



# Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits

*Jeffrie G. Murphy*

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## **Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits** Jeffrie G. Murphy

We have all been victims of wrongdoing. Forgiving that wrongdoing is one of the staples of current pop psychology dogma; it is seen as a universal prescription for moral and mental health in the self-help and recovery section of bookstores. At the same time, personal vindictiveness as a rule is seen as irrational and immoral. In many ways, our thinking on these issues is deeply inconsistent; we value forgiveness yet at the same time now use victim-impact statements to argue for harsher penalties for criminals. Do we have a right to hate others for what they have done to us?

The distinguished philosopher and law professor Jeffrie Murphy is a skeptic when it comes to our views on both emotions. In this short and accessible book, he proposes that vindictive emotions (anger, resentment, and the desire for revenge) actually deserve a more legitimate place in our emotional, social, and legal lives than we currently recognize, while forgiveness deserves to be more selectively granted. Murphy grounds his views on careful analysis of the nature of forgiveness, a subtle understanding of the psychology of anger and resentment, and a fine appreciation of the ethical issues of self-respect and self-defense. He also uses accessible examples from law, literature, and religion to make his points. Providing a nuanced approach to a proper understanding of the place of our strongest emotions in moral, political, and personal life, and using lucid, easily understood prose, this volume is a classic example of philosophical thinking applied to a thorny, everyday problem.

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