



NEW MEXICO MARRIAGES FIRST PROJECT PRESENTS:

MARRIAGE LIFE LINE!



Spring Cleaning: Cleaning Out The Emotional Closet!

(By Michael Holland)

Welcome to the spring issue of The Marriage Lifeline! In this issue we are going to examine a topic that for many can be painful. Thinking about forgiveness can bring up a wide range of emotions for us. However, if handled properly, forgiveness can help us to have healthier, more satisfying relationships, and even contribute to our overall health. Since it is springtime, I thought it would be good to think about “cleaning out our emotional closets.”

First of all, realize that you are human, and that dealing with hurt feelings and releasing them through forgiveness is a both a decision that you make, and a process that you must work through over time. Holding onto the hurt feelings will only result in bitterness and resentment that will keep you trapped, and therefore unable to move forward with your life. Remember that time can help to heal the wounds, and that forgiveness is the key to beginning that process. So here are some thoughts and tips to help you begin.

Finding closure and healing from difficult experiences can be challenging under the best of circumstances. But it is often after the event that the negative energy resulting from our hurt that keeps us stuck. An exercise that many find helpful is to write a letter to the person involved. Express what you need to or what you even want to say, but then end the letter on a positive note saying something like: “I know that this is in the past now, and I am glad for what I’ve learned through this. I choose to let go of this hurt, and I forgive. I will never look back again. I won’t look over my shoulder. I will walk forward now, and live my life with dignity and grace.” Think of this letter as another chapter in your life, with a beginning, middle and end. Once

you’ve written the letter, you have written the ending, and closed the chapter. At this point, either burn the letter, or keep it in your journal or someplace secure, but in most cases there is no need to send the letter to the offending person. We can also have a tendency to harbor hurt feelings if we aren’t dealing with our own emotions in a healthy manner. So here are some other things to do that will help you finish your emotional spring cleaning:

Excuses: We all have them. For one week observe how many excuses you make for yourself, and then ask yourself if they are really true, or do they make it more convenient for you?

Rationalizations: Again, we all have them from time to time. The danger of allowing rationalizations is that they sear our conscious to allow us to do the things we know we should not do. Another way to spell rationalize is *rational lies*. Tell yourself the truth. There is no good excuse for doing the things we know are wrong.

Procrastination: “I’ll do it later” has to be the biggest con job that we do to ourselves. It keeps us thinking about “someday” which will never arrive since it’s not on the calendar. The next time you are tempted to procrastinate, put it off until later. Instead, procrastinate about procrastinating. Do the task now, put it on your calendar, or delegate it.

Thinking about these ideas and realizing that we all have faults and blind spots can help us to be more forgiving towards others. We remember our own faults, and realize that because others have forgiven us, we are more willing to be a forgiving person. Remember that we are all imperfect human beings!

Continue reading in this issue for more ideas on becoming a person who lives a healthy lifestyle of forgiveness!

Inside this issue:

Unforgiveness: Like Taking Poison and Expecting the Other Person Will Die!	2
Okay I'll Forgive..... But Do I Have To Forget?	3
Forgiving Yourself	4
Harboring Hard Feelings	5
Celebrate Your Relationship & Celebrate Youth	6
Do You Need To Laugh?	6
Calendar of Events	7

Featured Upcoming Event:

Celebrate Your Relationship and Celebrate Youth (for teens). Both held on Saturday May 9th, 2009, 9am - 5pm.

Don't miss this fun day for the whole family!!!

Unforgiveness: Like Taking Poison and Expecting the Other Person Will Die!

(By Rebecca Holland)

I have bad news and good news. The bad news is that people can hurt you. Sometimes people you trust let you down, betray you, abuse you, and it goes deep. You not only feel hurt, you feel wronged. You didn't deserve it. You can't forget it. It's like a videotape recorded inside your mind, and there is no on-off button. It comes on randomly. Every time it shows that rerun, you get walloped all over again. There's no delete button. You're stuck with it. If you continue to hold onto it and let it control your life, it becomes unforgiveness and it can trap you for life if you're not careful.

Unforgiveness is like taking poison and expecting the other person will die. Unfortunately, unforgiveness harms us and keeps us in a place of bitterness and anger. In fact, much of the time the other person doesn't even know that we aren't forgiving him/her. We sometimes think we have a right to be unforgiving and that if we forgive it will let the other person off the hook. We think that if we forgive, we have to forget everything and never think about what happened again. Nothing could be further from the truth. I know many people who have held onto unforgiveness and at certain points in their lives, that unforgiveness begins to play out in their physical bodies. It causes high blood pressure, anxiety disorders, ulcers, headaches, and much more. It truly is like taking poison and allowing it to destroy your life.

