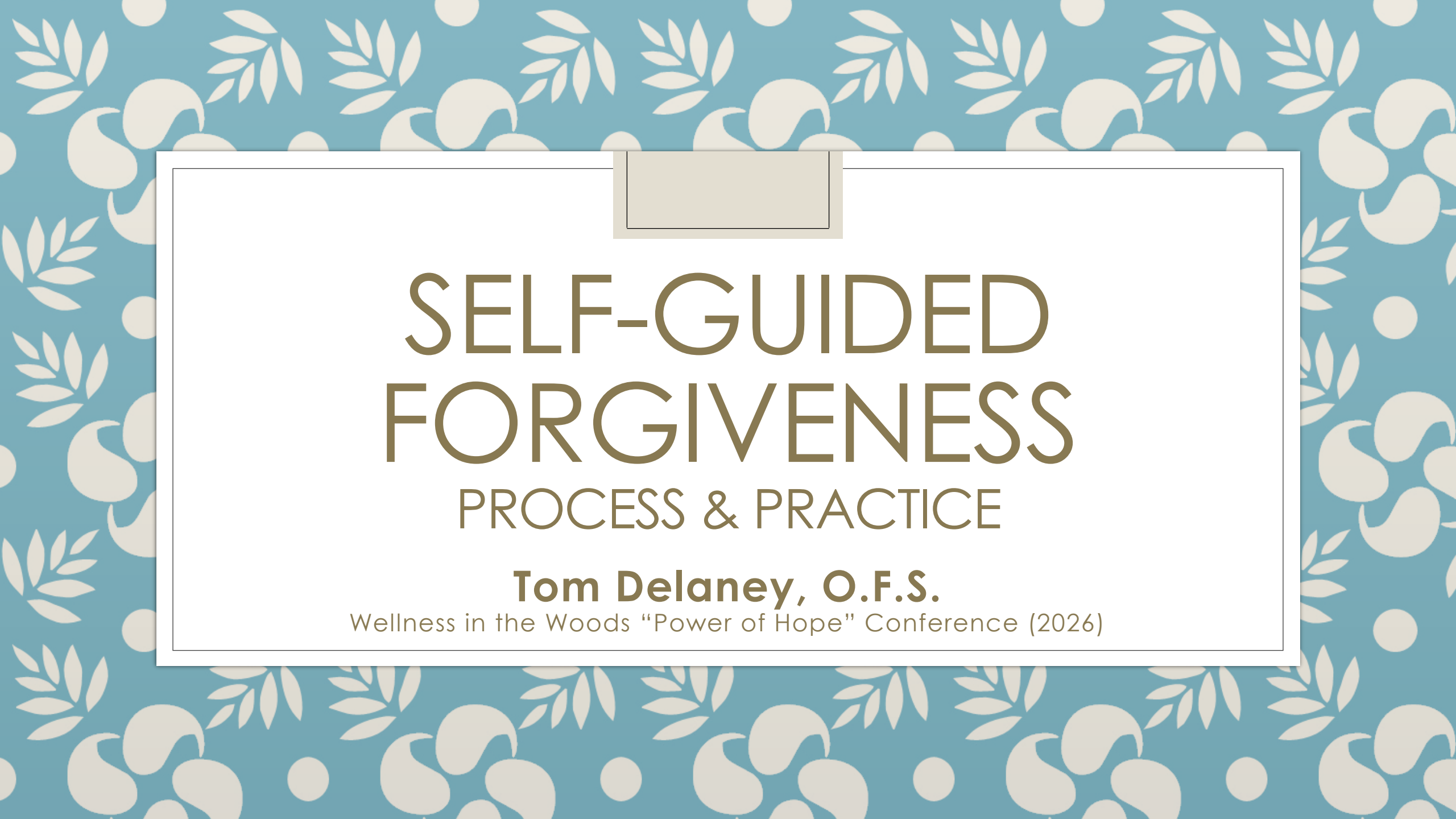




SELF-GUIDED FORGIVENESS

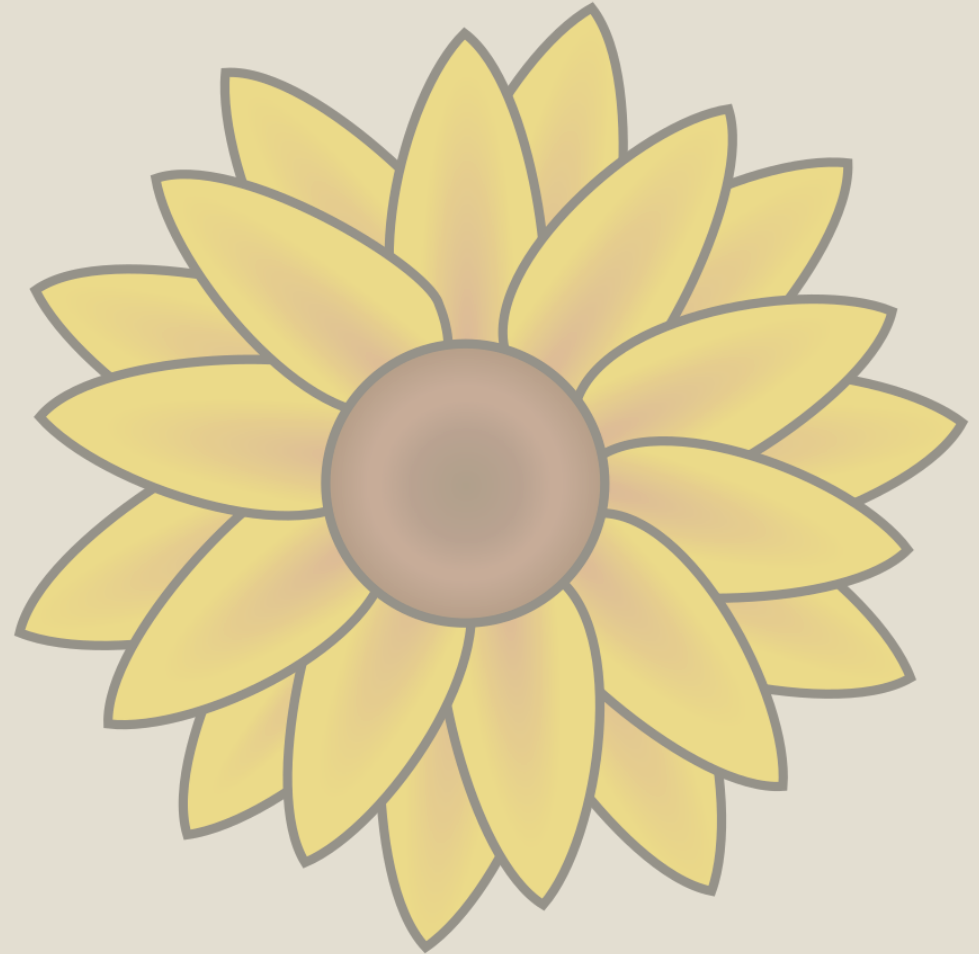
PROCESS & PRACTICE

Tom Delaney, O.F.S.

Wellness in the Woods “Power of Hope” Conference (2026)

Grounding Exercise

- Breathe and breathe again
- Sense your own presence
- See?
- Hear?
- Smell?
- Touch?
- Feel arrived
- Gratitude



What is a good life?

- When do you think a person has a “good life?”
- What do you think a “good life” has in it?
- Something we all want for ourselves and the people we love.
- All around the world the same five important things for a good life:
 - Happiness & Life Satisfaction
 - Mental & Physical Health
 - Sense of Personal Meaning & Purpose
 - Good Character & Virtue
 - Close Positive Social Relationships
 - Financial & Material Stability



What is forgiveness?

- What would you say it means to forgive someone, or be forgiven?
- When it is a full and lasting forgiveness with mental health and other benefits, forgiveness is:
 - Replacing ill will with good will toward someone who wronged us.
 - Hoping the person who wronged us will change, heal, and grow away from what caused them to do the wrong.
- Forgiving someone is often a way for a person to feel that they have a good life, or at least a better life.

