

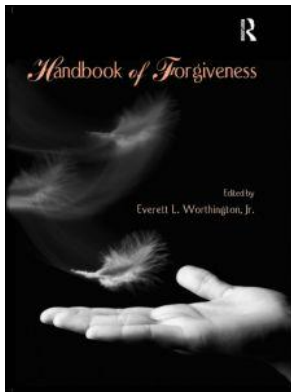
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Handbook of Forgiveness

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A Progress Report on the Process Model of Forgiveness

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Chapter Twenty-Four

A Progress Report on the Process Model of Forgiveness

Suzanne Freedman
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The past 19 years have seen a birth of interest in forgiveness by psychologists, counselors, psychiatrists, researchers, religious leaders, and the general public. For example, Konstam, Marx, Schurer, Emerson Lombardo, and Harrington (2002), in their research with mental health counselors, found that “90% of respondents indicated that forgiving is an important clinical issue and would be interested in pursuing professional training focusing on forgiveness related issues in clinical practice” (p. 69).

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the progress on the process model of forgiveness developed by Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1991). We begin with a definition of forgiveness. The process model will be defined, followed by a discussion of pioneering studies using this model. Recent work using the process model follows, with a brief review of a meta-analysis conducted on empirical studies. A response to critics follows.

What Forgiveness Is and Is Not

After studying this topic since 1985, we define *forgiving* as the following.

People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right) and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right). (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, p. 29)

Abandonment of anger is not something that happens overnight, as the definition seems to imply. In practical terms, our definition includes decreases in negative affect, cognition, and behavior. Over time, possible increases in positive affect, cognition, and behavior toward the offender may occur.

In addition to defining what forgiveness is, Enright, Freedman, and Rique (1998) discuss how forgiveness is more than accepting what happened, ceasing to be angry, and making oneself feel good. Forgiveness is not the same as forgetting, condoning, excusing, legally pardoning, or automatic reconciliation, which is defined as getting back together in a relationship (see Enright, 2001 for a more expanded discussion of what forgiveness is and is not).

We find that the most frequently occurring misunderstanding is the equating of forgiveness with reconciliation. It is possible to forgive and not reconcile (Freedman, 1998). An injured individual can work on the process of forgiveness knowing that reconciliation is not possible if, for example, the offender remains entrenched in a hurtful pattern of behavior toward the offended person.

Contexts Surrounding Forgiveness

Forgiveness occurs in a moral context of the offender's injustice and the offended person's mercy. Often forgiveness is viewed as something one does for oneself without taking the offender into account. Forgiveness takes the other into consideration and is not solely a self-help strategy. When one completes the forgiveness process, he or she is doing good for the offender, for the self, and perhaps for others with whom he or she is in close interaction.

Because forgiveness takes place in a context of injustice, the solution to that injustice need not be only forgiveness or only a quest for fairness. Forgiveness and justice can and should coexist.

Forgiveness is an individual decision and should not be forced on anyone (Baskin & Enright, 2004). One can be educated about forgiveness but then must make his or her own decision regarding whether to forgive. It is one's choice. If one is forced into forgiving, pseudo-forgiveness rather than genuine forgiveness may result (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998).

THE PROCESS MODEL OF FORGIVENESS DEVELOPED FROM THE DEFINITION

After clarifying what forgiveness is and what it is not, the group began constructing psychological models of forgiveness. Hepp-Dax (1996) writes, "One of the advantages of the construct of forgiveness as presented by Enright et al. (1991), is that it is viewed as a multidimensional construct that combines cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors, since all are involved in forgiveness" (p. 35).

Enright et al. (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991) asserted that the process of forgiveness can occur in 20 units. Unlike the definition of forgiveness, which we have come to realize has a core meaning that is unchanging, the pathways to forgiving are many. After a thorough review of the literature in the areas of psychology, psychiatry, philosophy, and theology, and after numerous discussions with people who have forgiven, Enright et al. (1991) developed this model as their best estimate of the process people go through when trying to forgive.