Now, here's the good news. There is a way to cope with hurt and overcome the pain. It is called forgiveness and there is nothing more powerful than being able to forgive someone who has hurt you and

let go of the pain you feel. Forgiveness is a choice and not a feeling. In most cases our feelings are fickle and don't line up with some of the choices we make in life. For example, sometimes I get so angry in traffic that I "feel" like ramming my car into the car in front of me, but I don't act on my feeling. I make a choice to keep my car away from the car in front of me. My feeling and my choice were not the same; they were at opposite ends of the spectrum. I can make a decision to forgive even though I don't "feel" like forgiving.

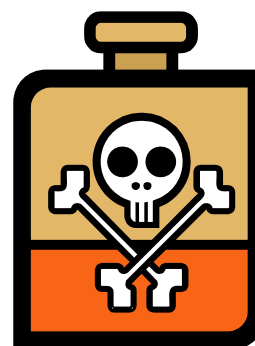
Maybe you are saying, "How do I forgive?" This may sound odd, but if need be, begin by pretending. There's a wonderful thing about pretending something. If you pretend it often enough, you become it. This is called "creative hypocrisy." Ordinary hypocrisy is when you pretend to be something you have no desire to really be. Creative hypocrisy is when you pretend to be that which you really do want to be.

Finally, if forgiveness always comes hard for you, take a journey back into your own forgiveness. Reflect on the fact that no matter what you've done in the past, others have forgiven you. No matter how wonderful you have been in your life, you still had times when you needed to be forgiven. When have you needed forgiveness yourself and received it?

No matter what has been done to you, no matter how deep the wound, forgiveness is possible.



Michael and Rebecca Holland,
NMMFP Directors



New Mexico Marriages First

**Project
(NMMFP)
exists to:**

**Provide
culturally
appropriate
marriage
education,
marriage
enrichment
projects, and
programs that
explore positive
relationship
models for
married couples,
engaged couples,
couples interested
in marriage and
teenagers thus
strengthening
marriage and
reducing the
incidence of
divorce.**

*The
NMMFP
Motto:
"I Do! I Did? I
Will . . .
For LIFE!"*

Okay I'll Forgive....But Do I Have To Forget?

(by Ashley Salazar)

Have you ever looked into the eyes of somebody that is killing you with every word they say and every action they take? You think to yourself, "that's it - our relationship is over!"; it will never be the same. How could they say that? Why would I allow someone to treat me like that? Why would they do this to me? Days, months, even years can pass and then the apology comes. They were wrong, they can admit it, and because we are human we usually accept their apology. But what comes next is the hardest thing...



I have forgiven and I have been forgiven. That's the easy part for me. What is the hard part?... Forgetting! Often times we plaster on a gigantic fake smile and tell the person that has hurt us that every-

thing is alright, while really we are just waiting for the next opportunity to bring this up again, and to remind the person how much they have hurt us. We are wounded, our pride is telling us that we need to seek revenge, and sometimes we like keeping this "guilt card" in our back pocket, just in case we ever need to pull it out.

So once you have really forgiven how do you forget?

- **Just say it!** - You were hurt; the person that hurt you needs to know this. They need to know while you may have forgiven them when they apologized you are still holding on to it. Let them know that it is taking time, but you are working on completely forgetting, because it's important to your relationship that you stop holding on to this anger.
- **Take responsibility for your reactions!** – Just because you are hurt, it does not give you the right to retaliate, after all what good is that going to do? While it may temporarily feel good to break someone down in order to build yourself up, it ultimately hurts us in the long run. Remember, we can't control what others do, but we can control what we do.
- **Deal with one issue at a time!** – Like the famous expression goes "Rome was not

built in a day". If you have a lot to forget you cannot expect to go to bed tonight and wake up tomorrow with no memory of what you are going through. Take a break; remind yourself that it's going to take little steps until you completely forget what happened.

- **Old habits die hard!** – We are creatures of habit; we often go back to what we know, even if it doesn't work for us. It's like wearing an old pair of shoes that we love but don't fit right. We like these shoes, we are used to these shoes, and heck we don't want to throw them away! We know that every time we put them on we are in pain, but we keep thinking that maybe this time they won't hurt, this time it will work. Truth is those shoes need to go! We do this when we go back and remind ourselves of all the reasons we shouldn't forget the hurt someone put us through. We allow ourselves to go back, instead of going forward...
- **What's it worth?** – I get it, there are some things that we think we just can't forget, trust me... been there, done that! But you have to stop and ask yourself, is this one thing worth the relationship or the friendship you have built with this person? I cannot answer that for you, it's a choice you have to make. If the relationship is worth it you have to forgive and forget, if you don't do this it's not fair to you and it's definitely not fair to them.

Forgiveness takes time, and forgetting takes work! If you are not willing to work at that, things will stay the same and you will never be able to fully love and trust that person. It's a choice that we have to make, it is not easy, but then again the right thing to do is never really easy, is it?



