

# *Helping Clients Forgive*

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# *Helping Clients Forgive*

- ***Presentation Outline***

- ***Introduction***

- ***What is Forgiveness***
- ***Why Forgive***
- ***Whom to Forgive***
- ***When To Forgive***
- ***How to Forgive***

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*“The weak can never forgive,  
Forgiveness is an attitude of the strong.”*

*Ghandi*

# Helping Clients Forgive

*"It's one thing to have a heart broken,  
Quite another to have it poisoned." dk*

## ■ **Introduction**

### ■ **Profile of a Candidate for Forgiveness**

- *One has been deeply offended*
- *The offense is like a betrayal or abandonment*
- *It's irreversible – can't be undone or deleted*
- *It Changes one's life course and robs one's dreams*
- *Day and night the memory combined with pain continues*
- *The injustice turns to resentment and resentment to toxic rage*
- *You are now imprisoned, seeing only prison walls, desiring only to be free*

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*"To be social is to be forgiving."*

*Robert Frost*

## ■ **What Is Forgiveness?**

### ■ **Why So Many Descriptions and Definitions?**

- *It is everyone's experience everyday*
- *We all offend and are offended in many ways*
- *Offenses have no bounds of language, culture, age, gender, creed, ideology or religion*
- *It is a question of the universal value of justice - How to bring justice back when offended by an injustice? Can justice be restored ?*
- *The articulation of a universal value is complex resulting in the plethora of descriptions and definitions*

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*"Life is an adventure in forgiveness."*

*John Dryden*

# **Helping Clients Forgive** *"Forgiveness does not change the past, it transforms the future."*

*Paul Boese*

- ***What Is Forgiveness?***
  - ***Forgiveness is Not ...***
    - ***Forgetting***
    - ***Excusing***
    - ***Denying***
    - ***Settling***
    - ***Amnesty***

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***"The only remedy to the inevitability of  
history is forgiveness;  
Otherwise we remain trapped in the  
predicament of irreversibility."***

*Hannah Arendt*

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*“Forgive your enemies but  
remember their names.” JFK*

- **What Is Forgiveness**
  - **Forgiveness is Not ...**
    - *Reconciling*
    - *Absolution*
    - *Tolerance*
    - *Fixing*
    - *An Event*

*“When we forgive an injustice,  
We do not excuse it,  
We do not tolerate it,  
We do not deny it,  
We look the evil full in the face,  
Let it’s horror shock, stun and enrage us,  
And only then do we forgive.”*

*Lewis Smedes*

## ■ **What is Forgiveness?**

- **Two Movements**
  - *What has been done to me*
  - *What I need to do*

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*"I will not be held accountable  
For what has been done to me,  
But will be held responsible  
For what I do in return."*

*Viktor Frankl*

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***"... whenever one has to face a fate that cannot be changed ... just then is one given an opportunity to actualize the highest value ... For what matters above all is the attitude we take toward suffering. The attitude in which we take our suffering upon ourselves." Viktor Frankl***

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***"The essence of human existence lies in the stance taken toward a fate that cannot be changed." Beverly Flanigan  
Forgiving the Unforgivable***

*"Nothing can make justice just like mercy." Robert Frost*

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## ■ ***What is Forgiveness?***

### ■ ***Two Movements***

- ***What has been done to me – an injustice***
  - ***What I do in return – seek justice with mercy***
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- ***"When faced with an injustice we are given a unique opportunity to respond with mercy by withholding our need for entitled retribution while absorbing the burden of the offense and covering the debt ourselves." dk***

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*"Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that crushed it." Mark Twain*

## ■ What is Forgiveness?

### ■ Two Movements

- What has been done to me – an injustice
- What I need to do – seek justice with mercy

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- *"If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them; but the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being, and who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"* Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn The Gulag Archipelago 1918 -1956

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*"Justice consists in taking from no man what is his." Hobbes (1652)*

## ■ *Why Forgive?*

### ■ *Forgiveness Ignores Justice ... is the charge*

- *That forgiveness is perceived as unfair is common*
- *The sense of unfairness and injustice of forgiveness provides resistance for getting on the path of forgiveness*
- *The Sunflower ... "Karl couldn't pay" ... then what?*

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*"Forgiveness seems ... unnatural. Our sense of fairness tells us that people should pay for the wrong they do." Smedes*

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**"Forgiving forgives  
only the unforgiveable."**

*Jacques Derrida*

***"Relationships create crisis and tensions ... from which no one can entirely escape. But whether a human life is built on this [social] foundation or broken against these rocks ... it is violently shaken and forever shaped."***

*Mortimer J. Adler (1952)*

## ■ **Why Forgive?**

### ■ **The Human Dilemma**

- **We are social beings**
- **We know and understand justice**
- **Our knowledge of justice is not consistently reflected in our behavior**
- **We offend others and thereby incur interpersonal debts**
- **Interpersonal debts inhibit wholesome relationships**

***"It's really quite simple. People's most basic need in life is relationship. People connected to other people thrive and grow, and those not connected wither and die."***

*Dr. Henry Cloud*

# **Helping Clients Forgive** *“Without forgiveness life is governed by an endless cycle of resentment and retaliation.” Robert Assagioli*

- **Why Forgive?**
  - *Offenses incur losses and debts*
  - *There are two options in dealing with debt*
  - *Option One: Retributive Justice*
    - *Debt payment is compensation for damages incurred*
    - *Offenders are held accountable for their debt payment*
  - *Option Two: Restorative Justice*
    - *Most interpersonal offenses cannot be assessed in compensatory terms*
    - *Therefore offenders cannot and do not cover their debts*
    - *Restorative justice attends to the outstanding debt of the offender*

*“Justice that love gives is surrender,  
Justice that law gives is [retribution].”*

*Ghandi*

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*"Mercy meets all the demands of justice  
and provides all the evidence for  
justice having been served." dk*

## ■ **When to Forgive**

- **Forgiving is not an event – it's a path**
- **Forgiving is done in the "perfect tense"**
- **"The Ice Man Cometh" by Eugene O'Neill**

*"Most of us can forgive ...  
We just don't want our offender to forget  
That we have forgiven."  
Ivern Ball*

# **Helping Clients Forgive** *"The consequences of unforgiveness are far greater than its causes." dk*

- **Whom To Forgive**
  - **The Person**
    - **The Person Who Offended You**
    - **The Person Who Wounded You**
    - **The Person Who Wronged You**

*"Anger is an acid which does more harm in the vessel it is stored than on anything it is poured."*

*Mark Twain*

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*"Knowing what is lost is important,  
Knowing what is left is imperative." dk*

## ■ **How to Forgive**

### ■ **Three Themes**

#### ■ **Grieve the Loss**

- *Paganini – He focused on what was left*

#### ■ **Deal with Injustice**

- *Viktor Frankl – "I will be held accountable for my response."*

#### ■ **Cancel the Debt**

- *The Drowning Man Trial – The opportunity to exercise mercy*

*"So much has been given me,  
I have no time to ponder  
That which has been denied."*

*Helen Keller*

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*"Revenge makes promises  
it can't deliver." dk*

## ■ How to Forgive?

### ■ The Process of Forgiveness

- *The offended one is able to identify a loss which is an injustice*
- *The offended one chooses to abandon anger and resentment toward the offender, rather than respond with justifiable retaliation and the expectation of retribution*
- *The offended one grieves the loss and cancels the debt which the offender owes, acknowledging that justice had been done*

*"Only the wounded have the  
authority to forgive." dk*

# **Helping Clients Forgive** *“The ‘give’ in ‘forgive’ Is what you give yourself” dk*

## ■ **How To Forgive**

- ***Selfishly – It is the gift you give yourself***
- ***Mercifully – The offender can’t add a thing***
- ***Intolerantly – Forgiveness is not tolerance***

***“The strongest argument in favor of forgiveness  
is the alternative - a permanent state of unforgiveness.”***

*Philip Yancey*



# *Helping Clients Forgive* “Not to forgive is to hope for a better past.” dk

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*“I was angry with my friend, I told my wrath, my wrath did end.” Wordsworth*

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# **Helping Clients Forgive** *“We obstruct the path of justice When mercy is not shown.” dk*

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# **Helping Clients Forgive** *“The foolish neither forgive or forget, The naïve forgive and forget, The wise forgive and do not forget.” Thomas Szasz*

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*“Forgiveness is not the same as pardon ...  
you may forgive someone and still insist on  
a just punishment for that wrong.”*

*Lewis Smedes*

# **Helping Clients Forgive**

***"If we ... want to love***

***We must learn to forgive."***

***Mother Theresa***

***"In a world of flawed communication  
Community is possible through  
Understanding others***

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***In a world of painful alienation  
Community is created through  
Accepting others***

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***In a world of broken trust  
Community is sustained  
By forgiveness***

*Augsburger*

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