

2009

# Gender role orientation and the role of empathy in interventions promoting the development of interpersonal forgiveness.

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Gender role orientation and the role of empathy in interventions  
promoting the development of interpersonal forgiveness

by

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Counseling Psychology

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2010

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## ABSTRACT

Research over the past quarter-century has revealed a host of benefits associated with forgiving someone for a past hurt, such as reductions in anxiety and depression and increased satisfaction with life and subjective well-being. Despite these potential benefits, forgiving is difficult. As such, researchers and clinicians have examined the efficacy of therapeutic interventions that assist clients in developing forgiveness. Ultimately, such interventions are evaluated by their efficacy in successfully cultivating forgiveness and promoting well-being (e.g., reducing psychological symptoms).

The present experiment was conducted to understand the potential value of two group counseling interventions for individuals suffering the effects of a past hurt. In particular, this study sought to determine (a) whether some interventions are more effective than others at cultivating forgiveness; (b) whether individuals with masculine versus feminine gender role orientations will respond differently to these interventions; and (c) whether individuals with masculine gender role orientations in particular have unique needs when it comes to forgiving. The investigation was informed by the growing body of literature indicating that males and females often respond better to particular psychotherapy approaches (Ogrodniczuk, Piper, & Joyce, 2004; Ogrodniczuk, Piper, Joyce, & McCallum, 2001) and often demonstrate different forgiving styles (Wade & Goldman, 2006; Worthington & Lerner, 2006), as well as by speculation as to whether biological sex or gender roles account for more of the variance in individual differences commonly reported between males and females (Hunt, Lewars, Emslie, & Batty, 2007; Karniol, Gabay, Ochion, & Harari, 1998; Milovchevich, Howells, Drew, & Day, 2001).

Longitudinal data collected from 111 participants across three treatment conditions prior to and immediately following treatment revealed that participants in all treatment conditions tended to experience reductions in negative feelings and thoughts toward the transgressor. Only one treatment condition, however – an intervention based on Worthington’s (2001) REACH model of forgiveness – led to increased forgiveness. Implications of this finding are discussed, as are limitations of the investigation and future research directions.

## CHAPTER 1

### LITERATURE REVIEW

An increasing number of applied researchers and clinicians have begun to endorse the value for clients of therapeutic work aimed at promoting forgiveness in victims of interpersonal transgressions (e.g., Fitzgibbons, 1986; Wade, Bailey, & Shaffer, 2005). In the past quarter-century, behavioral researchers have progressively uncovered more and more potential physical and psychological benefits of forgiving past interpersonal offense. Research, particularly in the past decade, has explored the associations between forgiveness and cognitive performance, stress, psychopathology, and a host of indicators of physiological (e.g., blood pressure, cortisol secretion, sleep) and psychological (e.g., anxiety, depression, grief) well-being. A handful of investigators have focused their efforts on establishing forgiveness-promoting interventions that can be empirically tested, quantitatively measured, and clinically employed to the benefit of individuals still carrying the burden of past hurts. Two questions that each of these investigators ultimately addresses is whether interventions aimed at promoting forgiveness (a) successfully cultivate forgiveness, and (b) promote well-being (e.g., self-esteem, meaning in life, psychological health).

Furthermore, there is a growing awareness that males and females might exhibit different attitudes and behavioral tendencies when it comes to forgiveness (Lawler-Row, Karremans, Scott, Edlis-Matityahou, & Edwards, 2008; Wade & Goldman, 2006; Walker & Doverspike, 2001; Worthington & Lerner, 2006) and forgiveness-related constructs such as revenge motivations (Gault & Sabini, 2000) and empathy (Macaskill, Maltby, & Day, 2002). Males and females have also been shown to respond differently to particular styles of



psychotherapeutic treatment (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2001; Ogrodniczuk et al., 2004). Despite these noteworthy differences between the sexes, research on forgiveness interventions has not been conducted to directly investigate whether different treatments are indicated for males and females who wish to forgive a person who has hurt them.

### *Defining Forgiveness*

Everyone, it seems, knows what forgiveness is. However, the meaning of this concept often differs from one person to another. Beliefs about what forgiveness entails are influenced considerably by people's fundamental values and convictions (Mahoney, Rye, & Pargament, 2005) as well as by their culture (Recine, Werner, & Recine, 2007; Scobie, Scobie, & Kakavoulis, 2002). As such, for the proposed study to have any scientific or clinical value, an operational definition of forgiveness must be tendered.

Constructing an operational definition for forgiveness is no small task. Significant debate has taken place among forgiveness researchers over how to conceptualize forgiveness (see McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000, for a review). Exline and Baumeister (2000) suggest that forgiveness is the "cancellation of a debt" by "the person who has been hurt or wronged" (p. 133). For Hargrave and Sells (1997), it is an "effort in restoring love and trustworthiness to relationships so that victims and victimizers can put an end to destructive entitlement" (p. 43). Thompson and Snyder (2003) define forgiveness as "the framing of a perceived transgression such that one's attachment to the transgressor, transgression, and sequelae of the transgression is transformed from negative to neutral or positive" (p. 302). Rye and Pargament (2002) define forgiveness as "letting go of negative affect (e.g., hostility), negative cognitions (e.g., thoughts of revenge), and negative behavior

(e.g., verbal aggression) in response to considerable injustice, and [forgiveness] also may involve responding positively toward the offender (e.g., compassion)” (pp. 419-420).

