Forgiveness Plus: Strategies for Improving Relationships

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Presented at the Midwest Christian Psychology Conference,

Springfield, Missouri, 8 December, 2012*

I can learn from you! Do share your thoughts about forgiveness and reconciliation.

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* This presentation is similar to my presentation at the AACC conference in Branson, MO, 29 September, 2012.
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It is no secret that people can be deeply hurt in close relationships. Forgiveness helps us let go of the harm but relationship repair requires more than forgiveness. We need forgiveness plus.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

1. Identify factors related to forgiveness.

2. Identify barriers to forgiveness and reconciliation.

3. Identify specific interventions that promote forgiveness and reconciliation.
Forgiveness in Christian Relationships: Overcoming Barriers

What ingredients help people develop and maintain healthy and happy relationships? Our world is full of stories of hatred and violence such as the looting at gun point following hurricane Sandy or the Taliban shooting of a young Pakistani girl. Nearby we witnessed the 2012 torching of a Mosque in Joplin, Missouri. In the 2012 season of political debates, candidates hurled accusations against one candidate or another. Their supporters often picked up the phrases and insult other supporters on Facebook. Still there are stories of forgiveness and reconciliation that can inspire us to focus on healing and recovery. As members of faith communicties it is vital that we remain grounded in the love of God rather than evil so that God’s love may flow through us to promote healing in the form of reconciliation and restoration. I view forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration as acts of love.

Let’s keep a few things in mind that will help us clarify the focus of this presentation.
1. In this presentation, I am focused on close relationships within a Christian community whether, family, friendship group, church, or organization.
2. I am focused on Christians helping Christians. Although the virtues of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation seem to be universal and a part of many religious traditions, there are some components of our Christian faith that offer a somewhat different context. I do think there is much overlap between what we do in a Christian context and what non-Christians do in other contexts.

Forgiveness in the Context of Human Nature
The topic of human nature is too broad a subject to cover in this presentation but I want to mention a few points so you can think about where forgiveness might fit with psychological and theological understandings of how people function. I use a multidimensional model when assessing counselees or thinking in general about human functioning. I use the acronym SCOPES to refer to the six dimensions of the model (e.g., Sutton & Thomas, 2005; Sutton & Mittlestadt, 2010). At the heart of the model are the four familiar dimensions that define how we respond to life events or COPE (Cognitive, Observable behavior, Physiological, Emotional). I add two S dimensions for the Spiritual core of our being and the Social context in which events take place. Because people are whole persons, we will usually have to consider multiple dimensions at the same time.

Let me suggest using a smart phone, tablet, or other recent computer example—one that has apps (or software). In figure 1, I present a generic phone with customizable apps. Most of our responses originate in our brains. Human brains respond to stimuli when various systems are activated. We seem to have default settings and a capacity to run one or more applications at the same time. Let’s take a look at some basic apps before considering those related to justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

We can think of the hardware as that basic physiological or biological product. We come in different colors with customizable aspects to our designs. We have a default mode that lets us operate even when we are not fully aware of what is going on. We have different capacities for memory and processing. Most of us have a dual core. One devoted to the automatic processing of life and the second to rational and logical thought that is not routinely engaged but helps us solve difficult problems. (Read Kahneman’s Thinking: Fast and Slow).
Forgiveness Plus

Smart People

**BASIC APPS**

- S  Spiritual
- C  Cognitive
- O  Observable Behavior
- P  Physiology
- E  Emotional
- S  Social- Space & Time

Figure 1. Basic components of human functioning

We can think of **Spirituality** as our operating system. You can imagine getting your downloads from the cloud and staying in sync with God. Spirituality is partly prewired but is customizable. It can be wholly transformed. We are members of different spiritual tribes, Android, Apple, Windows, Methodist, Catholic, Baptist—you get the idea.

Now there are several App folders that contain modules activated as needed. Think broadly about cognitions. The biological basis for thinking is prewired. There are structures and processes of perception, attention, and memory. But we also have software that helps us use our stored memories to solve problems. We store beliefs, which seem to have some influence when we focus on those beliefs. Cognition includes language and the huge role that plays in human relationships, including the capacity to encourage or insult, apologize, request forgiveness and express forgiveness in ways that may or may not be eloquent.
We have apps for emotions. We readily experience disgust, anger, happiness, sadness, and anxiety or fear. We can add words and refinements to basic emotional modules but the emotional modules are tied to cognition and behavior when activated. Some have more primary modes of feeling than others so some are quick to anger or quick to feel fearful and anxious. Other seem happier than most.

