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### CONVERSATIONS WITH SELF

#### To forgive and forget

T.T. SRINATH

How does one tackle guilt? By accepting one's mistake sincerely

What is guilt, and how do you end up feeling it? Guilt and its attendant supplementary feeling, shame, are largely the result of self-deprecation and unfair comparisons. Guilt arises when you believe you've done something that, in your opinion, is wrong, more often morally. Shame arises when you are consumed by guilt and cannot cope with what you consider turpitude.

Both these feelings, born out of the primary feeling of fear, are caused when integrity is put to test.

Many of us who go through life not wanting confrontation, not liking the mess that surrounds the unpleasantness that arguments cause. While confrontation in itself is not unhealthy, particularly when you confront yourself, it becomes unhealthy when you want to avoid the pain of facing yourself. And so, you avoid getting in touch with yourself, and believe you have coped. Yet, when alone, the feeling surfaces, especially if it has not been dealt with fully. The consequence is guilt. And, soon, it is substituted by shame.

Avoid denial

How does one counter these feelings? For one, by not denying the feelings that are the result of an act of impropriety. That way, you programme yourself to feel guilty. Often, it is wise to acknowledge to yourself the incorrectness of the act, and then be gentle enough to forgive yourself. This is not an excuse or a cop-out; it is the genuine feeling of being sorry.

When you genuinely forgive yourself, you circumspect and do not commit the act again. When you don't forgive yourself and bury the act as inconsequential, the feeling of letting yourself down returns to haunt you sooner than later, and you feel miserable.

All of us perform an act only because we see an inherent reward. Yet, not all acts support beneficial outcomes. Sometimes, when you've said or committed an act of transgression either on yourself or another, you justify the act by saying: "I did not mean it". But, when the act has unhealthy consequences, the resultant feeling is not joy but guilt — "May be, I should not have said it", "May be, I should not have done it".

These thoughts evoke pain. And so, you apologise for the unfairness of your words and deeds. It also means dropping your ego and saying with sincerity that you were wrong, and like I said before, forgive yourself, because you are human and fallible.

When you forgive yourself, you feel liberated, and realise that it is okay to err. You also realise that you don't have to prove you are right. To commit an act of indiscretion is part of being human. Don't forget that. Many a time, when you truly forgive yourself, you are also able to forgive others who, you think, have wronged you. It is important to realise that you don't have to justify yourself to anyone, not even to yourself. And, consider that to err is human, but to forgive is being alive.

(The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at [ttsrinath@vsnl.net](mailto:ttsrinath@vsnl.net))