

To Forgive or Not to Forgive: That Is the Question Leader's Guide

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### Objectives

#### Participants will

- Define what forgiveness is and is not
- Learn possible steps to achieve forgiveness
- Experience a forgiveness activity

### Materials Needed

#### For Leaders:

- Leader's Guide – FCD04-001 including:
  - o Forgiveness Quotes
  - o Forgiveness Activity Script
  - o Forgiveness Oval
- Tape recorder and blank tape (optional)

#### For Participants:

- Participant's Guide – FCD04-002
- Forgiveness Attitudes and Beliefs (Assessment) FCD04-003

(use before and after lesson)

#### Before the lesson:

Practice reading the script for the forgiveness activity. It is very important to conduct the activity slowly, with enough time for participants to pause and reflect. To make the pacing of the activity appropriate, it may help to record an audiotape of the script that you can play during the lesson.

Make one copy of the Forgiveness Oval for each participant.



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## **Introduction**

*(directions for leaders are in italics)*

*Announce that this lesson will have a pre- and post evaluation. Hand out the Informed Consent letter to all group members. Read the letter to the group. Invite them to ask questions about the evaluation, and answer the questions based on information in the letter. Tell the members they may keep the letter in case they have future questions about the evaluation project. It is fine if some members decide not to participate in the evaluation.*

*Hand out the Forgiveness Attitudes and Beliefs page to the members.*

*Say: We will begin the lesson today with a brief pre-evaluation. Please turn to the side of the paper that says "before the lesson" and respond to the statements according to your attitudes and beliefs right now. Just mark your first impression for each of the statements.*

*Read the directions at the top to the group, and allow time for them to complete the first "Before" side of the page. Ask them to place the completed page below their chairs so that they can complete the other side at the end of the lesson.*

*Say: Many of us know family members and friends who have been angry with others for years, even decades. Some people die without forgiving others who have hurt them. How do we help others and ourselves deal with this issue? Is forgiveness necessary? When is forgiveness appropriate? In this lesson we will learn more about forgiveness and look at some possible processes for reaching forgiveness. In this lesson on forgiveness we will*

- *define what forgiveness is and is not,*
- *learn possible steps to achieve forgiveness, and*
- *experience a forgiveness activity.*

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF FORGIVENESS**

- *From ancient times, spiritual, religious, and moral teachings have extolled the necessity of forgiving others.*
- *From 1932 to 1980, many papers were published about the theoretical aspects of forgiveness. However, leaders in psychology and mental health, including Freud, Jung, Adler and Frankl, gave little or no attention to the topic.*
- *From 1980 to the present, more intensive and serious attention has been given and research conducted on the topic of forgiveness.*

- Between 1997 and 2003, the Campaign for Forgiveness Research funded 46 innovative research projects on the effects of forgiveness.

*Hand out the Forgiveness Quotes. To start the group thinking about forgiveness, ask the participants to take turns reading the quotes. Ask which quotes are meaningful to them and allow a little time for discussion.*

**DEFINITIONS OF FORGIVENESS (refer to Participant Guide)**

*Say: These definitions come from professionals and researchers working in the field of forgiveness. Again, ask participants to take turns reading the definitions of forgiveness from the participant's guide. Ask which definitions were meaningful to them.*

**WHAT FORGIVENESS DOES NOT MEAN (refer to Participant Guide)**

*Review the points in the "what forgiveness does not mean" section of the Participant Guide. You can ask for volunteers to read each point and ask the group to discuss them.*

**WHAT FORGIVENESS DOES MEAN**

*Review the points in the section of the Participant Guide. Lead discussion.*

**WHY FORGIVE?**

*Ask: What are the benefits of forgiving someone? Allow discussion. Research shows many benefits when we truly forgive someone. Summarize these points:*

- A decrease in stress, anxiety, depression and hostility,
- An increase in hope, self-esteem and well-being, which may or may not be a result of being true to one's religious conviction or personal morality,
- More steadfast relationships with friends and family,
- Improved cardiovascular functioning,
- Less frequent illness,
- Less cynicism and more trust, and
- A greater sense of control, power and resolution.

