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Application and Assessment of Interpersonal Forgiveness

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Overview

Moral issues within psychology have been an object of study since the 1890s (see, for example, Hall, 1891). The majority of studies in the 20th century have centered on themes of justice, not mercy (see, for example, Killen & Smetana, 2006). In the 1980s, almost a century after the emergence of moral psychology, the construct of forgiveness began to emerge as a possible area of basic and applied research within psychology. From its humble beginnings, the psychology of forgiveness has now begun to emerge as a field worthy of researchers' time. For example, in 1985 a perusal of the American Psychological Association's database yielded no entries for the word "forgiveness." An examination of that site (PsychINFO) in October 2006 revealed a total of 218 entries for 2005–2006 alone. Those entries are as wide-ranging as social, developmental, clinical, and

counseling psychology; family studies; and psychiatry. Forgiveness is even making inroads into the study of law (Sullivan & Tifft, 2006) and peace studies (Bole, Christiansen, & Henemeyer, 2004). This chapter discusses the research and practice in interpersonal forgiveness applied to the health professions.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the chapter, the reader should be able to:

1. Define the construct of interpersonal forgiveness;
2. Understand the history and current application of forgiveness research;
3. Identify the role of interpersonal forgiveness in rehabilitation and health; and
4. Examine current assessment measures of interpersonal forgiveness.

Introduction

The psychology of forgiveness is growing as a field, we think, because of its centrality to healthy relationships and healthy emotional functioning. To be able to forgive is an action that can benefit those forgiven and those doing the forgiving. If this is so, then it is important for our field to find effective ways to apply forgiveness when people are hurt by the injustices of others and to assess accurately a person's current level of forgiveness if effective applications are to ensue.

In this chapter, first, it is vital to understand the construct if we are to proceed well in the areas of application and assessment. Second, we review the intervention studies in this newly emerging area. All of the studies reviewed (with one exception in McCullough & Worthington, 1995) rely on the "gold standard" of intervention research: randomization to group, pretesting, posttesting, and follow-up testing with well-validated instruments. Third, we review assessment approaches so that the reader might select the best instrument for a given situation. Let us begin by examining the meaning of forgiveness.

History of Research and Practice in the Assessment of Forgiveness

The concept of *forgiveness* finds its roots in the ancient writings of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Accounts such as Joseph forgiving his brothers (Genesis 50) and the father forgiving his prodigal son (Luke 15) are just two narratives that portray forgiveness as a cessation of resentment and an offering of a beneficent response toward offenders, all in the context of unconditional love. Although other ancient religious or philosophical systems—such as Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism—deal with notions of forgiveness in their treatment of such concepts as compassion and mercy, the most explicit and thorough ancient references come from Judaism and Christianity (Enright, Eastin, Golden, Sarinopoulos, & Freedman, 1992).

About 20 years ago, forgiveness remained largely outside the purview of social science, until Smedes (1984), Enright, Santos, and Al-Mabuk (1989), and Worthington and DiBlasio (1990) planted forgiveness on the scholarly landscape. Since then, the growing wave of forgiveness research has continued to shed light on the processes and outcomes of forgiveness interventions. Although not all scholars agree on the exact definition of forgiveness, most agree that forgiveness entails the giving up of anger and resentment, and many would suggest that those negative emotions be replaced by positive ones, such as benevolence and love. Enright (2001) provides a comprehensive definition of forgiveness:

> *When unjustly hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead by trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence, and love; as we give these, we as forgivers realize that the offender does not necessarily have a right to such gifts. (p. 25)*

Thus, forgiveness includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Also important in describing forgiveness is defining what forgiveness is not. Forgiveness is not condoning, excusing, forgetting, justifying, calming down, or reconciling (Enright, 2001).

It is important to note here that there is healthy discourse across several disciplines—psychology, philosophy, and others—regarding what forgiveness is and is not. The definition we present here is not the only definition of forgiveness; rather, it represents one definition based on nearly 2 decades of academic inquiry and empirical research. (See Murphy (2000); McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen (2000); and Rye et al. (2001) for an overview of alternative definitions of forgiveness.)