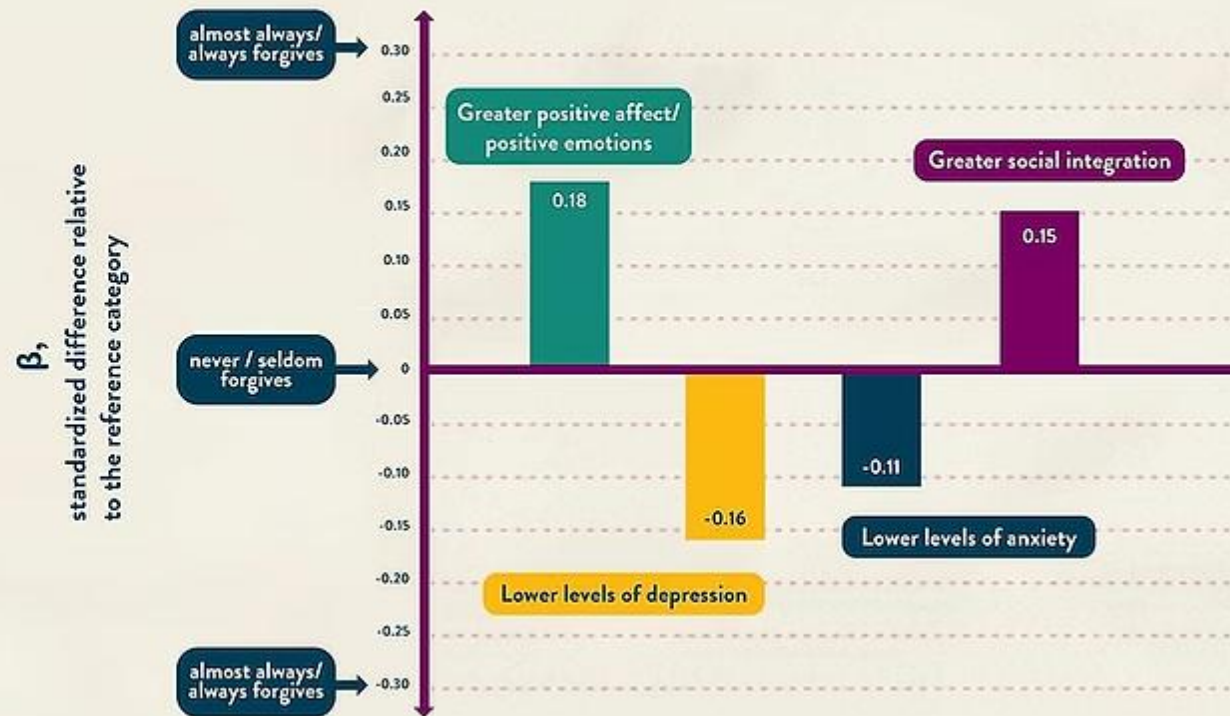


What does forgiveness do?

- *Write It:* When was a time you forgave someone, or were forgiven?
- *Write It:* What was your experience before and then after forgiveness?
- Mental Health Benefits (Personal & Community)
 - Lowers symptoms of depression and anxiety.
 - Raises personal sense of meaning and purpose, as well as happiness.
- Physical Health Benefits
 - May lower symptoms of poor health associated with depression and anxiety.
- Possible Creativity Benefits (Personal & Community)
 - Forgiveness frees the mind of resentment clutter and gives it more mental space for creativity