We have apps for behavior as well. These are linked to beliefs and emotions. As a triad they represent different attitudes. We can think of broad patterns in terms of the five factor theory of personality.

Finally, all of the above dimensions of functioning operate in an environment. We have apps for social functioning in space and time contexts. Just think of all the ways we can connect with people using social media. So we talk with others and send texts and pictures and videos. We are highly social people. We behave differently in church, school, and work. We behave differently around family and friends than we do around co-workers or strangers. Time makes a difference too because we often change how we act from childhood to adolescence and though various age periods as adults. On the micro level, we may respond differently early in the morning compared to midday or late at night. Student often preface their assignments by telling me how long they have been awake.

**Christian versus Secular Forgiveness**

Now let’s focus on what might be different about forgiveness within the context of close Christian relationships.
1. The leading forgiveness theorists such as Ev Worthington (2006) and Robert Enright (2001) focus on forgiveness as an intrapersonal process of healing. In committed relationships, we are equally concerned about reconciliation as a coexisting process with forgiveness. This makes our work both easier and more difficult. I hope to explain why.

2. Forgiveness takes place in a context where two people have likely offended each other and attempted many ways to cope with the offenses before coming to a counselor. There is often a long history that contextualizes the task of counselee and counselor.

3. Because forgiveness has received so much attention in both popular and academic research settings, we need to be cautious about the availability heuristic. That is the phenomenon of responding to new situations based on what is salient in our minds. Forgiveness is not a panacea for all that is wrong in a relationship. We know that but it is too easy to be obsessed with the value of forgiveness and any newly acquired skills that we overlook those other important ingredients like communication and the skills needed to cope with job loss and financial stress, chronic illness, sexual dysfunction, and so forth.

Forgiveness: A Quick Review

Forgiveness is part of a justice app. When people offend us, our justice module is activated and we begin to assess the offense and offender. We pass judgment and expect the offender to take action to repair the relationship damage. We store the event with our appraisal of the damage and wait to be paid for the harm done. There are all sorts of things in this appraisal process. Each of us will have different settings as we consider our demand for justice. In figure 2 I present some common settings related to justice.
These settings represent a short list of things people weigh when responding to an offense. People assess severity in different ways. There is a contrast effect based on our history of treatment. We have different expectations about apologies. You will find more about how apologies help later in this paper. Our feelings about the offender and our sense of trust are also relevant. Some have a more forgiving disposition than others do. Higher forgiveness is related to higher agreeableness (Worthington, 2006). Another helpful analysis is an understanding or moral reasoning. Jonathan Haidt and his colleagues have done so much to help us better understand moral psychology. Again, we don’t have time to review that detail here but I refer you to his book, The Righteous Mind for a review of his six dimensions of morality. When offenders and victims appraise an act differently, they are likely drawing on different dimensions and different weighting of those six dimensions. This can be a serious barrier to forgiveness and reconciliation.
Now let’s assume a person has been offended and wants to deal with that horrible feeling of injustice, which psychologists call unforgiveness. I realize that some of you may have read a lot about forgiveness yet I think I should offer a brief review of some key aspects of the forgiveness process.

1. **The need for forgiveness begins with either one major offensive event or a series of offensive events** that build to the point that the offended person is overwhelmed. In short, people sin against others. Small offenses can be dismissed but larger ones can tip the scales resulting in a serious disruption in relationships.

2. Major offenses or an accumulation of many small offenses often lead to a state called unforgiveness, which can last for years. We refer to these phenomena as holding grudges. **Grudges like sludge and build to the point that noting more can flow down the interpersonal drain.** The inevitable back-up ruptures relationships.

3. **People can deal with components of the unforgiveness features in many ways that are not simply forgiveness.** For example, people can learn to manage anger, stress, fear, rumination and other concerns without going through a prescribed set of forgiveness stages.

4. Forgiveness models focus on an intrapersonal process that begins with an assessment of the hurt and leads to strategies that help the client forgive a specific offensive event.

5. Reconciliation is an interpersonal process. People can and do forgive without reconciling. And important for our discussion, people can make progress in reconciliation without forgiving.

6. Regardless of the forgiveness model (think forgiveness app) you embrace, I think there are a few common steps to keep in mind.
A. **ASSESS** the offense in sufficient depth so that counselee and counselor are clear about the offensive event and the perceived effects on the counselee.