The model is not to be viewed as a “rigid, step-like sequence, but a flexible set of processes with feedback and feed-forward loops” (Enright et al., 1998, p. 12). The authors explain how some people may skip units and others may go back and rework units previously experienced, because there is great individual variation in how people forgive. This process model of forgiveness may not be an exhaustive description of how each person forgives, but it illustrates how complex the journey of forgiveness is and that it is not a process that occurs overnight. Each person approaches forgiveness differently, based on his or her previous experiences and role models. In fact, the interventions described below to assess this model have incorporated slight variations of the model over the years (Baskin & Enright, 2004). The 20-unit model is divided into four different phases, which are briefly described here.

Units 1–8 represent the *uncovering phase* as the person gets in touch with the pain and explores the injustice he or she experienced. Working through these eight units allows the injured to experience both the pain and the reality of the injury and how it has affected him or her. Feeling pain from the injury motivates some people to see a need for change, and gradually they realize that previous ways of coping may not have been effective or are no longer serving their purpose.

Units 9–11 represent the *decision phase*, which we view as a critical part of the forgiveness process. The Decision Phase illustrates that one explores the idea of forgiveness and what is involved in the process of forgiveness before committing to actually forgiving. As Freedman and Enright (1996) point out, one may make the cognitive decision to forgive, even though he or she does not feel forgiving at the time.

The *work phase* of the model encompasses four units beginning with Unit 12, which involves seeing the offender with new eyes or reframing who he or she is by viewing the wrongdoer in context. The individual who is hurt tries to understand the context of the offender to understand better how the injury could have occurred. Reframing often leads to feelings of empathy (Unit 13) and compassion (Unit 14). Unit 15 deals with acceptance and absorption of the pain and is seen as the heart of forgiveness (Enright et al., 1998). The injured accepts and absorbs his or her own pain as well as the pain of the offender instead of passing it on to others or back to the offender.

The *outcome phase* represents the last four units in the model. The injured realizes that as he or she gives the gift of forgiveness to the offender, healing is experienced. The entire process of forgiveness may lead to improved psychological health. See Enright (2001) and Enright et al. (1998) for a more thorough description of the 20-unit process model.

Early Studies Using the Process Model of Forgiveness

Hebl and Enright (1993) conducted the first empirical intervention using forgiveness as the goal. Before their study, all published works of forgiveness were anecdotal and case study reports (Hebl & Enright, 1993). The purpose of the Hebl and Enright (1993) study was empirically to examine an 8-week group therapy program with elderly women who had miscellaneous hurts. The participants' goal was to forgive one person who had hurt them deeply. Participants were randomly assigned to either a forgiveness or a control group. The forgiveness group followed the process model developed by Enright et al. (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991). The control group met for the same amount of time—60 minutes weekly—and discussed general topics suggested by the group during the first session. Forgiveness was not discussed in the control group. Posttests showed that the experimental group had a significantly higher forgiveness profile, compared with the control group. Both groups had a significant decrease in anxiety and depression from pretest to posttest. As the first empirically based experimental study using forgiveness as a goal, Hebl and Enright's (1993) study is noteworthy.

Freedman and Enright (1996) conducted a forgiveness intervention with 12 women who were incest survivors. The goal was for the incest survivors to forgive their abusers. The women ranged in age from 24 to 54 years old, were Caucasian, and lived in a Midwestern city. Using a yoked, randomized, experimental and control group design, the participants were randomly assigned to an experimental group (receiving forgiveness education immediately) or a wait-list control group (receiving the intervention after the experimental group). See Freedman and Enright (1996) for a detailed description of the intervention procedure.

After the intervention, the experimental group gained significantly more than the control group in forgiveness and hope, and decreased significantly more than the control group in anxiety and depression. After members of the control group completed the forgiveness intervention, they showed similar gains in forgiveness and hope, as well as in self-esteem, and greater decreases in anxiety and depression. Members of the experimental group were also posttested again 1 year from the date they completed the intervention. The change patterns were maintained (Freedman & Enright, 1996). This study illustrated the effectiveness of a forgiveness intervention for incest survivors. A more forgiving attitude toward one's abuser and greater psychological well-being resulted after participation in the forgiveness intervention (Freedman & Enright, 1996). Verbal reports from the incest survivors illustrate psychological benefits from forgiving as well. One survivor stated that after forgiving her father, she was able to use the forgiveness model with her mother for not protecting her. Other early work can be found in Al-Mabuk, Enright, and Cardis (1995), Coyle and Enright (1997), and Lin (1998).

