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JOHNSON COUNTY[®]
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CONTINUING EDUCATION

Introduction to our speaker, provided by:

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Speaker: Dawn Kuhlman, MA
The Impact of Forgiveness on Your Mental Health

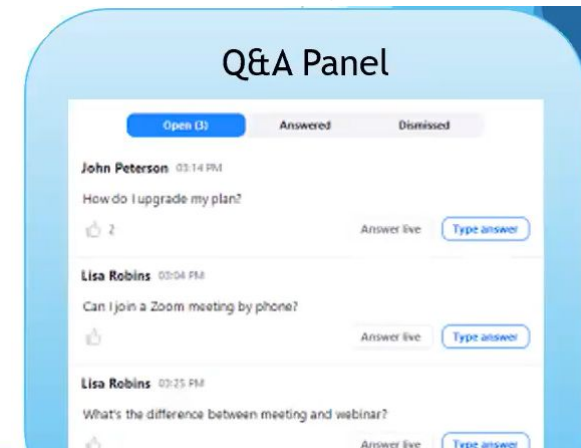


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Notes About This Webinar:

Post questions during the presentation using the Q&A Panel

- Press on the thumbs up to vote on a question
- Questions must be sent through the Q&A Panel to be seen (please don't use chat)
- Most popular questions will be answered during this webinar



AGENDA

Define forgiveness

Discuss benefits of forgiveness

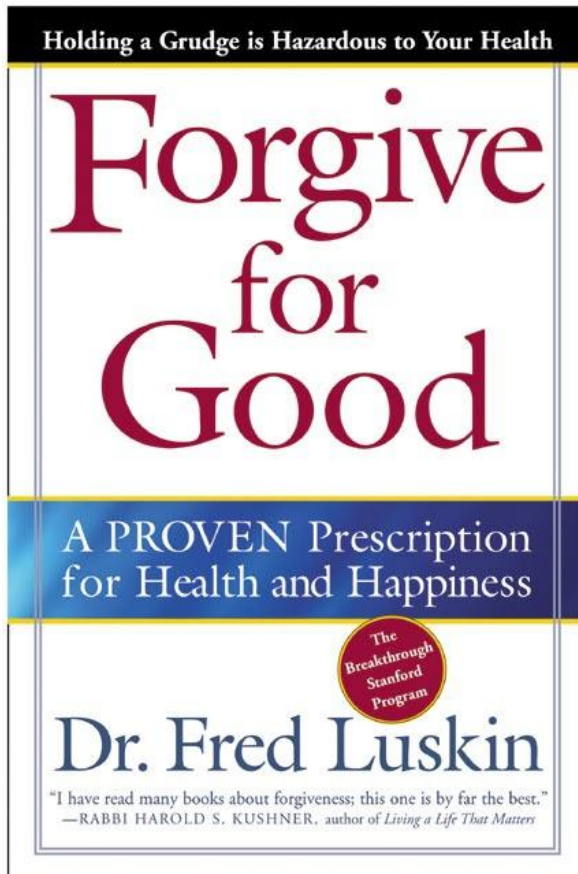
□ Examine research results

Experiential Compassion Exercise

Gain tools for releasing negative emotions AND increasing positive emotions



Forgiveness Resources



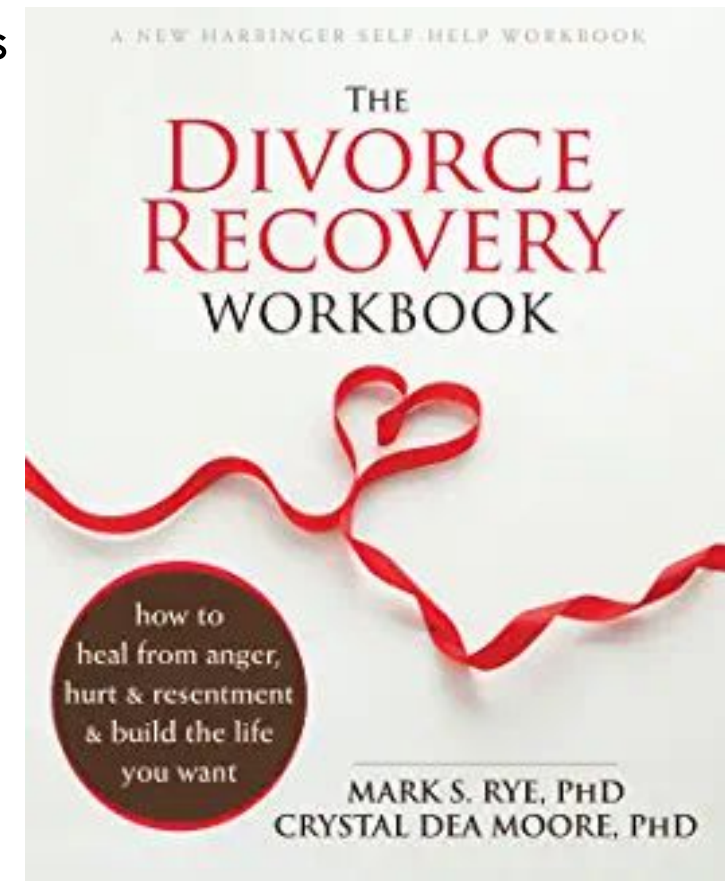
Forgive for Good: Nine Steps to Forgiveness
– Author Fred Luskin – (2004)