The preceding definitions are but just a few of the dozens of that can be found in the forgiveness literature. How, then, can a satisfactory understanding of the construct be reached? To begin, a number of similarities among definitions exist, particularly in relation to forgiveness as a therapeutic goal, and can serve as a starting point for a common understanding (Wade & Worthington, 2005). As Worthington (2005) suggests, a *de facto* consensus appears to largely exist among researchers regarding what forgiveness is *not*. Forgiving is not the same as condoning (Veenstra, 1992), forgetting (Kearns & Fincham, 2004; Smedes, 1996) or reconciling (Freedman, 1998). It is not the same as justifying, excusing, minimizing, overlooking, pardoning, or tolerating an offense (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Wade, Johnson, & Meyer, 2008; Wade, Meyer, Goldman, & Post, 2008). Condoning, for instance, implies that an offense was justified (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002) and effectually communicates a recognition that there was no unfairness in the transgression (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Similarly, excusing suggests that there were extenuating circumstances for the offense (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002), thereby freeing the offender from responsibility for her or his actions (Rye et al., 2005). Many people believe that in order to forgive they must continue or re-establish a relationship with the person who transgressed upon them (Kearns & Fincham, 2004). However, forgiving is not the same as reconciling with an offender (Enright & North, 1998; Worthington, 2006; Worthington & Drinkard, 2000). A person can choose to forgive an offender without restoring the fractured relationship (Freedman, 1998; Seybold, 2007). As Wade and his colleagues note, this understanding of forgiveness permits an offended party to continue to hold an offender

accountable for the consequences of her or his behavior and to contemplate whether a relationship (along with its antecedents, e.g., trust) can be reestablished (Wade, Worthington, & Haake, 2009). Forgiveness does not translate to an agreement to trust another, but instead to let go of the grudge one carries as a result of a breach of trust. Finally, forgiveness is not the same thing as forgetting. Research in fact shows that forgiving is not related to attempts to not think about an offense (Lawler-Row, et al., 2008). A person who forgets an injustice is less likely to establish safe boundaries with individuals who have hurt her or him in the past (Wade, Johnson, & Meyer, 2005). Forgiveness, but not forgetting, acknowledges the injustice and hurt that followed the transgression (Smedes, 1996).

Although there is largely a consensus among applied researchers and clinicians about what forgiveness is not, this only leads part of the way to an operational definition of forgiveness. By reviewing the conceptual work that has been done by previous researchers a clearer definition will emerge. Many researchers –those previously cited, as well as others (e.g., Fincham & Beach, 2002; Thoresen, Harris, & Luskin, 2000) – have made significant contributions to the forgiveness literature. The construct of forgiveness and, in particular, the testing of forgiveness interventions has been disproportionately conducted by two research teams. Below is a review of the conceptual work on forgiveness by these two teams that is intended to clarify definitional issues.

*McCullough, Worthington, and colleagues.* Some of the most substantial research on forgiveness and forgiveness interventions in counseling has been conducted by McCullough (e.g., McCullough et al., 2007; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997), Worthington (e.g. Wade & Worthington, 2005; Worthington, Sandage, & Berry, 2000), and

their colleagues (e.g., Sandage, Hill, & Vang, 2003; Wade, Bailey, & Shaffer, 2005). A recent search of a scholarly database using the authors' names along with the keyword 'forgiveness' revealed 31 publications by McCullough and 51 publications by Worthington (PsycINFO, 6/6/09). McCullough et al. (1997) defined forgiveness as "the set of motivational changes whereby one becomes (a) decreasingly motivated to retaliate against an offending relationship partner; (b) decreasingly motivated to maintain estrangement from the offender; and (c) increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the offender, despite the offender's hurtful actions" (pp. 321-322). Soon thereafter, Worthington, Sandage, et al. added a key modification to the third element of McCullough et al.'s definition to include fostering "conciliation between the parties if conciliation is safe, prudent, and possible" (p. 229). In essence, these theorists assert that forgiveness is a change process in which, over time, a person becomes more positively inclined (toward conciliation and goodwill) and less motivated by negative reactions (avoidance and revenge) toward his or her offender (Bono, McCullough, & Root, 2008). At the heart of this understanding of forgiveness as a change process is replacing one's vengeful and avoidant *motivations* toward another person with prosocial motivations. Thompson and Snyder offered an insightful summarization of this approach, pointing out that "this implies that forgiveness is an *intrapersonal* process regarding *interpersonal* relationships" (2003, p. 303, emphasis added).

*Enright and colleagues.* Perhaps the single most prolific researcher in the field of forgiveness research has been Robert Enright, who, with the assistance of a number of colleagues, has authored at least 67 publications on the topic (PsycINFO, 6/6/09). Included among these have been a number of intervention studies to promote forgiveness (e.g., Coyle

& Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996), theoretical papers (e.g., Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991), and a meta-analysis (Baskin & Enright, 2004).

In an early attempt to conceptualize forgiveness, Enright, Gassin, and Wu (1992) defined it as “the overcoming of negative affect and judgment toward the offender, not by denying ourselves the right to such affect and judgment, but by endeavoring to view the offender with compassion, benevolence, and love...” (p. 101). More recently, however, Enright and his colleagues have redeveloped the definition. Demonstrative of this change, Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) defined forgiving as the decision to “willfully 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)” (p. 29).

Both groups, however, share commonalities in their definitions of forgiveness. These similarities include conceptualizing forgiveness as (a) an intrapersonal/intrapsychic process; (b) freely chosen by the forgiver; (c) that not inherently in the realm of any specific religion or sect; (d) in which feelings, thoughts, motivations, and behaviors toward an offender become less negative and more positive; (e) that can – but need not – involve relationship repair and reconciliation. Also, both state that forgiveness is more than a simple reduction in unforgiveness (Worthington & Wade, 1999).

*Unforgiveness* can be understood as the negative feelings, thoughts, motivations, and/or behaviors that accompany the belief that one has been transgressed upon by another long after the transgression has taken place (as opposed to more immediate reactions; Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005; Worthington & Wade, 1999). Specifically, these include

feelings of dislike, hostility, anger, or even hatred towards an offender, as well as desires for revenge and for avoiding contact with the person who committed the offense (McCullough et al., 1998; Worthington & Wade; Wade, Worthington, et al. 2005; Worthington, 2003).

Worthington, Berry, and Parrott (2001) compare forgiveness and unforgiveness to shed light on the difference between the two:

“Unforgiveness is a complex of related emotions consisting of resentment, bitterness, hatred, hostility, residual anger, and fear which are experienced after ruminating about a transgression. Forgiveness is the contamination or preventing of unforgiving emotions by experiencing strong, positive, love-based emotions as one recalls a transgressor. The positive, love-based emotions can be empathy, sympathy, compassion, agape love [friendship], or even romantic love for the transgressor” (pp. 108-109).

