

Forgiveness and Health

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The Forgiveness Process has a very specific definition. It means the process of cancelling the conditions in you which block the flow of love and goodwill towards yourself or another, independently of the actions of anyone else. It can also be defined as a healing of memories.

Forgiveness is NOT condoning someone else's harmful actions. It does NOT signify weakness on the part of the forgiver. It is NOT something you must wait until the offender asks for before you do it. It is NOT something you give to the offender, it is a gift you give yourself. It can be taught, learned, practised, and is a useful life skill.

Can you see connections between forgiveness and health? I hope in this article to show you how, after you have been hurt or humiliated; left angry or resentful; experienced real or false guilt (shame); or been in thrall to envy, irritation, hate, intolerance, prejudice, or any other sustained 'negative' emotion, the blocked love flow, which is the state of unforgiveness, profoundly affects the way your body functions. It can damage your health. I will indicate some steps you can take to remedy the situation. I hope also to give you enough information for you to take your interest further, if you decide to do so.

Before looking at the forgiveness process itself, and the benefits it can bring, let us increase our motivation by looking at the negative consequences of unforgiveness. Usually, when people do this they find how tired they are of them and how much they want to do something about it and move on.

EFFECTS ON THE BODY OF UNFORGIVENESS

There are many ways unforgiveness can affect you. For instance, your muscles may tighten, contributing to imbalances along your spine, and pain in your neck, back and limbs. We have many everyday phrases like “So-and-so is such a pain in the neck to me”. Headaches may occur due to increased tension of the neck muscles on the base of your skull. Because of this increased muscle tension (“uptightness”) around joints there may also be decreased blood flow to the joint surfaces. This then makes it more difficult for the blood to remove wastes from the tissues and reduces the flow of oxygen and nutrients to the cells. This will increase the likelihood of inadequate tissue repair during sleep, impairing recovery from injury, arthritis, etc. Injury through inattention (‘accident’), or violence is more likely. The blood flow to your heart may be constricted. Your digestion may be impaired. Your breathing pattern may change and become restricted. When your teeth over-clench when you are asleep it can contribute to problems with your teeth and jaw joints.

Increasing knowledge of the chemical neuro-transmitters in the brain, nervous system, glands and intestinal tract is showing us how closely our feelings and body chemistry are related. When you feel bad, the chemistry and electrical patterning in your brain is changed, and your mind is less able to see its way through problems and difficulties. Your immune system is likely to function less well, and your body then becomes a more vulnerable “seed bed” to infections, and perhaps malignancy.

The list could go on. Indeed, translated into medical “diagnoses”, it becomes a list of many of the conditions seen by doctors and dentists all over the world. And while unforgiveness may not be the sole cause of all of them, it almost certainly contributes to vulnerability to them - it can “set the scene” for them, as it were. It can also delay, or even impede, recovery.

EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS ON RELATIONSHIPS

As we open our eyes to “see” them, the effects on our relationships become clearer. In some areas of the globe, we witness the seemingly endless cycles of revenge. Closer to home we notice the stony silences, the sweet “Yes, dear” that really means “No! I can’t stand any more of this!”, the family rows; the physical, emotional and verbal abuse between adults, and by adults to children; the amount of gossip and poisonous criticism in a community; the “tall poppy syndrome”; the tendency to believe that somehow only bad news is newsworthy and thus to broadcast (and listen to) more bad news than good; the overflowing prisons; the decreased productivity in the workplace; the subtle ways we sabotage ourselves and each other; the undercurrents of “bad vibes” in a home or workplace. Diminished love flow can be seen in the way our environment and other species of life on Earth have been treated over centuries.

This list, too, could be extended, and represents a kind of undiagnosed “disease” in the body of all nations, or indeed, of humanity itself.

EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS ON INNER FREEDOM - HOW CHOICES ARE MADE

If you have unforgiveness in you, you are *not free*, and yet you may not realise this. You may well find yourself doing things *as if willed by unconscious forces*, saying or doing harmful things you did not truly intend, and unconsciously avoiding certain situations and opportunities. You may not realise how much you are limiting yourself - in fact, *imprisoning* yourself in your own negativity. Because your deepest and highest values are held hostage by the negative emotions, your value system tends to become unstable, and you may find yourself in fluctuating conflicts both within your own psyche and with other people. Even if you sense “There must be more to life than this!”, and yearn for inner peace, these conflicts prevent you having it.

