

Autonomous Resolution of Conflict

ARC

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Objective

Autonomous Resolution of Conflict (ARC) is a protocol for moving forward in a forgiveness process.

The intention is to free oneself from the suffering of resentment, rancour, reproach, anger, rumination... to move towards relational **serenity**, in a constructive approach of clarification, kindness, learning, affirmation and fulfilment.

The goal is not necessarily reconciliation. In some cases, the relationship will now appear meaningless, and perhaps even toxic. Forgiveness allows one to find a better way of communicating, and to bring comfort to oneself and often to the other.

Context

Rancour feeds the ego and pride. To harbour resentment by ruminating over history is to torture oneself. It is also playing at being one's own tormentor, positioning oneself as a victim, and sometimes as a vengeful vigilante.

To refuse to forgive is to cling to the past, in a refusal to move forward, to live and to love.

The path to forgiveness is often like feeling one's way around in the dark. This protocol aims to make it clearer, more conscious, **simpler** and more **accessible**.

Do not set too specific or immediate a goal. The process can take place over several stages. It takes time for the important issues, but it holds many gifts and a few nice surprises.

Usage

This process can be followed to forgive those who are present or those who are absent, those who are alive or those who have passed away, parents, spouses, children, friends, teachers, colleagues, superiors, rulers...

It is also aimed at forgiving Life... and oneself.

It can also lead to asking for forgiveness directly from the person concerned.

This approach compiles and reshapes steps identified in different books or teachings. It presents four preceding phases to forgiveness in order to clarify the situation, and two additional phases to forgiveness, for a total of seven steps.

It is useful to begin with a **meditation**, to focus the mind and increase its clarity. Ideally, each step will be experienced in a meditative attitude, in order to go through it as lucidly and deeply as possible. Starting by getting settled correctly, sitting with your back straight, aware of your body and breathing, helps you to find yourself again.

Forgiving in 7 Steps

1 - The basic situation

The first thing is to look at the conflict situation, to describe it clearly, as factually and objectively as possible.

To move towards lucidity and understanding, let the situation, the atmosphere, come back up. Watch the film unfold. Hear the noises, the words... What happened?

Draw out the **objective**, proven, tangible **facts**, with as much neutrality as possible, without comment or interpretation.

Naturally, **emotions** follow. They are sometimes located in the body, which is why it is important to pay attention to your feelings. Writing helps to identify them.

One emotion can hide another, i.e. anger for example can mask sadness or fear.

While doing your best to remain a spectator, also take note of the thoughts, and the judgments, criticisms and **reproaches** that are coming up. You can simply memorise them, but writing them down allows you to see them better.

Judgements reflect beliefs, translation filters: if someone does this then it always means...

Judgements put people and circumstances into categories. They lock them up into boxes that are simplifying, reassuring, but above all imprisoning.

2 - The need

The return to the basic situation, combined with meditation, brings one back to objectivity, and moves aside the emotional and mental veil, which often hides the real issue.

The next key question is: what is the unmet need?

It is expressed independently of anyone else.

My need is my own. I don't have to seek to compel anyone to meet it.

Need is neither a desire, nor a preference, but a necessity.

Example:

Need: I need to hydrate.

Desire: I would like a tea.

Preference: Jasmine tea rather than bergamot.

The proper formulation of the need allows one to take **responsibility** for one's life and regain one's power. A need is personal and does not involve the other.

If you hear "I need you to ...", you already know that there is an evasion of responsibility, or even an attempt at manipulation (on your part or on the part of another). It is then necessary to return to the real need.

The clear identification of the need leads to the construction of a perspective and a resolution.

In the choice of strategy to meet one's need, urgency and negotiability are key criteria. It is important to remember that not all needs are compatible and not all will necessarily be met. There is prioritisation.

Example: I am tired, hungry and need physical activity. It is possible to choose rest, food or sport depending on the time available or the priority of the moment.

See the list of needs below.

3 - The request

The **clarification** of the need allows one to formulate a request. This is a key element, without which the identification of the need would remain mute, powerless.

What would I have wanted? How would the situation be in a better world ...?

It must be realistic and concrete. The result will be verifiable. This makes it possible to avoid chimaeras or illusory generalities such as: I want to be younger, I want them to love me...

It can be addressed to the other or to oneself, or even to the universe.

The expected result is achievable, and if possible verifiable.

The request is negotiable! The question to ask oneself is: "Am I ready to accept a refusal? Am I ready to look for a solution that also suits the other person?"

Examples of a request to the other :

Request: In the future, would you agree not to make noise in the morning?

Negotiation: moving towards a mutually satisfactory solution for each.

