

Hello there. And thank you for joining me, I will tell you it is a beautiful day here in Cleveland, the snow is gone, the sun is out. Still a little chilly, but it is so crisp and clean. And it smells fresh out there and I love it. And I want to take a moment to say a really big thank you to those of you who have reached out and said that this podcast is helping you. I am loving those messages and those emails and all the support. And if you are enjoying this, I would love love for you to leave a review on iTunes or wherever you are listening.

So, this topic today on the power of forgiveness is a really big topic. For me personally, I am passionate about forgiveness. And this has been coming up a lot lately. For sure it's been coming up for me personally, and for a lot of my clients in terms of what is going on in the world. And also, just in terms of our own personal lives and what's going on professionally. And the world that we are living in right now is providing a lot of opportunity to not live in forgiveness. We have a world crisis going on with a lot of fear and anger and disagreement at its ultimate level. And there are a lot of reasons to disagree on policy and International Relations and politics. And also, within our professional community was so many unknowns with some companies that are booming, and then others that are really struggling to even hire enough people and others are struggling to keep the doors open. And there seems to be plenty of people and circumstances to blame.

And here's the interesting thing. And I've been thinking about this a lot lately, we also have what I would call smaller grievances, just daily grievances, including you know, the person who just cut you off in traffic or the coach who did not let your kid on the team, I was just talking with someone about that. Or the fact that someone in your house keeps leaving dirty dishes in the sink. Or there's a colleague that you feel like they are not pulling their weight. So, the world at large, and our worlds provide a lot of people and opportunities to not forgive.

So, this has quite a bit to do with wellness and wellbeing a lot. And I want to frame this by, again, emphasizing that we talk about the TEA cycle in our work, I call that the Tango Echo Alpha cycle in our work. And the T stands for thoughts and the E stands for emotions and then the A stands for actions. And the key to self-leadership, if this is what you choose to do, is to understand that the premise is that our thoughts create our emotions, and then our emotions lead to our actions.

And that is really important to understand when we truly are trying to change. When we're trying to change who we are when we're trying to change our reactions or our responses. Whether it's trying to eat healthier, or to drink less alcohol or to be kinder or more open in our interactions, or to be less stressed about what is going on in the world and in our worlds. And it is also true when we are practicing forgiveness. We have to understand that actions and our emotions are

influenced by our thoughts. They're triggered by our thoughts, not by what's happening in the world. And that can be a difficult thing to understand, especially with all of the things that are going on in our world right now. And understanding this TEA cycle is foundational, and then actually using it, especially if we feel that someone or something or a situation has wronged does. So, using the cycle takes practice.

And so, I want to talk about this TEA cycle and forgiveness and how it can be immensely powerful and can help us to be the best version of ourselves no matter what is going on in the world. So, I want to talk about it by breaking down the word itself into its syllables. And then I want to give you steps to practice forgiveness. And so, I want you to think about the word for give ness. So, we're going to talk about for who is forgiveness really for. And we're going to talk about the give section. What are you giving when you forgive? What are you giving up when you forgive? And then also we'll talk about the ness? What is the state or condition that is created when we practice forgiveness?

So, let's start with the for piece Who is it for? And most often I think that we frame forgiveness is something that we give to somebody else as an I forgive you. I'm giving my forgiveness to you because you did something, or you said something that hurt me physically or mentally or emotionally. And I think that sometimes people think that if we forgive someone, that means that we're not going to hold them accountable. Or it's like erasing what happened or even forgetting what happened. So, we might say, I forgive you for cheating on me in this relationship. And so that means I'm going to take you back. Or I forgive you for taking my wallet, so then I'm not going to report you. And this is really true in terms of parenting. If I forgive my child, and that means that I won't hold them accountable or have consequences. And I don't think that that's what forgiveness is at all.

So, for me, I like thinking about forgiveness in terms of three main elements. And the first is the choice to forgive deciding that you will or that you will not forgive. And then there's that emotional element of truly forgiving within your heart and not carrying around negative feelings towards the other person. And then there's the action piece, and what we're going to do when we forgive. And so, the first two pieces, the choice, and the emotions that we hold, are really tied together. And we know that through that TEA cycle, but the action piece that stands on its own.