Regarding the implementation of forgiveness, two basic models exist in the literature: decision models and process models. Decision models emphasize a cognitive decision to let go of resentment, bitterness, and any need for vengeance (DiBlasio, 1998). In so doing, the forgiver separates reason from emotion and, as an act of the will, decides to forgive (DiBlasio, 2000; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). The process model of forgiveness, on the other hand, maintains that forgiveness is a complex process that takes time and hard work. One key feature of process models is a "roadmap" of forgiveness that identifies how people actually forgive one another. For example, in Enright's Process Model of Forgiveness (2001; see Exhibit 21.1), people journey through four phases of forgiveness: uncovering anger, deciding to forgive, working on forgiveness, and discovery and emotional release (see also Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). In making this journey, the forgiver moves at his or her own pace through different developmental guideposts, often revisiting some and sometimes skipping others.

Forgiveness interventions have proven effective with a variety of populations with myriad hurtful experiences. As a result of forgiveness interventions, elderly females showed higher forgiveness profiles and decreased in depression and anxiety (Hebl & Enright, 1993); college students increased in positive affect toward the offender and reported decreased vengeful feelings and increased conciliatory behavior (McCullough & Worthington, 1995); parentally love-deprived adolescents experienced significantly lower anxiety and higher self-esteem, hope, forgiveness, and positive attitudes toward their parents (Al-Mabuk, Enright, &

Exhibit 21.1

ENRIGHT PROCESS MODEL OF FORGIVENESS

The Enright Process Model of Forgiveness

The Phases and Units of Forgiving and the Issues Involved

UNCOVERING PHASE

1. Examination of psychological defenses and the issues involved
2. Confrontation of anger; the point is to release, not harbor, the anger
3. Admittance of shame, when this is appropriate
4. Awareness of depleted emotional energy
5. Awareness of cognitive rehearsal of the offense
6. Insight that the injured party may be comparing self with the injurer
7. Realization that oneself may be permanently and adversely changed by the injury
8. Insight into a possibly altered "just world" view

DECISION PHASE

9. A change in heart/conversion/new insights that old resolution strategies are not working
10. Willingness to consider forgiveness as an option
11. Commitment to forgive the offender

WORK PHASE

12. Reframing, though role-taking, who the wrongdoer is by viewing him or her in context
13. Empathy and compassion toward the offender
14. Bearing/accepting the pain
15. Giving a moral gift to the offender

DEEPENING PHASE

16. Finding meaning for self and others in the suffering and in the forgiveness process
17. Realization that self has needed others' forgiveness in the past
18. Insight that one is not alone (universality, support)
19. Realization that self may have new purpose in life because of the injury
20. Awareness of decreased negative affect and, perhaps, increased positive affect, if this begins to emerge, toward the injurer; awareness of internal, emotional release

Cardis, 1995); and female survivors of incest reported significant reductions in anxiety and depression and significant increases in hope, forgiveness, and self-esteem (Freedman & Enright, 1996). Furthermore, because of these interventions, college students showed more empathy and forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1997); men who were hurt by their partner's abortion decreased significantly in anxiety, anger, and grief and increased significantly in forgiveness (Coyle & Enright, 1997); residential drug rehab patients showed reduced depression, anger, and anxiety (Lin, Mack, Enright, Krahn, & Baskin, 2004); divorced individuals reported reduced depression (Rye et al., 2005); and emotionally abused women were able to improve in depression, trait anxiety, posttraumatic stress symptoms, self-esteem, forgiveness, environmental mastery, and finding meaning in suffering (Reed & Enright, 2006).

Importance of Forgiveness to Health and Rehabilitation

Until recently, psychological and social interventions and research have focused on the remediation or suppression of negative emotions associated with mental or physical illness. The current applications of interpersonal forgiveness are part of a growing trend in psychological research to focus on aspects of positive functioning that "lead to well-being, to positive individuals, and to thriving communities" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). This new focus is known as the Positive Psychology movement.

The empirical link between forgiveness and health has strengthened in the last several years. The link between mental health and forgiveness has been clearly established by various studies. Forgiveness has been shown both to decrease negative affect, such as depression, anger, anxiety, grief, and vengeful feelings, and to increase such positive traits as self-esteem, hope, positive attitudes, conciliatory behavior, positive affect, and empathy (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Coyle & Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Hebl & Enright, 1993; Lin et al., 2004; McCullough & Worthington, 1995; McCullough et al., 1997; Reed & Enright, 2006; Rye et al., 2005). A recent meta-analytic study of forgiveness indicated that interventions based on the process model of forgiveness yielded an effect size for forgiveness between 0.53 and 2.16, which can be considered a large effect size (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Lipsley, 1990). Furthermore, participants who received individual treatment, rather than treatment within a large group, demonstrated significantly greater increases in forgiveness (Baskin & Enright, 2004).

