CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Forgiveness:

The interpersonal relationships an individual establishes and maintains in his or her life offer quality and meaning in one’s life. The relationships with parents, spouses, children, extended family and friends provide for a valuable social network. These interpersonal relationships are an important part of an individual’s life. The trust, respect and expectations that a person invests in a relationship are quite personal and involve some of the most basic components of close interpersonal relationships. These interpersonal relationships begin with mutual attraction, develop with respect and trust and are sustained by the belief that each person will act in the other’s best interest (Flanigan, 1992). Despite the best intentions of those involved in a given relationship, mistakes may be made, considerations of the other person(s) may be abandoned and the other’s best interest may be put aside.

Therefore, interpersonal conflicts are a normal feature of human life, which must be dealt with across the entire lifespan. To put it in other way, conflict is an unavoidable by-product of interpersonal relationships (Cords & Killen, 1998; Fincham, 2000). Competition for scarce resources, ambitions toward power and status and betrayals of loyalty and trust can all have negative effects on relationships causing them to become at least temporarily more distant and less committed (McCoulough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown & Hight, 1998). Conflicts may range from simple divergence in preferences to deep hurts and severe transgressions.

Frequently, interpersonal relationships can be sources of happiness and security for many people; however, there are times in everyone’s life when interpersonal relationships are the source of negative emotional experiences. As such, People have devised a variety of potential solutions to the corrosive effects of interpersonal transgressions (Fry & Bjo¨ rkqvist, 1997). One mechanism that can avoid the negative effects of interpersonal relationships is forgiveness, an approach whereby people quell their natural negative responses to transgressors and become increasingly motivated to enact positive ones instead.
1.2 Why is Forgiveness Important?

When people get emotionally or physically hurt by others, termination of the relationship is one of the most frequently reported consequences of the offense (Leary, Ansell & Evans, 1999). Although there are many instances where termination of a relationship may be more beneficial to the victim than forgiving (Wade & Worthington, 2003), there are also many instances where forgiving is more beneficial to the victim (Wivliet, Ludwig & VanderLaan, 2001). Research on forgiveness has revealed at least two important ways forgiveness may benefit people: intrapersonally and interpersonally.

First, from an intrapersonal perspective, forgiveness has been linked with better physical and mental health. People who showed less forgiving responses had higher levels of sympathetic nervous system activity (Wivliet et al., 2001), and higher levels of cortisol (Berry & Worthington, 2001), than people who showed more forgiving responses. Both increased sympathetic arousal and cortisol levels are biological markers for physiological overload (i.e. allostatic load) that increase cardiovascular risks (Berry & Worthington, 2001); forgiveness is found to decrease sympathetic arousal (Lawler et al., 2003) potentially decreasing cardiovascular risks. Consequently, being unforgiving can have detrimental health affects, literally “breaking one’s heart”.

Psychologically, forgiving people report less mental health problems than unforgiving people (Berry & Worthington, 2001; Maltby, Day, & Barber, 2004). In an intervention to promote forgiveness with incest survivors, Freedman and Enright (1996) randomly assigned patients to a forgiveness intervention condition or an intervention wait-list condition. Patients who completed the treatment showed better psychological health than the control group and reported lower levels of depression, anxiety, and higher levels of self-esteem.

Second, from an interpersonal perspective, forgiveness has been linked with more pro-social behaviors (Karremans, Van Lange, & Holland, 2005). Karremans and colleagues found that people who forgave an offender were more likely than people who did not forgive to engage in more pro-social acts such as donating to charity. In addition, forgiveness has been suggested to help facilitate relationships by helping to maintain social ties within a social network (Struthers, Dupuis, & Eaton, 2005).

Evolutionarily, it has been advanced that forgiveness preserves relationships in order to sustain group cohesion; ultimately enhancing the survival rates amongst
members (Gold & Davis, 2005). Cooperation and fairness among members of a group has been suggested to be the foundation of the formation and maintenance of social relationships; and this is found not only in humans but among other animals as well (Beckoff, 2004). Fehr and Fischacher (2004) posit that human cooperation centers around what they call conditional cooperation; the idea that the social norms governing cooperation only exists when cooperation is present. This may be one of the reasons why some people view transgression as debts (Exline et al., 2004); to them every wrong act must be rectified because it’s only fair. In general, the maintenance of close social relationships is important for human happiness (Buss, 2002), and one of the ways people can maintain strong social ties is to forgive others when a transgression has been committed (Gold & Davis, 2005).

1.3 What is Forgiveness?

For a long time, researchers have been debating on the definitions and theories of forgiveness but at the same time, depending on their research work, they have defined forgiveness in a number of ways. People within virtually all religious and philosophical systems and in virtually all countries agree that forgiveness is a virtue. After that, the agreement regarding forgiveness diverges. Some say, it is an ideal virtue and is too hard for practically anyone; others say it is for the spiritually, morally, or willfully elite but not for common folk; some say that everyone should forgive—frequently, quickly, and essentially everything—but differ in how likely that is to actually occur. Some say forgiveness is contextualized within efforts at relational repair, and others say it should be done unilaterally.

Traditionally, definitions of forgiveness have fallen into two categories: forgiving involving (a) reduction of negative experiences, for instance- emotions, motivations, behavior, cognition (Ashton, Paunonen, Helmes & Jackson, 1998) or (b) both a reduction of negative experience and a resulting positive experience toward the offender (Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004). Worthington (2005) observed that when strangers or people in poor or non–valued relationships offend, the focus is on reducing the negative. In valued, continuing relationships, the focus is on both reducing the negative and then (if possible) increasing the positive.

Forgiveness is a constructive communicative act that allows individuals to cope with transgressions as well as with transgressors rather than negatively respond to hurtful experiences (Metts & Cupach, 2007; Worthington, Van Oyen Witvliet,
Pietrini, & Miller, 2007). Fincham, Stanley and Beach (2007) indicated that forgiveness serves as a dyadic self-repair strategy ‘‘with the potential to influence exchanges over time by changing the degree to which each partner’s behavior serves to determine the other’s response’’. Forgiveness does not always lead to relational repair; however, it does allow forgivers to view transgressors in a positive regard and to move forward into future relationships (Metts & Cupach, 2007).

Concerning the nature of forgiveness, some researchers believe that forgiveness is interpersonal, involving both the transgressor and the transgressed individual (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998). Others believe that forgiveness is intrapersonal, which may occur within the transgressed individual regardless of the transgressor’s involvement (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1994; McCullough, Sandage, & Worthington, 1997a; Worthington & Wade, 1999).

According to Worthington (2006) forgiveness is an intrapersonal process, that is, forgiveness is an experience that can be achieved independent of the transgressor. And at the same time, he acknowledges that the interpersonal processes surrounding the transgression may play an important role in facilitating or hindering forgiveness. Further, forgiveness actively involves a complex of psychological processes, such as the decisional, cognitive, emotional and motivational components.

Wade and Goldman (2006) described the forgiveness process as (a) internal to the person who is hurt or offended and not reliant upon the collaboration of the offender, (b) beyond the mere reduction of anger, bitterness, and revenge (i.e. unforgiveness), and (c) distinct from and able to exist independently of pardoning, excusing, or overlooking an offense.