Worthington and Wade (1999) note that whereas reduction of unforgiveness is necessary for forgiveness to occur, forgiveness is not similarly necessary for reduction of unforgiveness to occur. For instance, one could reduce his or her unforgiveness by way of exacting revenge on a transgressor or by pursuing legal or punitive punishment. Therefore, forgiveness can be defined as a behavioral, cognitive, and emotional process involving two primary components: (a) reduction of unforgiving behaviors, thoughts, and feelings about the hurtful event; and (b) increase in positive, prosocial behaviors, thought, and feelings toward the offender (Wade, Johnson, et al., 2008; Wade & Worthington, 2005).

### *Models of Forgiveness Promotion*

Before moving on to the findings of existing research on forgiveness interventions, it would be prudent to first take the opportunity to explore how forgiveness interventions

work. While a number of theoretical models for these interventions exist (e.g., Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2005; Rye et al., 2005), the following pages offer insight into the theoretical bases for the two most prominently researched models for promoting forgiveness: Worthington's (2001) REACH Model and Enright's Process Model (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991).

*Worthington's REACH Model.* Worthington's (2001; 2003) Pyramid Model to REACH Forgiveness is the result of more than a decade of research conducted by Worthington and his colleagues (e.g., McCullough & Worthington, 1995; McCullough et al., 1997; Worthington, Kurusu, et al., 2000). REACH is an acronym for the five steps to forgiveness denoted by Worthington. In the first step, the offended party must *recall* the hurt and acknowledge the pain inflicted by the offense. Next, the individual works to develop *empathy* for the offender. In doing so, this person tries to imagine what it was like for the offender at the time of the offense, and also recognizes that he or she (the victim) has transgressed upon others in the past and has graciously been forgiven. This leads to increased humility and compassion, which bring about the third step, during which one chooses to grant the *altruistic* gift of forgiveness, even though the offender may not have done anything to deserve forgiveness. In the fourth step, the person makes a *commitment* to forgive the offender. At this point, the decision to forgive is made public, thereby strengthening the individual's resolve to follow through. In the fifth and final step, the individual *holds on* to forgiveness, thereby permanently displacing the previously held thoughts, feelings, and motives of unforgiveness (Worthington, 2001; 2003).

*Enright's Process Model of Forgiveness.* Enright and his colleagues (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991) have developed a model of interpersonal

forgiveness comprised of 20 distinct steps (see Baskin & Enright, 2004, for a brief description of all 20 steps). These steps can be split into four linear phases. The first, called the *uncovering* phase, includes the first 8 steps focuses on recognizing and recalling the hurt caused by a past offense and increasing awareness of how one has dealt with the offense emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally. Steps 9-11 constitute the *decision* phase, in which the offended party sees that unforgiveness may not be working, explores the concept of forgiveness, and considers whether he or she wishes to forgive the offender. In the third, or *work*, phase, the individual works toward developing a broader understanding of the offense and empathy for the offender. This occurs in steps 12-15. The final phase, called the *deepening* phase, takes place within steps 16-20. During these steps, the person focuses on the newfound sense of healing and meaning that forgiveness has allowed him or her to experience (Baskin & Enright, 2004).

#### *Previous Research on Forgiveness-Promoting Interventions*

Publications dealing with proposed interventions to promote forgiveness and their outcomes have only begun to emerge in the scholarly literature over the last 15 years. These studies offer convincing support for the effectiveness of these interventions in bringing about meaningful therapeutic outcomes (Root & McCullough, 2007). This research has been centralized, and is largely limited to two teams of researchers (headed by Enright and Worthington/McCullough), though other researchers (e.g., Luskin, Ginzburg, & Thoresen, 2005; Rye & Pargament, 2002) have begun to play a larger role in recent years. While much of the outcome research has taken the form of group interventions (for reviews of forgiveness group intervention research, see Wade & Worthington, 2005, as well as Wade, Worthington, et al., 2005), individual interventions have also been explored (e.g., Coyle &



Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996) as have couples interventions (e.g. Ripley & Worthington, 2002). Research has addressed specific *offenses* (Coyle & Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996), *offenders* (Rye & Pargament, 2002; Rye et al., 2005), and *age groups* (Al-Mubak, Enright, & Cardis, 1995; Hebl & Enright, 1993). At the same time, other research has incorporated participants with assorted past hurts (Wade, Worthington, et al., 2005; Worthington, Kurusu, et al., 2000).

Three meta-analyses of forgiveness outcome studies have been conducted that organize and summarize the diverse literature that has developed (see Table 1). Worthington, Sandage, et al. (2000) published the first such synthesis, a review of eleven studies comprising a total of thirteen interventions aimed at promoting forgiveness, all using time-limited group interventions. The investigators calculated a beta coefficient for a weighted least squares regression between effect size and duration (in hours) of intervention ( $R = .70, p = .007$ ). When they later factored in the results of individual intervention studies that had been reported, as well as a newer group intervention study, the correlation coefficient increased to .86 (Worthington, Kurusu, et al., 2000). In terms of effect sizes, Worthington, Sandage, et al. (2000) reported a small to medium overall effect (Cohen's  $d = .43$ ) for forgiveness interventions, with interventions lasting six hours or more having a large effect (Cohen's  $d = .76$ ) and those lasting fewer than six hours having a small effect (Cohen's  $d = .24$ ). As a result of their findings, Worthington and colleagues explicitly advised that forgiveness promotion interventions last at least six hours.

Table 1

*Forgiveness Treatment Effect Sizes and Confidence Intervals Reported in Meta-analyses*

Meta-analysis study	Treatment	Modality	N		d	95% Confidence Interval	
			Total	Intervention			Control
Baskin & Enright (2004)							
	Decision-based	group	188	104	84	-.04	-.24 - .16
	Process-based	group	120	49	71	.82	.43 - 1.21
	Process-based	individual	22	11	11	1.66	.68 - 2.64
Worthington, Sandage, & Berry (2000)							
	≥ 6 hours	group	606	176	430	.76	.57 - .95
	4 hours	group	48	24	24	-.31	n/a
	≤ 2 hours	group	356	193	163	.24	.04 - .44
Wade, Worthington, & Meyer (2005)							
	Forgiveness theory	group	722			.57	.51 - .63
	Forgiveness comparison	group	246			.43	.33 - .53
	Alternative comparison	group	181			.26	.16 - .36
	No treatment	group	411			.10	.04 - .16