And there's a really great story to illustrate this point that I want to share with you. A few years ago, I was at a parenting session that was being held by local private school, and there's a psychiatrist there who was speaking to parents and talking about how we can have love and

compassion and hold that space for our children, while simultaneously holding strong boundaries. That's the ultimate dance of parenting. Right? And so, she used this analogy that I love, she compared holding love and compassion with boundaries to the two key components of a song. And those two key components are the tune or the melody, and then the words to the song. And the analogy was that as a parent, you always want to provide a tune and a melody that is loving and safe and supportive. And that that energy is foundational, and that permeates the room. It's the background music, it's the tune or the melody. And then there are the words. And the words are the boundaries, the word is the action piece, the word is the follow through the responsibility in your rules.

So, for example, if your child is getting poor grades, and you are practicing this energy of love and compassion, while also having a boundary, you might say, "I totally understand that you are struggling, and that this is really hard for you. It's hard to organize, it's hard to prioritize. And I'm going to help you do that in a variety of ways. And we can brainstorm ways to do that together. And also, one of the ways that I am deciding that we are definitely going to do that is by limiting screen time, or weeknight activities", or whatever you decide is the boundary as a parent. So, you can hear that the tune is loving and supportive. But the boundary is the consequence of the poor grades. So simple? Yep. Easy? not at all. Why? Because we are emotional beings. And it is one thing to know how you want to act and behave towards your children and the people that you love and the people that you work with. And the people are standing next to you in the grocery line or in traffic. And it is quite another to manage that energy. And I think that the practice of practicing forgiveness is an amazing tool that can help us in managing all of those other emotions.

So, here's my caution. In giving this example in the parenting, it is very different to say to somebody, "I know this is hard for you. And I know you don't like it, but you made this bed. And so, this is what we're going to do". That's not the energy of being loving. That's more like I told you, you're wrong. I'm right and this is what's going to happen. So don't misconstrue the tune. And the words, make sure that the practice of forgiveness is about you, and how you are utilizing your own thoughts and your own energy.

And this is it's not easy to cultivate the energy of forgiveness and the energy of compassion and love and kindness in the midst of chaos. And when we're really hooked in. Oh, it is so so powerful to be able to do that. To have empathy and awareness and to also simultaneously take your right action that you deem is necessary. That is powerful. And so, I like to think about forgiveness as being able to practice utilizing that energy. It's about singing the tune of forgiveness, with your energy and what you are giving and who you are being.

And that is the second piece of this. What you're giving. The first piece is who is the forgiveness for yeah, it's first for sure it's for the other person because they get to be in your space, they get to be the recipient of your tune. It's like being around someone who is vibrating on a higher plane. Of course, that is beneficial for anyone who's in the AO in the area of operations. And the giving is the tune itself and at its core is love, whether we call that compassion or understanding or empathy at its core, it is love.

And we talked about the two essential emotions on an earlier podcast and how they are fear and love. And so, when you are giving this energy, this kindness, empathy or understanding it is based on love, and the person in front of you for sure will be the recipient. And, and, and you are the one who gets to experience those emotions. I think that is so cool. You're the one who gets to feel kindness in your body, you're the one who gets to experience that energy of love those physical sensations in your body. And when you get to experience that, that is good for you. And, by the way, it is so much more fun to experience kindness and compassion and forgiveness, instead of anger and frustration and annoyance and resentment and whatever else comes when you're not practicing forgiveness.

So, I want you to think about those two elements. For give ness is really at its core for you, you are giving yourself the gift of peace and love and releasing all that yucky energy it takes to hold on to resentment and anger and guilt. And when you don't forgive, when you don't forgive yourself, you get to experience guilt. You get to experience more negative energy when you're not forgiving. You get to keep replaying within your mind. In a situation you get to keep feeling that same energy over and over again. And when you do that, when you do not practice forgiveness, you are giving yourself that negative energy. And when you release that energy, that emotion, those physical sensations, you are gifting yourself big time. And I think that is a key point. Think about that. There's the mental choice of deciding that you're going to forgive someone else or yourself. And then there's that emotional piece, the emotional release. It's one thing to say I forgive you. And it is quite another to actually forgive. Especially when you are holding on very tightly to your story when you feel like they have done you wrong or you have done something really wrong.

When I talk to people about this, they'll be like, no Traci, listen, you do not understand what they did or what I did. This is seriously egregious. Let me tell you, my story. See how this is different. And we love our stories. I love my stories and our brains like telling those same stories. It feels comfortable, it feels righteous, it feels right. And those stories can be really toxic. constantly stirring up old stories is like creating stress within our own bodies. We put ourselves in fight or flight that's chronic stress. And it takes its toll on your immune system on your heart on your

digestive system on your entire being your entire physical organism and on your mind and your own well-being.