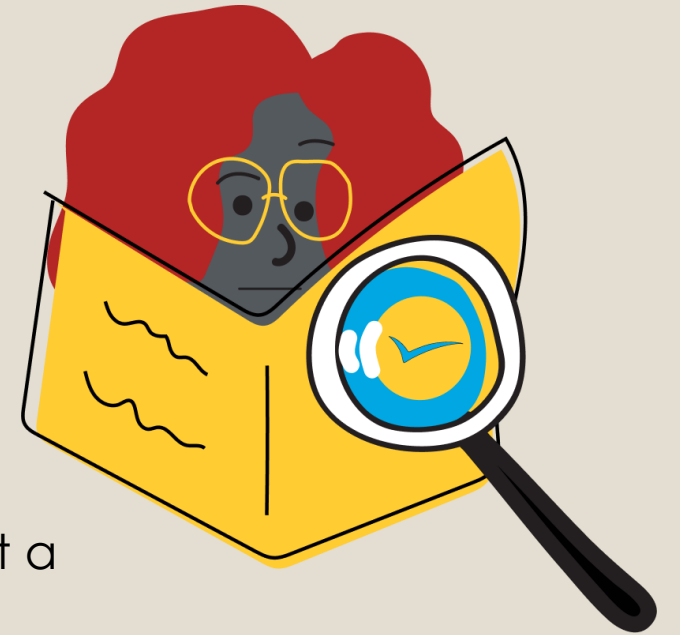
Benefits of Forgiveness of Others



Long, K. N. G., Worthington, E. L., VanderWeele, T. J., & Chen, Y. (2020). Forgiveness of others and subsequent health and well-being in mid-life: a longitudinal study on female nurses. *BMC Psychology*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-020-00470-w>

Is all forgiveness the same?

- Two kinds of forgiveness:
 - *Decisional Forgiveness*
 - Deciding not to engage in negative behaviors in response to a wrong done to you
 - *Emotional Replacement*
 - Replacing negative emotions (thoughts and feelings) about a wrong with positive emotions
- For full and lasting forgiveness with benefits, you need both.