Forgiveness has also been defined as a process of changes within an individual. The process of forgiveness involves changes in cognition, emotions, and behaviours toward the offender. The changes include (a) reduction of negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that include the pain, hurt, anger, bitterness, and any desires for revenge that result from the hurt; and (b) increase of positive thoughts, feelings, and pro-social behaviours toward the offender that can include compassion, understanding, love, mercy, or simply a feeling of pity (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough et al., 1998; Rye et al., 2001; Wade, Johnson, & Meyer, 2008; Worthington, 2005; Worthington, Sandage, & Berry, 2000; Worthington & Scherer, 2004).
In Enright’s definition, forgiveness is achieved when the victim, who arrived at a judgment that he or she has been treated unfairly, willfully decides to abandon resentment and revenge and to respond to the transgressor out of beneficence (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000a). And under this broad definition of forgiveness, Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) point out that forgiveness is different from excusing, condoning, justifying and reconciling. Excusing is offered to someone who has done something unfavorable but irrelevant to unfairness, while forgiveness involves morally unjust acts done by a transgressor. In condoning, a transgressed individual recognizes the moral injustice of an incident, yet decides not to revenge out of external pressures (such as material benefits or social expectations) rather than out of beneficence. Justifying is the transgressed individual’s attempt to view the other person’s unfavorable acts as reasonable, and if the acts could be justified, no moral injustice is involved and thus is unrelated to forgiveness.

Rusbult et al. (2005) emphasized forgiveness as a "process that rests on a fundamental, psychological transformation of the transgression situation" while Affinito (2002) noted that forgiveness is a "process of reacting to injustice. In order to forgive, one must have been offended oneself, must know that a wrongdoing was committed, and must desire to forgive (Ferch, 2000; Smedes, 1996). The forgiveness process differs for different types of transgressions. For example, a personal insult is a much different transgression than infidelity.

Forgiveness is a complex journey with individual differences depending on the circumstances (Freedman, 1998), a journey along which one explores pain and suffering (Enright, 1996) and one which is fraught with dangers: self-absorption about relieving one's pain, dwelling on one's victim status, being perceived as a doormat, and the risk of being rejected (Worthington, 2005c). Forgiveness is a change process that takes time (McCullough et al., 2003; Rusbult et al., 2005). It can be a slow haul, despite the inclination of religious people to think it ought to be done quickly and perfectly every time (Smedes, 1996).

Most researchers agree that forgiveness involves a release of the victim’s bitterness and vengeance while acknowledging the seriousness of the offense. Forgiveness also does not imply forgetting, condoning, reconciling, accepting, justifying, excusing, overlooking the event, or releasing the offender from legal accountability (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Mahoney, Rye,
Fincham, Paleari, and Regalia (2002) argued that “forgiveness is a concept that has received remarkable little attention despite its pervasiveness”. Forgiveness is a unique relational construct because it is the “light” that cannot exist without the dark side of interpersonal communication (Metts & Cupach, 2007). Enright, Santos and Al-Mabuk (1989) noted forgiveness is the ability to overcome negative emotions and judgments of a transgressor, not by denying these emotions, but by viewing the transgressor with compassion, benevolence, and love. From a social exchange framework, forgiveness is essentially a cancellation of a debt in a relationship (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004).

Forgiveness has recently been proposed as an important aspect of emotional recovery following an interpersonal injury (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Worthington, 1998, 2001). Although the debate continues as to whether forgiveness should be granted to injurers when they will not take responsibility for their actions, or when they continue to perpetuate harmful acts (Worthington, 2005), forgiveness has been shown to have a positive impact on physical, relational, mental and spiritual health, whereas unforgiveness can be distressing and may leave people ruminating about their injuries and feeling hostile towards those who injured them (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001).

Overall, researchers suggest that forgiveness is a positive method for coping with a negative relational experience in that it benefits the forgiver through a reorientation of emotions, thoughts, or acts toward the transgressor (Wade & Worthington, 2005). Essentially, forgiving others’ transgressions is a pro-social act that can benefit and/or maintain relationships. However, there are some drawbacks to forgiving others. For example, some individuals may experience discomfort or stress when the forgiveness act seems unjustifiable or costly to the forgiver. Ultimately, interpersonal transgressions are like debts, and the forgiver has the opportunity to cancel debts to restore relational equity and stability. When resources are high, such as satisfaction, closeness, and commitment, individuals are likely to forgive their partners’ transgressions (Friesen, Fletcher, & Overall, 2005; McCullough et al., 1997). Individuals are motivated to forgive in rewarding relationships when compared to unrewarding relationships.
Indeed, forgiveness allows the relationship between conflicting parties to move forward following a transgression (Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). For example, forgiving a transgressor may result in more positive emotional reactions (McCullough et al., 2001) and fewer negative health symptoms (Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001) compared to one who fails to forgive his or her transgressor. Thus, forgiveness not only benefits the future vitality of the damaged interpersonal relationship (Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2005; Wohl et al., 2006) but may also have both mental and physical benefits for the harmed party (Friedberg, Adonis, Von Bergen, & Suchday, 2005; Lawler et al., 2003; Witvliet, Phipps, Feldman, & Beckham, 2004).

Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini and Miller (2007) provided a summary of other generally agreed components of forgiveness, including (a) rumination has a close link with unforgiveness; (b) unforgiveness has a close link with the perceived injustice gap; (c) to forgive is to reduce unforgiveness; (d) forgiveness can only be achieved progressively; (e) forgiveness with strangers is different from forgiveness in close relationships; (f) a decision to forgive (decisional forgiveness) is different from the experience of forgiveness (emotional forgiveness); and (g) decisional and emotional forgiveness are distinct processes although they may lead to one another.

Forgiveness is a response that can allow the offended partner to release negative emotions, which, if left unattended, could interfere with continuing a healthy relationship (Fincham, 2000; Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2005). Whether or not one desires to continue a relationship with another, forgiveness can positively benefit the individual, emotionally and physically (Berry, Worthington, O’Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005; Harris et al., 2006).

Forgiveness as a means of responding to or coping with interpersonal transgressions seems to be a beneficial strategy. A forgiving response has been linked to greater emotional well-being, greater empathy for others, less physiological reactance (e.g., lower blood pressure) and for the elderly, fewer physical health problems (Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001; Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

Despite the lack of a consensual definition, most researchers agree that forgiveness concerns a decrease in negative feelings and increase in positive feelings toward the transgressor. For example, McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) define forgiveness as “a set of motivational changes, whereby one becomes
decreasingly motivated to retaliate against and maintain estrangement from an offending relationship partner and increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the offender, despite the offender’s hurtful actions”.

Forgiveness is a relatively new area of scientific investigation and consensus has not yet emerged around a formal, operational definition of it (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000; Worthington, 1998b). However, most researchers agree that forgiveness exists both as an end state and also as a multistage process through which this state is achieved (Enright & Coyle, 1998; Worthington, 1998c).

1.3.1 Forgiveness & Self-Esteem

One way that interpersonal transgressions can be harmful is through the threats they pose to the self-worth of their victims. When one individual commits a transgression against another, it can make the victim feel devalued (Scobie & Scobie, 1998), uncertain (Eaton, Struthers, & Santelli, 2006) and defensive (Maltby & Day, 2004). This, in turn, can result in actions that are not conducive to forgiving, such as avoiding the transgressor, holding a grudge, and seeking revenge. Because transgressions are threatening to the self, it is expected that individuals with less robust self-worth will be less forgiving in general because they have a continual need to protect their self-worth, and that they will also be less forgiving in specific situations involving interpersonal transgressions because they experience transgressions as being particularly threatening.