So, I want to share a story about forgiveness that I think is so amazing and powerful. And this is just one of many. And the story is about Jesse Lewis, who was six years old when he was killed at Sandy Hook. And I was reading an article by his mom, Scarlett, who is just an amazing and beautiful soul. And she tells how she learned about her son's death. And she tells a story of that morning when Jesse's father came to pick him up for school that she turned to give him a hug. And she saw that he had written I love you on the frost on the car window. So, she ran inside to get her phone and she took a picture of him. In front of those words, I love you before kissing him goodbye. And those were her last moments with him.

And she tells of how at first after Jesse died, it felt like the shooter was attached to her like there was an umbilical cord. And all of her energy was being sapped. And she said that forgiveness was like taking a giant pair of scissors and cutting that cord and tying it to regain her personal power. And she says that forgiveness is central to her resilience is central to her healing. And that really struck me was thinking about the idea that resiliency is the capacity to recover, to recover quickly from difficulties. And that is an important leadership skill. It's an important self-leadership skill. And it is an ongoing skill.

And if you have a situation in your life that keeps popping into your mind and you know that you haven't forgiven right now is a great opportunity to practice cutting that cord to practice forgiveness each time that situation comes up in your mind. Every time you notice unforgiveness in your mind, in your heart, it is an opportunity to practice resiliency. Scarlett talks about how she moves through forgiveness, and then something will pop up in her mind. And then she will remember and then she practices forgiveness again and again. And so that is about that third syllable ness, creating a state of forgiveness, The state or condition of being resilient, the state or condition of being compassionate, the state or condition that you want to create that you want to live in.

And so being resilient by its very nature indicates that there is a difficulty or a tragedy or a circumstance or a memory to recover from. And so being resilient means to continually choose over and over and over again, to choose love and forgiveness, especially when we are hurt, and the memories are fresh. Are we keep replaying them and making them fresh? To practice that is a meta skill. It's an amazing, crazy meta skill. That is, I think, just stuck right now I how important that is and how difficult it is and how powerful it is.

And Scarlett is a living example of the truth that we have the capacity as humans to continually and purposefully, consciously choose to continually give love and kindness and to give up all of the rest so that we can create that state that nest within us. And yes, within the world around us, it is the state of taking back our personal power, so that we can be free from the emotions that do not serve us.

So how do we forgive? We've all got stories of how someone did something or didn't do something and how that affected us. So right now, I want for you to get a story in your mind of something that happened to you, where perhaps you haven't forgiven, or you need to continually forgive. And it could be something really big that happened in your past that you really want some peace around. And it can also be something that is quote unquote trivial, like the daily stories that we tell about the person who had 12 items and the eighth item or underlying right, or how this one person always droned on in a meeting or how this one particular client is never satisfied, or we have this story about our in-laws or whatever the daily stories are that we tell.

So, whatever it is for you, I invite you to get that story in your mind and then go through this forgiveness practice so that you can practice the power of forgiveness. And there are three steps to it. So, the first step is to write your story down to get it all out to write out all the details, and to let your brain speak freely. And here's the caution for this is that you all are highly educated, you know that telling a grievance and repeating the story doesn't serve you but I want for you to let it out to tell the story and to let your limbic brain rain to talk about all of it and to let yourself say what you are thinking, bring out those negative thoughts so that you can see them and get it all out. And then see if you can go back and capture what actually happened, the facts of the situation in one sentence or as succinctly as you can.

And I want to give you an example to illustrate how difficult this can be. So, I like to show a video of a kid throwing a temper tantrum and I mean a temper tantrum in the grocery store. And I do this when I am running workshops and this kid is going at it. He's throwing stuff off the shelves. He's kicking and screaming; he is high pitch and people are watching. And so, it's entertaining for us, right? And when I asked people to say okay, tell me this story succinctly. Never is a story told succinctly why because people have been in that situation either on the receiving end as the parent, or they have seen other people in that situation, and they can commiserate. And so, I hear things like that kids need some serious parenting, or that parent needs to do the right thing and buck up and haul that little kid to the car. Or someone's going to tell their own story of how they handled it. And inevitably, it takes a long time to get to a succinct sentence that describes what happened. Because we like our stories. We like to interject our stories into whatever is happening

even to a video that we have nothing to do with. And so, the succinct sentence in this scenario is that the child is on the floor, kicking and screaming, the child has thrown things off of the shelf. That's it. Everything else is pretty much speculation and stories and opinions and judgments about what's going on.