Recent Work

Meta-analysis of Intervention Studies. Baskin and Enright (2004) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate whether forgiveness interventions are effective in increasing forgiveness and psychological well-being. Nine published studies with empirical results were used in the meta-analysis. Although the field is still early in its development, the analysis could be useful for those designing future studies on forgiveness (Baskin & Enright, 2004).

The authors described three basic models of forgiveness gleaned from the literature. The first model is the Enright et al. (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991) process model described earlier in this chapter.

The second model identified by Baskin and Enright (2004) was developed by McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) and is described as fostering “both cognitive and affective empathy” (Baskin & Enright, 2004, p. 9). It includes nine different components, with the first component similar to the first eight units in the Enright et al. (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991) model. The other eight steps are also similar to various units in Enright and colleagues’ 20-unit model, such as developing empathy, practicing cognitive reframing, thinking about when one has needed forgiveness from others, and considering the offender’s needs (see Baskin & Enright, 2004, for a thorough description).

The third model was developed by McCullough and Worthington (1995) and was designed to introduce people to the idea of forgiveness and to consider the decision to forgive in a 1-hour session. In all three models, participants focus on one person who hurt them deeply and work on forgiving that person. The first two models are process based, and the third model is decision based. Process-based models include the decision to forgive as well as other cognitive and affective units. Decision-based models emphasize making the decision to forgive and can be placed solely in the cognitive domain. According to Fitzgibbons (1986) and as previously mentioned, people first approach forgiveness cognitively, then emotionally.

Baskin and Enright’s (2004) meta-analysis appears to be one of only a few assessments of all existing published forgiveness interventions. Other criteria for a study’s inclusion were the use of a control group, publication in a refereed journal, and the use of quantitative measurement. The nine studies included in the analysis were categorized into three groupings: (a) decision-based studies, (b) process-based studies with a group format, and (c) process-based studies with an individual format.

Results illustrate the effectiveness of forgiveness interventions for adults and older adolescents. Baskin and Enright (2004) make a number of conclusions based on the data. First, effect size scores were low for the decision-based forgiveness interventions, compared with both the individual and group process-based interventions. Specifically, there was no significant difference in forgiveness between those receiving a decision-based intervention and those receiving no intervention. Second, *individual*-based

process interventions had a higher effect size, compared with the *group* process-based interventions (1.66 vs. 0.82). Baskin and Enright (2004) emphasize how this finding highlights the time and energy required by both participants/clients and educators/counselors to forgive a person for a deep injustice completely and successfully. Forgiveness interventions seem to be particularly well suited for incest survivors, adolescents hurt by emotionally distant parents, and men hurt by their partner's decision to have an abortion.

The difference in findings between the process-based models and decision-based models of forgiveness support the use of a process-based model of forgiveness in educational interventions or counseling. The 0.82 effect size on process-based group forgiveness interventions can be viewed in terms of the average person in the intervention doing as well or better than 75% of the control group (Baskin & Enright, 2004). For the results of the process-based individual intervention, the effect size was 1.66, meaning that the average person in the intervention group did as well or better than 95% of the people in the control group (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Effect sizes for the mental health variables also illustrate the effectiveness of forgiveness. The effect size of 0.59 for the process-based group interventions means that the average person in the forgiveness group did better than 65% of the control group (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Even more striking is the effect size for the mental health variables for the process-based individual interventions, which was 1.42. These results clearly support a link between forgiveness and mental health. These results are almost three times the minimum level for a large effect size (Lipsey, 1990).