Consistent with several influential conceptualizations, Coppersmith (1967) and Rosenberg (1965) define “self-esteem” as an attitude that individuals hold about the self or, more specifically, an evaluation of one’s lovability and competence (Harter, 1990; Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). As do other types of attitudes, the self-attitude presumably operates—that is, influences behavior—via both implicit (automatic, uncontrolled) and explicit (conscious, controlled) processes (Epstein, 1990; Fazio, 1990). The implicit effects of the self-attitude on people’s psychological and behavioral responses occur spontaneously, in the absence of conscious self-reflection or other higher-order cognitive processes, the explicit effects of the self-attitude result from deliberate self-reflection (Greenwald & Banaji 1995; Koole, Dijksterhuis, & van Knippenberg, 2001). In their efforts to understand how these different processes influence the self, social-personality psychologists are increasingly emphasizing the importance of measuring and understanding both implicit and
explicit self-esteem (e.g., Bosson et al., 2003; Greenwald & Farnham, 2000; Hetts, Sakuma, & Pelham, 1999; Jones, Pelham, Mirenberg, & Hetts, 2002; Jordan et al., 2003).

Explicit self-esteem is defined as people’s consciously controlled, verbalized evaluations of the self—or, the self-attitude that is captured via self-reports and other explicit measurement techniques. In contrast, implicit self-esteem is defined as the affect that is elicited automatically by stimuli that prime the self—or, the self-attitude that is captured via cognitive priming tasks and other implicit measures (Fazio & Olson, 2003).

The positive effects of self-esteem have been well-documented (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004). Although some researchers suggest that high self-esteem, or certain types of high-self-esteem, may not be unconditionally beneficial (e.g., Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Crocker & Park, 2004), past research suggests that there would be a positive relationship between self-esteem and forgiveness, in that those with high-self-esteem will be more forgiving than those with low self-esteem, both in general and following specific transgressions.

It has been proposed that self-esteem acts as a buffer against self-threat, whereby those with a strong buffer would have less reason to engage in the defensive behaviors associated with not forgiving than those with a less resilient buffer (Pyszczynski et al., 2004). In other words, self-esteem protects the self from the threat associated with interpersonal transgressions.

Self-esteem is an individual’s general sense of worthiness as a person (Baumeister, 1993; Branden, 1994; Rosenberg, 1979). Individuals with high self-esteem hold positive self views and evaluate themselves as valuable beings. Researchers argue that human beings are motivated to pursue self-esteem; and many of the human behaviors are rooted in the need to view ourselves as valuable (e.g., Pelham & Swann, 1989; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Kernis, 2003). Self-esteem has been regarded as a powerful predictor of various psychological processes such as goal pursuit (Mischel & Morf, 2003), and psychological outcomes such as well-being (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003) and distress (Tennen & Affleck, 1993). In the recent decade, researchers have suggested that not only the high/low level of self-esteem, but also the stability of self-esteem across time, predicts individuals’ well-being (Kernis et al., 1993).
Most researchers hypothesize a positive relationship between forgiveness and self-esteem. Eaton et al. (2006) propose that self-esteem buffers potential threats to self-worth brought by transgressions. Transgressions can be perceived as threats to self-worth and, when it is perceived as a threat, individuals may become defensive (Maltby & Day, 2004) and display defensive behaviors associated with unforgiveness (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004). Assuming two individuals perceive the same amount of threat from a transgression; the one with higher self-esteem will perceive the threat as proportionally less threatening, and thus easier to forgive.

1.3.2 Forgiveness & Gratitude

Gratitude has been no less of a challenge than forgiveness to define. Forgiveness is a positive psychological response to interpersonal harm and gratitude is a positive psychological response to interpersonal benefits. Despite the fact that, forgiveness and gratitude have been viewed as perennial human concerns in many ancient theories of the good life (Emmons & McCullough, 2003b; McCullough & Worthington, 1999), psychologists have only recently begun to explore the applications of forgiveness and gratitude to the promotion of human welfare.

McCullough et al. (2002) initially defined the disposition toward gratitude ‘‘as a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people’s benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains’’. Later, Emmons and McCullough (2003) noted broader conceptualizations of gratitude as ‘‘an emotion, an attitude, a moral virtue, a habit, a personality trait, or a coping response’’. Consistent with this broader conceptualization, Emmons and McCullough (2003) also noted that gratitude has cognitive and emotional components.

Watkins et al. (2003) define the grateful disposition as one that predisposes an individual to experience this state. Watkins et al. define grateful affect as Guralnik (1971) does which is ‘‘a feeling of thankful appreciation for favors received’’. Though Watkins et al. agree with Guralnik’s definition, they further identify four key characteristics of grateful persons. First, grateful individuals feel a sense of abundance. Second, grateful individuals appreciate contributions of others to their well-being. Third, grateful individuals appreciate the simple pleasures of life—those
readily available to most people. Fourth, grateful individuals recognize the importance of experiencing and expressing gratitude.

Friedman (1989, 2000) defines gratitude as being thankful for: (a) people, situations, and circumstances in life, (b) what you have received, experienced, and learned, (c) spiritual source/resources within, (d) abundance within, (e) what you give and forgive, (f) your inner qualities, and (g) future positive experiences, prosperity, and blessings. Perhaps the most common view defines gratitude as “the recognition and appreciation of an altruistic gift” (Emmons, 2004). Central to the concept of forgiveness is the idea of a freely chosen, prosocial, motivation in which the desire to seek revenge and avoid contact with a transgressor is overcome and an increase in positive thoughts, feelings and behaviors occurs (Fincham, 2000; Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

The unique qualities of gratitude and forgiveness may be most pronounced in how they relate to emotional vulnerabilities and positive psychological processes. In general, empathic emotions tend to increase positive and decrease negative affect (Batson, 1990). Consistent with this theory, grateful people are less likely to respond with anger after being hurt by others (McCullough et al., 2002). Abandoning angry feelings also appears to be fundamental to forgiveness (Berry et al., 2005; Enright, 2001; McCullough, 2000). As with anger, character strengths also show inverse relations with depressive symptoms (Brown, 2003; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). Indirect evidence also suggests that forgiving people may be less lonely. For example, forgiveness creates closeness in romantic relationships (Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006) and promotes social connections in general (Karremans, Van Lange, & Holland, 2005). Thus, character strengths are expected to negatively correlate with emotional vulnerabilities.

Gratitude is a cognitive-affective state that is typically associated with the perception that one has received a personal benefit that was not deserved or earned, but rather, due to the good intentions of another person (Emmons & McCullough, 2003a, 2003b). McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, and Larson (2001) conceptualized gratitude as a moral affect because it results from and stimulates behavior that is motivated by a concern for another person’s well-being. We could be grateful for a variety of benefits: personal (e.g., advice) or collective (e.g., books/programs your organization badly needed), material (e.g., a gift) or interpersonal (e.g., emotional acknowledgment from a friend), monetary (e.g., a loan) or nonmonetary
(e.g., much needed help), mundane (e.g., a book you were wanting) or nonmaterial, such as benefits from nature (e.g., awe-evoking weather) or from spiritual life (e.g., experiences of divine interventions).

McCullough and colleagues (2001) also argued that gratitude has three moral functions. Gratitude can serve as a moral barometer because it indicates a change in one’s social relationships as a result of people who he/she regards as moral agents for having augmented his/her personal well-being. Gratitude can also serve as a moral motive because it motivates people to respond to kindness with kindness and to subsequently inhibit destructive motivations toward a benefactor. Finally, gratitude can serve as a moral reinforcer because its expression can increase the chances that a benefactor will respond with benevolence again in the future; just as showing ingratitude can instill anger and resentment in benefactors and inhibit future acts of kindness.