Ashley Salazar,
Youth Educator



**Mike Gibson,
Office & Public Relations
Manager**

**Contact NMMFP if you
would like to schedule a
marriage event in your
community!!**



**Brad Biggers,
IT Support**

1207 Golf Course Road, Ste. E
Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87124
Phone: (505) 891-1846
Cell: (505) 401-5734 or
400-9869
Email:
mholland@nmmarriagesfirst.org
rholland@nmmarriagesfirst.org



Forgiving Yourself

(By Mike Gibson)

My wife and I have been married thirty years and the future for our relationship looks fantastic! However, this has not always been the case. We have had our ups and downs just as every marriage or relationship experiences, and admittedly; I have been the source for the majority of the lows our marriage has suffered.

We met and married so young and my actions and behaviors were based on what I had learned growing up. I learned that the man was in charge and made the decisions; discussion over. Boy was I ever off base. Only through years of trial and error in conjunction with our mutual faith beliefs, did I realize there was a smoother path to follow.

Now, thirty years into the marriage and things slowly improving, a new issue comes up for me: I am feeling a great deal of guilt over the way I have treated my dear wife and in many instances, the way I treated my children like soldiers rather than the great kids they are. Even though I have made very constructive changes in my behaviors, I still struggle in easing my mind about the past.

I read a Magazine article titled, "Forgiving Yourself First." It is the story of a man's account of his military combat action and the lives

he took while serving. It suggested that before one can move forward in life in a positive, contributing walk, they need to forgive themselves for perceived past short comings and in turn, forgive others with more compassion and understanding.

My wife has been the consistent one through the years. She held her ground firmly to ensure our marriage survived through some very tough times. Today, I adore her and thank her often for her perseverance and hard work through our years of marriage. My commitment to her is unbendable.

Take a moment to reflect and evaluate: Are you holding onto some guilt or ill feelings toward yourself? Perhaps it's time to forgive yourself and experience a fresh start. It gave me a great new outlook on my marriage and my life.



www.TheMarriageLifeline.com



**Leonie Oliva,
Project and Events
Coordinator**

*New Mexico
Marriages First
Project Staff:*

**Rebecca Holland,
Project Director**

**Michael Holland,
Assistant Project
Director**

**Mike Gibson,
Office and Public
Relations Manager**

**Leonie Oliva,
Project and Events
Coordinator**

**Ashley Salazar,
Youth Educator**

**Anita Bruce,
Accountant**

**Brad Biggers,
IT Support**

(505-891-1846)

Harboring Hard Feelings

(By Leonie Oliva)

How does having a grudge or hard feelings about someone make you feel? Usually it's not good. You may feel anger, or even rage, and want to scream at them. Or if you are a "hold it in" type of person, like me, you may have a silent, seething anger eating you up from the inside. You may feel sad, nervous, anxious or just uncomfortable around the person who has upset you. As time goes by and the issue is not resolved resentment and bitterness may set in. Or maybe feelings of contempt or general hostility. If the person who has hurt your feelings is a family member or friend "the situation" can impact social gatherings and your day to day activities. And if the person who has hurt your feelings is your spouse, well, that is definitely going to affect your life! Whatever the outcome, these types of hard feelings are not having a positive impact on your life. So why do we let them persist?

Letting go of hard feelings and creating a new start with the person in question can be hard for many reasons. Some reasons may be "concealed" - meaning they are not immediately obvious to us until we really analyze the situation and our behavior. Here are some possibilities:

- As human beings we do like to be "right" and to feel that our behavior and feelings are justified. So it can be kind of comforting to us to judge someone else to be "wrong" and to hold on to that.
- The "wrongdoer" may not appear sorry for his/her actions and may even be continuing them intentionally or unintentionally (if you have not communicated with them effectively about what they did and how it made you feel), thus

compounding the hurt. But have you really made an attempt to sort out the issue with the person, or is holding a grudge an alternative to you having to do this?

- We may be gathering sympathy and support from others about the wrongdoing we have suffered - and maybe we don't want to give that up?

In all these cases, there is some benefit to us in keeping the hard feelings going, such as avoiding having to confront someone; feeling justified in our own behavior and not having to admit that maybe we did contribute a tiny little bit to the situation; or enjoying the sympathy of friends.

I know that in my case, I do not like conflict and confrontation, so I will sometimes hold a silent grudge rather than having it out with the person in question. I am just angry on the inside. Oh, and I may share the injustice I have suffered with a few close friends so I can enjoy their validation of my opinion on the matter!

So if you are having a hard time giving up hard feelings it is worth doing a quick "cost benefit analysis" on the situation. Consider what are the benefits to you of keeping the grudge in place versus the costs to you of being unforgiving (anxiety, anger, bitterness etc)? Ask yourself do you really want to keep those negative emotions in your life? Then check if there is anything you need to admit to yourself about the situation? Once you identify any concealed reasons for being unforgiving, you will have more freedom to take action. You can choose to forgive, get those horrible hard feelings out of your life and create a fresh start!