Studies Recently Completed. Lin, Mack, Enright, Krahn, and Baskin (2004) investigated the use of forgiveness therapy with 14 patients with substance abuse dependence from a local residential treatment facility. Participants were randomly assigned to and completed approximately 12 twice-weekly sessions of individual forgiveness therapy or approximately 12 twice-weekly sessions of an alternative individual treatment based on routine drug and alcohol therapy topics. The latter treatment is the typical therapy implemented at the residential facility. Participants who had completed forgiveness therapy had significantly greater increases in self-esteem and significantly greater decreases in depression, anger, anxiety, and vulnerability to drug use than did those who went through the alternative form of therapy. Most benefits of the forgiveness therapy remained superior to the alternative at a 4-month follow-up. Participants were initially quite low in forgiveness—lower than the average for a non-clinical adult population sample (Lin et al., 2004). At posttest, the forgiveness therapy participants averaged higher than the published norm for the adult sample, and this gain was maintained at follow-up.

Forgiveness therapy goes beyond treating only symptoms to treating the underlying causes of substance abuse. Past research has illustrated that substance abuse is often a symptom of underlying resentments and related emotional issues. Forgiveness therapy can be a successful addition to traditional therapies for substance abusers.

The results of Lin et al.'s (2004) study provide support for forgiveness therapy to be used as an effective new treatment for substance abuse clients.

Hansen (2002) showed that implementing a forgiveness intervention with terminal cancer patients led to significantly greater increases in forgiveness of the offender, hope, and quality of life; it also led to significantly less anger than did a control intervention. Forgiveness, as illustrated in both Hebl and Enright's (1993) study and Hansen's (2002) work, has the potential to be helpful for those facing end-of-life issues.

Gambaro's (2002) dissertation also illustrated the impact forgiveness education can have on young adolescents. Gambaro (2002) implemented a forgiveness intervention with adolescents (ages 12–14) who had higher than average levels of anger. In a group setting, half of the students received the forgiveness education, and the other half (control condition) received a Rogerian-based support-group experience. At post-test, participants in the experimental group demonstrated greater decreases in "anger as a trait," "having an angry temperament," and "predilection to react in an angry manner" than did control subjects. The experimental group showed significantly greater improvements in their attitudes toward school and family and in the quality of their relationships with friends and family. These differences were maintained at follow-up 9 months after the intervention had ended. Gambaro (2002) also looked at school grades, detentions, and in-school suspensions and found that the experimental group was significantly higher in academic achievement and significantly lower in detentions and suspensions than the control group. Other recent work is described in Knutson (2003), Freedman and Knupp (2003), and Park (2003).

Response to Critics

Although the forgiveness research has been favorably acknowledged by many, it has also been subject to criticism. We interpret such criticism as a positive sign that researchers and those in the helping professions are beginning to take seriously the ideas presented (Enright & Coyle, 1998). Lamb and Murphy (2002), in particular, have put forth a number of objections to the forgiveness research in their edited book, *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views of Forgiveness in Psychotherapy*. We include here eight of Lamb's (2002) concerns regarding the forgiveness research, followed by our response.

1. Lamb (2002) argues that there is no consensus regarding the definition of forgiveness and its set of necessary conditions. She is accurate in her statement of definitional confusion, as McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen (2000) have pointed out. Enright and colleagues (1998) anticipated the development of myriad definitions and cautioned researchers to take care as they answered the question: What is forgiveness? Although the caution was not always heeded, research from a variety of laboratories has maintained a fair level of stability and integrity, despite varied definitions of the concept. We believe that the core definition of forgiveness remains constant, regardless of whether researchers agree.