1.3.3 Forgiveness and Emotional Regulation

Emotions have long been viewed as passions that come and go, more or less of their own accord (Solomon, 1976). However, there is a growing appreciation that individuals exert considerable control over their emotions, using a wide range of strategies to influence which emotions they have and when they have them (Gross, 1998).

In the past two decades, the topic of emotion regulation has become quite popular in psychological research and clinical psychology and commonly refers to measures taken by an individual to modify the natural course of affective responses. For example, Thompson (1994) defined emotion regulation as “…the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one’s goals”.

According to Gross (1998) emotion regulation refers to the processes by which we influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express them. Because emotions are multi-componental processes that unfold over time, emotion regulation involves changes in “emotion dynamics” (Thompson, 1990), or the latency, rise time, magnitude, duration, and offset of responses in behavioral, experiential, or physiological domains. Emotion regulation also involves changes in how response components are interrelated as the emotion
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unfolds, such as when increases in physiological responding occur in the absence of overt behavior.

Two major emotion regulation strategies that have been particularly studied are cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression (Gross & John, 1998). In particular, cognitive reappraisal is defined as the attempt to reinterpret an emotion-eliciting situation in a way that alters its meaning and changes its emotional impact (Lazarus & Alfert, 1964; Gross & John, 2003). Expressive suppression is defined as the attempt to hide, inhibit or reduce ongoing emotion-expressive behavior (Gross & Levenson, 1993; Gross & John, 2003).

Based on an analysis of how emotions unfold over time, it has been argued that cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression have their primary impact at different points of the emotion-generative process (Gross, 2001; Gross and John, 2003). Specifically, cognitive reappraisal is an antecedent-focused strategy that acts before the complete activation of an emotion response tendency has taken place. Thus, it might be expected to modify the entire temporal course of the emotional response before emotion responses have been completely generated. Expressive suppression is a response-focused strategy that intervenes once an emotion is already under way and after the behavioral responses have already been fully generated. Thus, it might be expected to require repeated efforts to manage emotional responses as they continually arise, challenging the individual’s resources.

The usage of cognitive reappraisal allows implementing and producing interpersonal behavior that is appropriately focused on social interaction and is perceived by the others as emotionally engaging and responsive. On the other hand, expressive suppression comes relatively late in the emotion-generative process and principally modifies the behavioral aspect of the emotional responses, without reducing the subjective and physiological experience of negative emotion, which is not directly targeted by suppression and may thus continue to linger and accumulate unresolved. As expressive suppression comes late in the emotion-generative process, it requires the individual to effort fully manage emotional responses as they constantly occur. These repeated efforts deplete cognitive resources to the detriment of social performances and create a sense of discrepancy between inner experience and outer expression in the individual (Higgins, 1987). The final effect of this sense of inauthenticity can lead to negative feelings about the self, making more difficult the establishment of emotionally close relationships and rather contributing to avoidant,
diverted and anxious relational behaviors (Sheldon et al., 1997; John and Gross, 2004).

Applied researchers seem to agree that forgiveness is a positive method of coping with a hurt or offense that primarily benefits the victim through a reorientation of emotions, thoughts, and/or actions toward the offender. Forgiveness is a process that leads to the reduction of unforgiveness (bitterness, anger, etc.) and the promotion of positive regard (love, compassion, or simply, sympathy and pity) for the offender.

A common theme in current forgiveness theory is that forgiveness is fundamentally an emotional phenomenon in which feelings of anger and hurt, and the thoughts and behaviors these emotions arouse, figure centrally (Thoresen, Luskin, & Harris, 1998). Moreover, the full process of forgiveness, whether it be the “silent forgiving” of letting go of hostile emotions without seeking to improve relations with the offender (Baumeister et al., 1998) or the more interpersonally oriented attempt to achieve increased liking of and empathy toward the offender (Enright & Coyle, 1998) can occur only after the emotions aroused by an offense have been addressed.

1.3.4 Forgiveness & Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivations

Transgressions are a class of interpersonal stressors in which people perceive that another person has harmed them in a way that they consider both painful and morally wrong. Such transgressions exert negative psychological effects which are accompanied by inner turmoil involving emotions like anger, anxiety and sadness and motivations like wanting revenge or seeking to avoid the rejecting person and a decay of benevolence and goodwill (McCullough, Worthington & Rachal, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998). These interpersonal transgressions also result in feelings of injury, resentment, anger and attributions of blame and have the potential to disrupt the relationship.

Relating to others whether strangers, friends or family inevitably exposes people to the risk of being offended or harmed by those other people. Throughout history and across cultures, people have developed many strategies for responding to such transgressions. Two classic responses are avoidance and revenge & seeking distance from the transgressor or opportunities to harm the transgressor in kind. These responses are normal and common, but can have negative consequences for individuals, relationships, and perhaps society as a whole. Psychologists have been investigating interpersonal transgressions and their aftermath for years. However,
although many of the world's religions have advocated the concept of forgiveness as a productive response to such transgressions (McCullough & Worthington, 1999), scientists have begun only recently to devote sustained attention to forgiveness. Nevertheless, researchers have made substantial progress in illuminating forgiveness during this short amount of time.

However, because relationships are often valued, emotions like guilt and shame over one's own contribution the break up or rejection and more relationship enhancing motivations like wishing reconciliation or desiring benevolence for the person might also attend the aftermath of the break-up (Berry et., al 2005).

The internal experience typically considered stressful (Lazarus 1999; Worthington, 2006). That is, the jumble of emotions, motivations and ruminations constitute a stress reaction. The stress reaction has been labeled unforgiveness (Worthington & Wade, 1999). According to a stress and coping theory of forgiveness or unforgiveness (Worthington, 2006), this process can be described using classic stress and coping theoretical terminology. The theory suggests four stages:

1. A stressor (i.e., rejection or break-up)
2. Appraisals (i.e., the cognitive, emotional and motivational evaluations of the degree and types of psychological damage done by the rejection and the threat that the damage makes to one’s self-sysem or relational or personal identity and the threat to one’s sense of justice and honor)
3. Stress reaction (i.e., the unforgiveness complex of emotions, motivations and ruminations) and
4. Attempts to cope with the situation and one’s emotional reactions to it.

There are many ways to cope (Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Worthington, 2006) with experience of stressful unforgiveness. These include the following: One can engage in angry, vengeful acts to pay back the damage done or get revenge. One can simply put the person out of one’s physical life and try not to think about person, avoiding the person physically or cognitively. One can suppress one’s emotional expression and negative behaviours for the good of the future of the relationship or the harmony in the groups to which the couple belongs; this called forbearance (Worthington, 2006). One can attempt to repair the relationship through talking about the transgression and arriving at some understanding, usually called reconciliation (Freedman, 1998; Waldron & Kelly, 2008).
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Over the past decade, forgiveness has become a topic of interest to social psychologists, in part because of its role in the maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships (see Fincham & Beach, 2002; Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Although several different definitions of forgiveness are present in the literature, a commonly accepted definition is provided by McCullough and colleagues (McCullough, 2001; McCullough et al., 1997, 1998). These researchers operate from the assumption that most people react to transgressions with two forms of negative behavior—avoidance or revenge (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; McCullough et al., 1997, 1998). As such, forgiveness is accomplished when motivation to avoid the transgressor or to seek revenge against the transgressor is reduced. According to this view, forgiveness necessarily fosters pro-social behaviour toward the offending party and thus helps restore the relationship to its pre-transgression state.