In a meta-analysis performed by Baskin and Enright (2004), the authors reported on six studies encompassing a total of nine distinct experimental interventions. They categorized the studies into three groups: those in which forgiveness is characterized as: (1) a *process*, utilizing an *individual* format; (2) a *process*, utilizing a *group* format; (3) a *decision*, utilizing a *group* format. Decisional forgiveness involves a ‘behavioral intention statement’ to release a grudge and give up one’s unforgiveness toward a transgressor (Wade, Worthington, et al., 2005). The process of forgiveness, on the other hand, develops over a series of stages; it does not require the same degree of explicit intention, and is not satisfied by the mere proclamation of forgiveness (Baskin & Enright, 2004). These investigators reported largely differing effect sizes for the three categories, the highest ( $d = 1.66$ ) being for process-based individual interventions, while a nonetheless large effect ( $d = 0.83$ ) was found for process-based group interventions. These results show that the average person in an individual process intervention was more likely to achieve forgiveness than 95% of those in a control condition, while the average person in a group process intervention was more likely to achieve forgiveness than 75% of those in a control condition. Surprisingly, Baskin and Enright found a small negative effect ( $d = -0.04$ ) for the decision-based group interventions, suggesting not only that process-based interventions offer greater effectiveness, but that decision-based group treatments do not seem to offer benefits compared to non-treatment.

Unfortunately, Baskin and Enright (2004) have left open the possibility of a confound in their assessments of effectiveness. Specifically, they did not account for the fact that the order of effectiveness of the interventions (from most to least effective, process-

based individual, process-based group, and decision-based group) also corresponds to the order of time-intensiveness of the treatments (from most to least time-intensive, process-based individual, process-based group, and decision-based group). As such, it is possible that time spent in treatment actually accounts for most if not all of the effect reported.

In the most recent published meta-analysis of forgiveness intervention studies, Wade, Worthington, and Meyer (2005), like Worthington, Sandage, et al. (2000) before them, limited their investigation to interventions utilizing a group treatment format. Unlike Baskin and Enright (2004), who limited their data to that from articles published in refereed journals, these investigators included data from conference presentations, doctoral dissertations, and unpublished manuscripts. As such, this was the most inclusive of the three meta-analyses, incorporating data from 27 studies. While numerous models of forgiveness and measures of forgiveness/unforgiveness were used, the most commonly used models were those of Enright (2001) and Worthington (2001), and the most commonly used outcome measures were the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI; Subkoviak et al., 1995) and the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale (TRIM; McCullough et al., 1998). Wade et al. calculated effect sizes (ES) for three treatment categories (in addition to a no-treatment control category) by estimating the change in forgiveness from pre-intervention to post-intervention experienced by the average participant. Results of their analyses indicated that theoretically-grounded forgiveness treatments (FT;  $ES = 0.57$ ) and non-theoretically-grounded forgiveness (comparison) treatments (FC;  $ES = 0.43$ ) were the most effective, and did not differ significantly in effectiveness from one another. These two intervention categories differed, however, in that only FTs were significantly more effective at bringing about forgiveness than alternative treatments (AT;  $ES = 0.26$ ) that did not

explicitly attempt to promote forgiveness. All three treatment types (FT, FC, and AT) were more effective at promoting forgiveness than no-treatment control conditions (NT;  $ES = 0.10$ ).

Wade and colleagues (Wade, Worthington, et al., 2005) also found that partial interventions – whether treatments that only addressed select pieces of a model of forgiveness, partial FC, or partial AT – had a mean weighted effect size of 0.28 (CI = 0.22 to 0.34). Full interventions (whether complete FT, FC, or AT), on the other hand, had a mean weighted effect size of 0.77 (CI = 0.70 to 0.84). Alternately, no-treatment control conditions had a mean weighted effect size of only 0.10 (CI = 0.04 to 0.16), making them significantly less effective than either full or partial interventions.

#### *Does Forgiveness Work for Everyone?*

Clinical researchers seek not only to find out what works, but to answer the more specific question, *what works for whom?* At this time, there is no supported theory in regard to forgiveness interventions as to what works for whom and when (Wade, Johnson, et al., 2008). Of particular interest to the present investigators in exploring the intrapersonal benefits of forgiveness is whether males and females are affected differentially. Before this undertaking can occur, a few basic terms must first be defined. *Sex* can be understood as a person's relatively unchanging biological aspects of being male or female, while *gender* refers to the behavioral and psychological roles and expectations attributed to males and females by cultures and by society (Przygoda & Christer, 2000). *Sex* reflects a person's genetic makeup; *gender*, on the other hand, reflects a given society's values and norms. Much like the terms 'sex' and 'gender,' the terms 'sex role' and 'gender role' have been

used in a largely interchangeable fashion by researchers (Przygoda & Christer, 2000; Ray & Gold, 1996). Gilbert (1985) defines the construct of a role as:

“a person's position in an organized social structure and to the rules of conduct governing interactions between individuals in various positions. Sex roles are those roles assigned to individuals on the basis of their biological sex. In essence, sex roles refer to normative expectations about the division of labor between the sexes and to gender-related rules about social interactions that exist within a particular culture or historical context (Angrist, 1969)” (p. 163).

*Gender role orientation*, also called *gender identity*, *gender ideology*, or *gender role adherence*, refers to how rigidly one thinks and behaves in accordance with societal beliefs of what constitutes appropriate behavior for men and women (Hiller & Philliber, 1985; Kerr & Holden, 1996). When individuals are impaired by their gender roles, gender role conflict can result. O’Neil, Good, and Holmes (1995) define gender role conflict as “a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others. Gender role conflict occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self” (O’Neil et al., pp. 166-167). Gender role conflict, particularly in men, has been found to be positively correlated with anxiety (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991) and depression (Good & Mintz, 1990), and negatively correlated with self-esteem (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991).

Differences between male and females have been found across a range of therapeutic constructs. For example, Ogrudniczuk, Piper, Joyce, & McCallum (2001) found that interpretive interventions tended to have better outcomes with male clients whereas supportive interventions tended to have better outcomes with females clients. These authors

suggested that males may prefer a treatment that allows them to maintain some emotional distance, as they typically use coping strategies that involve suppression or denial of their emotions. As such, interventions that enable them to examine – rather than fully experience and express – their [uncomfortable] emotions may be more beneficial in facilitating change. Ogrodniczuk, Piper, & Joyce (2004) found that among depressed clients in group therapy, women had better outcomes than their male counterparts in both supportive and interpretive group treatment interventions. Blazina & Marks (2001) suggest that attitudes toward self-reliance and emotional disclosure may prohibit men from easily adapting to traditional forms of therapy.