<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

Science-based insights for a meaningful life

The Divorce Recovery Workbook: How to Heal from Anger, Hurt, and Resentment and Build the Life You Want

Authors: Dr. Mark Rye & Crystal Dea Moore



FORGIVENESS DEFINED

“...the experience of peace and understanding that can be felt in the present moment. You forgive by challenging the rigid rules you have for other people’s behavior and by focusing your attention on the good things in your life as opposed to the bad (p.xii).”

- Antidote for a case of the “shoulds”

FORGIVENESS IS...

- ☐ is the peace you feel when you put grievances to rest.
- ☐ is for you and not the offender.
- ☐ is for taking back your power.
- ☐ is taking responsibility for how you feel.
- ☐ is about your healing and not about the people who hurt you.
- ☐ is a trainable skill just like learning to throw a baseball.
- ☐ helps you get control over your feelings.
- ☐ can improve your mental and physical health.
- ☐ is becoming a hero instead of a victim.
- ☐ is a choice.

Everyone can learn to forgive.

STUDIES REVEAL: FORGIVENESS IS HEALING

1. People who are more forgiving report fewer health problems.
2. Forgiveness leads to less stress.
3. Forgiveness leads to fewer physical symptoms of stress.
4. Failure to forgive may be more important than hostility as a risk factor for heart disease.
5. People who blame other people for their troubles have higher incidences of illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and cancers.
6. People who imagine NOT forgiving someone show negative changes in blood pressure, muscle tension, and immune response.
7. People who imagine forgiving their offender note immediate improvement in their cardiovascular, muscular, and nervous systems.
8. Even people with devastating losses can learn to forgive and feel better psychologically and emotionally.

RENTING TOO MUCH SPACE IN OUR MINDS...



How much time do we spend thinking about our hurts and disappointments?

How much intensity is there?

Are you renting out more space to what is wrong than what is right?

FORGIVENESS MEASURES

THESIS: DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN
FORGIVENESS OF SELF AND OTHERS (2002)

Dawn Glasener-Kuhlman
□ Thesis Chair Dr. Mark Rye

Forgiveness of Other Scale

Forgiveness of Self Scale

Assessments: Reliability & Validity

Glasener-Kuhlman, D. E., & Rye, M. S. (2004, July). Mental health and the forgiveness of self and others. In N. Wade (Chair), *Applied research on forgiveness: Implications for therapy*. Symposium presented at the 112th annual convention of the American Psychological Association, Honolulu, HI.



FORGIVENESS MEASURES

Absence of Negative (AN) – designed to measure the degree to which the person has overcome negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about the offender

- “I can’t stop thinking about how I was wronged by this person.”
- “I spend time thinking about ways to get back at the person who wronged me.”

Presence of Positive (PP) – designed to measure the degree to which the person has the presence of positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward a specific offender

- “I wish for good things to happen to the person who wronged me”
- “I have compassion for the person who wronged me.”

My research showed letting go of the negative is more important than developing positive in terms of psychological adjustment. (FOS PP only variable related to mental health (i.e., self-esteem).

RESEARCH STUDY QUESTION 1

What is the relationship between forgiveness of self (FOS), forgiveness of others (FOO), and mental health?

