDER
- NURTURE
- SYNERGY
- HOPE
- IDEALS
- PARDON

FOR GROWTH

Remember it takes time to heal. Meditate on the following scriptures for at least a week or two.

Write what the following verses mean to you.



**Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.**

– Isaiah 55:6-7



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More Scriptures on next pages

**Think about times** these experiences surface. Perhaps someone reminds you of the person or situation that was hurtful. Or, a situation or physical setting reminds you of the initial pain you felt. Name these as precisely as you are able:



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**Think about** the last time you were angry with someone. Was the level of your emotional response more severe than the actual offense committed against you? Then it is likely you are experiencing some baggage transference. Write about this recent event, analyzing where you think your anger level came from:



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**Once you have determined** the actual transference issue, the next step is to uncover the motive for harboring the hurt or pain. Is it possible you still seek “justification”, “revenge”, or other retaliation for what you experienced? Do you have a lack of trust or do you experience fear? In other words, do you lash out because you want to get back at whoever or whatever has hurt you? Our human nature wants to blame because we can then avoid the responsibility – we can say, “It’s just the way I am” . . . which is never healthy. There is a process of accepting responsibility for the baggage we carry. Can you determine **why** you’re holding on to this resentment? It may take time for you to sort this out, symptoms are often illusive. Read the example on the next page and then go back to the beginning of this exercise and think through the questions again.



**Have mercy on me,  
O God, according to  
your unfailing love  
according to your great  
compassion blot out my  
transgressions. Wash  
away my iniquity and  
cleanse me from my sin.**  
– Psalm 51:1-2



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**If you, O Lord, kept a  
record of sins, O Lord,  
who could stand? But  
with you there is  
forgiveness; therefore  
You are feared.**  
– Psalm 130:3-4



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**An Example of Baggage Transference:**

In the later years of college, I married a wonderful man who shared my love of family and children. He also shared the same teaching profession as me. We finished school together, he graduated with a master’s degree, and I my bachelor’s degree.

We moved to a small town in Iowa and began our family. Four years later we moved to northern Minnesota where we completed our family of five children, four boys and a girl.

Then my husband began keeping regular company with a man who taught at the same school as him, going to a local bar every night after school. Soon our family was ravaged by alcohol and all the ugly things that are connected to it. He returned home later and later until I had to feed the children and put them to bed before he came home. We lost our communication and slowly he became a stranger. The whole thing culminated in an incident of physical abuse. Eventually, after three years of counseling, I divorced him and began raising my five children alone.

The task was so overwhelming that all I could do was focus on “one day at a time.” I began to discover that I had a very inappropriate reaction to anyone who had been drinking. If they even smelled like alcohol, I could feel the rage grow inside me. Ah, yes . . . baggage transference!

Was the anger even connected to the person that brought about the reaction? No. It was part of the pain I carried as I watched my marriage disintegrate, and my life become pretty impossible. Working through this meant a lot of letting go (pardon). Perhaps this helps you understand how trauma in your life can affect future relationships.

**To Work Through the Effects of Baggage Transference:**

It is important to clarify the levels of forgiveness you have personally experienced as God forgave you. In light of His love and faithfulness, He shows you great mercy. He has also given you the ability to forgive as He forgives. Forgiving is so difficult but so freeing.

Ask God to strengthen you so you can forgive whoever or whatever caused you to carry baggage. Pray, and be sensitive to what triggers your release of anger and resentment. Ask God to forgive you and to forgive the person or persons who hurt you.

Go slowly. Pray, listen, wait and pray some more.  
*Remember it takes time to heal.*



◆ ◆ ◆  
**Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”**

– Matthew 18:21-22



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**Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

– Colossians 3:13



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Find Freedom from Baggage Transference through . . .

**PARDON**

**FORGIVENESS AND RELEASE**

**Pardon** is forgiveness of an offense or cancellation of a penalty. It involves excusing someone for what they did or for what they failed to do. Pardon provides the offender with release from penalty; it provides the one granting pardon with release from bitterness. In effect, pardon is “letting go”.

**When Pardon Grows:**

Pardon does so much for interpersonal relationships! It releases people to go forward. It acknowledges that we all do things that harm other people, sometimes greatly. And yet we can forgive and move on.

Pardon frees us from bitterness and resentment. It removes the drive for revenge, and even the need to completely understand why an offense was committed.

Pardon helps fill the human need for forgiveness, so that people are free to move on and grow together. We all want relationships that are strong enough to endure mistakes and transgressions. When pardon is present, it means that the commitment to one another surpasses any irritations and offenses. A summary of some of the benefits when pardon is present:

- Current relationships are not hindered by baggage from past relationships.
- People receive the blessing of forgiveness
- Reconciliation is possible
- People around the parties involved also benefit
- Stress decreases
- People focus less on the minor irritations of life

**List ways you can be more forgiving of others:**




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Some ways to Pardon . . .

**PRAYER**

Some suggestions . . .

- Dear Lord, thank You for the pardon You have mercifully and graciously given me.
- Please help me to graciously pardon those who have committed offenses against me.



**THOUGHTS**

Affirm thoughts like these . . .

- The Lord has forgiven me so much!
- I appreciate that others have pardoned me.
- With the Lord’s help, I can forgive \_\_\_\_\_.
- Pardon renews relationships.
- Pardon releases us to move on.



**ACTIONS**

Some suggestions . . .

- Pray the words from the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”
- Thank the Lord for the pardon He has given.
- Let go of grudges.
- Write a letter granting forgiveness.



**To err is human,  
to forgive divine.**

– Alexander Pope