The link between forgiveness and physical health, although somewhat less supported, is gaining strength as well. Huang and Enright (2000) discovered a relationship between forgiveness reasoning and blood pressure levels. Lawler et al. (2003) reported that state forgiveness was correlated with lower blood pressure levels and heart rate, and trait forgiveness was linked to lower blood pressure levels. Worthington and Scherer (2004) review literature demonstrating, through brain activity, hormonal patterns, the sympathetic nervous system, tension in facial muscles, and measures of blood chemistry, that the state of unforgiveness is stressful and that forgiveness can alleviate that stress. They also offer some initial support for propositions that forgiveness reduces hostility and affects both the immune and central nervous systems at various levels

(Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Forgiveness, then, is important to well-being, both mentally and physically.

Current Assessment Methods in Interpersonal Forgiveness

Since the social-scientific study of interpersonal forgiveness is a relatively new construct within the field of psychology and counseling (Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992; Enright & Human Development Study Group, 1991), there is some debate regarding what forgiveness is and is not and how it is most effectively measured (McCullough et al., 2000; Rye et al., 2001). These definitional considerations are paramount to issues of measurement and assessment. Perhaps more than any other variable, a researcher's or practitioner's conceptualization and definition of forgiveness will determine the types of outcomes they expect to find and the tools with which they assess those outcomes. Therefore, it is appropriate to

Discussion Box 21.1

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

The study of interpersonal forgiveness has burgeoned in the past 2 decades. Once absent from the social sciences, interpersonal forgiveness has inspired countless empirical articles and books that examine the theory, process, application, and measurement of the construct. And yet, despite the increasing academic interest in the study of interpersonal forgiveness, there is currently no academic consensus regarding the essential components or operational definition of interpersonal forgiveness. Therefore, before implementing or analyzing forgiveness programs or interventions, it is important to explore and articulate a working definition. Your response to these questions will likely impact your intervention model and assessment methods.

What is forgiveness?
Is forgiveness the absence of negative or the presence of positive thoughts, feelings, and actions? How is forgiveness different than excusing or condoning the unjust action? Can someone forgive without forgetting? Is there any act beyond the scope of forgiveness? Does authentic forgiveness necessarily involve reconciliation with the offender? Is forgiveness *a decision or a process of many decisions?*

Who is forgiving?
Is the person I am counseling or evaluating open to forgiveness? Does the intensity of the unjust and deep hurt prevent him/her from considering forgiveness as an option? Is she/he able to discuss their deep hurt rationally? Does he/she have preconceptions about forgiveness that are inaccurate or incomplete?

examine the components of forgiveness—definition, process, and participant—before choosing an assessment of the construct.

The definition of forgiveness discussed earlier in the chapter (Enright, 2001) and the Enright Process Model of Forgiveness describe forgiveness as a process of gradual changes in thoughts, feelings, and actions toward a wrongdoer. Subsequently, the measurement tool designed by Enright and Rique (1999) to assess interpersonal forgiveness is multidimensional in its construction and asks questions within affective, behavioral, and cognitive domains. Conditions such as construct-measurement match are essential to the accurate assessment of interpersonal forgiveness. Therefore, when choosing a forgiveness assessment, consider the following questions (adapted from Enright and Fitzgibbons, 2000):

Assessment Guidelines

1. Does it appropriately reflect the construct you are measuring?
2. Is it easy to complete, and is it developmentally appropriate?
3. Does it have strong psychometric properties of reliability and validity?

In the following section, we present three measures of interpersonal forgiveness that have been reported in published research: The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI), The Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children (EFI-C), and The Forgiveness Scale. These three measures were chosen as exemplary measures for three primary reasons. First, each measure assesses interpersonal forgiveness in a manner that is consistent with and reflective of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral assumptions represented in our earlier discussion of the construct of forgiveness, and each contains both positive and negative variables in assessing these categories. Second, each of the three measures assesses "transgression-specific" forgiveness—actual expressions of forgiveness based on a real experience of hurt—rather than an assessment of general forgiveness tendency or dispositional forgiveness. Finally, these three measures were chosen for their strength of construction (e.g., broad age range, general ease of use, and high internal reliability). Additionally, we will provide information on how to obtain copies of these measures for use in counseling, educational, or other research programs.