In the morning, you can take your shower, and then put on the headphones for music (not the radio at full blast).

Request: Would you be willing to meet this week?

Negotiation can go towards: see each other next week or phone each other this week...

The request turned towards oneself, can look like: "I ask myself to do such an action, in such a way, within such a time frame...", "I promise myself not to say yes anymore when I think no."

Examples of self-request:

Next time... :

- I will not let my emotions get the better of me.
- When the phone rings and I'm not free, I won't answer it anymore.
- I will allow enough time to catch my train.
- I will not accept to do a favour that I am not comfortable with...

Do not confuse request, whim and demand.

Whim

I want lemon tea now.

I want us to meet now.

A sense of precision or urgency is usually characteristic of a whim.

Demand

If refusal leads to a negative emotion (frustration, anger...) then the request was a demand and not an open request.

The demand does not respect the freedom of the other person and makes the other person pay for a possible refusal by blackmail or by affective or emotional punishment, such as guilt, reproach, or a domestic scene.

Frustration, anger, sulking, even sadness, indicate an immature aspect and an attachment to the form of response given to a need or want.

Obligation does not leave room for love.

4 - Welcoming and meaning

Often, the situation no longer exists, only a memory persists. However, the emotions remain, very real. Making a drama out of it increases suffering and prevents learning.

Meditation helps to gain perspective, to **calm the mind**, and to **take stock** of the situation. To reject circumstances is to cling to them. This only prolongs them and slows down the evolution, the resolution.

It is better to say to yourself: This is my reality at the moment, okay.
It will pass too!

According to the great principle of meditation, welcoming opens up to experience and learning. If I dare to consider that everything that happens to me can *ultimately* contribute to my good, I will seek the **gift** of the situation!

Some questions to ask yourself:

- What can I learn or heal through this experience?

- In which cases do I act like the other?
- On the stage of life, which character does the other play in my scenario?
- Is it an already identified pattern? A repetitive attitude?
- Is there a cause, an unconscious motivation that leads me to behave as I did, or to be in this circumstance?
- What is the hidden benefit?

Hidden benefit

If we consider that things do not happen by chance, that we have a creative power over our lives, it is interesting to ask **why** I am in this situation, especially if it reoccurs regularly.

Beyond the visible disadvantages, there is undoubtedly a **self-interest** in being in this situation.

Example for someone who is ill: apart from the multiple inconveniences, the hidden benefit may be to be able to be pampered, to see loved ones, to rest or have leisure activities, to escape from work or school...

Another example, more specific, but frequent: provoking a break-up with a loved one, makes it possible to avoid the emotional intensity generated by the relationship or to stop the fear that the relationship will end. The unconscious mind has chosen sadness over apprehension and stress.

Mirror effect

Often the situation brings the additional gift of knowing oneself better. The mirror effect invites us to contemplate the other person to see which aspects of myself they reflect.

In general, what bothers the other person about me is what they **reject** about themselves. I will then look at what, about myself, is disturbing for the other person, or others, in order to potentially improve myself.

I will also see in the other person what bothers me and what I do not accept in myself, so that I can know myself better, welcome what can be perfectible, and transform it, improve it if possible.

5 - Forgiveness

The previous steps help to gain distance, to see the situation better from a **global** perspective, and to clear the emotional fog.

Instead of posing as an avenging vigilante, I meditate again to gain a bird's eye view.

Let he who is without sin cast the first stone. Bible, John 8, verse 7.

Forgiving the other

Properly speaking, in forgiveness, if reproach is aimed at someone else, it is recommended to start by turning towards them in intention, possibly visualising them in front of me and asking myself:

- What did the other person feel? How do I imagine they feel now?
- Can I see their suffering?
- Do I recognise the right of the other person to have fears, wounds...?
- Do I recognise their right to make mistakes? To a defensive or protective reaction, even if they have to learn to manage them?
- Can I admit that the other may have done their best, according to their history, values, suffering, consciousness, and unconsciousness?
- What was their need? What is their current need?
- Can I recognise the humanity of the other, with its strengths and weaknesses?

- Do I see that, in this, they resemble me? Am I not also a *tormentor* sometimes?

I am probably unaware of the real **cause**, the injury or the weakness, that made them behave like they did, and perhaps they too are unaware of it.

The other might have acted in the same way with someone else. Maybe I was passing by and got caught in the crossfire, which was not aimed at me?

And even if it were a personal offence, will I continue to carry it for much longer? For what purpose?

Gradually, I let go of my attachment to my wound, to my entitlement, to my resentment, even to my vengeance.

It is a **decision** to move towards **understanding**, and eventually to compassion.