2. Another concern is that there is little justification for the theories developed for the forgiveness process, and the ones that do exist were developed using clinical observation. As Enright (2001) explains, we regard the four phases of the process model and the 20 units within the phases as guideposts that most people experience. We do not consider these phases and units to be carved in stone or rigidly fixed. Numerous studies have indicated that when participants are led through the units of this model, they have learned to forgive and have experienced emotional healing. In addition, when we tested the model with these different populations, we had to change some of the guideposts or units to fit the participants' actual experiences better.
3. The topic of unilateral forgiveness, in which nothing is expected from the perpetrator of the wrongdoing because of its unconditional nature, raises additional concerns for Lamb. According to Andrews (2000), "The forgiver and forgiven need each other for justice to be enacted and to require remorse from a perpetrator is not to confuse justice and forgiveness, but to show their interdependence" (cited in Lamb, 2002, p. 8). Negotiated forgiveness seems to imply some type of ongoing relationship between the injured and injurer; however, it is not always possible or feasible for such a relationship to occur. We believe forgiveness is best offered freely and in one's own time, regardless of the offender's actions. Lamb (2002) appears to be arguing that an injustice may be committed through the process of unconditional forgiveness. As stated previously, Enright et al. (1998) discuss specific expectations that exist for reconciliation (getting back together in a relationship) but are not necessary for forgiveness. Although an admittance of wrongdoing, an apology, and acts of remorse by the offender may certainly make forgiving easier, forgiveness can occur in their absence.
4. Murphy (2002, 2003) suggests that releasing negative and vindictive feelings may be equivalent to "letting go of self-respect, self-defense, and allegiance to moral order" (Lamb, 2002, p. 8). Forgiveness researchers have not properly addressed this criticism. In response to this point, we defer to Holmgren's (2002) eloquent discussion of the necessary steps leading to forgiveness. The first step is that the client who has been injured needs to recover his or her self-respect and recognize that the injury he or she received was wrong. This involves recognizing that he or she (the injured) is a valuable person who deserves to be treated well and that the offensive behavior was not his or her fault. In this context, the act of forgiveness is a sign of self-respect and an allegiance to moral order. It is the offering of mercy toward the offender in the face of wrongdoing.
5. Lamb (2002) and Richards (2002) ask whether other counseling or treatment approaches may be more effective than forgiveness. We do not think that those who study forgiveness are claiming that forgiveness is the only way to heal after being deeply injured but that forgiveness is *one way* to heal and effectively decrease anger and resentment. Before illustrating that forgiveness is better or as effective, compared with another approach, the Enright et al. (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991) group wanted to show that forgiveness is effective in

its own right. Recent research has shown that forgiveness education and therapy is as effective and even more effective than alternative therapies (see Chapman et al., 2001; Gambaro, 2002; Hansen, 2002; Lin et al., 2004; Park, 2003). If a medical researcher found a drug to cure cancer, should she exclaim, "Wait! Let's not use the drug. There may be a drug that is as effective or perhaps even more effective"?

6. Lamb claims that a lot of what is discussed in the Enright et al.'s (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991) model of forgiveness is covered in traditional therapy, such as feelings of guilt and shame, confrontation of anger, how one has been changed as a result of being hurt, and reframing who the wrongdoer is. Yet here is the large difference between traditional therapies and forgiveness therapy: No therapy before forgiveness therapy has deliberately taken the spotlight off of the client and pointed it straight at the offender. The client in forgiveness therapy must step outside of a primary self-focus toward a moral focus on the offender. As paradoxical as this seems for therapy, it works. So yes, the ingredients of the Enright model have similarities with traditional therapy, but they are used in different ways, creating a new and innovative therapy for clients.
7. Lamb (2002) is troubled by the lack of attention to the moral question: Why forgive? She says, to answer that question, forgiveness researchers need to answer why, morally, people may not and should not forgive. Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) examine in considerable depth whether forgiveness qualifies as a moral virtue. The reader is encouraged to read their exposition of forgiveness as a virtue to determine whether they were successful.
8. Finally, she concludes her introductory criticisms of forgiveness with a discussion of how forgiveness theorists ignore the context of forgiveness. We hope that this chapter has illustrated our emphasis on context. We include the following points to make this clear. Lamb (2002) and Murphy (2002, 2003) both imply that the forgiveness advocated by forgiveness educators and counselors is a Christian-based perspective. Although it is hard not to think of religion when one hears the word *forgiveness*, the Enright group has studied forgiveness from a psychological perspective without adhering to any one religion. This decision was made early in the development of the forgiveness program so that the therapy and education that flowed from the model would be open to all people. Throughout the years, we have worked successfully in forgiveness therapy and education with people from all of the monotheistic faiths, Buddhism, Hinduism, atheism, and religious indifference. They are given the freedom to apply the process model to their particular worldview.

