

CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS FORGIVENESS

FORGIVENESS

- It is seen that the concept of forgiveness is involved in more than one field such as literature, religion, psychology, history, sociology and philosophy (Williamson & Gonzales, 2007).
- In psychology, the concept of forgiveness has been the focus of attention by cognitive, developmental, social and clinical psychologists (Mullet, Girard, & Bakhshi, 2004).
- With the increased interest in forgiveness, especially in the second half of the 1990s (Fincham, 2000; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002), some debates on explaining the concept of forgiveness also began (McCullough & Worthington, 1999).
- Although there is no consensus on the definition of forgiveness, there are accepted definitions in the literature.
- Forgiveness is defined as a state in which (a) the motivation to retaliate against the offender decreases, (b) the motivation to avoid the offender decreases, and (c) the motivation for reconciliation and goodwill increases despite the painful actions of the offender (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; McCullough et al., 2001).

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WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

“Forgiveness is a process of inner transformation in which a person consciously lets go of negative emotions (anger, resentment, hatred) toward the person who harmed them and instead tries to develop positive emotions such as empathy, compassion and love.” (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 1998).

“Forgiveness is a voluntary process characterized by the development of positive orientations (compassion, magnanimity, hope) towards the person who has harmed by reducing negative feelings and desire for revenge.” (Worthington, 2006).

“Forgiveness is the process of giving up revenge after an injustice and developing more positive emotional and cognitive reactions towards the person who harmed” (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002).

“Forgiveness is the recognition of the injustices experienced in the relationship, the acceptance of the responsibility of the harmed person and the development of a mutual understanding of the parties to repair the relationship.” (Hargrave, 1994).

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- Understanding what forgiveness is gains clarity when it is considered together with the concepts it is related to.
- One of these concepts is close relationships. Considering the functioning of human life, the most important need of individuals is to establish close relationships. Close relationships enrich the inner and outer worlds of individuals.
- However, as in every situation, there are some risks in close relationships.
- Fincham (2000) states that when we establish close relationships with people, we voluntarily leave ourselves in the most vulnerable state.
- While on the one hand this vulnerability makes possible the deep emotions that can be experienced, on the other hand it means that hurt or injury is inevitable. In this way, it is like a double-edged sword.
- In other words, close relationships that fulfill our deepest need for closeness can be the source of the most severe pain (Fincham et al., 2002).
- Since violations within close relationships lead to hurt, forgiveness becomes an important part of daily life (Mullet et al., 2004).

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TYPES OF FORGIVENESS

1. Self-Forgiveness

Acknowledging one's own mistakes, failures or past actions and transforming one's guilt, shame or anger towards oneself over time into a more compassionate attitude towards oneself.

Recognition and acceptance of guilt

Taking responsibility (without absolving oneself)

Efforts to compensate for behavior

Developing self-compassion

Give up self-destructive thoughts/behaviors

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TYPES OF FORGIVENESS

2. Interpersonal Forgiveness

Definition:

An internal process of consciously forgiving another person's behavior that has caused physical, emotional or moral harm.

Types:

a. Conditional Forgiveness

Forgiveness is granted when the perpetrator apologizes, shows remorse or offers reparation.

The attitude of “if you say forgive me, I will forgive you” is common.

b. Unconditional Forgiveness

The process of forgiveness is experienced without any expectation of apology or change from the perpetrator.

Forgiveness is directed towards the victim's inner peace.

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TYPES OF FORGIVENESS

3. Situational / Event Based Forgiveness

Definition:

A process of forgiveness for a specific event. It focuses on what was done, not who did it.

Example:

A friend breaks a promise

Cheating by a spouse

Unjust behavior of a teacher

This type of forgiveness is usually associated with non-repetition of the event, making sense of the perpetrator's behavior and emotional processing.

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Models of Forgiveness

Enright'in FORGIVENESS Süreci Modeli (The Process Model of Forgiveness – Robert Enright) – 4 Stages

- Studies on forgiveness reveal different models of how interpersonal forgiveness works.
- One of the most remarkable models is the Forgiveness Process Model proposed by the Human Development Study Group (1991).
- The model focuses on the process of interpersonal forgiveness and provides important information about its use in counseling and therapy.

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Enright'ın FORGIVENESS Süreci Modeli (Process Model of Forgiveness – Robert Enright) – 4 Stages

A. Uncovering Phase

The person realizes the effects of the harm they have experienced.

They become aware of feelings such as anger, resentment, hurt.

It questions whether forgiveness is necessary.

B. Decision Phase

Recognizes that forgiveness is an option.

He or she is willing to choose forgiveness instead of taking revenge or staying angry all the time.



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The Process Model of Forgiveness

C. Work Phase

Attempts to understand that the perpetrator is human and may have flaws (empathy).

They try to understand the reasons for the perpetrator's behavior.

Feelings of forgiveness begin to develop.

D. Deepening Phase

The person realizes the psychological and emotional benefits of forgiveness.

A greater sense of peace, hope and meaning can develop.



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2. Worthington'un REACH Modeli (Everett Worthington)

REACH refers to the five stages of forgiveness:

R - Recall the hurt: Honestly recall what happened, without suppressing the hurt.

E - Empathize: Try to understand the event from the perpetrator's point of view.

A - Altruistic gift (offer forgiveness as a gift): If you have been forgiven in the past, offer forgiveness as a gift to someone else.

C - Commit: Make a decision to forgive (write it down, speak it out, etc.)

H - Hold: Stick to the decision to forgive and maintain it even if resentment resurfaces.

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Gordon & Baucom's Three-Phase Model of Forgiveness

I. Impact Stage

The person experiences the strong emotions of shock, anger, sadness, distrust, etc. at the moment of learning about the betrayal or harm.

The impact of the event on the relationship is assessed.

At this stage, the person starts to question their previous beliefs about their partner or the relationship.

Questions such as “How could he/she do this to me?”, “How real was our relationship?” arise frequently.

This stage involves accepting the feelings and facing the reality of the event.

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2. Meaning Stage

- The person tries to make sense of what happened.
- Questions such as “Why did this happen?”, “Is this event related to his/her personality or was it a temporary situation?” come to the fore.
- Guilt, responsibility sharing and context assessment are made.
- The perpetrator's intentions and possible reasons behind his/her behavior are examined (empathy may develop at this stage).
- At this stage, people may also try to understand how the incident relates to relationship dynamics.

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3. Recovery Stage

- The person takes a conscious step towards forgiveness.
- Trust starts to be rebuilt.
- The decision to continue or end the relationship can be made, but the forgiveness process is focused on reducing the emotional burden.
- Positive changes such as renewed closeness, restoration of emotional connection, strengthening of communication can occur.
- This stage is a time of healing not only the relationship but also the individual himself/herself.

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Hargrave's Forgiveness and Reconciliation Model

- Terry Hargrave's Forgiveness Model is an approach developed specifically in the context of family therapy, focusing on the process of repairing fractures and traumas between individuals. This model considers forgiveness not only as an individual emotion or decision, but also as a relationship-based repair process.

In Hargrave's model, forgiveness works through two main processes:

- ◆ Justice-Based Forgiveness
- ◆ Relationship-Based Forgiveness

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Justice-Based Forgiveness

- This is the dimension in which the individual demands that the harm done to him/her be acknowledged and that some form of “justice be done”.

Stages

- **Recognition of Harm:** The victimized person identifies the violation and the harms they have suffered. This makes the victimization visible.
- **Acceptance of Responsibility:** The perpetrator accepts the consequences of his/her behavior and the harm caused. He/she does not deny guilt.
- **Compensation and Reparation:** The perpetrator offers reparation to the person harmed (this does not have to be material, it can be remorse, an apology, a change in behavior).
- This process provides a sense that justice has been done. The victimized person feels more valued and heard.