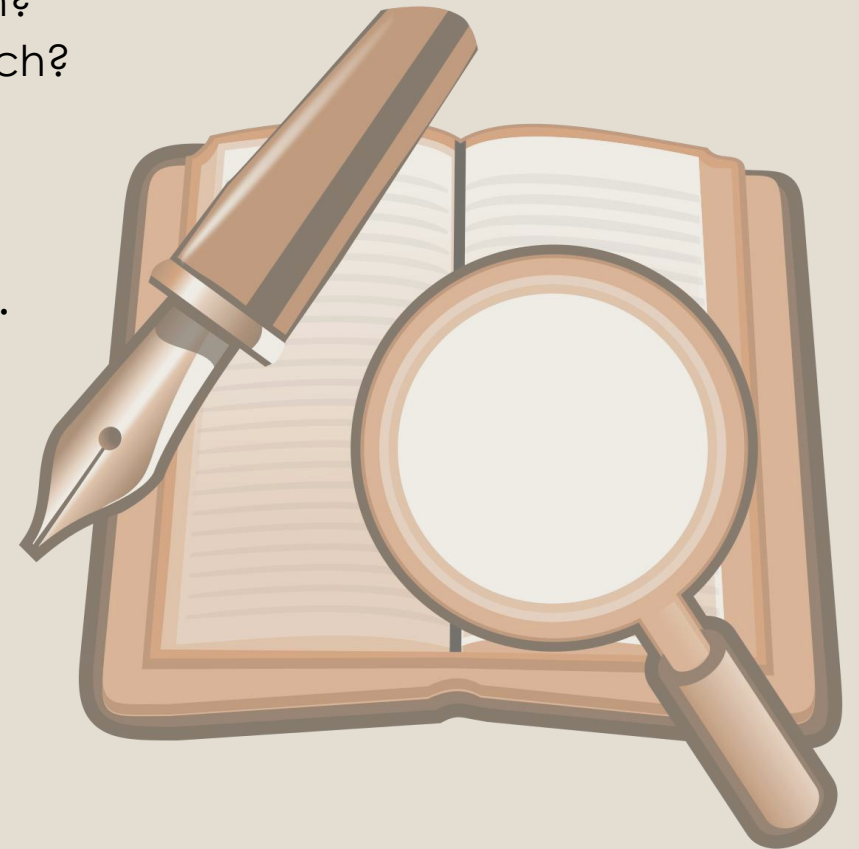


REACH for Forgiveness

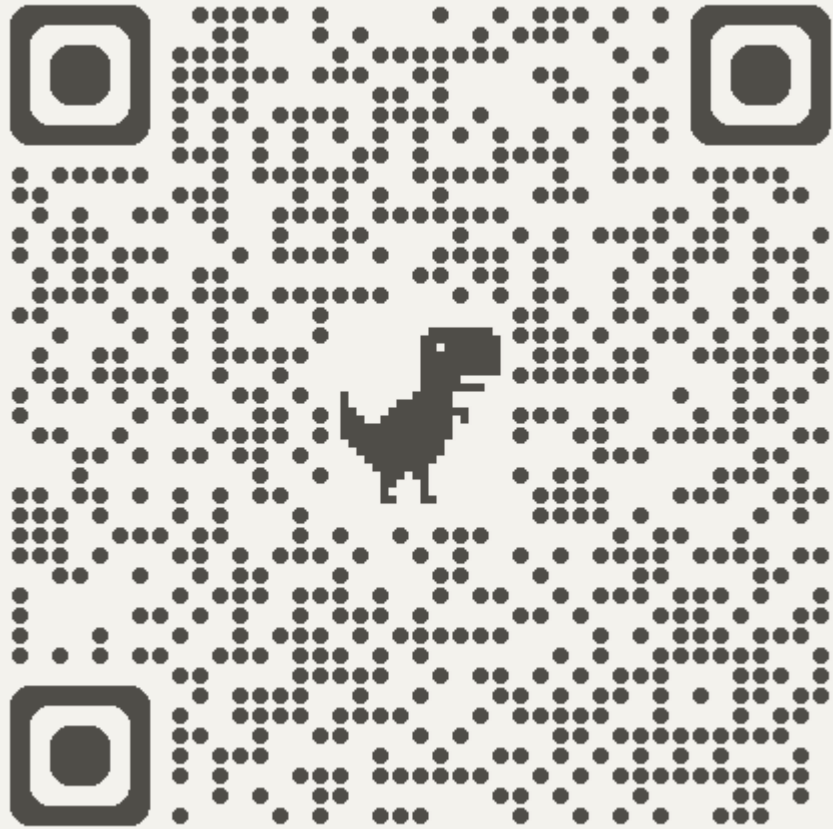
- **R**ecall
 - Remember the event you want to forgive with as much clarity and detail as possible
 - Start with a small wrong or hurt your first time, and build your forgiveness strength over time
 - Prompts and questions for journaling help
- **E**mpathize
 - Consider the wrongdoer's life circumstances and history and see why they did what they did
 - Empty Chair Exercise
- **A**ltruistic Gift of Forgiveness
 - Use your empathy to forgive even if not deserved or no benefit to you
- **C**apture
 - Use journaling, or making a reminder, to formally (give form) to your full forgiveness.
- **H**old
 - Remind yourself and revisit your forgiveness as often as you need to

Self-Guided Forgiveness

- We always guide our own forgiveness, sometimes more accidentally than intentionally.
 - Did we learn about real forgiveness growing up or not so much?
 - Have we experienced real forgiveness in our lives or not so much?
 - You can always learn and it is never too late.
- Forgiveness workbooks are a proven way to guide your forgiveness toward being more intentional, full and lasting.
- REACH Forgiveness Workbook
 - Validated in the U.S. and other countries
 - Free / No Charge / Open Source
 - Even works on your phone!
 - Covers each of the steps in REACH
 - Work at your own pace
 - Can be used in small groups too



