

[IMAGE]

To Err Is Human, to Forgive Is...Good for Your Health

Eighteenth-century English poet and essayist Alexander Pope is credited with saying, "To err is human, to forgive, divine." Nearly 200 years later, researchers at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville believe forgiveness may not only be divine, but a good way to stay healthy.

The survey of 108 college students gathered data on specific situations in which they had felt betrayed, and whether the students seemed to have forgiving personalities ("trait" forgiveness) and how recalling the situation affected them during the interview ("state" forgiveness). During the interviews, the researchers monitored students' vital signs, including blood pressure and heart rate.

Trait forgiveness was associated with lower blood pressure readings, while state forgiveness was associated with lower blood pressure and heart rate. Additionally, signs of sympathetic nervous system arousal (e.g., the stress response) that elevated when betrayal events were brought up also seemed to return to normal faster in students deemed "forgiving types."

Think of the ability to forgive as the ability to reduce stress in your life. We all know how debilitating stress can be, particularly in the long-term; in fact, considerable research shows that stress can contribute to chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease. So don't hold a grudge - it's bad for your health!

Want to learn more about stress relief? Visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/general/wellness/index.html.

Reference:

Lawler KA, Younger JW, Piferi RL, et al. A change of heart: cardiovascular correlates of forgiveness in response to cardiovascular fitness. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* October 2003;26(5), pp373-93.

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