Celebrate Your Relationship & Celebrate YOUth



Don't miss out on a day of fun for the whole family on Saturday May 9th. **“Celebrate Your Relationship”** is an event for couples at all stages of their relationships - dating, thinking about marriage or married. You will come together for a day of learning about healthy relationships through humor, activities and music. The day will be hosted by Jay and Laura Laffoon, dynamic and inspirational speakers who use humor and music to deliver their healthy relationship message.

Held at the same time **“Celebrate YOUth”** is a fun event for teens (12 - 18 years) which will also focus on healthy relationship skills. It will be led by Justin Lookadoo, an in-demand national youth educator who has written numerous books for teens including the best seller **“Dateable: are you? are they?”**.

Younger children (0 - 11 years) can enjoy our **FREE** onsite, adult supervised childcare. The day includes lunch and refreshments and will take place at Grace Outreach, 2900 Southern Blvd, Rio Rancho. The best news is both events are **COMPLETELY FREE!!!!**

Space is limited, so don't miss out on this opportunity for your whole family to have some fun!! You must pre-register to attend, so call us today or visit our website and sign up on line:

www.TheMarriageLifeline.com



A BIG THANK YOU TO FORMS PLUS!!!

We would like to thank Forms Plus for supporting NMMFP through its donation of printing services for our quarterly newsletter.

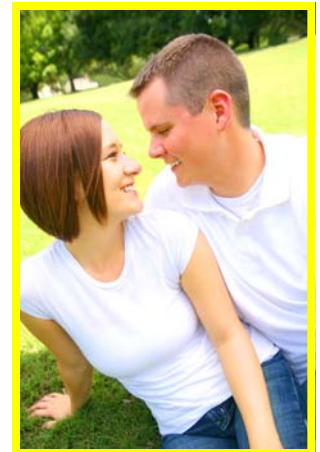


DO YOU NEED TO LAUGH?

SORRY!



FORMS PLUS
(505) 247-1132



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



April 2009

NMMFP Marriage Mentor Training, Saturday April 18th, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Class will be held at Church Alive!, 4601 Avocet Road NW, Albuquerque. Contact NMMFP to Register (505-891-1846). **Training is FREE!!**

Healthy Marriages How to Build A Healthy & Strong Relationship: A Relationship Seminar For Couples, Saturday April 18th, 9:30am to 12:00pm. Class will be held at Santa Fe Country Club, 4360 Country Club Road, Santa Fe. Contact Healthy Marriages (1.888.892.4250). Only \$10.00 per couple. Register by April 13th

Healthy Marriages How to Build A Healthy & Strong Relationship: A Relationship Seminar For Couples, Saturday April 18th, 6:00pm to 8:30pm. Class will be held at Sandia Resort & Casino, Albuquerque. Contact Healthy Marriages (1.888.892.4250). Only \$10.00 per couple. Register by April 13th.

May 2009

NMMFP Celebrate Your Relationship Date Night, Friday May 8th, 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm, Jemez Pueblo, venue to be announced. Contact NMMFP to Register (505-891-1846). **FREE EVENT!!**

NMMFP Celebrate Your Relationship and Celebrate YOUth, Saturday May 9th, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at Grace Outreach, 2900 Southern Blvd, Rio Rancho. Contact NMMFP to register (505-891-1846). **FREE EVENT!!**
Space is limited so call today!

June 2009

NMMFP Premarital Education Class, Saturday, June 6th, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm. Venue to be announced. **Class is FREE!!**

August 2009

NMMFP Couples Check Up Conference with Ron Deal, Friday August 21st, 6:00pm to 9:00pm and Saturday August 22nd, 9:00am to 3:00pm. Venue to be announced. Contact NMMFP to register (505-891-1846). **Conference is FREE!!**

September 2009

NMMFP Premarital Education Class, Saturday, September 12th, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm. Venue to be announced. Contact NMMFP to register (505-891-1846). **Training is FREE!!**

NMMFP Marriage Mentor Training, Saturday September 26th, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Venue to be announced. Contact NMMFP to register (505-891-1846). **Training is FREE!!**

NMMFP Events

We ask that you register for all of the NMMFP events. NMMFP events include childcare, meals or snacks!!



The Family Lifeline, Inc.
New Mexico Marriages First Project
1207 Golf Course Road, Suite E
Rio Rancho, NM 87124

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Rio Rancho, NM
Permit # 750

**Your Spring Marriage
Life Line Newsletter
Is Inside!**

To:

**Mark Your Calendar and Plan to Attend the
NMMFP Celebrate Your Relationship and
Celebrate YOUth events on May 9th, 2009!**

www.TheMarriageLifeline.com