When someone commits a wrong and victimizes us (or others with whom we identify), we commonly experience feelings of injustice and want actions to be taken to restore justice. Often such actions include the imposition of punishment and calls for revenge (Vidmar, 2000). The satisfaction in seeing perpetrators punished derives largely from a notion of just desert or retributive justice, which is considered a fundamental human motivation (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002; Hogan & Emler, 1981). The tendency to retaliate or seek retribution after being insulted or victimized is deeply ingrained in the biological, psychological, and cultural levels of human nature.

Primatologists have documented that certain species of old world primates (including chimpanzees and macaques) coordinate retaliatory responses after being victimized by another animal, sometimes even after considerable time has passed (Aureli, Cozzolino, Cordischi, & Scucchi, 1992; de Waal, 1996; Silk, 1992). Psychologically, the human proclivity for revenge is also codified in the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960): People are motivated to respond to injuries and transgressions by committing further injuries and transgressions equivalent to those they have suffered. However, revenge rarely is perceived as being equitable. Victims tend to view transgressions as more painful and harmful than do perpetrators. Moreover, when a victim exacts revenge, the original perpetrator often perceives the revenge as greater than the original offense and may retaliate to settle the score.
thereby perpetuating a vicious cycle of vengeance (see Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998).

We define forgiveness as a set of pro-social motivational changes that take place within an offended relationship partner such that he or she becomes less revengeful, less avoidant or more benevolent toward a transgressing relationship partner (McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough, Fincham & Tsang, 2003). The removal of negative motivations such as revenge and avoidance that typically occur after a transgression (McCullough et al., 2003) and the reestablishment of positive motivations such as benevolence should foster the restoration of closeness and commitment following a transgression. Given the importance of re-establishing close relationships in the aftermath of conflict for many non-human primates and other animals (Keltner & Potegal, 1997; Silk, 2000) it would be surprising if the human psychological repertoire did not include intra-psychic mechanisms to facilitate relationship repair.

In the psychological literature, several definitions of forgiveness have been proposed, but there is growing consensus that forgiveness may be defined by pro-social motivational changes towards a transgressor, consisting in a decrease in interpersonal avoidance, a decrease in revenge motivation, and an increase in benevolence (cf. McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998).

According to Western worldview, forgiveness is conceived as a psychological response to interpersonal insult or injury which initiates a series of motivational changes (McCullough, 2001). Behaviorally, forgiveness is manifested in seeking a positive relationship with the transgressor rather than avoidance or seeking revenge (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001). The converse of forgiveness is anger, resentment, and hostility, which need to be replaced with positive emotions such as compassion and empathy in order for forgiveness to occur (Worthington & Wade, 1999). Similar to Western conceptualizations (Subkoviak et al., 1995), forgiveness according to the Hindu tradition has affective, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions (Temoshok & Chandra, 2000).

As a prolegomenon to research in this area, most researchers have sought to specify what they mean by the term forgiveness. Many of the definitions they have proffered share only a modest degree of resemblance. Consider three examples: Enright and colleagues (Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992) defined forgiveness as “the
overcoming of negative affect and judgment toward the offender, not by denying ourselves the right to such affect and judgment, but by endeavoring to view the offender with compassion, benevolence, and love.”

Interestingly, laypersons tend to view positive features as more representative of forgiveness than a decrease in negativity (Kearns & Fincham, 2005). In this regard, they appear to be closer to the view of philosophers who have noted that forgiveness, is “an attitude of real goodwill towards the offender as a person” (Holmgren, 1993, p. 34) or “the attitude of respect which should always characterize interpersonal behavior” (Downie, 1971, p. 149). There is lack of agreement among researchers on whether forgiveness requires a benevolent or positive response (e.g., compassion, empathy, affection, approach behavior) to the offender or whether the absence of negative responses (e.g., resentment, anger, avoidance) is sufficient (Exline, et al., 2003; Fincham, 2000). Indeed, forgiveness may be uni-dimensional in non-continuing relationships but appears to have both positive (benevolence) and negative (unforgiveness) elements in close relationships that continue (Worthington, 2005).

1.3.5 Decisional and Emotional forgiveness

Worthington (Exline et al., 2003; Worthington, 2003; Worthington & Scherer, 2004) has identified two types of experiences of individual forgiveness, that is, decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness. Decisional forgiveness is a statement of one’s behavioral intentions toward the offender—to eschew revenge or avoidance (if it is safe to continue interacting with the transgressor). Decisional forgiveness is rooted, most often, in will or in an ethical framework that mandates forgiveness. Emotional forgiveness on the other hand, is a process of replacing negative unforgiving emotions with positive other oriented emotions like empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love, which can be facilitated by other non-self-oriented emotions like gratitude, humility, contrition, and hope (Worthington, 2003).

Empathy, sympathy, compassion, romantic love, and altruistic love lead to emotional forgiveness (Worthington, 2006), which has been defined as "the emotional juxtaposition of positive other-oriented emotions against negative unforgiving emotions" (Worthington, Scherer et al., 2006). In other words, emotional forgiveness means having empathic, compassionate, and loving thoughts and feelings which replace bitterness, anger and resentment.
There is a difference between decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness. Decisional forgiveness is a behavioral intention to not seek revenge or avoid the offender, on the other hand, emotional forgiveness is a change from negative to positive feelings toward the offender (Wade et al., 2005). Decisional forgiveness changes behavior but emotional forgiveness changes the heart (Worthington, 2003). The choice to forgive is nudged along by warm emotions such as empathy, humor, or love that are in contrast to a state of unforgiveness (Worthington & Wade, 1999). The decision not to forgive, on the other hand, may reveal hatred and an unforgiving heart (Freedman, 1998).

Moreover, from this point of view the forgiveness process is activated when a person makes a conscious choice/decision to forgive (see things differently) and then turns the forgiveness process over to a higher power/Self (e.g. the Holy Spirit). During this process projections are owned and released and peace and love are set as goals. Recently, Worthington and Scherer (2004) have somewhat echoed the Foundation for Inner Peace, Jampolsky, and Friedman distinguished between emotional and decisional forgiveness. Emotional forgiveness is rooted in a subset of negative emotions including but not limited to: resentment, bitterness, hostility, hatred, etc.

According to Worthington and his colleagues (Worthington and Wade 1999; Worthington et al. 2001) forgiveness acts through the displacement of unforgiveness or the ‘‘contamination’’ of unforgiveness with forgiveness or positive, pro-social, love-based emotions. Decisional forgiveness, on the other hand, is based in one’s beliefs about future interactions with a transgressor. Worthington and Scherer point out that emotional and decisional forgiveness may go hand-in-hand or may diverge in interesting ways. For instance, while decisional forgiveness might often precede emotional forgiveness and actually facilitate it, this does not have to always be the case.

Decisional and emotional forgiveness are internal processes on the part of the victim and they tend to reduce the distress of the rejection (Fincham, 2000), have mental health benefits (Toussaint & Webb, 2005) and have physical health benefits (Worthington, Pietrini & Miller, 2007). Both are different processes, likely with different sequelae. Decisional forgiveness, while it might reduce hostility does not necessarily reduce stress responses. Thus, it is probably related to reconciliatory processes and through improved relationships, indirectly to health. Emotional
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forgiveness is likely more related to health sequelae because of its strong connection to overcoming negative affect and stress reactions by cultivating positive affect. Most would agree that (a) decisional forgiveness has the potential to lead to changes in emotion and eventually behavior whereas (b) emotional forgiveness involves changes in emotion, motivation, cognition, and eventually behavior.