B. Develop a **BELIEF** that it is desirable and possible to forgive the offender for the offense. There are various components to this step that prepare counselees to forgive.

C. Articulate a **COMMITMENT** to forgive the offender. This should be done in writing. It is a solemn moment that allows a person to turn from the past to the future and resist the temptation to revisit the offense and the sequelae.

D. **DO** something to affirm the commitment to forgive. This is not necessarily reconciliation but it does require a person to ensure that the commitment is not mere words but an attitude that involves action. The action might not be directed toward the offender but should affect actions toward others as the victim experiences release from the backward focus on the offense.

**WRD (Weapons of Relationship Destruction)**

I hope that as I list some WRD items -- barriers to forgiveness in relationships -- that you will recall other barriers from your own experience. I encourage you to list them in your notes and share them with as many as connect with us. Couples deal with a myriad of exchanges that they often overlook but some rise above others as powerful stimuli. In addition, a number of smaller offenses can stick to each other to form a monster that seems to emerge from nowhere and catches people off-guard. We should keep in mind Gottman’s (1994) finding that 69% of all marital problems can be classified as perpetual and recurring. I have been thinking that many of the powerful offenses in a relationship have to do with betrayal. Let’s consider some of those events in a couple’s life together.
**Relationship betrayal by failing to nurture:** The powerful negative ratio building described by John Gottman (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw9SE315GtA). Insults and complaints increasingly exceed positive comments. Be sure to check our his concept of *contempt* as the major WRD in relationships.

**Relationship betrayal due to Self-Love:** Time for personal pursuits can crowd out time together (Online gaming and so forth, Baseball, and other sports, Hobbies, Music, Reading, Work)

**Financial betrayal:** Many people struggle to pay bills. When a partner consumes excess resources, trust can be irreparably harmed (Irresponsible hidden purchases, Persistent Overspending, Gambling).

**Emotional betrayal:** In romantic relationships, one partner can develop an attachment to another person, which competes with love for one’s spouse or partner. This betrayal is felt and much worse than an excessive devotion based on duty to an ailing family member.

**Family and parenting:** It is no secret that couples argue about parenting tasks and methods. Criticisms can reach a tipping point that impairs both the marriage and the capacity for effective parenting.

**Capacity to cope with special needs:** People vary widely in their capacity to cope with spouses or other family members who have special needs. Special needs vary widely and include such challenges as dementia, end-of-life care, and a limiting chronic illness.

**Sexual betrayal:** The obvious insult of infidelity is too common and often leads to irreparable damage.
**Abuse and violence:** Again, these concerns are very serious and may interfere with reconciliation leaving us with a focus on intrapersonal forgiveness.

**Effects of betrayal and the barriers that develop**

We now consider those common features of unforgiveness that develop in response to the offensive betrayal events. As we have noted, an uncomfortable event might be overlooked such as missing a dinner or a celebration but when a *tipping point* (think Gladwell) has been reached, the relationship can take a dive.

**Unforgiveness is like clogged drain.** Periodically I have a task that I resist. My wife has observed from time to time that our bathroom sink fails to drain as usual. The water and stuff slow down. I offer suggestions like just raise the stopper or pour hot water down the sink. At some point the water remains in the bowl. My wife moves over to use my sink. I know its time for deep cleaning. I gather my tools and rags. Get down on my knees (very spiritual) and open the cabinet door. Slowly I fumble for the valve and begin the process of cleaning. You get the picture? Grudge upon grudge leads to sludge. At some point, the relationship can no longer drain off minor negative comments.

**Unforgiveness, like grudge 2 sludge, clogs life’s drain**

Let’s have a look at some of those features using the **SCOPE** model.

**Spiritual barriers**

*Blaming God or the Devil:* Attributing life situations to God or the devil. The problem may be bad theology and/ or persistent problems of locus of control. Ultimately we need to assess and address the win aspects of attachment to God: Avoidance (vs. closeness) and Anxiety (vs. secure).
**Spiritual Transference** – For Christians, the relationships with God and family are primary so it is easy to transfer (i.e., generalize responses) feelings and attitudes toward God or toward others onto the other party. That is, angry feelings toward God may be transferred to a friend or member of the clergy and vice versa.

**Instant miracles**- Some Christians believe that God will answer their prayers without delay. A belief in instant healing can interfere with forgiveness when emotional forgiveness takes longer than expected. Pastors still advise congregants to forgive and forget as I and a colleague once witnessed following a massacre in Africa.

