



Enriching Lives

### ***THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS IN RELATIONSHIPS***

Can you think of a situation in which you felt betrayed, hurt and/or disappointed? Most people can visualize at least a single situation in which a transgression was committed against them. Experiencing damaging transgression can adversely affect relationships in various ways. Relational conflict may escalate and as a result, relationships may be strained and/or destroyed. Therefore, to prevent relationships from becoming estranged it is important to explore what responses can foster healing and restoration. Hence, the question remains, “What can be done to promote healing and/or salvage a relationship after an interpersonal wound has been created?” This article will summarize the benefits of expressing forgiveness.

- Expressing forgiveness may occur overtly and/or covertly. To further elaborate, an overt communication of forgiveness consists of stating a direct reference to the presence of a debt and one’s willingness to release the other person from the debt. For instance, “I forgive you for hurting me and I’m willing to put it behind us.” In contrast, with a covert expression of forgiveness, one’s statement or behaviors suggest that either no transgression was committed or that the transgression was so trivial as to be of no significance. A sample statement of a covert expression of forgiveness could be, “No big deal.”
- The benefit of communicating forgiveness is that it can lead to reconciliation. Reconciliation conveys a readiness to function in an atmosphere of trust. Reconciliation restores trust and harmony in interpersonal relationships. Sincere articulations of forgiveness are likely to foster reconciliation and produce promising relational results. When individuals behave in a forgiving manner, their behaviors may catalyze a positive interaction cycle that replaces the conflictual and damaging interactional pattern.
- In addition to expressions of forgiveness enhancing relationships, people who practice forgiveness internally and express forgiveness externally may obtain mental and physical rewards. Communicating forgiveness can erase the power differential between the emotionally injured party and the transgressing party. Utilizing forgiveness can be an empowering experience because it can release you from the “victim” role, provide you with the opportunity to cancel a debt and restore yourself and the transgressing party on equal grounding. Furthermore, disclosing forgiveness can assist you in unleashing anger; finding closure to a distressing circumstance; gaining wisdom and in assigning meaning to the learning experience.

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