### WHY PEOPLE DON'T FORGIVE

*stubborn, love martyr*

Ask: Why do people sometimes not forgive another person? Allow discussion, then share this list (an excerpt from *The Unburdened Heart*):

- We lack experience and expertise
- We're angry
- We're afraid of being hurt again
- We've grown comfortable with the victim role
- Our culture doesn't emphasize forgiveness
- We don't want to admit that we were hurt
- We fool ourselves into thinking that we have already forgiven (denial – haven't done the work of forgiveness yet)
- Our egos get in the way
- We think the person doesn't deserve forgiveness
- The offender doesn't apologize
- We believe the apology isn't sincere
- We wait for the wrongdoer to become a right-doer
- We're cynical
- We believe we shouldn't forgive in certain circumstances (whoever is more in the wrong should apologize first)  
*don't feel we need to*

### SUPERFICIAL/PSEUDO FORGIVENESS

*- say we forgive but keep reminding the other person*

What passes for "forgiveness" among us much of the time really isn't forgiveness at all. At best, it is a social convention used to smooth ruffled feathers. At worst, it is something that buries the hurt even deeper inside us. Here are some examples:

- Absolving the offender. We make excuses for the person's behavior and decide there is nothing to forgive.
- Shaming the offender. For example, saying "I forgive you" and then essentially nullifying what we said by adding "I realize you are still too immature to understand what you did."
- Asserting self-righteous moral superiority or playing God. You call the offender and say, "I have forgiven you, I absolve you."
- Guilting the offender. You forgive in such a way that it makes the offender feel awful. "I forgive you...even though you've forever changed my life."
- Neglecting the offender by withdrawing love and caring.

### **Forgiveness Activity Script**

Let's take a couple of deep breaths together. Please sit silently and listen. Now, identify someone you want to forgive and get them clearly in mind. It can be someone living or deceased, someone you have not seen in years or someone you see every day.

Take the sheet with the oval shape drawn on it, and put that person's name on the line at the top of the oval. This figure now represents your characterization of that person.

Take a pen or pencil and fill the oval with all of the thoughts, feelings, judgments and attitudes you have about them. Write small if you must, but put everything in that oval. For example, were they critical, sarcastic, mean, and dishonest? How did they drive you or other people crazy with their behavior? What are their character flaws, as you see them? Take your time and leave nothing out. Be as picky, unmerciful and derisive as you like. No one will see this paper but you.

Why dredge up all this old stuff? It's painful and maybe you would rather forget it. However, if you are remembering it right now, it is still there inside you, festering away, and maybe has been there for a long time. It needs to be put on that paper where the light of your awareness can shine on it. If you see it and acknowledge it, you can consciously let it go. Trying not to look at it will only keep it around longer. Grievances denied have a much more profound effect on us than we can possibly imagine. And the more we try to push them down, the more powerful they become.

If you have chosen a person to forgive, please take a moment to realize that you have taken a big step in healing your relationship with him or her. You and I do not usually take the time to look at all the disagreeable things we have to say about certain people. This exercise will not demean or discount you. On the contrary, it will release light into an area of your consciousness that has been in the shadows. Remember that the act of observing is the first step toward understanding.

*(pause for 5 to 10 minutes to allow people to write)*

As you look over what you have written, see if you have left anything out. Add whatever is necessary before continuing. When you have finished,

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write: "And everything else." It signifies you are including anything you may remember in the future.

*(pause another 3 to 5 minutes)*

I am going to ask you three questions. Allow yourself to grasp the questions. Then take a moment to get in touch with your true feelings. You may encounter a variety of emotions as you go through this exercise. This is natural, for the emotions coming up have probably been there for quite awhile. Just let them be there. Sit with them. You do not have to do anything with them except give yourself room to experience them.

The answers to these questions are either yes or no. Responding with a 'Maybe', 'I think so', 'I'll try', or any other vague or qualifying answer counts as a "No." This is because qualifications do not come from your heart. If they occur, it is a sign that you are not yet ready to forgive that person. Be aware that you may need to have room to say: "No, I'm not willing to forgive this person," before you can have the space to give an authentic yes.

Close your eyes, and place on your lap that piece of paper on which you have written all your notes about the person you are going to forgive. Let your hands rest on the paper. As you do, you might be able to feel the energy from that characterization sheet.

In your mind's eye, place an empty chair in front of you, facing you ... Allow yourself to see this person coming toward you from the horizon to your right ... Let them sit in a chair in front of you ... How do they look as they see you? Do they appear worried or wary? Now, answer the following questions to yourself as you hear me ask them:

1. Are you willing to forgive this person totally? By this, we mean, are you willing to let go of everything you have written on that sheet of paper, and even things you have not written? You may not want to, may not even think you know how, but are you nevertheless willing, from your heart, to let this person off the hook? Again, are you willing to forgive this person totally? Answer yes or no to yourself.