DOING A FORGIVENESS PROCESS DOES NOT MEAN DENYING YOUR FEELINGS

Being able to get in touch with and release bad feelings *safely and harmlessly* is very important for all of us, both personally and for society as a

whole. Some form of 'safety valve' that we can learn is essential if harm is to be prevented. A Forgiveness Process will include this. Many forms of therapy and counselling have been developed to help people release feelings harmlessly. But one does not need to stop after expressing and releasing bad feelings (and this must always be done *harmlessly*), especially as it does not always complete the healing of our painful memories. One can give oneself the gift of going further, and apply all the other steps of a full forgiveness process.

EFFECTS OF UNFORGIVENESS ON THE MIND

Our negative, critical thoughts about ourselves and others affect us deeply. "Negative" points to a "minus" or "subtraction" does it not? When we have negative thoughts, we have subtracted from ourselves the love and life force that is potentially there for all of us to share. Our perceptions become diminished and distorted. Our view of the world becomes narrowed and we tend only to see the negative, in ourselves or others. Our decisions are therefore less wise than they could be. Prejudice, intolerance, racism, agism, sexism, blaming and criticising, etc., are all forms of unforgiveness. A Forgiveness Process must include changing such belief systems.

SELF FORGIVENESS

When you are unloving and unforgiving towards yourself the effects can include: Self-hatred, self-criticism, belittling yourself, undervaluing yourself, low self-esteem; depriving yourself of the good opportunities life offers you, and then living with regrets; not being open to receive love; indulging in habits or addictions that harm yourself or others; punishing yourself through activities or relationships that work harm to yourself; abusing yourself or others, whether physically, verbally, emotionally, sexually, educationally, or spiritually. Naturally, since most of these make you depressed, it is not surprising that lack of self-love can be found accompanying or contributing to many cases of depression. And curiously, lack of self love may also try to block you when you decide to forgive others

or yourself! This must be understood. The *good* news is that ways around it can be found, if you are willing.

UNFORGIVENESS IS BLOCKED LOVE AND/OR GOODWILL

What do all the above problems have in common? If you can imagine love (and/or goodwill) as a kind of 'energy' that flows between people, the common denominator is that there is a blockage of the flow of the 'energy' of love and goodwill. This in turn is reflected in a drop in life energy in the person or persons concerned. There is a close connection between the flow of life energy (or vitality) and the flow of love. Feedback from direct muscle testing can reveal a physical effect of this quite simply, which can often help a person become more aware of this. Your muscles go weaker when you think of a person you have a need to forgive.

Unforgiveness may be impeding your healing in body, emotion, mind and relationships. Unforgiveness is *dangerous*. An old proverb states:- "A person who hates (blocks love), must dig two graves".

THE NEED FOR GENTLE AWARENESS

If anything like this is happening to you or someone you know, it has first to be *recognised* before anything can be done about it. Often we simply have not "seen" the unforgiveness underlying the outer patterns. It sometimes takes a crisis *outside* us to wake us up to what is also happening *inside* us. Discovering the power of forgiveness can be one of the opportune gifts that a crisis brings.

It is very important to be kind and compassionate to yourself as you let into awareness the level of unforgiveness you may have been carrying. Then you can search for the healing power of forgiveness more effectively and the process of healing proceeds more easily. As your level of loving intention increases, circumstances conspire to help you and eventually you *will* find your way to complete Forgiveness. Perhaps we could put it differently, if you are open to that, and say that Love will find you.

BENEFITS OF FORGIVENESS

The benefits of unconditional love can include improved physiological functioning in virtually all systems of the body; the emotional life becomes richer and more serene; the mind becomes clearer; the real issues becoming easier to see. Goodwill brings its healing and enlightening influence into the situation. Even *one* person practising unconditional love in a situation can improve matters. If all people (in a family, organisation, group, even parliament!) were to do it consistently - what then could happen?

Unconditional love is one of the few things in the universe that does not get less when it is given away. Both love and joy *increase* when shared. But *conditional* love disappears when the conditions are no longer fulfilled and resentment takes its place.