The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI)

The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI; see Exhibit 21.2) is based on the definition presented earlier in the chapter and the Enright Process Model of Forgiveness.

The EFI was developed over a 2-year period where graduate students and professors specializing in development and measurement met to explore what forgiveness is and how it could be measured. A total of 60 questions were constructed across 3 major domains—affect, behavior, and cognition—with a balance of 10 positive and 10 negative questions within each domain. For example, participants respond to questions such as "I feel warm toward him/her," "I would avoid him/her," and "I think he or she is worthy of respect," which were created to assess both positive and negative thoughts, feelings, and actions toward the

Exhibit 21.2

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENRIGHT FORGIVENESS INVENTORY (EFI)

ATTITUDE SCALE

We are sometimes unfairly hurt by people, whether in family, friendship, school, work, or other situations. We ask you now to think of the **most recent** experience of someone hurting you **unfairly** and **deeply**. For a few moments, visualize in your mind the events of that interaction. Try to see the person and try to experience what happened.

1. **How deeply were you hurt when the incident occurred?**
(circle one)

No hurt A little hurt Some hurt Much hurt A great deal of hurt

2. **Who hurt you?**

Child Spouse Relative Friend of the same gender Friend of the opposite gender Employer

3. **Is the person living?**

Yes No

4. **How long ago was the offense?**
(Please write in the number of days or weeks, etc.)

____ days ago ____ months ago
____ weeks ago ____ years ago

5. **Please briefly describe what happened when this person hurt you:**

Now, please answer a series of questions about your current attitude toward this person. We do **not** want your rating of past attitudes, but your ratings of attitudes **right now**. All responses are confidential so please answer honestly. Thank you.

SAMPLE AFFECT QUESTIONS

This set of items deals with your current **feelings** or **emotions** right now toward the person. Try to assess your actual **feeling** for the person on each item. For each item please check the appropriate number matching your level of agreement that **best** describes your current feeling. Please do not skip any item. Thank you.

I feel _____ toward him/her. (Place each word in the blank when answering each item.)

I feel...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 warm	1	2	3	4	5	6
2 negative	1	2	3	4	5	6

20 items total on the Affect subscale (10 positive and 10 negative affect items).

SAMPLE BEHAVIOR QUESTIONS

This set of items deals with your current **behavior** toward the person. Consider how you **do act** or **would act** toward the person in answering the questions. For each item please check the appropriate number matching your level of agreement that **best** describes your current behavior or probable behavior. Please do not skip any item. Thank you.

Regarding this person, I do or would _____. (Place each word in the blank when answering each item.)

I do or would...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21 show friendship	1	2	3	4	5	6
22 avoid	1	2	3	4	5	6

20 items total on the behavior subscale (10 positive and 10 negative behavior items).

SAMPLE COGNITIVE QUESTIONS

This set of questions deals with how you currently **think** about the person. Think about the kinds of thoughts that occupy your **mind** right **now** regarding this particular person. For each item please check the appropriate number matching your level of agreement that **best** describes your current thinking. Please do not skip any items. Thank you.

I think he or she is _____. (Place each word in the blank when answering each item.)

I think he or she is...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
46 dreadful	1	2	3	4	5	6
47 loving	1	2	3	4	5	6

20 items total on the cognitive subscale (10 positive and 10 negative cognitive items).

SAMPLE PSEUDOFORGIVENESS AND VALIDATION QUESTIONS

In thinking through the person and event you just rated, please consider the following questions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
61 There really was no problem now that I think about it	1	2	3	4	5	6

We have one final question.

To what extent have you forgiven the person you rated on this *Attitude Scale*?

Not at all		In progress		Complete forgiveness
1	2	3	4	5

6 total items in the pseudoforgiveness and validation subscale

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wrongdoer. Participants respond to these questions on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly agree* to (6) *strongly disagree*.

The EFI evaluation begins by asking participants to describe a recent experience of unfair and deep hurt. They are also asked to visualize the person (wrongdoer) who is responsible for the hurt. Participants are then asked to focus only on the wrongdoer they identified in the focusing exercise as they complete the forgiveness assessment.

