

Stuck on How to Forgive?

- Turning towards Forgiveness....perhaps the hardest of all gifts to give.
- How DOES one make it a “new day”? How does one start over? Is it even wise?

When the Process to Heal Hurts Is Undertaken...

Reconciliation Begins & the byproduct Turns into Steps to Forgiveness

Connect-Talk® can turn into Connect-WalkSM ... back on the path, better together, but you have to work at it to get to the destination.

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Disclaimer: No part of this is meant to be psychological advice for any specific person or situation. This is a general teaching only. Neither Connect-Talk, LLC nor Dr. Simeone-DiFrancesco is responsible for its application, understanding or misunderstanding.

The process of healing of hurts is usually mutual. This is written for situations which may be attempted one-sidedly, and/or mutually. It can address the beginnings of exploring everyday little hurts, little trauma, core relationship traumas, and even “big-T” traumas in the spectrum of infidelity, affairs and other betrayals. This is only meant to be a summary, not the entire process. Please feel free to use it like a diagram or outline of steps you each may take to get out of “gridlock”, “dead-lock”, avoidance or giving up.

STARTING POINT: STAGE ONE

1. Tell your partner what your hurt is, in specifics.
2. Partner listens, takes notes, and does not interrupt. No comments
3. Then the offending partner (the one who did the hurting in this particular instance) – goes through the following basic steps to heal the wounded one’s hurt: (Awareness is key here.)

A. Admission Phase: The offending partner admits the unhealthy or violating action.

1. Fully – if fully responsible. This is especially important in cases of betrayals and abandonments that go contrary to your commitment regardless of other feelings.

Or

2. At least to extent of being responsible for not coming through in a more clear positive way. Do express regret over their hurt even if you are not responsible for it. (Admitting regret does not mean you are accepting full responsibility.)

Goal: to see, admit & correct where I am responsible. The goal is not self-explanation & defense. The hurt one is not interested in your explanation & defense – they want to know you understand their hurt and won't do it again.

B. On-going Inner Awareness Phase: Change inner attitudes, emotional regulation, and reactivity into healthy coping mechanisms, such as patience, healthy assertiveness, calm acceptance, empathic love, flexibility, understanding, and negotiability...Eliminate passive aggressive game-playing and manipulation, fighting or withdrawal and avoidance.

1. Once the hurt one tells you what's wrong – see what attitude I had that needs correcting or improving. This may be due to one of my schemas or an unhealthy coping mode triggered by a schema.* It may be a difficulty regulating my emotions, or a pervasive lack of empathy. It may be connected to my own misinterpretation and failure to give benefit of the doubt due to past learned schemas. It may even be a skewed or otherwise exaggerated perception due to my own past hurts. I do need to determine what on my side caused this, regardless of whatever on their side may have triggered me. This ideally includes maladaptive schemas and modes. I may need psychotherapy to figure myself out on where this comes from, often a pattern of mine.

[1](Simeone-DiFrancesco, C., Roediger, E. and Stevens, B. (2015). *Schema Therapy with Couples, A Practitioner's Guide to Healing Relationships*. Wiley, Oxford, UK.)

For ex: If I want to stay connected, I might need to be less concerned about my own self feeling vulnerable and more concerned about you feeling unloved or hurt. I also may need to work on "reparenting myself" [2]* or with some outside help or spiritual turning to God [3], so that I am able to identify, calm and fulfill my inner needs. Work at this, practice and consider obtaining some therapy so you see how to change these rough edges of your personality.

C. Ongoing systematic change and Connect-Talk [4] Phase: designed to systematically make conscious efforts to change the cited attitudes, heal the underlying schemas, and craft new coping behaviors.

Ex – Journals, Schema Flashcards, Couples Clash-cards (Op. cit.)

Discuss it daily/frequently (not my own hurt, but my awareness & change efforts) with my partner.

Reminders to myself of my new coping mechanisms

Identify with my partner a "Melting Technique" by asking in what way can I best reach you? Please demonstrate for me what helps it in terms of words, tone, touch, enthusiasm, etc.

D. Healing and Restoring Phase: Throughout all of the above steps, the offending party needs to deliberately empathize with the hurt one. Empathy often involves saying in specifics what

you understand of how the other must have felt, (regardless of how responsible you were for it!) Describe their feelings – “devastated”, “big pain in chest”, so that they know you feel a bit of how they possibly may have felt. Relate to things as they come up that connect in one way or another to the hurt, and cause a memory activation of it. Speak of these things with caring rather than avoidance. This phase brings out the reassurances needed or the enthusiasm required to rebuild trust again. It is listed last on the list as it takes the “Rest of your life” – and as long as it takes! However it is interspersed throughout all the prior steps.

As long as it takes – you, the offending partner, need to keep working at “being extra good” to offset and fill the gap thereby repairing the damage. [5]

NOTE, AT THIS POINT, ESPECIALLY IN SCHEMA CLASHES, THE PROCESS OFTEN NEEDS TO BE RE-APPLIED FROM THE OFFENDING PERSON’S PERSPECTIVE. THIS IS STAGE TWO. THE OFFENDING PARTNER’S OWN HURT/PAIN/ANGRY FEELINGS MAY EMERGE AS THEY BECOME AWARE. USUALLY THE ONE WITH THE AGGREGIOUS “BAD BEHAVIOR” NEEDS TO START THE PROCESS TO UNLOCK THE GRIDLOCK IN STAGE ONE. IF IT’S MUTUAL, TOSS A COIN!

Hopeful Result: The hurt one(s) may be in a much easier position to open & give the gift of forgiveness with the steps followed above. Forgiveness is never a guarantee, and always a gift. Even if the hurt one does not open up – the offending partner still owes the above as a point of justice and integrity. The hurt one may have been victimized by a big trauma, or everyday little “t” traumas. It is a lot to ask, but sometimes one’s deepest hope is to somehow change this all and make it better. The hurt partner can often start the process by inviting the offending partner to go through these steps. With a little help and support this reaching- out to guide and support (versus blame and criticize) the offending partner may turn to the benefit you both. These steps may help to take you both through the maze of hurts and can suggest that instead of giving up, perhaps there is a way to forgive and reconcile, a way that honors and respects you both. I also suggest learning more about the Couples Schema Clashcard by myself and Dr. Eckhard Roediger. It is in our book cited below. [6]

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[1] Simeone-DiFrancesco, C., Roediger, E. and Stevens, B. (2015). *Schema Therapy with Couples, A Practitioner’s Guide to Healing Relationships*. Wiley, Oxford, UK.

[2] Ibid.

[3] The concept of “limited re-parenting is in Schema Therapy with Couples”, as well as in much of the other literature on Schema Therapy. The understanding of how to accomplish limited re-parenting using one’s spiritual resources in a Christian application is currently in press.

[4] Connect-Talk® formulated by Dr. Simeone-DiFrancesco on applying loving ways to talk about life’s hardest issues (in press).

[5] There are clinical exceptions to this with the case of personality disorders where it is best to speak to a psychologist about this, or other well-experienced therapist with significant training to parse out the elements involved, including your role in the cycle.

[6] Op. cit.

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