According to Worthington Jr, et al., (2007) decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness are important antagonists to the negative affect of unforgiveness and agonists for positive affect. One key distinction emerging in the literature between decisional and emotional forgiveness is- decisional forgiveness is a behavioral intention to resist an unforgiving stance and to respond differently toward a transgressor. On the other hand, emotional forgiveness is the replacement of negative unforgiving emotions with positive other-oriented emotions. Emotional forgiveness involves psycho physiological changes, and it has more direct health and well-being consequences.

In his hypotheses, Worthington (2006) suggests that decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness are two distinct processes involving different psychological mechanisms. Decisional forgiveness is the transgressed individual’s intention to inhibit negative behaviors and/or to maintain positive behaviors towards the transgressor. It is hypothesized to be arrived at “rationally or by will”. Emotional forgiveness is an experience of the negative unforgiving emotions being replaced by the positive other-oriented emotions. It is hypothesized to be arrived at through “emotional replacement”. Worthington hypothesizes the two processes to be different from each other. Sometimes, individuals who make a decision to forgive may still experience the unforgiving emotions. And in other times, individuals may have experienced emotional forgiveness, even if they did not make any decision to forgive. Although the two processes may be independent, they may also lead to one another. For instance, when a transgressed individual makes a decision to forgive, he or she may behave in a way to maintain positive interactions with transgressor. These positive interactions may improve the victim-transgressor relationship, and in turn improve the transgressed individual’s cognitions and emotions towards the transgressor. Similarly, in the case of emotional forgiveness, changes of emotions may at the same time bring about changes in cognitions and behaviors.

In his stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness, Worthington (2006) considers decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness as two of the many coping
mechanisms in the context of interpersonal transgressions. He suggests that individuals experience a transgression when they perceive an injustice gap. An injustice gap is defined as the difference between a desired outcome and a current outcome of an incident. With reference to Lazarus’s (1999) stress-and-coping theory of emotion, he argues that when an injustice gap is perceived, individuals would appraise whether the transgression may be a threat or a challenge. If individuals find the situation difficult to cope with, they may appraise it as a threat; and if they find it not difficult to cope with, they may perceive it as a challenge.

When a transgression is appraised as a threat, individuals more likely ruminates, mentally replaying the negative sides of the event repeatedly. Rumination leads to accumulation of unforgiving emotions, defined as a complex of delayed ‘cold’ emotions, including bitterness, resentment, hostility, hatred, anger and fear (Worthington, 2006), and the unforgiving emotions in turn leads to motivations to seek justice, revenge or avoidance. The experience of unforgiving emotions is stressful and individuals seek various strategies to cope with this stress. These coping strategies may include but not restrict to justice seeking, revenge, forgiving, self-smoothing or reappraising the event.

Decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness are two of the many strategies to reduce the injustice gap and the unforgiving emotions. Decisional forgiveness contributes to coping with the stress of unforgiveness as individuals may feel more resolved of the internal struggles concerning the transgression. Emotional forgiveness contributes to coping with the stress of unforgiveness as it directly reduces unforgiving emotions towards the transgressor. The use of the decisional and emotional forgiveness coping strategies may lead to different outcomes. Decisional forgiveness mainly affects relationships, social interactions and social harmony (Hook et al., 2009), while emotional forgiveness mainly affects physical health and mental health (Worthington et al., 2007a; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Although Worthington focused his discussion on decisional and emotional forgiveness, he noted that no strategies of coping with the unforgiving stress are definitely better than others. Whether the strategies may be effective depends on the specific transgression context. In sum, Worthington defines intrapersonal forgiveness in terms of its decisional and affective-motivational components.
1.3.6 Forgiveness and Empathy

Most relationships eventually encounter conflict of some nature, where one party perceives that the other has behaved in a hurtful or unjust manner. In some instances transgressions can lead to strong grievances that interfere with the relationship. To enable the relationship to continue positively (or resume), one of the key processes that may need to take place is for the offended person to forgive the transgressor for what was done. A perceived transgressor can take a variety of actions to aid this forgiveness process, such as listening to and empathizing with the hurt person’s point of view, apologizing, replacing damaged property or compensating the hurt person for any damage (Wertheim, Love, Peck, & Littlefield, 2006).

Empathy plays a significant role in the process of forgiveness (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; McCullough, Sandage et al., 1997; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Malcom and Greenberg (2000) define empathy as “an effort to understand another person’s perception of an interpersonal event as if one were that other person, rather than judging the other person’s behavior from the perspective of one’s own experience in the event”. In terms of forgiveness, empathy involves the ability of the offended party to acknowledge and appreciate the personal variables and history of the offender as well as the acting antecedents facing the offender at the time of the transgression.

With empathy, an offended individual must consider the confusion, fear, or vulnerability of the offender. By attempting to understand the state of mind, motivations, limitations, and assets of the offender, the offended person must draw closer to the offender in a psychological sense. Batson, Turk, Shaw, and Klein (1995) noted that empathy “amplifies or intensifies motivation to relieve another person’s need. It also carries information about the degree to which one values the other person’s welfare and wants to have his or her need relieved”. This aspect of empathy involves the offender engaging in an active process of considering the wants or hardships of the offender and additionally appreciating the mitigating effects that these wants and hardships had on the transgression.

This feature of empathy indicates the intentional effort of the offended person to incorporate a more positive image of the transgressor. Both conceptual and empirical literature on forgiveness promotes empathy as a crucial element of forgiveness in which the offended individual seeks to look from the perspective of the
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offender and through which a greater understanding and appreciation of the offender may occur.

Theories of forgiveness highlight the key role of empathy in forgiveness. For example, Enright et al., (1998) concluded that forgiveness involves four processes or phases. In the uncovering phase, the transgressed individual becomes aware of the emotional pain associated with the perpetrated act and experiences a range of negative emotions. In the decisional phase, the individual realizes that there is a need to refocus in order for healing to begin and makes a commitment to forgive. In the work phase the individual begins to think about the perpetrator and the offense in a new way. The generation of a new understanding allows empathy and compassion to be experienced, allowing the pain of the offense to be accepted and the transgressed individual to offer goodwill toward the perpetrator. In the deepening phase, the individual obtains emotional relief and may find new purpose and greater compassion for others.

The broad definition of empathy includes affective and cognitive components (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). It has been defined “as accurately perceiving the internal frame of reference of another” (Gold & Rogers, 1995) and includes nonverbal communication (Katz, 1963). Moore (1990) asserted that empathy is “an organizer and regulator of a variety of behaviors” and Zahn-Waxler and Radke-Yarrow said empathy is central to what it means to be fully human. As such, it is critical to moral development and justice, thereby acting as a catalyst for societal cohesion and unity (Hoffman, 1990), because constructive interpersonal relations are contingent upon a willingness to take another’s perspective (Johnson, Cheek, & Smither, 1983).

It is likely that an ability to understand others, to relate to others, and to treat others as one would like to be treated would enable a person to forgive others. The empathic person tends to focus on others’ experiences in a fairly objective or unselfish manner rather than focusing on one’s own experiences in a selfish manner.

McCullough claimed that empathy is the only variable known to increase forgiveness in an experimental setting (2001). In their study on interpersonal forgiving in close relationships, McCullough and colleagues (1997) define empathy as emotions that are similar to, though not necessarily the same as, those of another person. Empathy often includes sympathy, compassion, and tenderness (McCullough et al., 1997). Empathy, like forgiveness, focuses on other people, not the self (Welton et al., 2008). The cognitive aspects of empathy can be distinct from its affective
facets, the former being “perspective-taking”, and the latter, the feelings listed above (McCullough et al., 1997). The two are not the same construct, but are highly related. In support of the relationship between empathy and forgiveness, those who forgive do tend to be more empathetic (McCullough, 2002; McCullough & Witvliet, 2002).