In addition to the three domains of assessment, the EFI provides an additional set of questions to evaluate *pseudoforgiveness*. As the term suggests, pseudoforgiveness is not genuine forgiveness but likely an expression of condoning or excusing the unjust hurt and wrongdoer. These pseudoforgiveness questions follow the same 6-point Likert format as the others but are scored independently. Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) report that a score of 20 or more on this scale is indicative of pseudoforgiveness and recommend that the data be removed from analysis.

The final question on the EFI is designed to allow for the assessment of construct validity—to ensure that the EFI measures forgiveness and not some other construct. Participants are asked about forgiveness for the first time in this question, which reads: "To what extent have you forgiven the person you rated on the *Attitude Scale?*" Participants respond on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from (1) *Not at all* to (5) *Complete forgiveness*.

The content and sequence of the EFI was originally validated through a study conducted by Subkoviak et al. (1992, 1995). Subkoviak and colleagues administered the EFI to 394 participants; half of the participants were college students, and the other half consisted of the same-sex parent of the student. Results from this study yielded a Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency of.98 and a correlation of.68 for the relationship between the construct validity question and the EFI. Both of these results are considered strong and have been replicated in numerous studies across diverse populations, as can be seen in Table 21.1.

The Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children (EFI-C)

The Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children (EFI-C; see example in Exhibit 21.3) is based on the adult version (EFI) and is representative of the definition and model of forgiveness presented earlier in the chapter. The EFI-C is designed to provide helping professionals and researchers an accurate and reliable assessment of children's expressions of interpersonal forgiveness.

The EFI-C begins by asking the children to describe a recent experience of deep hurt and to focus on the person responsible for that hurt. The children are

21.1 Reliability and Validity of the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI)

Study	Sample Size	Cronbach's α	Correlation of EFI and 1-item forgiveness question
Subkoviak et al. (1995)	394	.98	.68
Gassin (1995)	19	.99	.74
Coyle & Enright (1997)	10	.95	Not given
Sarinopoulos (2000)	219	.99	.60
Konstam, Chernoff, & Deveney (2001)	138	.98	Not given
Rye et al. (2001)	328	.99	.71
Lin et al. (2004)	14	.96	Not given
Maltby, Day, & Barber (2005)	224	> .92	Not given
Reed & Enright (2006)	20	.94	Not given

then guided through 30 questions across the 3 major domains—affect, behavior, and cognition—with a balance of 5 positive and 5 negative questions within each domain. For example, the children respond to questions such as "Do you feel happy about him or/her?," "Would you get back at him/her?," and "Do you hope they are happy?" The children are asked to respond to such questions by indicating (1) *Yes,* (2) *A little bit yes,* (3) *A little bit no,* and (4) *No.* The EFI-C also includes questions that assess pseudoforgiveness and construct validity.

The language throughout the measure is crafted to be developmentally appropriate for children as young as age 7. Because the EFI-C is designed especially for young children, it is advised that a trained practitioner guide each child through the assessment in an informal interview format and record their responses. Practitioners can even use colorful response boards whereby the children indicate their responses by pointing to a word or picture.

The EFI-C is a relatively new measure of interpersonal forgiveness and has only recently been implemented in empirical research with elementary-age children (Enright, Knutson Enright, Holter, Baskin, & Knutson, 2006). University researchers have successfully used the EFI-C to assess forgiveness levels of first through fifth grade students in elementary schools throughout the United States and in Northern Ireland. Preliminary use of the measure with third grade children in the United States and Northern Ireland has indicated levels of reliability consistent with the EFI (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$). However, further research is needed to properly validate the measure and establish expected norms.

Forgiveness Scale

Rye et al. (2001) developed a forgiveness scale that is "relatively brief and contains questions about both positive and negative responses toward offenders"

Exhibit 21.3

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENRIGHT FORGIVENESS INVENTORY FOR CHILDREN (EFI-C)

INTRODUCTION

Please remember a time when a person *hurt you very, very much*. Think back to what he/she did. Try to see in your mind what happened. How did this make you feel?

Circle the answer that is most appropriate:

Very Awful A Little Awful Not Awful Not at all Awful

Who was the one who made you feel this way?_____

How long ago did this happen? _____ months, weeks, days (circle one)

Please tell me about it (record what the child says):

SAMPLE AFFECT QUESTIONS

These questions deal with your current *feelings right now* about [state person's name]. Try to tell me your actual *feeling* for the person for each question.