2. Are you willing to forgive this person absolutely? By this we mean, are you willing to let go of your favorite stories and scenarios about them? Are

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you willing to give up permission to use these stories, either with yourself or with others, as the reason you have not achieved your goals and dreams in life? This means that every time you are tempted to use one of these stories, you will say to yourself, "Thank you for sharing, but I have already forgiven this person." So, once again, are you willing to forgive this person absolutely? Answer yes or no to yourself.

3. Are you willing to forgive this person unconditionally? Now and forever? This means that when you see them again, or think of them in any way, and notice you are starting to voice your old stories and evaluations, you will say, "Thank you for sharing, but I have already forgiven this person." This person may do what they usually do, which has upset you in the past. But you are hereby giving up permission to use what he or she does or says to form characterizations of them. In answering this question yes, you are willing to see that forgiveness has nothing to do with this person. It has everything to do with what you think or say about him or her. So, once again, are you willing to forgive this person unconditionally? Answer yes or no to yourself.

Whether you have answered yes or no to any of the questions, the fact that you have brought this person to sit in front of you says that you are willing for some healing to take place between the two of you ... We sometimes need room to say no before we can say yes ... There may be something you want to tell them from your heart right now ... Let them know what it is (*pause for fifteen seconds*). There may be something they want to tell you ... Listen to them now (*pause for fifteen seconds*).

If there are any questions to which you answered no, but are now willing to answer yes, allow yourself to do that now. If not, just let it be.

In your mind's eye, you can hug that person or shake hands. They did what they did. And so did you. That is the way it is with human beings. It is possible that all is well. Are you willing to see that possibility? Now, watch them as they walk away. If you still have any feelings about them, just let those feelings be. Know that healing is now taking place in your relationship with them.

Now, open your eyes. Take that piece of paper, tear it up, and throw it away. This symbolizes that you are complete in this process, no matter how you answered the questions. Figuratively, you are washing your hands of it.

Let's take some time to think about what you have gained from this exercise. You may have answered no to one or more of the above questions. Would you be willing to do the exercise again? If you continue to answer no to any of the questions, it might indicate that some specific work on the matter is needed. Above all, this is a time for compassion for yourself. If you have answered yes, what do you see? Is there a possibility of having a conversation with that person that was not a possibility in the past? (Note that this conversation does not need to take place for you to reap the benefits of forgiveness.) Do you notice a shift in your energy level? If so, what is it?

Learning to forgive is an ability that, with practice, becomes easier and easier. Be forewarned that you will also become more aware of people whom you have not forgiven. This awareness will stick with you until you act upon it and heal the relationship.

**Forgiveness Is Your Business.** People often ask, "Should I tell someone that I've forgiven them?" Think about it for a moment. If I walked up to you and announced, "I have forgiven you," what would your probable response be? Right! Something like: "What for?" Telling someone that you have forgiven them is irrelevant and a mistake. After all, forgiveness is your being willing to let go of what you have thought or said about them. It does not require even a single word from them to complete this process and bring you a sense of closure.

If you are not sure about forgiving a person who has been physically or emotionally violent with you or with a loved one, remember it can feel threatening or dangerous to let such a person off the hook. Remember that forgiveness does not mean forgetting or rationalizing away what they have done. It involves your letting go of a characterization of them that you have created.

(adapted from a presentation by Bernie and Kayla W. at 2002 Serenity Retreat, Rockaway Beach, OR)



### Forgiveness Quotes

"Think of your mind as a radar screen and you as the air traffic controller. On that screen at any minute are all the things you need to think about and attend to at any given moment. And then imagine that on your screen is a plane that has been circling for 9 or 10 years. Think of how much energy it is taking to keep that plane up there. Forgiveness is letting that plane land."  
---Fred Luskin

"Expectations are premeditated resentments."  
---Unknown

"Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back... in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you."  
---Frederic Buechner

"Forgiveness is the key to peace and happiness, and is the greatest healer of all."  
---Gerald G. Jampolsky, M.D.

"If I hold onto a grudge because I'm angry, I feel strong. But to set that anger aside takes real strength."  
---Everett. L. Worthington, Jr.

"It takes courage and commitment to act in a more forgiving fashion. It is not at all a sign of weakness, but a mark of strength."  
---Dr. Carl Thorensen, Stanford University

"Forgiveness is giving up hope for a better past."  
---John A. Mac Dougall

"He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself."  
---Unknown

"You and I don't get a choice about whether we have relatives. And we may not have a choice about how those relatives feel about us. But we do get to choose what our relationship with our relatives will be. Even if there is distance, or a past hurt, we can reach out in love. The other person may not change, but we do."  
---Martin Luther King, Jr.

