The Expert Says

Some ways we forgive ourselves are much healthier than others, says researcher Juliana Breines, PhD, who studies how self-compassion and self-criticism affect our health and well-being.

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Is there a downside to self-forgiveness?
Research suggests that while self-forgiveness can relieve unpleasant feelings like guilt and shame, it can also reduce empathy for others and motivation to make amends.

Okay, so what's the healthiest way for us to forgive ourselves?
Healthy self-forgiveness therefore seems to involve releasing destructive feelings of shame and self-condemnation but maintaining appropriate levels of guilt and remorse—to the extent that these emotions help fuel positive change.

What are some other healthy ways we can practice self-forgiveness?
Recognize what you did wrong. Consider reparative behaviors that can make a difference for others and help your personal growth. And empathize with those you hurt.

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