So, the first step for you as you after you are done writing out your story is to focus on the situation and to come up with one sentence that describes the situation and to make it as succinct as possible. And the reason that we do this is because we are practicing separating out what we make that story mean from what actually happened. And that is a meta skill all by itself, understanding the difference between the facts, and what we make the mean. And there are so many ways to interpret situations.

And that's what the second step is all about. It's about identifying your TEA cycle your thoughts and emotions and actions around the situation. So, see if you can identify, again, succinctly, what you are thinking, what you are emoting, what you are feeling, and how those emotions impact your actions and come up with one sentence to describe your TEA. So, you write out the sentence, and it'll start with I think, fill in the blank. So, then I feel fill in the blank. And then I do fill in the blank. So, an example of the kid freaking out at the grocery store. One example might be, I think, that other people are thinking, I don't know how to parent, so I feel totally embarrassed. And so, then I grab my kid, and I run out of the store. So that's the thought, the emotion and then the action. Or another example might be, I think, that my kid is being disrespectful, and I need to fix that as soon as possible. And so, I feel threatened. And so, my actions are I show him who is boss by grabbing him, smacking him, giving the stink eye, slapping, whatever. And the key is to link your thoughts, emotions, and actions and to objectively see how you are creating your actions through your thoughts.

And this is really, really important, because in this scenario, of feeling embarrassed or angry, or overwhelmed, these can be linked to the idea of forgiveness, because it's really easy to blame our emotions and our actions on how someone else behaved. The reason I feel like this is because my kid was on the floor on the grocery store. When we do that, we blame other people, for our emotions, and that never works in the long run doesn't work for you, it doesn't work for your kid, it doesn't work for your colleagues, it doesn't work for your relationships. And so, we want to be able to clearly identify our responsibility, our ability to self-lead our own TEA cycle. I just think that's so amazing.

And then the third piece, the third step is to decide on whether or not you want to keep the story

that you're telling. Decide if that story is in alignment with who you want to be. And so, in this scenario, if you back up and you think about it, and you're like, okay, what stage do I want to create? Who do I want to be? I want to be a common consistent parent; I want to be a safe place for my child. I want to be a strong disciplinarian. The bottom line is that you get to choose your state, your way of being your self, and then see if the story that you've told is in alignment with who you want to be. And then if not, you get to change it. That's when you get to decide if you want to continue telling that story or not. And if you are coming from a calm and safe place, then perhaps you might gently pick up your child and take him to the car, you might decide to stand there and stare at your child until they stop. The key is that your state of who you are being is going to dictate what you do.

And the really cool thing about this, the really cool thing about this is that no matter what is happening around you or to you, you always, always, always have the capacity to choose your response to the situation. Again, is this easy? No, not at all. But it is simple. And the ability to forgive, to truly forgive in your mind and in your heart is a skill. It's a skill that we get to keep practicing over and over and over again, as the world produces opportunities for us to do that. There is a lot going on in this world right now. There's a lot going on the world stage. And then there's also things like murder, and rape, abduction, and death. And there are people being mean and rude and hateful to one another. And I believe that when we engage and play with those energies and wish ill will upon those people or a group of people, that we are contributing to that negative energy.

And I think that's ironic because we become a part of that cycle. And I believe that it is our job as leaders to rise above that to purposely create as much love and goodwill as we possibly can. Even in the midst, especially in the midst of evil actions by others. That doesn't mean that we're not going to hold them accountable. It doesn't mean that we're not going to have boundaries, it doesn't mean that we aren't going to take the right action that we deem necessary. It means in the midst of that that we are going to create as much as we possibly can, the energy of love. And that takes courage. That takes people like Scarlett Lewis to lead the way. It takes people like you to lead the way and to show that even in the midst of our current world, especially in the midst of it, that we know how to lead with our hearts, and we know how to support one another in doing so.

So, thank you all for listening. I think that you are fantastic. I believe in you, and I am honored to walk this walk with you especially now. And to practice all of this with you I am deep in the practice and as they say you teach and speak what you need to hear, and I am practicing forgiveness. So, thank you for tuning in. And God bless you and let's go forth and create

forgiveness and love in this world because right now we need it, and we can do it. Let's create it together.

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