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"Learn to forgive yourself and to forgive others. Ask for forgiveness from others. Forgiveness can soften the heart, drain the bitterness, and dissolve your guilt."

---*Morrie Schwartz*

"The man who opts for revenge should dig two graves."

---*Chinese proverb*

"I think it means...putting yourself in the position of the other person, and wiping away any sort of resentment and antagonism you feel toward them."

---*Jimmy Carter*

"When a deep injury is done to us, we never recover until we forgive."

---*Alan Paton*

"Forgiving is an act of mercy toward an offender. We are no longer controlled by angry feelings toward this person."

---*Robert D. Enright*

"Forgiveness works directly on the emotion of anger (and related constructs such as resentment, hostility, or hatred) by diminishing its intensity or level within the mind and heart."

---*Richard Fitzgibbons*

"Forgiveness is the key that can unshackle us from a past that will not rest in the grave of things over and done with. As long as our minds are captive to the memory of having been wronged, they are not free to wish for reconciliation with the one who wronged us."

---*Lewis B. Smedes*

"Forgiving ourselves is a tough nut to crack. Which is probably a good thing. Forgiving ourselves *should* be hard. Probable, yes; easy, no. If forgiving ourselves comes easy, chances are, we are only excusing ourselves, ducking blame, and not really forgiving ourselves at all."

---*Louis B. Smedes*

"It is hard to imagine a world without forgiveness. Without forgiveness life would be unbearable. Without forgiveness our lives are chained, forced to carry the sufferings of the past and repeat them with no release."

---*Jack Kornfield*

"Healthy anger drives us to do something to change what makes us angry; anger can energize us to make things better. Hate wants to make things worse."

---*Lewis B. Smedes*

"Why do we allow someone who's nasty to us to rent so much space in our minds?"

---*Fred Luskin*

# To Forgive or Not to Forgive: That Is the Question

## Participant's Guide

### Definitions of Forgiveness

#### Vitz and Mango (1997)

The term "forgiveness" refers to a person's conscious decision to give up resentment and any claims for redress from someone who has hurt him or her.

#### Luskin (1988)

The moment-to-moment experience of peace and understanding that occurs when an injured party's suffering is reduced as they transform their grievance against an offending party. This transformation takes place through learning to take less personal offense, attribute less blame to the offender and, by great understanding, see the personal and interpersonal harm that occurs as the natural consequence of unresolved anger and hurt.

#### Affinito (1999)

Deciding not to punish a perceived injustice, taking action on that decision, and experiencing the emotional relief that follows.

#### Smedes (1984)

Forgiving is love's revolution against life's unfairness. When we forgive, we ignore the normal laws that strap us to the natural law of getting even and, by the alchemy of love, we release ourselves from our own painful pasts.

#### Worthington (2001)

The emotional replacement of (1) hot emotions of anger or fear that follow a perceived hurt or offense, or (2) unforgiveness that follows ruminating about the transgression, by substituting positive emotions such as unselfish love, empathy, compassion, or even romantic love.

### What Forgiveness Does Not Mean

- NOT forgetting

We all know the old adage, "Forgive and forget". However, forgiving someone does not mean we forget the wrong that the person did. Forgiveness has nothing to

do with forgetting. For example, what would happen if you burned your fingers on the stove, and you forgot that hurt? Remembering the pain helps us to not let the event be repeated.

An important part of forgiveness is remembering and dealing with what has happened. Pain inflicted will probably never be forgotten. Forgiveness allows us to put the pain in a place where it doesn't continue to hurt us.

- NOT condoning the person's behavior

By forgiving, we are not saying that what they did was acceptable or unimportant, or "not so bad". It was bad, it did hurt, and it was wrong. We are not declaring the offender "not guilty" or absolving the person of the wrong. We do not need to justify or explain the other person's behavior.

Forgiving does not mean removing responsibility for what the person has done. There is nothing about genuine forgiveness that precludes holding people accountable for their actions.

- NOT reconciliation

Forgiveness does not mean we have to meet face-to-face with the person who wronged us. Forgiveness and reconciliation are two different processes. Forgiveness we do by ourselves. Reconciliation requires the other person's participation.

- NOT self-sacrifice

Forgiveness is not swallowing our true feelings and playing the martyr or saying it's all right in spite of the pain. It is not gritting our teeth and tolerating those who hurt us, or using the "grin and bear it" approach. Self-sacrifice makes life less joyful and more difficult.