**Deliverance without personal work**- This is something like a belief in instant forgiveness but the difference is that God does all the work. In deliverance thinking, people have a limited role to play in the spiritual battles between Jesus and Satan. This belief continues to be held among believers in many countries.

**Cognitive barriers**

*Trust:* “I can never trust him/her again.” This can generalize as: “I can never trust another man/ woman again.”

*Entitlement narratives:* “I deserve better treatment.” People are here to serve me and meet my needs. This core belief can lead to thoughts of justice and revenge.

*Justice:* “What he/she did was just plain wrong!” “He/ she deserves to be punished.” The call for fire and damnation.

*Revenge:* “He/ she better watch out.” Thoughts and fantasies of ruinous destruction accompanied by that gloating feeling.
Memory: “Do you know what he/she did?” A belief in one’s memory of events as perfect and if people only knew what I knew, they too would be impressed with the wicked and unfair treatment. Our brain searches for other associations with the offenses and the negative thoughts we are processing. Our memories are imperfect and only retain a part of an experience. Different people present at an event recall different details.

**Hindsight is 20/200**

Duty: I must forgive. If I don’t forgive, God will punish me. A belief that a quick pushing aside of a hurt is required of a Christian, which can lead to stifling unrecognized emotions.

Victim narratives: I get what I deserve. I should have said that. If only I did what he/she asked he/she wouldn’t have been so mad at me. A victim’s narrative prevents an objective appraisal. As the narrative continues, the problem of unforgiveness deepens.

**Observable behavior: Verbal and nonverbal**

**Verbal behavior**
You will pay for this. You better watch your back.

Personal insults- numerous offensive words designed to hurt, belittle, embarrass. Recall Gottman’s findings on contempt and things like hostile humor, name calling, and mockery.

**Nonverbal behavior**
Active avoidance: Leaving, hiding from a painful stimulus- the burned hand on the stove effect.

It is hard work to promote healing a relationship when one person walks away.

Passive avoidance: isolation, withdrawn (think depression; too much stress to face)

Active aggression: Hitting in many ways; destruction of property

Passive aggression: Lateness for events; Low participation in spouse’s events, sex strike
Physiological responses and barriers

The physiological response to stress has been fairly well documented. There is of course some variation from person to person.

Common stress factors

- Dysregulated (increase/decrease) sleep and appetite
- Increased blood pressure and heart rate
- Stomach distress
- Muscular effects- tightness
- Neurological responses- headaches, migraines

Neuropsychological effects

- Deficits in attention and concentration possibly involving dopaminergic pathways
- Deficits in memory possibly associated with serotonin and the hypothalamus

Emotion

Emotional pain is at the core of our being, which we experience in associated words, images, behavior patterns, and palpable changes in our body. We describe these powerful and primitive emotions as hot states of anger, uncomfortable states like anxiety (including fear and dread) and cooler smoldering states like deep sadness and depression. Research shows that trait anxiety is a particular problem in forgiveness and reconciliation.

Social space

There are several aspects of social space that function as barriers to forgiveness and reconciliation. Counselors need to include this as part of their assessment.

The first dimension is time. People focused on past sinful events are mired in the past and unable to function effectively in the present or consider the future. This time problem can
Forgiveness obviously vary from person to person but in the extreme, a person almost seems to live in the past. So, focus on listening to the tense a person uses and the range of events in therapy. As yourself, “Where are those events located in time?”

There are several dimensions of social space that people occupy sequentially during a day. Other locations vary by the week, month, or holiday season. Many have a home and visit extended family. Many have friends. Most go to work or school and some do both. Within each social space are people who serve to enhance or degrade a person’s life experience. People affect us as we affect them. People serve as barriers to or facilitators of change.

I think we have to be careful that we as helping professionals do not become barriers when trying to help others. If we are so focused on forgiveness then we may see all relationship issues as an opportunity to work on forgiveness. Also, we can miss some of the serious mental health conditions that are not mere excuses. People are indeed overwhelmed by some mental health challenges, which we can ignore when focused on couples problems as a system or become eater to use a specific set of skills we have recently learned.