- Self-forgiveness scale and forgiveness scale
- Mental health: state and trait anger, depression, and self-esteem

RESULTS:

- FOO – negatively correlated with state and trait anger (extrapunitive orientation)
- FOS – self-forgiveness and anger did not have a relationship
- FOS and FOO both negatively related to depression
- FOS positively related to self-esteem (intrapunitive orientation) - FOO did not

STUDY QUESTION 2

Does self-forgiveness predict mental health beyond forgiveness of others?

RESULTS:

FOS and FOO both negatively related to depression

ONLY FOO relates negatively to anger

ONLY FOS relates positively to self-esteem



STUDY QUESTION 3

Which dispositional variables predict self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others?

- Dispositional Variables are unique or individual responses to situations that result from one's own past experiences.
- Dispositional Predictor Variables: Guilt, Shame, Religious orientation, Self-consciousness

RESULTS:

- FOO and FOS were negatively related to guilt and shame
- FOO and FOS were NOT related to religious orientation
- FOS (but not FOO) was negatively related to self-consciousness (p.105)

STUDY QUESTION 4

Shame - I am a bad person (internal) - “Shauma” Brene Brown

Related to inability to apologize

Guilt - I did something bad (external)

Do guilt and shame uniquely predict both self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others?

RESULTS:

Shame uniquely predicted dispositional FOS beyond guilt

Guilt uniquely predicted beyond shame in both FOO and FOS

THOUGHT ON EMPATHY

My research showed that...

Participants scored significantly higher on perceived harm rating committed by OTHER (\underline{M} = 3.01) than perceived harm rating committed by SELF (\underline{M} = 2.71) (p.63).

Participants scored significantly lower on PP when the wrongdoing was committed by OTHER than when the wrongdoing was committed by self (p.66)

Empathy Quotes

Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another, and feeling with the heart of another

Alfred Adler



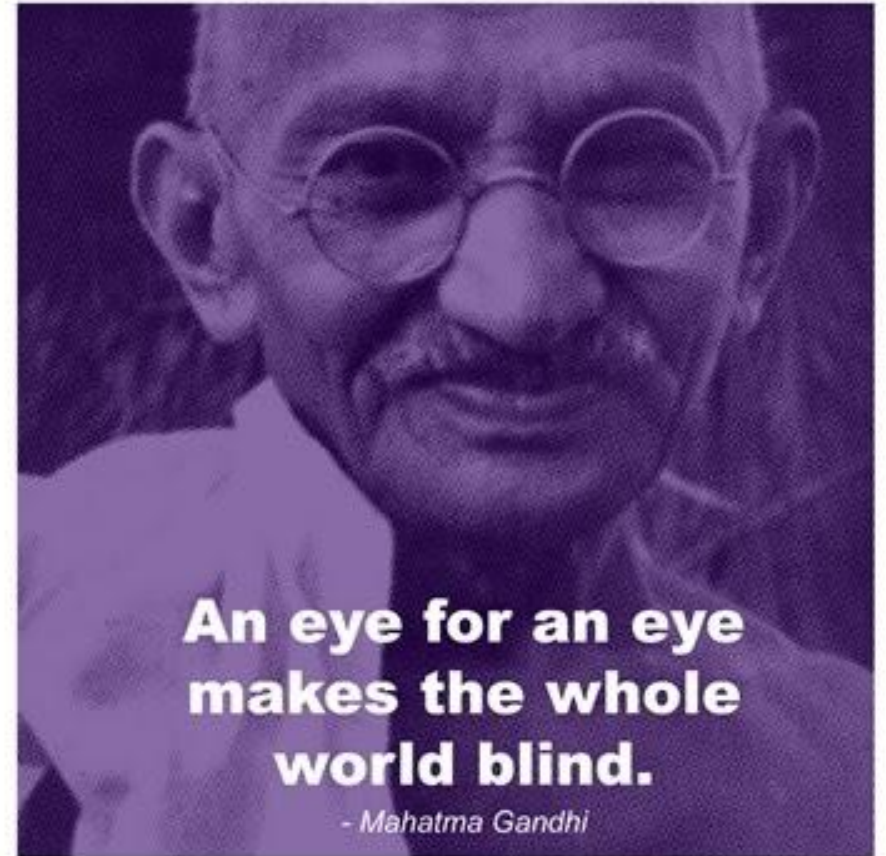
REVENGE

Starts with anger

Always destructive

Simultaneously seek compensation
and punishment

Is ancient and universal
eye for an eye



DEVELOPING SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion – a kind and loving attitude toward the self, connects you to others.