Do you feel _____ about him/her?

1. happy	Yes	A little bit yes	A little bit no	No
2. had	Yes	A little bit yes	A little bit no	No

10 total items in the affect subscale (5 positive and 5 negative)

SAMPLE BEHAVIOR QUESTIONS

These questions deal with how you act right now toward the person. This about how you *do act* or *would act* toward the person in answering the questions.

Would you _____?

11. be a friend to him or her	Yes	A little bit yes	A little bit no	No
12. not talk to him/her	Yes	A little bit yes	A little bit no	No

10 total items in the behavior subscale (5 positive and 5 negative)

SAMPLE COGNITIVE QUESTIONS

These questions deal with how you *think* about the person. Think about the kinds of thoughts in your mind *right now* regarding [name].

Do you *think* [name] _____?

21. is mean	Yes	A little bit yes	A little bit no	No
22. is a good person	Yes	A little bit yes	A little bit no	No

10 total items in the affect subscale (5 positive and 5 negative)

SAMPLE PSEUDOFORGIVENESS AND VALIDATION QUESTIONS

34. Have you forgiven [name]	Yes	No
35. Do you know what forgiveness is?	Yes	No

Tell me what it is:

5 total items in the pseudoforgiveness and validation subscale

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(p. 262). The *Forgiveness Scale* examined in this study is a reworked version of an earlier scale designed for romantic relationships. For the purposes of this study, Rye et al. conceptualize forgiveness as "a response toward an offender that involves letting go of negative affect (e.g., hostility), cognitions (e.g., thoughts of revenge), and behavior (e.g., verbal aggression), and may also involve positive responses toward the offender (e.g., compassion)" (p. 261). This conceptualization is similar in format to the Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) definition but lacks a strong emphasis on positive affect, behavior, and cognition toward a wrongdoer.

The Forgiveness Scale begins by instructing the participant to think about how he/she has responded to a wrongdoer and then complete a series of questions. There are 15 questions in this scale, and participants respond to each question on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly agree* to (5) *strongly disagree*. For example, participants are asked to respond to questions such as "I wish good things to happen to the person who wronged me," "I have compassion for the person who wronged me," and "I hope the person who wronged me is treated fairly by others in the future."

A sample of college students (N = 328) was solicited to validate the Forgiveness Scale. Analysis of the data revealed an overall Cronbach alpha of.87, which is an acceptable measure of internal consistency. The data also confirm that the Forgiveness Scale is significantly correlated with the subscales of the EFI. Copies of this scale are available by contacting Dr. Mark Rye at Mark.Rye@notes.udayton.edu.

Secondary Measures of Forgiveness

In addition to the primary measures of forgiveness (EFI, EFI-C, and Forgiveness Scale), practitioners and researchers may want to consider what we are calling secondary measures of forgiveness. As the review of research suggests, individuals who participate in forgiveness interventions often demonstrate decreases in negative emotional variables (anger, anxiety, depression, etc.) and increases in positive emotional variables (self-esteem and hope). The following is a list of exceptional instruments for measuring these secondary outcomes: Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Scale (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, &

Jacobs, 1983); Beck Anger Inventory, Beck Depression Inventory (Beck & Steer, 1987); and the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1981).

Research Critical to Issues in Forgiveness Assessment

Although the term *forgiveness* is not specifically listed in the ICF, the practice of interpersonal forgiveness is directly related to several of the domains within the ICF (WHO, 2006). Research presented earlier in the chapter is relevant to all four of the categories identified by WHO—Body Function, Body Structure, Activities and Participation, and Environmental Factors. By targeting the psychological variables associated with experiences of deep hurt (i.e., anger, depression, self-esteem, etc.), forgiveness interventions have demonstrated positive effects with regard to personal mental health, physical well-being, and interpersonal relationships (see introduction for review). Each of these general benefits has the potential to promote successful functioning within general environmental and support structures such as the immediate family, work environment, and personal relationships.

Forgiveness interventions are clearly connected to the mission and objectives of the ICF (Reed et al., 2005; WHO, 2006), yet there is a dearth of forgiveness research situated in the specific language of the ICF categories—a paucity that is present across several psychological domains of study (Bruyere, Van Looy, & Peterson, 2005). Implementation of ICF standards in forgiveness research would allow researchers and practitioners from across the world—working with diverse populations and within diverse cultures—a common metric for the comparison of human functioning with regard to interpersonal forgiveness (Reed et al., 2005). Furthermore, the complexity of the ICF standards would allow for a concurrent assessment of positive and negative health factors from "biological, individual, and societal perspectives" all at the same time (Reed et al., 2005, p. 122).