**Forgiveness Interventions**

My purpose today is to offer a context for the interventions and as time permits, suggest a few specific strategies. You will find more ideas in the references. You likely know that a number of fine books offer suggestions to help people forgive. Some writers like Ev Worthington offer programs that counselors can use. In addition to the general model, the authors include specific interventions. I suggest that one way we might view our role as counselors is that of John the Baptist. In this role, our task is to *prepare the way of the Lord.*

**Restore the Christian Narrative**
I believe restoring the Christian narrative is an effective intervention because it offers people a framework for factors associated with forgiveness. When relationships have been damaged as a result of offensive acts, a part of the overall Christian narrative has been broken. Restoring a person to faith in God as the person who controls the overarching life narrative and has given us a story of redemption is a quintessential lens for viewing life events.

One story that illustrates Jesus' view so well is the account of the woman who comes to wash his feet as recorded in Luke 7. Jesus is at a dinner and tells the story of two debtors to illustrate differences in the quantity of love as linked to debt forgiveness. The story also illustrates the teaching attitude of contrition and humility so valuable in preparing the way for forgiving. The gospel story is one of love, forgiveness, peace, grace, and mercy. As Christians connect or reconnect with God’s love, forgiveness, grace, and mercy they can develop a prerequisite state of humility and contrition. They become teachable. They can develop hope in the future and with renewed strength and spiritual resources, they can learn to reach out to others with love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness. The foregoing process can renew the mind and prepare the person for the task at hand of forgiving their spouse and where safe, they can offer and receive apologies and enter into those other trust-building steps important to reconciliation.

How do we restore this narrative? At some point following the assessment phase counselors can offer ways to reconnect with God through prayer, suggested Bible verses, stories, and questions asking the counselee to review those times when they felt close to God and experienced God’s blessing. They can be encouraged to share and write about experiences of love, forgiveness, grace, and mercy. The memories of such experiences are not easily accessed by a person who is focused on nursing their wounds. The brain naturally focuses on the offense. Threats to our wellbeing naturally take priority. Unfortunately, the mind does not know when to
turn off the negative search. The next time we are mentally online, we return to old searches and fail to enter new key words like hope, peace and so on. The ideas just don’t come to mind so one role a counselor has is to enter the key words and try to re-orient the counselee to the gospel story with all those forgiveness priming factors that can help the person reach the tipping point – that point at which the scales are rebalanced and they are ready to give up the offense story.

**Nail it to the cross**

Perhaps you have been in a church that included a Good Friday ceremony of nailing a written sin to a wooden cross. For some, the act of nailing a written offense to a cross can symbolize the commitment to give up the offense by recognizing God’s willingness to forgive us.

| Take your loss to the cross |

**Symbolize the baggage**

Christians speak about leaving burdens at the cross and finding the rest Jesus offers. Counselors refer to baggage people carry through life. Unforgiveness is a burden. Grudges and the associated negative emotions focus attention on the past and impair forward progress. This burden may be symbolized through a backpack or other package carried then given to a porter to gain relief. For the Christian, Jesus can be the porter who takes our life-baggage.

I was teaching a lesson on forgiveness to a church group and one perceptive member of the audience suggested one problem with baggage can be the enjoyment of attention received following an offense. If we are sensitive to victims, it is natural to care about them and how badly they feel but there comes a time for victims to let go of the hurt and live for the present.
There is a sensitivity required in treating victims of serious offenses. We don’t wish to harm them but it for the long term copious quantities of attention and care for old hurts interferes with healing. People can worsen if they love being a victim. Sometimes giving up baggage also means giving up attention and support.

**Use the mental remote control**

Frederick Luskin (2010) refers to a remote control metaphor as a way of helping people realize they can change the mental channel they are watching. With the symbolic press of a button they can move from the painful imaginative mental video to a new and refreshing selection. Counselors can help people create a new story or episode customized to their God-given strengths and interests. Find the beautiful places, enjoyable faces, peaceful states, soothing scriptures and props that will create a new story to watch over and over until the switch becomes easier and the power of the traumatic stimuli lessens. There are some beautiful stories that can help us cope more effectively such as *Left to Tell* by Immaculée Ilibagiza and the story of Nelson’s Mandela’s struggle in South Africa.

**Use expressive writing**

Social psychologist James W. Pennebaker (2011) found that writing about trauma had positive effects as people reframed the negative events after reviewing them in low threat situations. The writing can be distressful at first. Writing about trauma is not mere catharsis effect but a way to bring emotions under the control of cognition and behavior. When writing about the trauma, Pennebaker noted the importance of telling the story. A key aspect was creating a coherent story and, not just retelling but working at to tell it a different way. Counselors can offer prompts to help counselees take a role such as a narrator or just explain the
events another way. Because an individual does this work, the positive effect may be due to an increase in self-control, which was lost when traumatized.

**Add strategies to broaden-and-build**

Barbara Fredrickson (Worthington, 2006) documented the value of positive emotions in freeing personal resources to solve problems, plan ahead and engage with others. Negative emotions are a natural response to a threat and organize actions to flee or to fight and defend oneself. When the person is safe, these natural responses are no longer helpful but act as barriers to recovery. Counselors can educate counselees about this phenomena and help counselees discover texts and experiences to build back the positive feelings and replace the negative feelings linked to trauma and unforgiveness.

**The Reconciliation Component**

Reconciliation is a necessary component of forgiveness work in relationship repair. Reconciliation can only take place in situations where there is safety. The assessment of safety is an early task for people in relationship and counselors. Once safety has been resolved, steps toward reconciliation can begin. We may begin the process with a simple question, “Do you feel safe in this relationship?” However, assessment of safety should be ongoing because promises and good intentions can go awry.

Forgiveness is an intrapersonal process but in a relationship, forgiveness needs to be expressed and received. It is important to note the interdependence of forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness does not require reconciliation but can serve as a catalyst to promote
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reconciliation. Reconciliation does not require forgiveness but acts of reconciliation can serve as a catalyst for forgiveness.

**Apology**

Expressed forgiveness is a part of reconciliation. Expressed forgiveness is usually enhanced when an offender offers a sincere apology. Apologies can play an important role in reconciliation (Thomas & Sutton, 2008). People have a sense of what is sincere. People seem to require details to ensure the offender knows what it was that hurt the victim. A simple “I’m sorry” may not be enough. Counselors play an important role in helping offenders learn ways to express their apologies. Not everyone has great verbal skills even though they may be sincere. Excuses can mar an otherwise effective apology. If there are genuine excuses, they may be offered at a later time so as not to reduce the effects of the apology. We know that pain, lack of sleep, and work stress can affect our moods and be a factor in displacing aggression but these factors should not be used as excuses when seeking to rebuild or maintain a happy marriage.

In a recent article, Johanna Kirchoff and her colleagues examined the components of an apology in some depth. They found 10 key items that seem to make a difference. Here’s their list:

- Statement of apology
- Naming of the offence
- Taking responsibility
- Attempting to explain the offense
- Conveying emotions
- Addressing emotions and/or damage of the offended
Admitting fault
Promising forbearance
Offering reparation
Accepting request

In their study, the researchers found that more complete apologies were helpful to increase forgiveness. On small matters, there was no difference for more or less complete apologies but detailed apologies helped with more severe transgressions. Also, the ten items were all important but some were more important than others. More detailed apologies were more helpful in close relationships but brief apologies were best when seeking forgiveness from strangers.

**Editing out the negative**

Reacting to negative verbal communication is a common problem in couple’s therapy. Gottman’s technique of editing out the negative before responding has been successful in helping offenders learn skills that improve the emotional tone of arguments. See Babcock, Graham, Canady & Ross (2011) for a recent example of this strategy.

**Trust building**

Building trust takes time. Small acts of kindness can begin with a smile and an offer to help. Working together on projects can help restore a measure of trust. Trust is not an all or nothing concept but a relationship characteristic that increases or decreases with time. A critical level of trust is necessary to a marriage and any relationship. Successful trust building can begin using the twin components of trust and verify. At first, couples may need prescribed activities to
complete. They should be short and have a high probability of success. Following the activity, it is important to verify that the activity went well. Trust is build one step at a time. ON occasion there may be a break-through leap but at other times, progress is slow. Expectations need to be managed. Trying to recapture an old relationship may not work so think of building forward and seeing where it goes.

**Conclusion**

I would like to leave you with a sense of hope and encouragement. I believe many people find their way to forgiveness as they pray and meditate or benefit from wise counsel from friends or authors of many helpful books. Others report success by working through the steps of forgiveness with a counselor. I hope you have gained a few insights and ideas that will help at least a few other people.
References


Forgiveness Plus


The following book contains chapters from several authors. I wrote one on the psychology of forgiveness and reconciliation. At least until recently, Amazon offered a free sample from the book on kindle.

http://www.amazon.com/Forgiveness-Reconciliation-Restoration-Multidisciplinary-Pentecostals/dp/1608991946
If you are interested in the forgiveness research at our school, just search PsycINFO or Google

my name with Evangel University and key words like forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration and you can see some of the work our students have done.