Furthermore, many theorists posit that men have a lesser tendency to forgive than do women. Men are far less likely than women to participate in forgiveness interventions, by a ratio of nearly 1:4 (Worthington, Sandage, et al., 2000). In a review of nearly 100 studies that included forgiveness and sex, Worthington & Lerner (2006) found that compared to women, men appeared to be less willing to forgive a specific hurt or to see forgiveness as an acceptable way to respond to being hurt. Men are more likely than women to report anger and revenge motivations toward a transgressor (Gault & Sabini, 2000). Worthington and his colleagues were led by their findings to conclude that males are “substantially more at risk of holding onto unforgiveness than are women” (Worthington, Sandage, et al., 2000, p. 241).

A diversity of attributions has been posited as to why this disparity exists. Some theorists propose that males are taught to suppress most emotions (with the exception of aggressive emotions) and assert themselves, whereas females are socialized to respond to offenses with compassion, concern for others, empathy, and understanding, (Gault & Sabini,

2000; Heppner & Gonzales, 1987; Kopper & Epperson, 1996; Sharkin, 1993). Miller, Worthington, and McDaniel (2007) point to a possible differences in moralistic thinking, in which Gilligan's (1994) ethic of care which involves attention to the needs of others and preservation of relationships may be more appealing to females, whereas Kohlberg's (1984) justice-based morality which focuses on preserving a sense of righteousness and justice-served may be more attractive to men. This theory, then, is ultimately one of gender socialization and roles (Pasick, Gordon, & Meth, 1990). Were this indeed the case, such socialization would likely predispose males to respond to transgressions with anger, avoidance, bitterness, and revenge (i.e. unforgiveness). Indeed, research shows that the emotional experience of anger produces a desire for revenge that persists until it is acknowledged and dealt with (Fitzgibbons, 1986). High gender-role adherent men, then, might be expected to gain more from interventions that focused on anger reduction. At the same time, females, according to this theory, may find attitudes of compassion and care more compatible with their own morality (Eagly, 1987). Existing research can be as supporting this gender socialization theory of sex differences. For example, Singer et al. (2006) had participants in their study witness a player in a group resource game get punished for playing selfishly. Results of brain imaging technology indicated that male brains tended to show activation in their reward centers, indicating gratification in what they were witnessing, whereas female participants tended to show activity in areas of the brain associated with empathy, indicating unease and compassion for the offender. Wade and Goldman (2006) summarize this perspective:

“Men are encouraged to suppress most emotions, except for aggressive ones, and women are expected to respond to offenses with understanding, compassion, and



empathy (Gault & Sabini, 2000; Kopper & Epperson, 1996). This type of socialization might predispose men to respond to hurtful situations with anger, aggression, and bitterness (i.e. unforgiveness), whereas women may generally find it easier to experience the prosocial responses of understanding and compassion that are inherent in forgiveness. If this were true, sex differences would be greater among men and women who adhere more closely to traditional gender roles” (p. 298).

Preliminary research supports this thinking, showing that males and females may have different propensities to forgive. In a recent study, for example, Lawler-Row et al. (2008) reported that females indicated higher levels of trait forgiveness on average than did males. Research on forgiveness also tends to show that males who have been offended by others tend to have higher levels of unforgiveness (desires for revenge and avoidance) than do females (Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft, & Witvliet, 2008; Stuckless & Goranson, 1992; Wade & Goldman, 2006).

If the gender socialization theory is accurate, one would expect differences between the sexes to be most sizable between men and women who adhere closely to traditional gender roles (Wade & Goldman, 2006). Research supports the impact of gender role conflict in treatment outcome. For example, in a study that recruited participants for individual therapy, psychoeducational workshops, and men’s support groups, Blazina and Marks (2001) found that men who adhered closely to culturally prescribed gender roles had negative reactions to all three treatment formats. Men with high masculine gender role conflict tend to have higher levels of trait anger (Blazina & Watkins, 1996), anxiety and depression (Good & Mintz, 1990; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), relationship dissatisfaction

(Sharpe, Heppner, & Dixon, 1995), and overall psychological distress (Good et al., 1995; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). Additionally, low role flexibility has been shown to be a protective factor among men with coronary heart disease (Hunt et al., 2007). Such personal restriction could plausibly come in the form of negative mental and physical health effects associated with unforgiveness.

A vast amount of research has examined the function that adherence to conventional gender roles plays in one's behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes (Hamburger, Hogben, McGowan, & Dawson, 1996; Kerr & Holden, 1996; Ray & Gold, 1996). However, research examining the role of sex and gender related constructs in relation to trait forgivingness and forgiveness of a specific offense (i.e., state forgiveness) is scant. Lawler-Row and colleagues (2008) reported that males in their study reported lower levels of trait forgiveness, yet there were no differences reported between the sexes in state forgiveness. Ray and Gold (1996) reported that *hypermasculinity* – exaggerated or extreme adherence to the masculine gender role – has a well-established link with correlates of unforgiveness such as faultfinding in others and aggression. Walker and Doverspike (2001) found that the tendency to forgive was inversely related to how strictly participants adhered to traditionally masculine gender roles. On the other hand, Worthington and colleagues (Worthington, Sandage, et al., 2000) analyzed data from thirteen forgiveness intervention studies, and concluded that there was no meaningful relationship between sex and forgiveness. One possible reason for this discrepancy is that this study used archival data collected from studies that were not designed to measure sex differences. As such, these studies typically did not include measures of meaningful gender-related constructs such as gender role orientation. A second possibility is that Worthington and his colleagues analyzed data from

interventions studies, whereas the other research reported (i.e., Lawler-Row et al., 2008; Ray & Gold, 1996; Walker & Doverspike, 2001) did not utilize therapeutic interventions. These latter investigators reported one-time correlations between sex and forgiveness in which no experimental manipulation was utilized, whereas Worthington et al. focused on whether sex influenced *changes* in forgiveness from a time prior to treatment to a later time after treatment has been completed.