The *tormentor* sometimes suffers as much as the *victim*. And it is not unusual for the roles to alternate. Seeing the similarities between the other person and myself, allows me to reject them less and to soften my heart.

Stepping out of the victim role reveals one's own wrongs. It is then easier to go and ask for forgiveness directly to the person concerned, without waiting for them to ask for forgiveness first. It is a mark of humility or maturity to take the first step.

To understand is not to justify, nor to validate, nor to accept as normal. The relationship with the other, and with oneself, will probably no longer be the same. The project is peace, within oneself and towards the other, with or without the other.

I can **reconcile** myself with the *other person's soul*, while deciding not to see them again, because a friendship doesn't seem possible, or a relationship no longer makes sense to me.

To forgive is to decide to leave the past in the past, to bury the hatchet, and to lay down the emotional burden.

Meditation helps to **welcome** the other as they are.

Even in the absence of the other person, it is possible to ask them for forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a path that is travelled as the ability to love grows.

Forgiving yourself

An essential and delicate moment arrives. I face myself, I dive into myself.

I am looking for the answers to the questions:

- Have I ever acted in a similar way?
- Do I give myself the right to make mistakes?
- What are my escape-aggression mechanisms, to defend myself, to protect myself?
- Can I bear in the other (specifically or in general) what I reject in myself? And vice versa (even if I, alone, am involved in this ARC).
- Where does this rejection come from?

I scrutinise what I might be reproaching myself for. Perhaps I am not satisfied with the way I have managed to:

- guarantee my integrity
- assert myself, command respect
- set my limits, express my needs
- know what to say, how to act

I forgive myself for having entered into a conflict, as well as for not having been able to enter it. I forgive myself for having acted, reacted, for having allowed myself to be manipulated, attacked...

I probably did my best, but anyway, the past is past. The right question is: "What do I learn from it?"

The answer will lead to a request to oneself, a **promise** for the future. Meditation leads to looking at oneself with kindness and compassion, to the point of forgiving oneself for having entered into conflict, for not having succeeded in doing better.

To forgive oneself is also to trust in the request one has made to oneself: I will not do it again, I will not let myself be manipulated, insulted...

Internal Conflict

The process is similar. It is applied, in this case, as if a reproach is to oneself. There is then a **distancing** to better observe and understand oneself.

The dialogue is no longer conducted in front of the other, but in front of oneself.

Forgiving life

Finally, turn to life.

There is often unconscious reproach: how could you do this, to me?

Holding onto reproach would lead to a loss of confidence in the future and repeated victimisation.

Do not hesitate to start a **dialogue**, even if it means both asking and answering the questions.

A good way to forgive life is to look beyond appearances to find the gift, the learning, the lesson.

In general, remembering the gifts received helps in finding a good perspective and returning to gratitude.

6 - Blessing

Blessing results from, or can facilitate, a peaceful and **kind** state of mind. That is why it may succeed forgiveness, or sometimes predispose to it.

It manifests itself readily in meditation through positive thoughts, or by sending love, tenderness, a perfume, a colour... or by visualising, for example, flowers, butterflies, light, a shower of

glitter... depending on the inspiration of the moment.

It is offered freely to others, because they need it. It is also a way of thanking them for playing their part so well on the stage of life's theatre, for having delivered their lines in my film, for helping me to learn and grow. The blessing wishes them **well on a fulfilling journey**.

It is also addressed to oneself, simply to **honour** and recognise oneself, and even to thank oneself for the **courage** to face reality with as much lucidity as possible.

It is a way of congratulating oneself on the determination to face one's emotions and wounds, to go through suffering, to forgive, and finally to renounce the grudge in order to choose love.

7 - Gratitude

Finally, a time of **joyful and serene celebration** welcomes this sense of **release** from the burden of emotional tension. Celebration warms the heart.

It invites one to see the positive side of things, to find meaning in one's existence, to appreciate life with gratitude.

Identify the **gift** of the lived experience.

For example, I learned to:

- forgive, **love further**
- find a communication, build a more harmonious relationship, with someone and/or with myself
- understand the stakes of situations and interactions, decentre myself, consider the suffering of the other (instead of focusing on my own), reconcile with myself
- set my limits, formulate a clear request, respect myself, dare to speak up, take a stand, promise myself to manage

circumstances and relationships better

- build my inner peace, my **emotional security**, build a fulfilling **relational future...**

Finally, a feeling of gratitude can be born towards Life, which sent me this situation to learn to love better, in order to be more **fulfilled** and in **harmony**. It allowed me to go through this experience to be **stronger, wiser, happier**.

The drama has changed into comedy, so that I can recognise and welcome the gift, which always contributes to better taking my place in the great dance of life.