Cultural and Professional Considerations

An important question for those in the helping professions to ask is how culture impacts interventions. For example, McLernon, Cairns, Herstone, and Smith (2004) warn that, in some societies, harboring anger and revenge is viewed as a way of memorializing or actively remembering the victim in order to minimize the tendency to trivialize or forget the offenses. Some, like Nietzsche (1887), might regard forgivers as morally weak and inferior. If by forgiveness one means excusing, condoning, or any form of pseudoforgiveness, then this assessment might be true. Genuine forgiveness, however, requires great courage and is one way to deal with injustices by preserving the inherent worth of the individual (even the one responsible for the hurt).

Still, cultural differences do impact the practice of forgiveness. For example, Rabbi Marc Gopin offers a five-point summary to helping professionals regarding cultural differences (Enright, 2000): (1) those from different religious backgrounds probably understand forgiveness differently; (2) some might look for acts of genuine repentance, while others proceed from the standpoint of unconditional love; (3) some might insist on evidence of responsibility and trust;

Discussion Box 21.2

PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Interpersonal forgiveness is indeed a personal choice. However, the support or encouragement one receives for offering forgiveness may be impacted by religious beliefs, cultural expectations, family dynamics, and so on. Our recent research in Belfast, Northern Ireland, highlights the impact of family experiences and cultural expectations on interpersonal forgiveness. We encountered some initial reluctance and concern when meeting with several parents to discuss the implementation of a forgiveness education program at their children's school. Many of these families lived in interface areas and experienced significant intergroup violence. Parents from these areas were concerned that if their son or daughter practiced forgiveness, they would be targets for bullies at school and in the neighborhood. Anger was synonymous with strength. Forgiveness harkened weakness. We spent several hours meeting with these parents, listening to their concerns, and gaining an understanding of how their family dynamics and community experiences impacted their concept of forgiveness. In the end, parents and teachers alike were enthusiastic about forgiveness for their children. Consider the following when examining the impact of culture on the definition and application of interpersonal forgiveness. (1) How do you define forgiveness? (2) From where does this understanding come (cultural norms, etc.)? (3) Does repentance play an important role? (4) What role does trust play? (5) In each person's view, how deep is the injury? (Enright, 2000). What other questions might you add to this list?

(4) the depth of the injustice might be an important issue for some people; and (5) the forgiver's assessment of the offender's cultural history could impact the forgiveness process.

Although cultural differences do exist, Enright (2000) is quick to point out that many individuals and groups agree strongly in the words they use to describe forgiveness. Studies of forgiveness in the United States, Brazil, Australia, Israel, Korea, and Taiwan indicate general agreement that "to forgive is to cast off resentment, negative judgments, and revengeful behaviors toward the offender; they agree that to forgive is to substitute more positive emotions, thoughts, and behaviors toward the offender" (Enright, 2000, p. 14). Despite the universality of forgiveness terms, practitioners and others must recognize that the process of interpersonal forgiveness is highly individualized. The personal journey through forgiveness is therefore likely influenced by an individual's cultural identity, religious beliefs, personal history, and so on. These individual considerations are not prohibitive to forgiveness but may impact the process and assessment of the construct.

In dealing with painful offenses, many people are unaware that forgiveness is an option. Therefore, one of the responsibilities of those in the helping professions is to suggest effective options and alternatives to clients who desire

wholeness. One such effective method for dealing with the anger and resentment stemming from personal injustice is forgiveness therapy. As professionals, it is important both to be aware of what forgiveness is and what it is not and to have a basic idea of how to help someone make the forgiveness journey. Texts such as *Helping Clients Forgive* (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000) and *Forgiveness is a Choice* (Enright, 2001) are helpful resources for helping professionals in that they provide a step-by-step forgiveness guide that can be easily followed. One should note that although the forgiveness process has a roadmap, the journey is not necessarily linear. Because forgiveness is a choice, it cannot be forced upon anyone. It is a choice, however, that should be presented as an option to those who harbor anger and resentment from deep and unjust hurt.