### *Why Forgive?*

The effects of forgiving and its correlates have become a burgeoning topic in clinical, counseling, and social psychological research in the past quarter-century (Worthington, 2005, 2006). For instance, Bono, et al. (2008) found that on occasions when participants' state forgiveness was higher than their typical level of trait forgiveness, they reported more positive emotion, less negative emotion, and higher overall satisfaction with their lives. Empirical studies reveal that forgiveness is positively related not just to physical health (Lawler-Row et al., 2008; Worthington & Scherer, 2004), but also to a vast array of mental health indicators including anxiety, depression, and hostility (Brown, 2003; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Kendler et al., 2003; Mauger, Saxon, Hammel, & Pannell, 1996, as cited in McCullough & Witvliet, 2002) as well as broader constructs like subjective well-being (Bono et al., 2008) and meaning in life (Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006). Some suggest that forgiveness can be a more adaptive alternative to coping with negative events and emotions than alternatives such as drinking (McCullough, Root, Tabak, & Witvliet, 2009). The results of published reports have consistently been promising, and findings from some of the key studies in this area are summarized below.

*Mental Health Correlates of Forgiveness.* Research has consistently substantiated the relationship between forgiveness and anger reduction at both the state (Huang & Enright, 2000; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991) and trait (Berry et al., 2001; Tangney, Fee, Reinsmith, Boone, & Lee, 1999, as cited in McCullough & Witvliet, 2002) levels. Coyle and Enright (1997) found that among males hurt by a partner's decision to abort a pregnancy, a theoretically-informed course of individual therapy aimed at promoting forgiveness significantly reduced anger over the abortion. Furthermore, they showed that whereas control participants showed no reduction in anger without treatment (in fact, scores on a state anger measure increased slightly), once these participants eventually received the forgiveness treatment, their anger about the event decreased significantly as well. Although the significant findings are promising, the generalizability of the results are debatable due to the very small sample size (experimental,  $n = 5$ ; control,  $n = 5$ ). Coyle and Enright found comparable results when measuring the changes in anxiety that accompanied the forgiveness intervention. Independent means  $t$  tests indicated that compared to control participants, those undergoing a forgiveness-promoting intervention experienced a significant reduction in state anxiety. Correlated means  $t$  tests further showed that control participants who later received the same treatment experienced a significant reduction in state anxiety. Similar to their findings on anger and anxiety, Coyle and Enright reported significant effects of a forgiveness-promoting intervention in reducing the grief experienced by men whose partners had abortions. Those receiving treatment showed a significantly greater reduction in grief over the abortion when compared to those not receiving treatment. Similar results were then found for control participants once they eventually received the treatment. Mean change

scores for control participants from pre-treatment to post-treatment were significant, indicating a significant improvement.

Whereas Coyle and Enright (1997) compared their forgiveness treatment to a no-treatment control group, Reed and Enright (2006) compared a forgiveness treatment to an alternative treatment that was “designed and delivered ... to match as closely as possible the basic elements of the therapy approach” (p. 923). This study explored this difference among a sample of 20 women who had suffered significant emotional abuse in a relationship that had ended at least two years previously. A comparison of scores on state anxiety from pre-intervention to post-intervention for participants receiving the forgiveness treatment indicated a significant reduction. Notably, though, a comparison of mean change scores between the two conditions failed to indicate a significant difference in the reduction in state anxiety experienced. Reed and Enright found a different effect on depression, though. Specifically, they found that those in the forgiveness treatment intervention reported a significantly greater reduction in depression scores than those receiving a therapy treatment not aimed at forgiveness. However, the statistical significance of the actual reductions achieved by participants in the forgiveness intervention was not reported. In light of this, the benefit gained in comparing the effects of the two treatments on depression seems somewhat diminished.

Other researchers have found mixed results as well. Witvliet and her colleagues (Witvliet, Phipps, Feldman, & Beckham, 2004) examined this relationship in a sample of 213 military veterans suffering from PTSD. Unlike Enright’s team (Coyle & Enright, 1997; Reed & Enright, 2006), they did not find a correlation between interpersonal forgiveness and anxiety (state or trait). This study differed from the previously mentioned studies, though, in

a number of meaningful ways. First, this was not an intervention study, and so it did not focus on *change* in anxiety. Second, this study utilized measures of dispositional forgiveness as opposed to measures of forgiveness of a specific transgression. Third, not only was this sample different in that it was comprised solely of military veterans, but like the sample used by Coyle and Enright (1997), all participants were males, whereas the sample used by Reed and Enright (2006) was all female. Whereas Witvliet et al. (2004) failed to find a connection between trait forgiveness and anxiety, they found a positive correlation between difficulty forgiving others and the occurrence of depression, an association reported by previous researchers (e.g., Brown, 2003). They also found a relationship between trait forgiveness and the severity of PTSD symptoms.

Seybold, Hill, Neumann, and Chi (2001) utilized a sample of 68 community adults (68% male, 32% female; mean age = 46 years) “with a variety of immunological, psychophysiological, and other physiological factors” (p. 250) to examine the association of forgiveness with 75 indicators of psychological and psychological health. Among their key findings were that trait forgiveness of others was significantly and inversely correlated with state anxiety, trait anxiety, and depression. Additionally, forgiveness of others was also significantly and negatively correlated with a host of anger and hostility measurements, including those directly measuring state anger, trait anger, angry temperament, angry reaction, cynical hostility, hostile attribution, hostile affect, and aggressive responding. While these correlations are encouraging, it must be remembered that they do not offer any evidence that forgiveness has a causal effect on any of these variables.

Maltby, Macaskill, and Day (2001) performed a study examining the personality and health correlates of forgiveness with a sample of 324 (224 females, 100 males; mean age =

22 years) British undergraduates. Depression was significantly related to failure to forgive others for both males and females, and was also correlated with anxiety and social dysfunction among females. The authors fail to offer a rationale for these sex differences; nonetheless, the emergence of these differences suggests that holding onto grudges might affect males and females differently.