To say that all of forgiveness centers only on Christianity is to neglect the fact that many who study and practice forgiveness come from other perspectives. The first author of this chapter is Jewish, and the process model does not contradict Jewish teachings. As another example, a graduate student from our group was interviewing for a college teaching job at a school on one of the coasts. The student is Muslim. A professor attending the student's colloquium, clearly annoyed by the presentation of

forgiveness, used his higher status and power to ask, “Will you be giving your report to the Pope tomorrow?” as he stormed out. The professor did not take the time to find out that this student is a faithful Muslim. The comment was an insult. (But the student forgave the grumpy professor!)

We now turn to four of Murphy’s (2002, 2003) criticisms of our process model and the research surrounding it.

1. Murphy questions why we would count greater tendencies to forgive as a gain after a group has been taught to forgive. Increases in forgiveness illustrate that the intervention is effective in helping people forgive. For example, just because one takes a math class, it should not be assumed that he or she is going to learn the math. There could be a variety of reasons why the student completes the math class without learning much at all. One reason is because the math class was not taught well. We count increases in forgiveness as a gain because it shows us that the process model is working.
2. Murphy questions the benefits that research has demonstrated regarding forgiveness. He asks what an increase in self-esteem means and questions the contexts surrounding decreases in depression and anxiety. He implies that the increases in psychological well-being are synonymous with leaving the victim powerless and in his or her status of a victim. Our first response is this: In general, “across all of the studies, there was not one instance in which a group experiencing forgiveness education showed a decline in psychological health. In fact, statistically significant improvements in variables such as hope and self-esteem, and significant decreases in anxiety and depression were more the rule than the exception” (Enright & Coyle, 1998, p. 154). Our second response is that in addition to statistical increases in well-being, verbal and behavioral reports from participants illustrate that after forgiving an offender, participants in Freedman and Enright’s (1996) study were more at peace, more productive at work, better able to handle relationships, better able to make decisions regarding career and relationship issues, and also able to use the forgiveness model with other people in their lives. In Lin et al. (2004), those haunted by the specter of drug use reported no psychological depression and greater control over substance use. The control group was not as fortunate. Is any of this *powerlessness* by those *forgiving*?
3. When he talks about the dangers of premature forgiveness, we agree with him. We always have warned against hasty forgiving (see Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991). We do not see the beef here. We are in agreement with Murphy that premature forgiveness is false forgiveness.
4. Murphy (2002, 2003) argues that it is morally permissible to hold onto resentment and rejection without forgiveness. He tells the story of a former student, Ralph, who was seeking advice for a personal problem. The student’s father, who had repeatedly sexually abused him as a child, wanted his son back in his life after

many years of separation. The father showed no repentance and “still seemed to be his same old arrogant self” (p. 48). Ralph did not want to begin a relationship with his father now, but his friends from church and minister were telling him that it was his duty to forgive and to welcome his father back into his family life, at least on limited terms. Ralph wanted to maintain his strategy of resentment and rejection but wanted to be validated for doing so (Murphy, 2002). After speaking with Murphy, Ralph decided to maintain his attitude of resentment, which had seemed to work for him in the past. As an aside, we do not know enough about Ralph’s life to know whether this is true or not. For example, Ralph may experience psychological benefits as a result of forgiving that he did not know were possible because he has held on to resentment for so long.

First, let us say, “Poor Ralph.” No one seems to be giving him accurate advice regarding forgiveness and reconciliation; no wonder he is confused. Murphy asks what Enright would say about a case like this and assumes that Enright would say these cases do not occur. These cases do occur (common sense alone would tell us that). We believe that Ralph is being put in an unfair situation because he is being asked not only to forgive but also to reconcile with an unrepentant abuser. Ralph’s religious leader is confusing forgiveness with reconciliation, and Murphy (2002) does not recognize the difference when he gives advice to Ralph. Regarding the religious leader’s belief that it is Ralph’s duty to forgive, we say that forgiveness is not a duty when Ralph is confused about the meaning of forgiveness. What, exactly, is poor Ralph doing when he “forgives,” especially when he has such confusion?

