

RECONCILIATION TOOLKIT

Forgiveness First



MarriageHelper

Forgiveness is vital in moving towards reconciliation.

In fact, it's the first thing that needs to happen for the process to go well.

LESSON HIGHLIGHTS

VIDEO 1: Importance of Forgiveness

- Forgiveness must happen FIRST
- Forgiveness must happen even if reconciliation doesn't
- "I decide to forgive when I realize that forgiving heals my pain."
- Forgiveness brings freedom to the forgiver.

• VIDEO 2: How to Forgive

• THE OFFENDED

- The offended party has the right to be hurt and angry.
- Often, the offended party has the right to bring punishment
- But we can never know that the other person hurts as much as we do.

THE OFFENDER

- Has hurt the offended, whether intentional or not
- The offender does not control forgiveness and cannot demand it
- A truly penitent offender accepts any grace and mercy offered
- Forgiveness is NOT a "get out of jail free" card.

TWO ESSENTIAL STEPS:

- 1. Decide to assign the offending person value again
- 2. Decide not to take vengeance

THIRD OPTIONAL STEP:

- 3. Decide to restore the relationship

LESSON HIGHLIGHTS

VIDEO 3: Decision Based Forgiveness

- Decision-based forgiveness is the mental process of letting go of resentment, bitterness, and need for vengeance.
- You don't have to wait until you are emotionally ready to forgive. It is possible to separate your feelings from the decision, and forgive because you decide to.
- Emotional pain and hurt are real and must be addressed. (It is possible to have emotional pain but also to control revengeful thinking)
- A forgiveness decision is a beginning, not an end to the healing.
- If someone hurt you, forgiving them is something you do because of your character and the person that you are, not because of what they have done, but despite it.

VIDEO 4: How do you forget?

- It's nearly impossible to completely forget, but you can minimize the thoughts
- Mindfulness techniques
- Replacing thoughts
- Writing down good things
- Just because you still remember doesn't mean you haven't forgiven

• VIDEO 5: Action Steps

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- 1. This is only the beginning of talking about forgiveness
- 2. Complete the "Uncovering" exercise (each of you individually) to prepare you for the rest of the course
- 3. You do not have to share your answers with each other

THE UNCOVERING EXERCISE

Understanding your anger begins to make healing possible.

If you have been hurt and feel anger because of that hurt, uncovering helps you begin to

- explore the injustice you experienced,
- assess the amount of your anger,
- understand any ways in which harboring your anger may be causing your more pain or harm.

Think of the person that caused you the most pain.

Circle YES or NO for whether you have experienced each statement.

If you mark YES, then rate the next part of that statement with the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Mixed			Completely

YES NO I admitted to myself that the person(s) hurt me.

____ I have accepted that this happened and have moved on.

YES NO I allowed myself to feel all the anger, resentment, etc. toward the person(s) who hurt me.

____ Those emotions have now subsided.

YES NO I admitted to myself that I felt shamed or humiliated by what the person(s) did. (if applicable to your situation)

____ I now have grown past those feelings.

YES NO I lost my energy because of the hurt or resentment I felt. Sometimes I felt that my feelings were consumed by what happened.

____ I have grown past that and gotten my energy back. I can enjoy life.

THE UNCOVERING EXERCISE

YES NO I thought over and over about what happened.

____ I no longer obsess about it. My thoughts are under control.

YES NO I compared my unfortunate state with my offender's more fortunate state. I felt that my offender didn't hurt like I hurt, or didn't have the negative consequences I faced.

____ I accepted the fact that my offender(s) will not hurt as I have hurt .

YES NO I realized that I may have been permanently changed by the event.

____ I know I am now a different person in some ways and accept that.

YES NO I began to adjust to the fact that life isn't always fair and things that happen to me will not always be fair.

____ I accept this as a part of life and no longer feel sorry for myself.

What is the best way for you to deal with your anger for
you to heal?

THE UNCOVERING EXERCISE

How is withholding forgiveness affecting you Physically?
Intellectually? Emotionally? Spiritually?

How would forgiving help you Physically? Intellectually?
Emotionally? Spiritually?

AHA MOMENTS

- Space for you to write down what you learned, big takeaways, or AHA moments from this lesson.