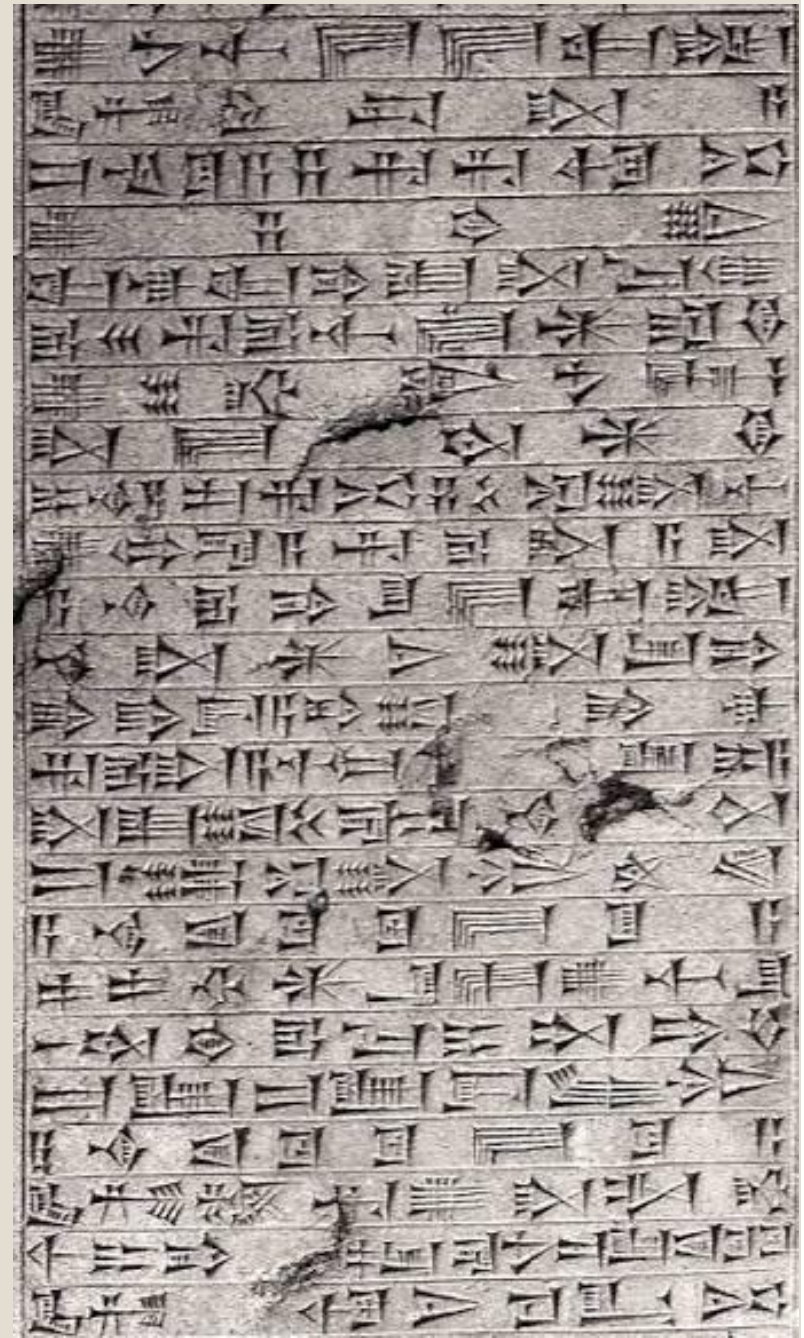
REACH Forgiveness Workbook



<https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/post/global-forgiveness-movement>

Forgive and forget?

- Forgiveness is about changing your relationship to something that happened, in the way that you want to.
- Forgiveness is not about changing the facts of what happened, disregarding them or forgetting them.
- Real forgiveness needs honesty, truth, and full acknowledgement of injustice.
- Forgiveness can happen without reconciling or reuniting with someone, and sometimes that's best for you.
- Forgiveness can help shrink an injustice down (a lot) but it never completely erases it.
 - Written in stone, the stone can get smaller but the writing is still there.



Other Important Questions

- Why do people not forgive?
- When is not forgiving good?
- How can I forgive myself?
- Can I experience forgiveness from God or my Higher Power?
- How does reconciliation with someone work after forgiveness?
- What is the benefit to another person of forgiving them?



The Power of Hope

CEU VERIFICATION FORM



Thank you!

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