*Physical Health Correlates of Forgiveness.* Empirical support for the relationship between both trait and state forgiveness and physical health is mounting (Lawler-Row et al., 2008; Seybold et al., 2001). Lawler et al. (2003) found a negative association between forgiveness for a specific offense and self-reported physical illness. In a study of 114 undergraduates asked to recall a time their parents upset or hurt them, Lawler-Row and her colleagues found that higher levels of trait forgiveness were associated with lower levels of systolic blood pressure, weekly drinking, and daily medication consumptions. Associations have also been found between forgiveness and resting blood pressure (Lawler et al., 2003), hematocrit and lipoprotein toxicity preventing activity (TxPA) levels (Seybold et al., 2001), sleep problems (Lawler et al., 2005), smoking (Kendler et al., 2003; Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006), drinking (Kendler et al., 2003; Lawler-Row et al., 2008; Seybold et al., 2001), and fewer medications taken (Lawler et al., 2005; Lawler-Row et al., 2008).

A related construct to unforgiveness is blame for a past hurt. In a review of 22 studies in which a heterogeneous assortment of participants blamed another person for a threatening or hurtful event, Tennen and Affleck (1990) reported a consistent relationship between blaming others and poor adaptation. Appraisal of adaptation was obtained using biochemical measures of disease control, length of hospitalization, occurrence of re-hospitalization, complications during hospitalization, and self-reports regarding physical

symptoms and complaints. Notably, none of the studies found a positive association between blaming others and positive adaptation. This review indicates that perhaps people who are able to avoid blaming others, or who move beyond blaming others following a hurtful event, may achieve greater levels of physical wellness.

Lawler et al. (2005) found that among 81 community-dwelling adults who were asked to recall a time when they had been hurt or betrayed by someone close to them, both state and trait forgiveness were significantly associated with fatigue, sleep quality, number of medications taken, somatic complaints, and symptoms of physical ailments (e.g., back pain, headache, nausea, stuffy head or nose). Notably, while both state and trait forgiveness played significant roles, state forgiveness was found in each outcome assessment to account for more of the variance in health than was trait forgiveness. Additionally, these authors determined that anger partially mediated the relationship between forgiveness and physical health. The generalizability of the results is uncertain, though, as the sample used was predominantly composed of middle-aged, Caucasian females.

One potential explanation for the link between (a) increased forgiveness and decreased unforgiveness, and (b) improved health is supported by research performed by Fredrickson and her colleagues (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000; Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004). Fredrickson (1998, 2001) proposed what she calls a *broaden-and-build theory of positive emotion*, in which the experience of positive emotion *broadens* the temporary thought-action repertoire and *builds* lasting coping resources. Empirical research has shown that states of positive affect promote greater creativity, innovative problem solving, and cognitive flexibility (Ashby, Isen, & Turken, 1999; Isen, 2000, 2003; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987) and as well as



behavior that cultivates social support and other lasting resources (Berry & Hansen, 1996; Berry, Willingham, & Thayer, 2000; Burger, & Caldwell, 2000; Cunningham, 1988).

These researchers note that emotions are connected to *specific action tendencies*, which serve to prepare the body to act in a way that serves to facilitate survival. For instance, fear causes the eyes to open wide so as to take in as much of the environmental threat as possible, causes blood-flow to redirect to the major muscle groups and away from the surface of the skin so as to assist in swift retreat, and leads the pituitary system to flood the bloodstream with hormones to afford the person extraordinary energy and strength. Unfortunately, these physical reactions to negative emotions, such as anger and hostility, can cause temporary or long-term physiological damage (Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987; Miller, Smith, Turner, Guijarro, & Hallet, 1996; Smith, 1992). For instance, cortisol, a stress-related hormone that escalates in response to perceived threats, leads to considerable changes in cardiovascular activity when released. According to what they call the *undoing hypothesis*, Fredrickson and her colleagues (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998) propose that the positive emotions experienced when forgiveness is granted (e.g., empathy, compassion) have what some have referred to as a *muting effect* (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998) or a *buffering effect* (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000) against the body's reaction to negative emotions. Existing research can be interpreted in accordance with this theory. For example, McCraty, Atkinson, Tiller, Rein, and Watkins (1995) showed that increasing positive affective states decreased blood pressure and heart rate, stabilized respiratory function, and increased immune function. When forgiveness is granted, the demands of negative emotions on the body are diminished (Witvliet et al., 2004). What's more, positive emotions experienced in forgiveness help to loosen the grip of formerly-held

negative emotions (e.g., desire for revenge), and in doing so dismantle the body from the ongoing damage caused by a specific action tendency, or “restore autonomic quiescence following negative emotional arousal” (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 313). In the case of cardiovascular arousal, for example, positive emotions speed up cardiovascular recovery by reducing stress on the cardiovascular system resulting from prolonged or lingering negative emotion due to distressing or upsetting events (Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001).

Forgiveness may foster improved physical health, then, through the reduction of chronic negative affective states and induction of positive, prosocial affective states and cognitive processes (Thoresen, Harris, & Luskin, 2000). A forgiving person, according to this logic, should be less likely to undergo increases in heart rate, blood pressure, and release of stress-related hormones when transgressed upon than a non-forgiving person, thereby foregoing short-term discomfort and being less likely to develop coronary disease as a result of long term exposure to these reactions. Research thus far seems to corroborate this theory. For instance, studies have found that forgiving people show lower cortisol reactivity (Berry & Worthington, 2001).

Witvliet, Ludwig, and Vander Laan (2001) tested this theory with a study utilizing a within-subjects repeated measures design. A sample of 71 undergraduates (35 female, 35 male) were assigned to alternately respond (via imagery techniques) to an offense committed against them in unforgiving (mental rehearsal of the offense, sustaining the grudge) and forgiving (empathizing with the offender, granting forgiveness) ways. Data were then collected from facial EMG, skin conductance, and electrocardiogram signals. Results showed that those who responded with unforgiving imagery experienced increased cardiovascular activity as well as increased arousal of the sympathetic nervous system. Self-

report data also showed that those in the unforgiving condition reported higher levels of anger and sadness, which are known risk factors for developing heart disease (Allan & Scheidt, 1996). In contrast, those in the forgiving condition reported lower levels of psychophysiological stress, lower levels of negative emotions, and higher levels of positive emotions. These findings suggest that espousing unforgiving responses can lead an individual to sustain physiological harm, whereas espousing forgiving responses can lead them to actually amass psychophysiological rewards.