Some more good news: In the twenty one years I have been studying it, I have *never* seen any harmful side effects arise from the forgiveness process when willingly and adequately carried out.

What then is the forgiveness process?

DEFINITION OF THE FORGIVENESS PROCESS

It is simply:- *The cancellation of all the conditions in the mind that are blocking the flow of love and life energy - independently of the behaviour of others. This heals the memories.*

THE REASON WE NEED TO USE A FORGIVENESS PROCESS

If underneath your physical condition or any bad relationships (in family or marriage, at school, or in the industrial, commercial, political, arenas) there is blocked love, then no matter how you treat the *symptoms or effects*, the condition may fail to heal, may relapse after temporary improvement, or may become a different manifestation of the original contributing cause. The unforgiveness remains imprinted upon your nervous and other physical systems, and the emotional negativity will find a way to leak out somehow.

Most of us were never taught specifically how to do a forgiveness process. The basic skills in life are more than the three "Rs" of Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rythmetic, - for they include Right Choice Making and Right Human Relationships. Learning the forgiveness processes comes under the last two. Many of us missed out, and, I would hasten to add, it was nobody's fault. A satisfactory method was simply not available nor widely known.

THE FORGIVENESS PROCESS CAN BE TAUGHT AND LEARNED

The state of unconditional love may be sometimes reached by an act of Grace, through a kind of epiphany, but this is not common. Much more often, and for most of us, we will need to learn a process of forgiveness, and then practise it.

In my experience, there are precise steps in the forgiveness process, each one being as important to the whole as all the parts of a delicate instrument like a watch. Think of it as a jig-saw – all the pieces need to be in place to get the complete result. All the steps are important, though different people may find certain steps more significant to them than others.

To help get started, and because we cannot always “see” clearly for ourselves when we are in a state of unforgiveness, a guide who is familiar with the process may be needed, or, some dedicated study is needed (see resource list at the end of this article). Part of you may feel resistant to the whole idea until you take the time to understand it better. This is not uncommon – almost the norm. After all, if there were no resistances in us to it, we would already have used it! Persistence is what always enables you to find a way through your difficulties. Think of Forgiveness Processes as emotional and mental house cleaning, a basic hygiene skill. All you need to do is to learn it, to practise it, and then it will become second nature to you, just as cleaning your teeth did once.

A FORGIVENESS-OF-OTHERS PROCESS MAY INCLUDE:

The actual steps are described in full detail in some resources given at the end of this article. To go further, you will need to get some of these. Here the steps will just be summarised.

At the outset, know this: It is always wise to carry out a forgiveness process *physically* in some way – by which I mean to enact it, to speak it aloud or write it out. This way it gets into your nervous system and your body, and does not just stay in your thoughts only. Just reading it silently will not usually be effective. Also, you never do it directly at or to the person you are forgiving. Indeed it may not be at all wise to do that. You may do it privately, or with a guide who has some experience with it, or with a supportive friend who is exploring the material and learning it together with you.

1. **SETTING THE SCENE:** You will need to understand that forgiveness means that you will be searching out and cancelling the conditions in you that have blocked the flow of love, joy, vitality etc., that arose when someone mistreated you. It is a gift to yourself, *not* to the other person. You will recognise the “forgiveness agenda” that your body has been carrying. This is a list that may include several people and events. It is wise to process only one person at a time. It can also be wise, especially if learning how to do this on your own, to choose one of the easier ones to start with. In this way you will be able to get the flow of the Forgiveness Process before using it for more difficult ones. [An analogy: It is easier to learn how to drive a car in a quiet field or empty street first, before going into very busy downtown areas].

2. **GETTING THE WILL ENGAGED:** You will need to decide (and verbalise in your own words) that deep down you *do* actually value health, freedom from negativity, love, creativity, joy and feeling worthwhile *more than* holding on to resentment, joylessness, irritation, hate even etc., (even if you haven’t always acted as if you did!). It will help you to list, and then compare, the benefits you want to happen to you as a result of letting go of all the negativity, grudge, bitterness, etc., and compare it with the burdens that are likely to happen if you stay resentful for the rest of your life.... This can really help motivate you to keep going with the process! You want benefits, not burdens! This makes it easier for you to decide to proceed.