Choose to acknowledge that other people have made the same mistake.

You are not alone in your fallibility.

Motivate you to do something different in the future.

Why are we so hard on ourselves?

Identify critical self-talk.

Different from self-esteem (self-esteem is an evaluation of your worth as a person and tends to be the outcome of doing well in various pursuits)

3 components of self-compassion (Neff):

1. Self-kindness
2. Connection with humanity
3. Mindfulness

FORGIVENESS REQUIRES US TO GIVE UP SUFFERING

Suffering is a need and an addiction.

Forgiveness requires that we let go of our need to be pitied, our need to be right, and our need to feel an intense connection with our tormentor through anger.

FEED & NURTURE THE GRIEVANCE STORY



Keep the hurt alive forever...and it keeps growing.

Keep us stuck in the hurts from the past.

Weights us down.

Becomes part of our identity.

□ I am what happened to me.

Other person maintains control.

Anger and hurt are meant to be fleeting emotions...not permanent fixtures.

6 OBSTACLES TO FORGIVENESS

1. Severity of Wrongdoing - Pick a role model
2. Absence of apology, remorse, or restitution – focus on your benefits
3. Frequent reminders of how you were hurt – reframe thoughts; boundaries on rumination (e.g., time limit)
4. The person still engages in hurtful behavior – boundaries; limit communication; reduce reactivity
5. Something sacred was violated – talk with religious leaders
6. People around you haven't forgiven – find appropriate support, change the subject

8 FORGIVENESS STRATEGIES

1. Let go of small stuff – start with the easy grudge first
2. Express your intention to forgive – to friend, yourself, pastor, therapist
3. Focus on an Inspirational Role Model (can be biblical or fictional)
4. Expand and shift your focus – change the channel, focus on gratitude
5. Draw upon your faith – pray for support and comfort; pray for the person
6. Think of a time when you did something hurtful – humanize each other
7. Empathize with the person – key to forgiveness; acknowledge his/her pain
8. Develop a forgiveness ritual – symbol (rock); paper shredder

Forgiveness Tool: Visualization

Close your eyes

IMAGINE a different or transformed relationship
with this person

IMAGINE calm feelings

Thinking in shapes or symbols may be easier

Practice. Practice. Practice.



THE COMPASSION EXERCISE: "JUST LIKE ME" BY HARRY PALMER

Honesty with one's self leads to compassion for others.

Objective: To increase the amount of compassion in the world.

Expected Result: Increase in understanding and a personal sense of peace.

Instructions: This exercise can be done anywhere. Try to do all five steps on the same person.

With your attention on the other person, repeat to yourself:

"Just like me, this person is seeking some happiness for (his or her) life.

"Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in (his or her) life.

"Just like me, this person has known sadness, suffering, and despair."

"Just like me, this person is seeking to fill (his or her) needs."

"Just like me, this person is learning about life."

You are in control of your perspective!
Focus on the positive!

Homework assignment

Week 1: Be grateful for what you have

Week 2: Be grateful for everything around you

Week 3: Be grateful for who you are

www.gratitudechallenge.com

<http://gratitudechallenge.com/downloads/gratitude-calendar.pdf>



Post Ed Talk Logistics

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Resources on website

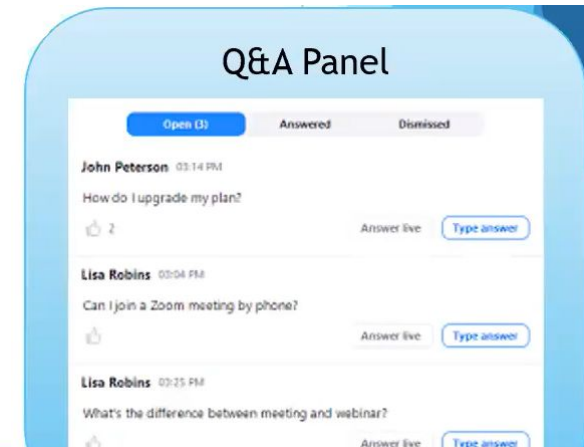
www.marchmediation.org



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thank you!

Join us December 7th at 10 a.m. for our newest EDTalk:

“Everything You Know About Networking Is Wrong”

Speaker: Diana Alt