- NOT a clear-cut, one-time decision

Forgiveness cannot be forced, and it is a process. Researchers now look at forgiveness and unforgiveness as two ends of a continuum, with a person moving, often not in a linear fashion, between unforgiveness and forgiveness over time. There is also a new concept of "not forgiving", which is a conscious decision to withhold forgiveness. Sometimes what people really need is permission not to forgive, to feel what they feel. It is important to be at peace with a decision to not forgive, and not let the hurt continue to disrupt our lives.



## What Forgiveness DOES Mean

- Canceling the debt

When someone does us wrong, we feel as though they have taken something that belongs to us – our peace, our joy, our happiness – and that they now “owe us.” When we forgive them, we simply release the debt. It’s no longer “you’ve hurt me and you’ve got to pay”. We don’t pretend the debt never existed, we just forgive it. “You no longer owe me anything.” **Forgiveness is about OUR healing. It is a way of getting poison out of our system.**

- Unilateral process

Forgiveness is something we do on our own. The other person does not need to cooperate or even be aware of it. Forgiveness does not depend on what the other person does or doesn’t do.

- Involves “letting go”

Forgiveness involves working through the feelings of what occurred and giving validity to “the loss.” It is a process that involves freeing ourselves from the emotional effects of what was done to us, getting free of the hurt, bitterness, and resentment. The number of times someone hurt us or whether they deserve forgiveness is not the issue. To forgive literally means “to give up”—to give up hatred, revenge, punishment. Our motive is to move our lives past bitter obsession.

When we have truly completed the process of forgiveness, what happened between us and the other person is no longer a “live” issue in the way we think of or relate to the person, or in the way we live our lives.

Signs of **genuine** forgiveness include:

- The ability to use anger constructively. We can use anger to initiate and sustain constructive activity (stop injustice, protect self, engage in conflict resolution). We are no longer controlled by anger or fearful of its expression.
- An increase in more neutral or genuine positive attitudes, especially toward the person forgiven. Greater life capacity to give and receive love, and experience gratitude.
- An ability to ask for forgiveness from others and to give forgiveness, even when the other refuses to forgive.

## STEPS TO FORGIVENESS

### 1. Recognize the injury.

Whom do you need to forgive? Writing a list is helpful.

How have they hurt or injured you? Describe what happened. Writing out all the details helps bring the hurt to the surface, and helps you see that, no matter how horrible or extensive the offense, it does have a boundary and is not limitless.

### 2. Identify the emotions and feelings involved.

List the feelings you have about what happened. For example: "I am afraid to look at this because..." or "It made me furious when..." or "I felt resentful/damaged/bitter." This can be difficult if feelings have been buried or stuffed down for a long time. Try writing and just letting your thoughts flow onto paper.

### 3. Express your hurt and anger.

Reaching genuine forgiveness almost always includes working through anger. Frequently, underneath anger are feelings of hurt. Anger that is left unresolved takes root and produces bitterness and resentment. Anger is not inherently good or bad, right or wrong. Anger is merely a fact of life. Healthy anger drives us to do something to change what makes us angry. Anger can energize us to make things better. Hate wants to make things worse.

It may be important to find a trusted friend, counselor, or religious community leader who can help work through the feelings. Be sure to choose someone who is nonjudgmental and is willing to just listen.

### 4. Set boundaries to protect yourself.

This is a way to possibly avoid additional hurts. Boundaries are limits. For example: "I will listen to what my mother tells me to do, but I won't allow myself to feel that I have to do what she says." Or, physically stay away from a particular family member for a time or for good.

### 5. Decide to forgive.

This is deciding that what you have been doing has not worked and being willing to begin the forgiveness process. Choosing to forgive is about healing your own feelings. It has nothing to do with what the other person does or does not do.

### 6. Work on forgiveness – cancel the debt.

Work toward empathy, understanding and compassion for the offender. See the person who, like you, is part of humanity on this earth. Acknowledge your pain and let it be. Let go of the emotional IOUs.

- Apologizing. "I know you didn't mean it the way I took it. If only I could get over my sensitivity about things like that." I end up apologizing to you for hurting me.

As a general rule, if what we say and do makes the other person feel bad, it's probably not genuine forgiveness.

### STEPS TO FORGIVENESS

*Say:* Many researchers and authors have identified steps to take to achieve true forgiveness. The process outlined in the Participant Guide summarizes the key steps.

*Review the Steps to Forgiveness with the group.*

*Say:* You may want to look at recent books on forgiveness available at the local library and bookstore for other ideas on how to proceed with the forgiveness process.