3. **CHOOSING HOW YOU WILL DO THE PROCESS:** It is wise to make the conscious decision to apply the forgiveness process *comfortably, joyfully and completely*. Because energy follows thought, deliberately setting a goal to do it thus will make it a much more satisfying experience than doing it *uncomfortably, miserably and incompletely*. [Many people are surprised that it can be a joyful process to forgive themselves or others. Often I have to challenge a patient’s deep seated belief that it has to be a miserable experience. That is just NOT true!]

What follows is usually carried out as a sort of dialogue between you and your mental image of the person you are forgiving.

4. EMOTIONAL VALIDATION: You will express, honour and validate your hurt feelings, while at the same time *choosing to be no longer dominated by them*. Release of these feelings may be needed (there are several methods for safe emotional release, or catharsis). You will tell the person (in imagination) how what they did has affected you. You will also state your intention that your negative feelings will no longer control you. You are tired of that and are choosing to free yourself from it.
5. UPGRADING NEGATIVE BELIEF SYSTEMS: You will then rigorously search out all the negative beliefs that formed in your mind – i.e. conclusions that you came to - at the time of your emotional pain, but which now act against you. These include negative core beliefs about yourself, the other person(s), men, women, relationships, life, sex, money, authority etc. It can be surprising to discover how many of these there are! To keep it joyful, it helps to imagine this as a kind of fishing expedition – the more you catch the better! You will state your intention that these negative beliefs will no longer control you. You are so tired of living your life based upon them. Having discovered them all you will then need to patiently and deliberately upgrade them to wiser ones. This is one of the most revealing and important steps to do carefully, so take your time.
6. PREFERENCE STATEMENTS: You will then state very clearly and explicitly what you would have *preferred* the other person to have done, (instead of recycling complaints about what you *didn't* want). There are specific ways these preference statements must be done, which must be learned carefully. You will also discover and state the deep *values or principles* which you hold and which were trespassed upon at the time. People usually find that they recover their sense of dignity and authentic power as they do this. [They sometimes also recognise that they themselves have not *always* lived up to the high standard they have been expecting of the unforgiven one! This can help to lighten the burden of unforgiveness

too, as the projection is taken back ...] Again, take your time to do this step thoroughly.

7. ACCEPTANCE: You will state that you are willing to accept that history happened the way it did, that you accept that it did not come up to your expectations. No amount of wishful thinking will alter what happened - or the fact that not forgiving will continue to create more harm to yourself and others. Underlying this step is the recognition that constantly holding on to the demand that your expectations should have been met is actually the source of your resentment, grudge, and bitterness in the present – which are now both controlling and harming *you*. And you are reminded of your decision to end that harm to yourself.

8. FORGIVENESS AS “CANCELLATION”: You will next use your will to cancel your demand that the other person should have (or should now) meet your preferences as a condition for you to practise unconditional love and goodwill towards yourself. or them. Steps 1-7 have been preparations for this. It is this step which seems to open up a better connection to your true, or Higher Self (see step 10 below). Forgiveness is an act of conscious will. Your emotions cannot do it. They are not even designed to do it. They are designed to be sensitive, to feel pleasure and pain. So it is useless to wait until you *feel* like forgiveness. You must be both willing to do it and you must *will* to do it. If you find your determination wavering at this stage, you will find that reminding yourself of the benefits of forgiveness, and the unpleasant consequences of unforgiveness (as in step 2) will help keep you motivated!

9. HANDING BACK RESPONSIBILITY: You will need to be willing to give back responsibility (not blame) to the forgiven one for the effects of what happened or is happening. You will choose to no longer take responsibility (and punishment in your body) for the wrong they did. [If you realise that you too were partly responsible for what happened, to complete your self healing, you will need to include this item when you carry out a Self Forgiveness Process later].

