

Information Handout

Professional Version | US English

Forgiveness Is ...



Description

Clients often struggle with the concept of forgiveness because of unhelpful misconceptions regarding its true nature. *Forgiveness Is...* is an information handout with a clear description of what forgiveness is and is not.

Instructions

This is a Psychology Tools information handout.

Suggested uses include:

- Client handout – use as a psychoeducation resource.
 - Discussion point – use to provoke a discussion and explore client beliefs.
 - Therapist learning tool – improve your familiarity with a psychological construct.
 - Teaching resource – use as a learning tool during training.
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References

Enright, R. D., Fitzgibbons, R. P. (2000). *Helping clients forgive: An empirical guide for resolving anger*. New York: American Psychological Association.

Forgiveness is ...

People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they wilfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right)

(Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000)

Forgiveness is not ...

- Pardon, legal mercy or leniency.
- Condoning or excusing.
- Reconciliation (you can come together again, but still not forgive).
- Justification (you can forgive, but don't have to believe their action was fair).
- Forgetting (forgetting would leave you vulnerable to the offence again).
- Balancing scales (getting back at someone is not the same as forgiving).
- Letting time heal the wound (forgiving is active rather than passive).
- Abandoning resentment (we might let go of resentment but still not forgive).
- Possessing positive feelings (we might feel positive towards an individual, but still not forgiven them).
- Saying "I forgive you" (you can forgive without using specific words).
- Making a decision to forgive (it can involve a decision, but forgiveness is a process which takes time).
- A quick fix (forgiveness takes time, and progress may fluctuate).
- Accepting what happened (we could accept the facts of an event but not forgive, accepting may be a part of forgiveness but not all acceptance is forgiveness).
- Moving on (we may decide to move on without looking back, and without forgiving).
- Accepting what happened knowing that God will punish them (this approach focuses more on justice than forgiveness).
- Saying "I have the satisfaction of not letting the person get to me".
- Letting the other person know how much they owe me (this is a form of revenge, and is using the misdeed/transgression as a weapon).

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