Multidisciplinary Approaches

Forgiveness intervention and assessment have taken place in multiple contexts. Forgiveness interventions have been successful in schools (Enright, Gassin, & Knutson, 2003; Gambaro, 2002; Gassin, Enright, & Knutson, 2005), marriages (DiBlasio, 2000), and inpatient drug rehab centers (Lin et al., 2004). Group interventions have helped elderly women (Hebl & Enright, 1993) and adolescents who felt deprived of love by their parents (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995). One-on-one interventions have helped women who survived incest (Freedman & Enright, 1996) and have experienced emotional abuse (Reed & Enright, 2006), men who were upset by their partners' decision to abort a baby (Coyle & Enright, 1997), and college students who experienced a variety of hurts (McCullough & Worthington, 1995; McCullough et al., 1997). The effectiveness of forgiveness interventions across multiple contexts and domains increases its credibility and viability as a treatment option. In the future, forgiveness interventions will span deeper into areas such as the family and even organizations such as houses of worship.

Major Issues That Need Attention

Despite tremendous interest in and empirical examination of interpersonal forgiveness over the past 2 decades, some important work remains. The central issue at hand is the need for further research to clarify and articulate a concise definition of forgiveness. In other words, we must ask, "What does forgiveness mean? (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). It has long been acknowledged that there is some controversy with regard to the definition of forgiveness differences (Enright, Eastin, et al., 1992). However, it is no longer sufficient for social scientists and practitioners to simply acknowledge these differences. The development of diagnostic scales—such as the Forgiveness Attitudes Questionnaire (FAQ) by Kanz (2000)—and recent meta-analyses—such as those conducted by Baskin and Enright (2004) and Wade and Worthington (2005)—provide essential insight into the common components and effective conditions of interpersonal forgiveness. We must therefore incorporate these new findings into our operational definitions and processes of forgiveness. Furthermore, as the field of forgiveness research continues to inform and shape the implementation of forgiveness interventions, there is a concurrent need for valid and reliable measurement of the construct.

Research Box 21.1

INTERVENTION STUDIES ON FORGIVENESS: A META-ANALYSIS

Baskin, T. W., & Enright, R. D. (2004). Intervention studies on forgiveness: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling and Development,* 82, 79–90.

Objective: To examine the type and effectiveness of empirical forgiveness interventions within a counseling context.

Method: The authors examined nine published empirical studies that implemented a forgiveness intervention within a counseling context. The studies were categorized based on the type of counseling model employed: decision model, process model within a group setting, and process model with individual treatment. In addition to the counseling model, the authors examined the sample population, forgiveness measure, and secondary psychological variable of interest. Effect sizes were calculated for the forgiveness and secondary psychological variables and compared among the three counseling models.

Results: Analysis of the data revealed a mean effect size for decision models of d = -0.04, a mean effect size for process models in a group setting of d = 0.82*, and a mean effect size for process models with individual treatment of d = 1.66*. Furthermore, the analysis of the secondary psychological variables revealed a similar patter: decision d = 0.16, process-group d = 0.59*, and process individual d = 1.42* (*p < .05).

Conclusion: The meta-analysis revealed that both process-based models of forgiveness intervention produced statistically significant effect sizes for forgiveness and the secondary psychological variables of interest. The process model within an individual setting was the most effective. Conversely, the decision-based models failed to yield statistically significant effect sizes.

Questions: What are the implications of these results for practitioners and researchers? How might these results shape future research in the field? Do these findings impact how we might best measure forgiveness? If construct-assessment match is an important measurement consideration, what characteristics might we expect to find in effective forgiveness assessment measures?

Conclusion

What surprises us, as we reflect back on the knowledge base in the psychology of forgiveness, is this: The field has developed quite quickly. In about 2 decades, the psychology of forgiveness has been shown to be quite effective for a wide variety of people suffering deep hurts. The effect sizes of the interventions are

moderate to strong, a testimony to the robust nature of forgiveness within the helping professions. Although forgiveness would seem to be a rather amorphous concept, its assessment can be done with high reliability and good scientific validity.

We look forward to the creative contributions of others over the coming decades. We anticipate that even though the essence of forgiveness, in all likelihood, will be shown to be similar across cultures, the nuances of different cultural norms and religious practices will become clearer to those studying forgiveness and trying to help others forgive.

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