

# RECONCILIATION TOOLKIT

## *The Reach Method*



**Marriage**Helper

# REACH - The Five Sequential Steps to Forgiving

In this lesson, you will learn a 5 step process to fully forgiving and moving on from the past for a better future.

## LESSON HIGHLIGHTS

### VIDEO 1: Recall the Hurt

- State the offense
- Offender explains without justification
- Honest explanation takes responsibility for actions
- Offender does not blame anyone else
- Offender answers questions

### VIDEO 2: Empathize

- Offended gives emotional reactions
- Offender provides empathy
- Offender makes plan to stop/end the offense
- Offended empathizes with offender's hurt
- You will find a complete detailed list at the end of this lesson guide

### VIDEO 3: Altruistic Gift of Forgiveness

- Both spouses recall a time that he/she hurt someone other than spouse and was forgiven
- Discuss with each other and seek to understand each other's point of view
- Remember that forgiveness is a gift, not a right

# LESSON HIGHLIGHTS

## VIDEO 4: Commit to Forgive

- Offender asks for forgiveness
- Offended grants forgiveness
- Have a symbolic ceremony to drive the stake in the ground
- If you are having difficulty forgiving yourself, consider doing the same process
- If you are having difficult moving on, consider doing the same process

## VIDEO 5: Hold on to Forgiveness

- It is normal to remember hurts and offenses
- Remembering a hurt doesn't mean you haven't forgiven
- Remaining bitter and hard indicates forgiveness hasn't taken place
- Remember the forgiveness ceremony and hold on to the forgiveness that has happened

## VIDEO 6: Action Steps

- Go through the following REACH Method exercise together
- Forgive self if needed
- Use good and wise counsel in this process if needed
- This process may take more than one session, and that is okay
- Make sure both of you are comfortable, at ease, and alone when you do this

# THE REACH METHOD EXERCISE

## Recall the Hurt

- State the offense
- Offender explains
  - \*Justification makes it sound as if the offender had a right to do what s/he did. Don't do this!
  - \*Honest explanation takes responsibility for your own actions – offers NO blame to anyone else
- Offender answers offended partner's questions

## Empathize

- Offended gives emotional reactions – “This is how I feel....”
- Offended person wants to know that the offender understands how much hurt there is.
  - \*Cannot move on as long as the offended feels the offender doesn't understand.
- Offender provides empathy for the hurt he or she caused
  - \*Restates the hurt and distress in way that the offended spouse feels there is understanding (as much as possible)
  - \*Acknowledge the offended partner's pain and distress
  - \*Validate the offended partner's hurt and distress
- Offender makes well-organized plan to stop / end the offense – make it nearly impossible to continue secretly
  - \*Total separation from the offending party, opportunity, or action
  - \*Accountability person or persons (both spouses trust)
  - \*A WRITTEN contract with consequences spelled out and that offers escalating negative consequences and NO provision for grace or mercy.
  - \*Permission for offended to check to make sure offender is living up to accountability

# THE REACH METHOD EXERCISE

## Empathize (continued)

- Offended empathizes with the offender's hurt
  - \*Does not justify offender's actions
  - \*Listens to and tries to understand hurts that may have helped lead the offender to the harmful action.
  - \*The POWER of stories in understanding
  - \*Listens to and tries to understand what the offender feels about him- herself
  - \*Restates, acknowledges, validates emotions – not actions

## Altruistic Gift of Forgiveness

- Offended recalls a time when he/she hurt someone (other than spouse) and was subsequently forgiven
  - \*Describes incident
  - \*Describes feelings of gratitude and freedom from having been forgiven
- Offender recalls a time
- Spouses discuss those emotions and their meanings
- Seek to understand intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally the need each of you has for forgiveness.

## Commit to Forgive

- Offender formally asks for forgiveness
  - \*Touch each other, if allowed – perhaps hold hands
  - \*Demonstrate humility in asking
- Invite a mutually agreed upon witness(s) to accentuate that the request grows out of a well-thought-out process that includes not only remorse but a well thought out process to turn away from the offending behavior



# THE REACH METHOD EXERCISE

## Commit to Forgive (continued)

- Offended formally grants forgiveness
  - \*Touch each other, if allowed – perhaps hold hands
  - \*Demonstrate humility in forgiving
- Have ceremony as a symbolic expression that the offense has been formally forgiven.
  - \*May be private, but it is helpful to give a definite signal to family/friends that transformation has occurred
  - \*Strong benefits in rituals and ceremonial acts

## Commit to Forgive - Self

- If you have trouble forgiving yourself, consider a similar process to that above.
- Make seeking your own forgiveness a ceremonial act. It may be public or it may be private. However, plan it and do it deliberately.
- Before the ceremony, invite a mature and trusted person to help you design a plan for accountability to keep you from yielding to your own temptations.
- During the ceremony, in the manner of your own religious beliefs or traditions, ask God for forgiveness. Be specific in what you tell Him and what you ask.
- Ask specific people you have hurt to forgive you. (NOTE: Do this in actuality only when it will NOT cause more harm than good! Sometimes it is better to ask vicariously or symbolically rather than actually going to the person.)
- If you have a person or people at your ceremony, ask a mature trusted person to “speak” for God (figuratively, of course) and tell you that you are forgiven. (Per the idea in James 5:16)
- Create some marker or symbol of that ceremony and keep it as a sacred reminder.

# THE REACH METHOD EXERCISE

## Commit to Forgive - To Get Past Own Hurt

- Make it a ceremonial act. It may be public or it may be private. However, plan it and do it deliberately.
- You may wish to invite the people you plan to forgive if they admit they have hurt you and are willing to ask you to forgive them. If they do not believe they hurt you, or would not ask for your forgiveness, do NOT invite them. In that case do the ceremony symbolically.
- During the ceremony, in the manner of your own religious beliefs or traditions, ask God to forgive those who hurt you and to give you the ability to forgive them as well. (if you wonder if this is consistent with Christianity, see Luke 23:34)
- If you have a person or people at your ceremony, ask a mature trusted person to pray with you that blessings will come to those who hurt you. (If you wonder if this is consistent with Christianity, see Romans 12:14, 17, 19-21)
- Create some marker or symbol of that ceremony and keep it as a sacred reminder.

## Hold on to Forgiveness

- It is inevitable sometimes to remember hurts and offenses.
- Remembering a hurt (recalling a painful memory) does NOT mean that forgiveness hasn't taken place.
- Bitterness and hatred are signs forgiveness hasn't taken place.
- Remember the forgiveness - it is permanent

# AHA MOMENTS

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