Forgiveness from a psychological perspective comes from a choice when one is aware of what forgiveness is and is not, of what is involved in the process of forgiveness, and that forgiveness takes time. Forgiveness should not be rushed or forced on anyone because it can lead to false forgiveness. Forgiveness should not be brushed aside because of fear of exploitation (because the quest for forgiveness and justice can occur concomitantly and because forgiveness and reconciliation can occur separately). Ralph can forgive if he decides to do so. Ralph can work on forgiveness at his own pace and initially for his own well-being, but he may choose not to enter into a relationship with his father until his father apologizes, admits his wrongdoings, and illustrates that he has changed. As a result of forgiving, Ralph may hope that his father recognizes his past offenses, makes reparations, and changes his hurtful behavior. What we would like to ask Murphy is this: How would true forgiveness, as described by Enright (2001; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000) and Holmgren (2002), affect Ralph? Would forgiveness bring Ralph more peace and psychological well-being than his present strategy of resentment and rejection? Based on what we have been finding in our scientific studies as described in this chapter, what would common sense say to Ralph if he tried to forgive with the process model?

NEW RESEARCH DIRECTIONS NEEDED

The intervention studies reviewed raise some significant issues for forgiveness research. What should be the duration of interventions to make it possible for subjects actually to forgive? Is it possible to come up with an actual time line that would capture the progression of the average person's experience with the forgiveness model? How does forgiveness change over time for individuals? Because forgiveness is individual for each person, is forgiveness education that occurs in a group setting as effective as forgiveness education that is individually focused? Are there certain benefits to group education? How often should the education occur? Once a week, twice a week? Does the whole model need to be experienced for forgiveness to occur and are there certain steps that are more critical than others in promoting forgiveness? There may be a number of different ways to educate effectively for forgiveness. One format may be best suited to people with particular kinds of hurts. More research on forgiveness needs to be conducted with different populations. If we can aid professionals to find the maximum psychological benefits to participants in the least amount of time necessary to achieve such benefits, those professionals may be able to serve more clients.

CONCLUSION

The state of forgiveness intervention work using Enright's process model is sound. Randomized, experimental and control group trials have produced initially interesting results, especially as seen in the meta-analysis described here. Experimental designs have begun to mature by including active control groups. Diverse educators and therapists who lead such research show, when all are taken together, that positive results are not the result of only a few very talented leaders. We need a continued effort with larger samples and an emphasis on the benefits for the one forgiven. Our emphasis on the forgiver's outcomes is a clinical choice based on therapeutic efficacy and should not be taken as a sign that forgiveness is a self-serving enterprise.

The response-to-critics section is by no means an attempt to address all critics' remarks about forgiveness. We value the criticisms because they aid us in the clarification of our own ideas. All clarification, whether borne out of independent inquiry or in response to critics, is a service to clients because it points more strongly to the truth. Just as we take risks by presenting our ideas and science to the scholarly community, so too do the critics open themselves to the risk of challenge. We have tried to illustrate that many of the criticisms aimed at forgiveness seem to result from incomplete formulations of definitions or misunderstanding of the contexts surrounding forgiveness.

Those who do forgiveness research and counseling do so because of an interest in the question: Can forgiveness help people to heal? What is clear is that both victims of injustice and their counselors are in need of more education regarding forgiveness and how to forgive. As Lamb and Murphy remind us, we need to do more research on when

a person's level of anger begins to be maladaptive. Not all anger is counter-productive. We need to know when a person is ready to forgive so that we do not simply presume that all who seek help will embrace forgiveness (and an accurate concept of it). Yet the field to date is healthy precisely because the important work of clarifying definitions and examining effective pathways to forgiveness has been done. The science, although still in its initial stages, is surprisingly strong. Come, critics, let us at least temporarily join in acknowledging the truth that forgiveness, properly understood and practiced, is good, and the examination of it to date is helpful to the hurting.

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