### FORGIVENESS ACTIVITY

*Distribute the oval sheets and read the script or play the tape that you have recorded. After the activity, invite the group to discuss the activity. .*

### CLOSING STATEMENT

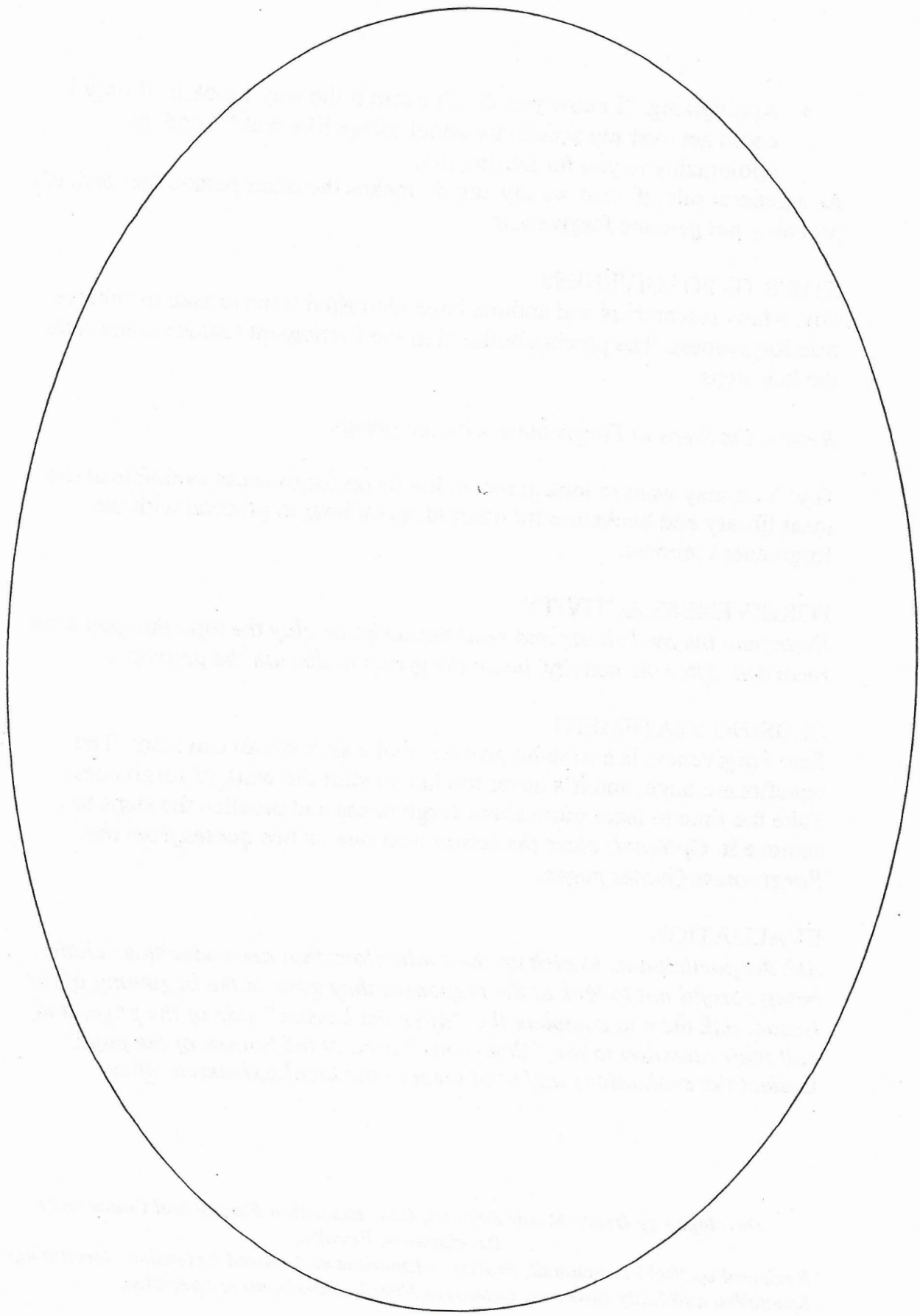
*Say:* Forgiveness is a lifetime process, and a skill we all can learn. The benefits are huge, and it's never too late to start the work of forgiveness. Take the time to learn more about forgiveness and practice the steps to achieve it. *Optional: close the lesson with one or two quotes from the Forgiveness Quotes pages.*