McCullough and colleagues (1997) formed the following theory on empathy and forgiveness in interpersonal relationships: Interpersonal relationships are usually based on positive attachment, or a long shared history. Thus, empathy occurs out of a motivation to care for the partner who has transgressed, and the researchers provide three possible reasons. The victim partner might be aware of the transgressor’s loneliness or emotional distress, or might simply want to bring the relationship back to its former closeness. There is a general consensus that empathy is associated with forgiveness, with the related assumption being that an empathetic person is more likely to forgive interpersonal transgressions.

1.3.7 Forgiveness and Affect

Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler, and Steward (2001) have outlined a physiological model linking personality and health via various emotional states. Specifically, they proposed that different personality traits elicit various affective states. These affective states, in turn, elicit physiological effects on health and well-being. This hypothesized process is especially relevant with respect to the mediating role of affect in the relationship between forgiveness and health given that Worthington and Scherer (2004) have proposed that forgiveness is an emotion-focused coping response. They argued that forgiveness involves replacing the negative emotions associated with unforgiveness with positive, love-based emotions and that it is through this transformation of emotional states that forgiveness affects physiological functioning.

Briefly, Positive Affect (PA) reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert. High PA is a state of high energy, full concentration, and pleasurable engagement, whereas low PA is characterized by sadness and lethargy. In contrast, Negative Affect (NA) is a general dimension of subjective distress and unpleasurable engagement that subsumes a variety of aversive mood states, including anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and nervousness, with low NA being a state of calmness and serenity. These two factors represent affective state dimensions.
Positive Affect (PA) is a state that reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active and alerts (Watson et al., 1988). PA can be measured as both a state and a trait; state affect captures how a person feels at any given time while trait affect is the tendency of a person to experience a particular affective state over time (Watson and Pennebaker, 1989).

Negative Affect (NA) is a dimension of subjective distress that includes a variety of adverse mood states, including anger, contempt, disgust, fear, and nervousness (Watson et al., 1988). NA, like PA, can be measured as both a state and a trait and has been linked to both subjective and objective health indicators.

1.3.8 Forgiveness and Forbearance

Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1993) defined forbear as “to bear with; endure” but also as “to control oneself when provoked”. Forbearance was defined by Webster’s as “a delay in enforcing or a suspension of or a refraining from enforcing debts, rights of action, rights, privileges, claims, or obligations,” or “the exercise of patience or restraint,” or “indulgence toward one’s offenders or enemies”. Thus, the term forbearance can be used in a purely descriptive sense to refer to the state of toleration or moderated reaction to a transgression. Forbearance need not be understood as a characteristic of persons (as when some people are characterized as being more forbearing than others); it can also be understood as a characteristic of one’s reaction to a specific transgression, regardless of whether the reaction is caused by characteristics of the person (personality traits), the relationship (i.e., the nature or quality of the relationship between the transgressor and victim), or the transgression (e.g., its severity). One who forbears attempts to suppress the visible signs of emotion (emotional expression) and visible behaviours (suppression of the expression of negative vengeful or avoidant motives).

1.3.9 Forgiveness, Shame and Guilt

Embarrassment, shame, and guilt figure prominently in human affairs. They are associated with social and moral transgressions, involve self-awareness, and motivate reparations for transgressions (Ausubel, 1955; Goffman, 1956; Taylor, 1985; Wicker, Payne, & Morgan, 1983). These “social-moral emotions” play critical roles in psychopathology (Sattler, 1966; Keltner, Mofitt, & Stouthamer-Loeber, in press; Tangney, 1991), personality (Edelmann & McCusker, 1986), and such social
phenomena as the demarcation of status differences (Clark, 1990) and moral
behaviour (Kochanska, 1993; Miller & Leary, 1992). Shame and guilt both are
dysphonic feelings that involve negative self-evaluations.

Shame involves an evaluation of the self. Although a specific failure or
transgression may trigger a shame reaction, the implications of the event are attributed
to the self. When ashamed, people feel as if they are “bad person” and that the self has
been humiliated or disgraced. Shame is an over-whelming feeling characterized by a
sense of being “small” and worthless in the eyes of both the self and others. With this
feeling of shame comes a desire to hide or escape from the situation (Lewis, 1971;

In contrast, guilt involves a concern with a specific behavior or transgression.
Guilty people are consumed with an idea that, they did a “bad thing”. Guilt is
characterized by feelings of tension, remorse and regret over the bad thing that was
done. According to theoretical accounts, individuals experience guilt when they focus
on negative aspects of their behavior—“the thing done or undone”—but they
experience shame when they focus on negative aspects of themselves— the self who
did or did not do it (H. B. Lewis, 1971; M. Lewis, 2000; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).
Both emotions are elicited by internal attributions, but guilt results when unstable
aspects of the self are blamed, and shame results from blaming the stable self.

Guilt is conceptualized as an emotional response to a behavior or failure that
one perceives was hurtful and/or a violation of an internal moral code (Lewis, 1971).
The response is usually experienced as some combination of tension, anxiety, regret
and remorse, and is directed towards the behavior but not generalized to the self, i.e.,
a guilty person feels bad about a behavior, but not about themselves. The distinction is
important, for two reasons. First, it distinguishes guilt from shame, which does reflect
an impaired sense of self (Tangney, 1991). Second, guilt feelings encourage a desire
to find a way to make amends for one’s wrongdoing (Tangney, 1991), through
conciliatory behaviors such as apologizing, constructive or non-hostile discussion,
and reparative or symbolic restitution.

A defining aspect of guilt is that it is associated with increased empathy and
awareness of another’s distress, and an awareness of being the cause of that distress.
Such a link has implications for forgiveness theorizing to the extent that empathy has
been shown to be an important component in the interpersonal forgiveness process
(McCullough et al., 1997). Because people prone to guilt are highly attuned to their
role in interpersonal transgressions, possess an elevated sense of empathy, and tend to be concerned with redressing a transgression, it was predicted that proneness to guilt would be positively related to a disposition to forgive others. Although a person might not experience empathy for a situation or its abstract cause, it was hypothesized that because a situation is external to the individual guilt-proneness would also be positively related to forgiveness of situations.

1.3.10 Forgiveness Therapy

Throughout the history of mental health and well-being research, the predominant focus of study has been pathological in nature. However, a trend towards the study of positive well-being has taken hold in the mental health field recently and one such concept is forgiveness. Since the last two decades, research on forgiveness has been growing, varying from neuro-imaging of forgiveness to controlled experiments of forgiving responses to efficacy studies of interventions promoting forgiveness (Wade, 2010; Worthington, 2005).

Forgiveness is considered a human strength and an important factor that influences human development. In counseling setting, application of forgiveness can be seen in interpersonal relationships like dating, marriage, family and friendships. Many counselors also are frequently involved in conversations with clients regarding forgiveness – be it to forgive or to seek forgiveness (Blocher & Wade, 2010; Legaree, Turner & Lollis, 2007; Wade, Bailey & Shaffer, 2005).

Over the last decade, group treatments have been implemented to help people cope with past hurts and offenses through the explicit promotion of forgiveness (Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005). These interventions appear to be effective for promoting forgiveness in addition to a range of other outcomes (e.g., reducing depression). People often come to counseling or therapy as a result of real or perceived hurts, offenses, and victimization. Much from the rich history of clinical practice informs therapists about ways to help people in these situations. Forgiveness is one alternative for dealing with offenses, although it seldom has been a specific goal in psychotherapy. However, within the last decade, applied researchers and clinicians have begun investigating the use of interventions to explicitly promote forgiveness.

Forgiveness therapy (FT) is an intervention in which a structured treatment protocol is used to enable a client to forgive a past hurtful event or injustice.
Forgiveness is sought, not as an act of mercy toward the perpetrator, but to allow the client to move past the emotional betrayal as a means to a healthier self-image, improved emotional functioning, and enhanced interpersonal interactions (Wade & Worthington, 2005).

The forgiveness process is painful, difficult, and complex. "Forgiveness is not a clear-cut, one-time decision" (Patton, 2000). The forgiveness process is a result of dealing with painful emotions and consequent healing of the wounds from a transgression. Painful emotion seems to be necessary to advance the process of forgiveness (Ferch, 2000). Indeed, the therapist should not avoid exploring painful emotions with a client but should skillfully encourage the journey in order to help a client reach a point of emotional freedom that comes with forgiveness (Ferch).

Although definitions of forgiveness vary among different researchers and clinicians, a general consensus exists, particularly among those who are studying the application of interpersonal forgiveness in therapy settings (Wade & Worthington, 2005). Forgiveness as a therapy goal is often understood as an emotional, cognitive, and behavioral process that includes two important components. The first component is the reduction or elimination of negative or uncomfortable feelings (e.g., anger and bitterness), thoughts (e.g., rumination about the offense, thoughts of revenge), and behaviours (e.g., avoiding places that remind one of the offense) associated with a specific hurt. The second component, which is a crucial aspect of forgiveness for many (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Worthington & Wade, 1999) is the increase in positive, pro-social feelings, thoughts, and behaviors.

Forgiveness is not just the reduction of the negative or uncomfortable reactions to an offense, but also includes this component of increasing positive reactions. This increase in a positive experience might take the form of compassion toward an offender, understanding or perspective taking, or even the willingness to engage the offender in conversation about the offense. Even in the most horrific situations, forgiveness could still include the increase in positive reactions toward the offender, even if that is simply pity for the offender that someone would be so disturbed as to perpetrate such harmful actions.

Forgiveness is a powerful therapeutic intervention which frees people from their anger and from the guilt which is often a result of unconscious anger. Forgiveness 1) helps individuals forget the painful experiences of their past and frees them from the subtle control of individuals and events of the past; 2) facilitates the
reconciliation of relationships more than the expression of anger; and 3) decreases the likelihood that anger will be misdirected in later loving relationships and lessens the fear of being punished because of unconscious violent impulses. Forgiveness frees others from their guilt, expedites, the resolution of depressive episodes, and leads to a decrease in anxiety as anger is released. It improves the ability to express anger appropriately, as the degree of repressed anger diminishes and resolves many of the physical illnesses caused by anger (Barefoot et al., 1983; Dembroski et al., 1985; Madow, 1972; Shekelle et al., 1983).

Why enter into a process of forgiving someone who has lost his or her right to receive such love (Enright et al., 1992)? Descriptions that emphasize forgiveness as therapeutic in nature can help to answer this question. Forgiveness is also viewed as: an effective means of promoting personal and relational development (Ferch, 1998); that which brings relief and a sense of a new beginning in life (a therapeutic event of enormous power and importance (Ritzman, 1987); a profoundly transforming experience and central to the healing of one’s brokenness (Bauer et al., 1992); that which frees the forgiving individual from the hard emotions of fear, anger, suspicion, mistrust, loneliness and alienation (Enright & Zell, 1989); and an internal, emotional release (Smedes, 1984). This movement or act of release is an inner response as opposed to re-conciliation—a behavioral coming together (Enright & Zell, 1989) and as such poses no risk of further injury. The process is also viewed as humanizing, courageous, healthy and restorative (Enright & Zell, 1989).

Forgiveness plays an important role in human relationships, and is an important value for society. Forgiveness is considered as one of the positive psychological phenomenon in human being. The concept of forgiveness has long been a focus of the world’s religions (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Rye et al., 2000), but only during the last decade did psychologists develop a sustained interest in the topic. Recent work has shed light on the social–psychological precursors to forgiveness (Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Fincham, 2000; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997), the personality processes underlying forgiveness (McCullough, 2001; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002), the process by which reasoning about forgiveness develops as people age (Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989; Mullet & Girard, 2000), the effects of forgiveness on physiological parameters such as blood pressure and respiration (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan,
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2001), and even the efficacy of clinical interventions for promoting forgiveness (Enright & Coyle, 1998; Worthington et al., 2000).

Forgiveness is almost universally seen as a virtue; many people say that they “want forgive but cannot,” “should forgive but can’t bring themselves to do so,” or have tried to forgive and failed repeatedly.” Several interventions have become publicly available and have been tested empirically that people can employ to forgive when they desire to do so.

Forgiveness is central to healthy human development and may be one of the most important processes in the restoration of interpersonal relationships after conflict (Hill, 2001). The common imperfection in the ability of human beings to relate to one another gives rise to frequent offenses and consequent negative affective, behavioral, and cognitive responses in interpersonal relationships. Unaddressed, these negative responses can lead to impaired social functioning. Forgiveness involves the reduction of negative responses to offense (Gassin & Enright, 1995; Hargrave, 1994). It does not involve seeking retribution or restitution (Rosenak & Harnden, 1992; Wahking, 1992) and does not require further vulnerability. Rather it allows accountability (Coleman, 1998; Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998).

1.3.11 REACH Forgiveness Therapy

Worthington and his group developed the first psycho-educational intervention model (secular) using a group treatment workshop with a shorter time frame (McCullough & Worthington, 1995). The Worthington group has continued to study the efficacy of forgiveness interventions (provided in psycho-educational group treatment) with individual adults forgiving various transgressions (McCullough et al., 1997 [Study 2]; Worthington, Kurusu et al., 2000). In 2005, the Worthington group published their first faith-based forgiveness intervention for individuals (Lampton et al., 2005).

Ultimately, Worthington’s Pyramid model became known as the acrostic REACH. The five stages of the cognitive-behavioral affective REACH model are: (a) Recalling the hurt, (b) Empathizing with the offender, (c) Accepting and understanding the Altruistic gift of forgiveness, (d) Committing to forgive, and (e) Holding on to forgiveness, even if additional forgiveness is necessary (Worthington, 1998a). Foundational to this approach is the educational aspect of providing the
participants with information on how unforgiveness negatively affects their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.

The Worthington group tested their secular, psycho-educational, cognitive, behavioral and affective model varying the components, with interventions ranging from 1-8 hours. The model was designed to create a “choreographed set of emotional, cognitive and behavioral experiences that change the person’s emotional experiences, producing in turn, states of calm openness,” (McCullough, et al., 1997). Empathy, humility, and commitment are three emotional experiences posited as essential to the model’s effectiveness. During the intervention process, the greatest amount of time is spent in the first stage, recalling the hurt (Wade, 2000). The foundation for the model was Worthington’s empathy-humility-commitment theory (Worthington, 1998a), the Pyramid model. Based on research that supports that narcissism inhibits forgiveness (Brandsma, 1982; Raskin & Novacek, 1991), Worthington posits narcissism is a natural enemy to empathy and humility and forgiveness is a natural response to empathy and humility.

During the intervention process, 25% of the time is spent on symbolic and experiential techniques. The emphasis is on teaching participants how to recognize, accept, and acknowledge their feelings of anger, hurt, and/or revenge. The intent is for the participant to learn empathy, genuineness, and positive regard (non-judgmentalness) toward the offender. There are no homework assignments between sessions.