10. CREATIVE MEDITATION OR VISUALISATION: This involves reaching up in consciousness above the level of your everyday mind to the level of an inner reality called by so many different names. It probably does not matter what you call it - it is the same inner reality. It exists in some form in virtually all cultures and religious traditions. Use whatever name *you* prefer for the *source or origin* within you of health, unconditional love, higher will, wisdom, patience, compassion, mercy, fairness, understanding, dignity, deep knowing of the interrelatedness of all beings, and other higher qualities. Some of the words people have used include: True Self, Deep Self, Inner Self, Spiritual Self, Soul, Higher Self, Essence, Transpersonal Self, Higher Power, Inner Power, Wise Part or Wise Person Within, and so on. Perhaps in the Maori tradition it is what called the Wairua, but I am not sufficiently well versed to be absolutely sure if that is correct. Aborigines in Australia told me that it is the real meaning they intend when they use the word that got translated into English as "Ancestors" – the very Source from which we came. Some may prefer to use the idea of the Christ consciousness deep within the human Heart. Others may refer to the Buddha Self within. Others still may prefer the word God, though the Soul can be thought of as the local representative of, and connection to, God. My own teacher used to say, "You do not always have to bother the president of the bank at head office to cash your cheque. He may be busy with important things – so do as much as you can at the local branch". What is important is to use the phrase or word for this inner reality, your Higher Self, the *source* of unconditional love within you, that is best for you.

It is from here that you draw down the living energies of love into yourself, first physically (to heal the body), then emotionally (visualising the Higher Self healing your 'earlier self' in each memory in turn), then mentally (changing negative beliefs that arose at the time of the painful incidents when the love flow through you became blocked, into wiser ones). To begin with, a guide familiar with the process can be helpful with this stage. But where that is not possible, some people have made an audio-tape in their own voice of this step from the full text of the process and used it to guide themselves through the meditation.

11. THE BRIDGE OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE - ENERGETICALLY HEALING THE DAMAGED RELATIONSHIP: Having thus brought love from your Higher Source to fill up your own energy system, you will meditatively *overflow* the unconditional love to the forgiven one, imaginatively 'seeing' their whole life – from babyhood, through childhood, and teenage, up to the present time. Especially allow yourself to become aware of the times of their pain and unmet needs, which contributed later to the times when they hurt you. This is a willed movement of the energy or qualities of love and goodwill. It is can often be accompanied by physiological changes - you will almost invariably 'feel better' after doing this. And more so with each forgiveness process that you complete.

The above meditation can be a profoundly beautiful experience, and is always more effective if the foundation for it have been adequately laid in the preceding steps.

12. GROUNDING: You will state your willingness to maintain the changes you have made in yourself, grounding them in every day life.
13. THE PATTERNS OF GOODWILL (Optional): You will remind yourself of certain mind-sets that are Patterns of Goodwill and Unconditional Love. They are derived from the Aramaic Language – European languages do not have adequate words for these concepts. These can be learned and practised and will be described in a future article. They can help us to embody the Laws of Right Human Relationships.
14. FUTURE PACING: You will visualise how you will think and behave in this and other relationships in the future, as you now act with goodwill, free of the old beliefs and conditioning. [Why is it important to do this? Because, as any athlete will tell you there is great value in mental rehearsal, and how it helps to improve their results in the field].
15. MAINTENANCE: You will gradually apply the process in progressively more areas of your life. Practise inevitably develops your skill.

THE SELF-FORGIVENESS PROCESS

The Self-forgiveness process is similar in many ways, but instead of the dialogue being between you and your mental image of another person, it takes place between your “everyday self” and your Higher Self. It is the Higher Self which forgives and heals the lower self. The Self Forgiveness Process can be used to heal regrets, negative beliefs and feelings about yourself – indeed all negative patterns in yourself which prevent you from loving and healing yourself or any of your parts. It is very important to do this, and most of us will need to do this from time to time. Many people dislike, criticise, or even hate, parts of themselves, their bodies, their emotional patterns, and what they do.

There are many core negative beliefs that we may need to heal with this process – for example, beliefs that we are unworthy, bad, guilty, incompetent, unlovable, blemished in some way, incapable, weak, must be punished, are doomed to illness or failure, and so on. And they can be.

You can usually know when each process is complete yourself, or whether some part of the process needs to be done more carefully or in more detail. Muscle testing can also be used to indicate more precisely if and when these processes are complete, and later, if the changes are being maintained. It can also indicate if more work needs to be done on any particular step.

THE “SIDE EFFECTS” OF FORGIVENESS

The effects of steadily applying the forgiveness processes in one’s life can include a great feeling of relief, improved relationships, better physical functioning, better response to medical or surgical treatments, increased confidence, more joy in living, a sense of inner freedom. I have witnessed for some people even a discovery of their life purpose. People become peacemakers, and blessed indeed are the peacemakers. Even the final stage of growth, dying, can become what it is meant to be, a peaceful, potentially

dignified and joyous transition to a greater life. These have all been observed.

Less easily measurable, but perhaps most important of all is a subtle change in the “thought atmosphere” around you. Bad vibes can become good vibes. A situation can be transformed in a way that was not previously possible. Good ideas can come into your mind that were not able to be registered before, and ways found around difficulties that previously seemed insurmountable. In an ongoing conflict situation of course, this would happen much faster if both parties work persistently and fully at applying the forgiveness processes. That will help the conflict transformation and the reconciliation process.

A Swedish psychologist, Barbro Holm-Ivarsson, has done four years’ research on this forgiveness process, which became a thesis for a Master’s degree at the University of Stockholm. In this she has documented the progress and beneficial developments in people with whom she worked, and her insights concerning the steps of the process. She has been generously willing to share her thesis with those who are seriously interested in this topic, via the internet. She can be E-mailed at <barbro.holm-ivarsson@trosa.mail.telia.com>

HOW YOU CAN TAKE IT FURTHER

I will list here some resources for you. I can tell you about what I know and have found to be useful to myself and my patients. There may be many other methods out there, in many different traditions. I am only indicating the ones that I have found to be effective for myself and in the situation I work in. The main thing is your own willingness to go on a search and to find, or create, *that method that works best for you*. If you really want to find out how to forgive, and then go on an inner and outer search, you *will* find what you need, because energy follows thought.

SEMINARS: The forgiveness processes described in this article can be learned in a confidential group at a weekend seminar. It can be extremely

deep and moving. Considerable trust builds up between participants in such groups. In several areas in New Zealand and overseas, some participants have gone on to form Action Groups of 3-4 who have gone on meeting weekly or fortnightly to support each other and to practise this skill for themselves. This has been powerful in releasing love steadily into their daily life, promoting beneficial change and growth. I must emphasise, practise is essential. Forming or joining such a group can help you in this. You get practise as a forgiver and as a guide. There is no doubt always more to learn. You yourself may discover something that will improve the process, and pass it on to others.

The method taught in these seminars was originally pioneered by Dr. Edith Stauffer, a wonderful lady now in her nineties, who first brought it to New Zealand, Australia, Korea and Japan in 1980. She has also taught it in Europe, and both Americas. The author of this article, Dr. Guy Pettitt, of Nelson, has been working with this material since 1980 and has seen various improvements to the original method arise from suggestions offered by his students and patients. Since 1982 he has taught nearly eighty forgiveness seminars, in New Zealand (Auckland, Wellington, Hawkes Bay, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Nelson, Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill), in Australia (Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, including for principals, teachers and school counsellors of the South Australian Department of Education, and Level II & III workshops for some people in Adelaide who wished to teach this material), in Lithuania (in the main State hospital in the capital Vilnius) and Russia (Mental Health Research Institute, Moscow), in Sweden, Holland, Switzerland, the U.S.A., Northern Ireland and England.

A current goal is to reach professionals who work with other people, and who want to master the skill first and then pass it on to a wider public, no doubt adapting it to meet the needs of those with whom they work, people of different backgrounds, cultures or age groups.

He would be happy to hear from anyone who would like to efficiently organise a seminar for their own professional or interest group. A 150-page workbook is provided at these seminars.

VIA THE INTERNET: In order to try to meet the needs of people who cannot attend such a seminar, a website has been created. The text of both the Forgiveness of Others and Self-Forgiveness processes can be found here:

<http://www.ts.co.nz/~gpettitt>

Unfortunately at this point in time it is not possible for the author to coach people by correspondence or E-mail. But from time to time people in different countries have written to him saying that they were able to use the material on the website with success.