### EVALUATION

*Ask the participants to pick up the evaluations that are under their chairs, being careful not to look at the responses they gave at the beginning of the lesson. Ask them to complete the "After the Lesson" side of the page, and call their attention to the "Comments" area at the bottom of the page. Collect the evaluations and send them to the local Extension office.*

*Developed by Debra Minar Driscoll, OSU Extension Family and Community Development Faculty.*

*Reviewed by Vicki L. Schmall, Professor Emeritus and retired Extension Gerontology Specialist, and Sally Bowman, Extension Family Development Specialist.*





**7. Commit to forgive.**

Take your list of injuries and burn or bury them. Write a letter to the offender, detailing the issue and your feelings, write "Cancelled" across it, and destroy it without sending it. Make up a forgiveness certificate (for your personal use, not to be given to the offender!) and post it where you will see it every day. Such actions leave us with the memory of a definite time when we tangibly and concretely cancelled the debt.

**8. Hold on to forgiveness and discover your release from emotional prison.**

If grudge or resentment thoughts about the issue and person in question surface, remind yourself that you have forgiven him or her.

Discover your own need for forgiveness. These steps work for forgiving yourself, too. Discover the freedom of forgiveness. Decide whether or not reconciliation is wanted or possible. When seeking reconciliation, the goal cannot be to restore the relationship to where it was before----- the offense has changed it permanently. A new way of relating will need to be developed.

***Certificate of Forgiveness***  
 I (your name) do hereby declare that  
 on (today's date)  
 I have completely and unequivocally forgiven  
 (name of person who hurt you)  
 for (description of the offense)  
 and give up my right to old feelings I have held, old characterizations of this  
 person, and old stories about what was done to me.

*Signed* \_\_\_\_\_

**For Further Reading:**

Jampolsky, Gerald and Diane V. Cinnicione "10 Stepping Stones to Spiritual, Physical and Emotional Health"  
[http://www.forgivenessworks.org/fw/main/resources/articles/stepping\\_stones.html](http://www.forgivenessworks.org/fw/main/resources/articles/stepping_stones.html)

Luskin, Fred, Forgive for Good. 2001, Harper, San Francisco.

Nelson, Mariah Burton. The Unburdened Heart: Five Keys to Forgiveness and Freedom. 2000, HarperCollins, New York.

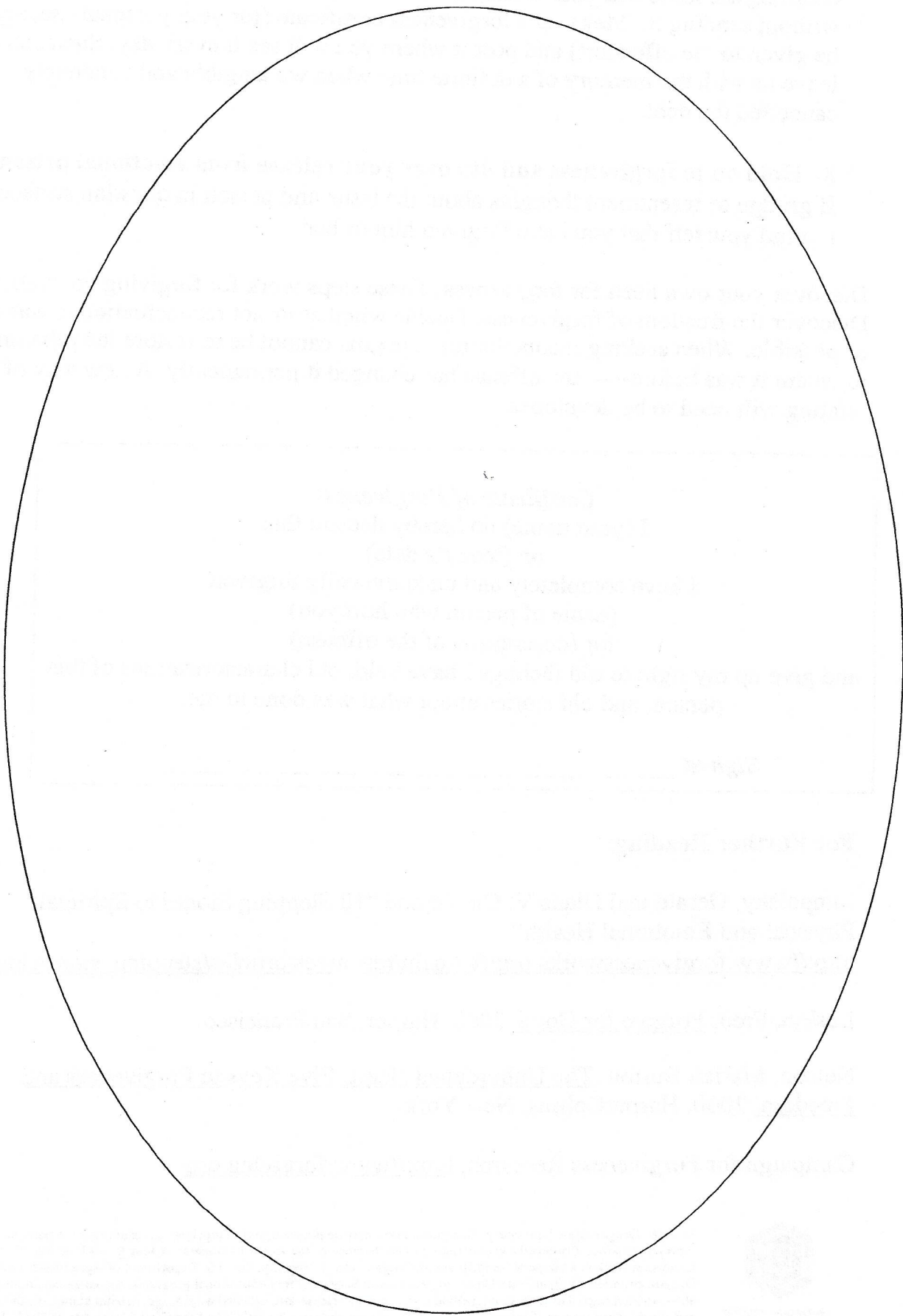
Campaign for Forgiveness Research, <http://www.forgiving.org>