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Relationship-Based Forgiveness

- This dimension focuses on rebuilding and repairing the relationship. It aims to rebuild relationship values such as loyalty, trust and commitment.

Stages

- **Developing Empathy and Understanding:**The victim tries to understand the emotional, developmental or contextual reasons behind the perpetrator's behavior.
- **Repairing the Relationship:**The bond between the parties is rebuilt.Although past harms are not completely erased, a basis for the continuation of the relationship is established.
- In this process, both the victim and the perpetrator feel more whole; mutual commitment can be restored.

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FORGIVENESS, PERSONALITY AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

- In studies examining the relationship between personality traits and forgiveness,
- There is a negative relationship between neuroticism and forgiveness (Walker & Gorsuch, 2002; Koutsos, Wertheim, Kornblum, 2008; Maltby et al, 2008; McCullough, Hoyt, 2002).
- There is a positive relationship between agreeableness and forgiveness (Koutsos, Wertheim, Kornblum, 2008; Brose, Rye, Lutz-Zois, Ross, 2005).
- Individuals with narcissistic, paranoid, and antisocial tendencies may react to easily absolve themselves from responsibility for causing any harm, deny the harm altogether, or rationalize their hostile actions against the injustice they have experienced. Similarly, in the relationship between narcissism and forgiveness, it is seen that the variables associated with narcissism are negatively related to the tendency to forgive (Brown, 2004; Strelan, 2007).

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- One of the places where forgiveness is used in practice is in couple and family therapies.
- Hill (2001) emphasizes that many individuals, couples and families struggle to explore the process of forgiveness.
- Couples may seek therapy following infidelity on one or both sides.
- Clients who have been cheated on by their spouses/partners report experiencing extraordinary pain and a deep sense of betrayal.
- Considering that intimacy is built on love and trust, it seems inevitable that infidelity and similar experiences have devastating effects for both parties (DiBlasio, 2000). There are different forgiveness interventions used in couple and family therapies.

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- Worthington and Diblasio (1990), who talk about the importance of mutual forgiveness in marital relationships, liken the hurts in marital relationships to broken arms and forgiveness to the healing process. Drawing attention to the fact that the broken bone is stronger than before after healing, the researchers state that it is possible to heal the fractures in marriages through mutual forgiveness.
- Supporting this view, Enright et al. (1992) argue that in some cases, forgiving another person can transform both the person and the other, and that forgiveness can not only mend the relationship but also improve its quality.

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- Fitzgibbons (1986) emphasizes the importance of expressing emotions that have destructive effects in addressing forgiveness in the counseling process.
- Considering that forgiveness is an internal process as well as an interpersonal one, it is inevitable that being free from emotions such as anger, revenge, guilt, resentment and shame will contribute to psychological healing.
- There is significant evidence of a decrease in anger levels after forgiveness interventions (Coyle & Enright, 1997; Fincham et al., 2002). Similarly, Worthington and Scherer (2004) suggest that forgiveness promotes psychological health.
- Indeed, forgiveness is known to have a positive effect on depression, trait anxiety, and health, and unforgiveness is predicted to have a negative effect on health (Hebl & Enright, 1993).

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APOLOGIZING & FORGIVING

- Fehr and Gelfand (2010) define apologizing as useful social tools that can act as a catalyst for conflict resolution and inspire forgiveness. Especially in the forgiveness of physical aggression, apologizing seems to be effective on forgiveness (Gauche & Mullet, 2005).
- When the offending party expresses regret and apologizes, not only do negative emotions diminish and positive emotions increase in the injured party, but this situation directly has a positive effect on the other party's forgiveness (Eaton & Struthers, 2006).
- There is evidence that apologizing to the offender facilitates forgiveness (Eaton and Struthers, 2006; McCullough et al. 1997; Struthers et al. 2008).