Gratitude to the other who played a role in my learning scenario.

Gratitude to myself for having walked this path.

Integration

Then comes the time of integration, to "tidy up", to perpetuate the gift. It is a time of absorption, of retention, to imprint emotions or understandings, and to remember them.

By contemplating the path walked, this time is used to **memorise** the teaching, the teachings, and to promise oneself to change. It allows one to prepare for the next time, just in case...

Writing serves to clarify and to keep track, to be able to reread and retrieve what might well be forgotten. I like inking on paper, with gestures and calligraphy.

Meditation helps a lot in this process, by anchoring in the body, to act appropriately, and to find the right attitude.

Finally, depending on the situation and the emotional implications, certain stages can be omitted or, on the contrary, developed.

This overall process can be followed to **forgive all of one's**

relationships along one's life path, those present or absent, those who have passed away, parents, spouses, children, friends, teachers, colleagues, superiors, rulers, the Divine, and especially oneself.

List of needs

A classification and prioritisation of needs has been established by Maslow (1916-1972, USA). It is represented by a pyramid, from the base to the top.

Here, each need is associated with an area of the body, to potentially help identify and clarify the need according to the feelings experienced during meditation. There is no prioritisation.

Sensations can also be associated with emotions.



Comprehension: head

Love, relationships: thorax

Self-esteem: solar plexus

Basic physiology: belly

Safety, protection: pelvis

On the other hand, Tony Robbins and Chloé Madanes do not classify needs in order of necessity, but consider more the specificity of the individual, their globality and the situation:

- certainty
- uncertainty/variety
- meaning/importance
- love and connection

and two spiritual needs:

- growing/evolving
- contributing

Numerous other lists of varying length have been compiled (Manfred Max-Neef, Michael Anthony...).

Marshall Rosenberg's caring communication or Nonviolent Communication (NVC) has developed a more detailed list that can support an understanding and clarification of one's own needs.

The list presented here is not exhaustive. It has been compiled from my perspective.

There is no ranking, as priorities are individual and circumstantial.

Physical body

Air, water, food

Safety, housing

Trust

Physical activity

Rest, sleep, recovery

Harmony

Softness, sensuality, chocolate 🍫

Emotional body

Love, tenderness

Kindness, compassion, empathy

Relationships, belonging

Solitude

Sharing: giving, receiving

Contact, sexuality, sensuality

Pleasure, satisfaction

Parties, celebrations, joy

Mental body

Comprehension, meaning, hope, projects

Learning, fulfilment

Peace, tranquillity

Choice, freedom

Poetry, culture, art, aesthetics

Self-respect: setting limits, self-assertion

Communication, dialogue

Humour, play

Spiritual body

Connection to Life
Truth
Nature
Beauty
Creativity, expression
Pardon: forgiving
Grieving process
Gratitude
Wonder...

Respect

Respect is not presented as a need, strictly speaking, but is rather approached as an ability to set expectations, and even to defend oneself.

The notion is cultural and individual.

In truth, I need to respect myself and learn to express my needs.

I cannot make the other person responsible for my needs, including respect.

My need is to implement the means available to me so that the other person respects my values, my functioning, my autonomy...

Paradoxically, I would lose my autonomy if I set the need for the other to respect me. I am co-responsible for what I consider to be their respect.

The real need is to know and be able to set **limits**, to clearly indicate what is experienced as disrespect, and to negotiate what is desired and acceptable to each. That is why, in the list, self-respect, **self-assertion** and safety are featured.

The difficulty tied with respect is the fear of rejection, judgement and conflict.

For example: for some people it is disrespectful to blow one's nose in front of someone (in Japan for example).

Instead of being reproachful: "You are being disrespectful to me", a formulation could be: "I do not feel respected when you blow your nose in front of me. Could you go into another room?"

The negotiation can go towards: "Would you be content if I turn my back to you when I blow my nose... How do you feel about my suggestion?"

Each person considers when the situation becomes acceptable to them, in order to find the best way to live with each other. Respect then becomes a co-creation.

In reality, the need and the difficulty often lie in respecting oneself.

Emotional indicators

Especially in a discussion, a few signs indicate that a need is not being met, that one feels insecure, or angry:

Body :

- physical restlessness, desire to move
- change in colour: paleness or redness
- cold or hot, sweating
- weakness, dizziness

Speech:

- the voice is higher
- volume increases
- faster word flow
- cuts off the other

When these signals come on, it is useful to have the reflex to slow down the rate of speech, lower the voice, and re-centre oneself.

Sometimes, it is necessary to know when to take a break, or even to withdraw and postpone the discussion. It is a good time to go and meditate a little.