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## Forgiveness Attitudes and Beliefs

### Before the Lesson

For each statement, choose one response using this scale:  
SA = Strongly agree; A = agree; NS = Not sure; D = disagree; SD = Strongly disagree

|                                                                                                                            | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|----|---|----|
| 1. If I forgive someone, that means I have to forget what that person did.                                                 |    |   |    |   |    |
| 2. It is okay to <u>not</u> forgive someone.                                                                               |    |   |    |   |    |
| 3. It is easier to forgive if I pretend that the hurt never happened.                                                      |    |   |    |   |    |
| 4. Forgiving someone is a clear-cut, one-time decision.                                                                    |    |   |    |   |    |
| 5. In order to forgive someone, I need to make peace with the person face-to-face.                                         |    |   |    |   |    |
| 6. The person who did wrong must apologize or ask for forgiveness before I can forgive him or her.                         |    |   |    |   |    |
| 7. Forgiveness means setting aside all my anger about the person or event.                                                 |    |   |    |   |    |
| 8. By forgiving someone, I am saying that what he or she did was okay.                                                     |    |   |    |   |    |
| 9. Feeling empathy toward the person who did wrong can make it easier to forgive that person.                              |    |   |    |   |    |
| 10. Before I can forgive someone, I need to look at all the thoughts, feelings, judgments and attitudes I have about them. |    |   |    |   |    |

## Forgiveness Attitudes and Beliefs

### After the Lesson

For each statement, choose one response using this scale:

SA = Strongly agree; A = agree; NS = Not sure; D = disagree; SD = Strongly disagree

|                                                                                                                            | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|----|---|----|
| 1. If I forgive someone, that means I have to forget what that person did.                                                 |    |   |    |   |    |
| 2. It is okay to <u>not</u> forgive someone.                                                                               |    |   |    |   |    |
| 3. It is easier to forgive if I pretend that the hurt never happened.                                                      |    |   |    |   |    |
| 4. Forgiving someone is a clear-cut, one-time decision.                                                                    |    |   |    |   |    |
| 5. In order to forgive someone, I need to make peace with the person face-to-face.                                         |    |   |    |   |    |
| 6. The person who did wrong must apologize or ask for forgiveness before I can forgive him or her.                         |    |   |    |   |    |
| 7. Forgiveness means setting aside all my anger about the person or event.                                                 |    |   |    |   |    |
| 8. By forgiving someone, I am saying that what he or she did was okay.                                                     |    |   |    |   |    |
| 9. Feeling empathy toward the person who did wrong can make it easier to forgive that person.                              |    |   |    |   |    |
| 10. Before I can forgive someone, I need to look at all the thoughts, feelings, judgments and attitudes I have about them. |    |   |    |   |    |

How will you apply what you learned today to your life?

Please write any comments you have about this lesson on forgiveness: