

Forgiveness
The Role of Forgiveness
in the Therapeutic
Process

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Favorite Forgiveness Quotes

“Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.”

C. S. Lewis

Favorite Forgiveness Quotes

“Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.”

Corrie Ten Boone

Favorite Forgiveness Quotes

“You will know that forgiveness has begun when you recall those who hurt you and feel the power to wish them well.”

Lewis Smedes

Favorite Forgiveness Quotes

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

Lewis Smedes

Favorite Forgiveness Quotes

“When we forgive evil we do not excuse it, we do not tolerate it, we do not smother it. We look the evil full in the face, call it what it is, let its horror shock and stun and enrage us, and only then do we forgive it.”

Lewis Smedes

Science vs. Religion?

- Forgiveness in Psychology Literature.
1984: Fourteen articles (mostly in theology journals).
2009: Hundreds in wide variety of professional journals.
- Psychology researchers steered clear of what they believed to be a religious subject.
- Theologians saw no need to use data.

Forgiveness

- Working Definition:

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).

Implications

- Wrong has been done/Offense has actually been committed.
- Forgiveness is a willful act chosen and carried out by a rational or sound mind.
- Only the offended can forgive.
- Forgiveness includes cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects.
- The offender has no right to the forgiveness.

What Forgiveness is **NOT**

- Pardon, Legal Mercy or Leniency (A merciful judge is not the one who has been hurt).
- Condoning /Excusing (Putting up with an offense or letting it go).
- Reconciliation (two people coming together again in the same roles).

What Forgiveness is **NOT**

- Conciliation (To appease or placate an offender).
- Justification (talking self into believing what the person did was fair/right).
- Forgetting (Ceasing to remember the offense, possibly leaving one vulnerable to it again).

What Forgiveness is **NOT**

- Balancing Scales (Getting back something in kind, punishing the offender).
- Self-Centering (Forgiving only for one's own benefit, focusing on oneself, and not the offender).

Phases of Forgiveness

- Uncovering Phase
 - Examining Psychological Defenses and Issues Involved
 - Confronting Anger
 - Admitting Shame
 - Being Aware of Depleted Emotional Energy
 - Being Aware of Cognitive Rehearsal
 - Comparing Self and Offender
 - Facing Permanent Change
 - Recognizing an Altered World View

Phases of Forgiveness

- Decision Phase (Decision to Choose Forgiveness)
 - Developing Insight: Previous Coping Strategies are Ineffective.
 - Being Willing to Consider Forgiveness as an Option.
 - Committing to Forgive the Offender.

Phases of Forgiveness

- Work Phase (deep, difficult work)
 - Reframing
 - Showing Empathy & Compassion
 - Bearing the Pain
 - Giving a Moral Gift

Phases of Forgiveness

- Deepening Phase
 - Finding Meaning
 - Having Needed Others' Forgiveness
 - Knowing That One is Not Alone
 - Realizing a New Purpose
 - Being Aware of Affective Transformation

Steps to Forgiveness

1. Don't Wait for an Apology!
2. Identify the Offender/Offense.
 - Be honest about how much the offense has cost you.
3. Recall the Hurt.
 - Realize that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts, and physical upset you are experiencing **NOW**.
4. Quantify the Energy Lost on unforgiveness.

Steps to Forgiveness

5. Empathize with the Offender.
 - "Behind every jerk there's a sad story."
 - Write a letter to self from offender's perspective.
6. Think about the relief you have felt when you were forgiven.

Steps to Forgiveness

7. Commit to Forgive.
 - At every moment that you feel upset, practice simple stress management techniques to soothe your body's fight or flight response.
 - Instead of mentally replaying your hurt, seek out new, positive ways to get what you want.

Steps to Forgiveness

8. Don't forget about self.
 - Forgiveness of others is a mirror of forgiveness of self.
9. Once is Not Enough.

Benefits of Forgiveness

- Reduced Incidents of Anger.
- Decreased Symptoms of Depression.
- Decreased Symptoms of Anxiety.
- Decreased Experience of Stress.

Benefits of Forgiveness

- Increased Feelings of Hope, Peace, Compassion and Self Confidence.
- Healthier Relationships
- Better Physical health.
-Cardiovascular health.