

Identifying My Personal Substitutes for Forgiveness

The Most typical substitutes for forgiveness are listed below. They are the same for all three paths of forgiveness (Your sins against God, sins against others, and others sins against you) You have used most of these substitutes, but you specialize in a few. The list is your coping mechanisms to deal with sin, pain and hurt instead of forgiveness. Take time to identify which one you specialize in or use most frequently. **Mark “G” for sins against God, Mark “O” for sins against other people, Mark “M” for My own sins against others.** God wants to free you from the patterns of coping and give you a new way to experience real life. It is only through forgiveness and God’s transformation that you will experience this freedom to love God, yourself and others like you were designed.

- Manage our emotions**—When we are feeling an emotion we do not like to feel, we tend to block it out or replace it. We reject uncomfortable emotions and try to feel comfortable ones- through denial, a change in activity, or drugs.
- Exercise self-control**—When we think about doing something inappropriate, we tend to restrain ourselves so as to not act out what we are thinking or feeling. Self-control is a good thing, but it is not forgiveness.
- Overlook sins**—We are so used to seeing sin in everybody, we tend to overlook sins, especially those we would call “little sins.” Most sins just don’t catch our attention.
- Misidentify sins**—Culture, family and personal rebellion against God make it difficult to correctly identify sins. We call something a sin when it is not. And we can believe something is not a sin when it is. God defines sin, not people.
- Blame the wrong person for sins**—We tend to blame our selves for other people’s sins and we tend to blame other people for our sins. We can even blame God for our sins!
- Try to forget about sins**—If something makes us uncomfortable, we tend to avoid it by not thinking about it. This can be done consciously and subconsciously (selective amnesia).
- Minimize sins**—We tend to compare one sin with other sins and “grade it on the curve.” Lesser sins are minimized when we start thinking “Well, it is not as bad as ...”
- Excuse sins**—We tend to find reasons why certain sins were unavoidable.
- Justify sins**— We tend to find reasons why certain sins were not only unavoidable, but appropriate and necessary!
- Deny sins**—We tend to deceive ourselves into believing that the sin did not happen, or at least was not a real sin.
- Ignore sins**—We tend to think that “time heals all wounds” if we just ignore the sin, and its consequences will just go away.
- Hide from sins**—We tend to run away, physically or mentally from sin, to escape having to face it head on. We use all kinds of good and bad things to avoid and hide from sin, such as work, pleasure, drugs, alcohol, activity, inactivity
- Tolerate sins**—We tend to accept sins as normal and inescapable, so we tolerate most of them.
- Punish someone for sins**—We tend to try to punish the guilty person or someone else, even the victim of the sin.
- Compensate for sins**—We tend to “make up” for sins by doing good things. We also tend to modify our behavior in unhealthy ways to keep other people from sinning against us again.
- Let it go**—We tend to try to “move on” and not let the sin affect us any more. Many psychological tools can be employed to do this. However, it is usually a combination of several of the other substitutes for authentic forgiveness.

Ask God to help you identify your substitutes for forgiveness so that you can replace them with real forgiveness.
Write M for My sins against others Write O for others sins against me Write G for my sins against God