Searching the Internet for other sites related to “forgiveness” will yield hundreds of websites for you to visit, of widely varying quality. Here is one with links to some others: <http://www.forgivenessweb.com>

A BOOK: “THE HEART OF HEALING”: Again, in order to try to meet the needs of people unable to attend a seminar, the author of this article wrote a three manual desk-top publishable book called: “The Heart of Healing”. It was developed in response to suggestions from many people to try to make it easier for them to get around the various difficulties that may come up for them. Think of it as a tool kit. Like any tool kit you must get acquainted with it and practise using it. Part One describes the reasons why we need a Forgiveness Process, the psychological model being used, and other background knowledge you might need. Part Two describes each of the steps - hopefully in sufficient detail that (with some dedication) the reader will be able to learn how to do it on their own. It remains to be seen how successful that will be generally, but some people have already been able to do that with great success. To make it easier to understand the points being made, both Parts One and Two have illustrative anecdotes, and there are summaries of “Points to be Learned” at the end of each chapter. Part Three is a summary of the ‘bare bones’ of the two forgiveness processes for use when you feel you no longer need the longer versions in Part Two.

[In New Zealand, “The Heart of Healing” costs \$60.00 including handling, postage, and GST. It can be obtained from the author – address at the end of this article]

BOOK: “UNCONDITIONAL LOVE AND FORGIVENESS” (1987 ISBN 0-940111-03-9) by Edith Stauffer. This is a smaller book by the original pioneer of the forgiveness process. Because of its simplicity, it is “user friendly”, and can be a very good introduction. It has also served as an excellent book for groups of people who meet regularly over time for self-development to use as a theme for their discussions for several months. It can get you going, it has a shorter version of the forgiveness process than the one I now use, and will enable you to go a long way. Its only disadvantage is that because of its brevity, some people did not always find it sufficiently detailed to find their way through certain difficulties that came up for them. So, if you feel you need the longer versions as well, seek them out via the Seminars, the website, or “The Heart of Healing”.

OTHER BOOK RESOURCES: Unrelated to the particular stream of teaching outlined in this article, but very much in parallel with it and with the same objectives, is the world wide Attitudinal Healing work of Dr Jerry Jampolsky, based upon the Course in Miracles. His latest book is called: “FORGIVENESS – THE GREATEST HEALER OF THEM ALL”. He has written several other well known books about the healing power of love – “Goodbye to Guilt”, “Love is letting go of Fear” and more.

Ask your local bookseller or librarian to search the booklists for other books about forgiveness, or conduct your own search through amazon.com - this will lead you to many other excellent resources, and prove very rewarding.

EPILOGUE

At least two universities in the world now have faculties doing research into the subject of forgiveness – the Universities of Wisconsin and Coventry. There are even more now offering peace studies and researching improved methods of conflict transformation. We are also increasingly hearing stories of forgiveness on the radio and TV. Forgiveness is definitely a topic whose time has come.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa has shown the world a new way of handling large scale hurt and grievances. From South Africa we learn that there are three points to the healing triangle.

1. Forgiveness – this takes only one willing person.
2. Reconciliation – this takes two or more willing people.
3. Restorative Justice (*not* justice based upon retributive punishment) can be a third ingredient needed in restoring goodwill, between individuals, within a nation or community, and internationally.

These three – Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Restorative Justice will be the cornerstones of the coming civilisation.

Even if all three seem to be needed, let us nevertheless realise that *forgiveness on its own* can contribute to, and even complete a personal healing, by bringing freedom from the harmful effects of sustained hate, resentment, irritation, criticism, guilt, false guilt, envy, jealousy, prolonged grief, etc. It can also improve the ‘atmosphere’ in almost any situation and thus increase the chances of reconciliation and community healing. Even one small lamp on a buoy at sea can shine in a large amount of darkness; it can be seen from a long way across the sea, and can help others to find their way better.

Anyone can discover and begin to learn how to bring the healing power of forgiveness, unconditional love and goodwill into their personal lives at any time. All that is needed is enough willingness. In the larger context, the mobilisation of goodwill as a result of forgiveness, which is unconditional love *in action*, can mobilise previously ‘unseen’ forces that can eventually bring deep healing to a community.

- *To find out more about the "Health, Joy, Love and Forgiveness" seminars, or to obtain copies of "The Heart of Healing"*
- *Fax +64-3-548-1241, or write to*
- *Dr Guy Pettitt, 81, Cambria St., Nelson, New Zealand.*