Other studies strengthen the evidence for the theory that forgiveness is associated with physical well-being, especially cardiovascular health. In their study of 108 college students (64 female, 44 male), Lawler et al. (2003) found that while a forgiving personality was associated with lower blood pressure, the willingness to forgive a specific offense was correlated with lower blood pressure and lower heart rate, regardless of personality. This group of researchers also found that forgiveness showed a relationship with sleep quality, fatigue, number of medications taken, somatic complaints, and a symptom checklist (Lawler et al., 2003). In line with Fredrickson's theory (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998), they suggest that forgiveness may ultimately affect physiological health by bringing about a reduction of negative emotions and weakening the hold of stress reactions.

#### *Potential Mediating Variables*

What if the reported benefits of forgiveness previously listed weren't actually due to forgiveness after all? That is to say, what if they are not ultimately attributable to forgiveness *per se*, but instead to a forgiveness-related construct? A common thread among most forgiveness studies is its reciprocal relationship with *anger* and *hostility* (Lawler et al., 2005; Witvliet, 2001). Anger can be understood as "a strong feeling of displeasure and

antagonism aroused by a sense of injury or wrong” (Fitzgibbons, 1986, p. 629) and is frequently thought to be a primary affective obstacle to forgiveness (Coyle & Enright, 1998; Worthington, 1998). There is reason to speculate that anger reduction – which is known to have a positive correlation with forgiveness (Coyle & Enright, 1997; Wade, Worthington, et al., 2005) – may be responsible for many if not all of the stated mental and physical health benefits attributed to forgiveness.

Anger’s connection to health is well-documented (Allan & Scheidt, 1996; Friedman & Rosenman, 1974; Lawler-Row et al., 2008; Spielberger & London, 1982). Suinn (2001) submits that anger is detrimental to health because it serves to increase susceptibility to illness, impair the immune system, lower pain tolerance, increase cholesterol levels, and increase risk of death from heart disease. For instance, one of the most robust findings in the literature on the mind-body link has been the damaging influence of anger and hostility on cardiovascular function (Allan & Scheidt, 1996; Deffenbacher, Demm, & Brandon, 1986; Miller, Smith, Turner, Guijarro, & Hallet, 1996). Does forgiveness in fact offer health benefits above and beyond those offered by the dissolution of anger?

A fundamental relationship exists between anger and forgiveness (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Despite this, anger is largely an underexamined construct in forgiveness research, especially research focusing on interventions to promote forgiveness (Worthington, Sandage, et al., 2000). In one intervention study that did examine anger, Luskin and Thoresen (1997; as cited in Thoresen, Luskin, & Harris, 1998) found that participants taking part in an intervention to promote forgiveness experienced a simultaneous reduction in anger. When one takes into account the conceptual link between anger/hostility and unforgiveness, it makes sense that reducing anger and hostility might contribute to a

concurrent reduction in unforgiveness. Anger often leads to desires for revenge that persist until the anger has been appropriately dealt with (Fitzgibbons, 1986), and desires for revenge are among the most powerful anger triggers (DiGiuseppe & Froh, 2002).

Lawler-Row et al. (2008) proposed that a key assumption among forgiveness researchers is that the relationship between lack of forgiveness and anger to some extent mediates the connection between forgiveness and physical well-being. These researchers found that among 114 undergraduates who were asked to recall a time their parents upset or hurt them, those with forgiving tendencies were significantly less apt to “express their anger in sarcasm, raising their voices, using foul language, or giving the offender ‘a piece of my mind’” (p.56), and were more likely to be open and assertive in expressing their feelings. Additionally, they determined that while anger-out style and trait forgiveness had equally strong associations to systolic heart rate, blood pressure, and rate-pressure product, the impact of forgiveness on health and physiological responses was independent from or in addition to the person’s anger response style. These investigators concluded that regardless of the relationship of forgiveness to anger reduction, forgiveness appears to lead to beneficial changes within the forgiver and that the explanation for the health effects produced by forgiveness must ultimately be attributable to something other than mere anger reduction.

Carson, Keefe, Goli, Fras, Lynch, Thorp, et al. (2005) used a sample of 61 adults who suffered from chronic low back pain to explore the relationship between forgiveness, anger, pain, and distress. Using data collected from self reports, correlational analyses indicated that individuals high in state forgiveness conveyed lower degrees of state and trait anger, physical pain, and psychological distress. Post hoc mediational analyses suggested

that the relationship between forgiveness and distress and between forgiveness and pain could be accounted for largely by the presence of state anger. These tests also found, however, that certain facets of the experience of pain, such as the emotional processes it gives rise to, are largely independent of the influence of state anger.

In addition to anger reduction, a second variable that may play a role in mediating the relationship between forgiveness and well-being is *empathy*. Hoffman (1977) defines empathy as “the vicarious affective response to another person’s feelings” (p. 712). In simpler terms, empathy can be understood as the ability to appreciate the thoughts and feelings of another person, without actually experiencing the situations of that person (Worthington & Wade, 1999). Empathy decreases the desire to retaliate against an offender (Batson & Ahmad, 2001) and promotes a motivation to lessen the suffering of others (Batson, Ahmad, Lishner, & Tsang, 2002). Exline et al. (2008) note that “victims often see the actions of perpetrators as inexplicable or rooted in sheer malice (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990), a stance that hardly seems conducive to forgiveness” (p. 496). Instead, victims who are able to take the perspective of an offender tend to be more forgiving (Brown, 2003; Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; McCullough et al., 1997). Both of the leading models for promoting forgiveness (Enright, 2001; McCullough, 1998) consider the development of empathy toward one’s offender as a critical element to the cultivation of forgiveness. Research has confirmed the link between empathy and forgiveness (Konstam, Chernoff, & Deveney, 2001; McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough et al., 1998; Wade, Worthington, et al., 2005; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002); indeed, the development of empathy for one’s offender is one of the most reliable predictors of forgiveness (Root & McCullough, 2007). It would follow, then, that individuals higher in state and/or trait

empathy will have an easier time achieving forgiveness. Indeed, intervention research indicates that regardless of the intervention used, individuals who experienced greater levels of empathy toward their transgressors were more likely to forgive (McCullough et al., 1997). Additionally, Wade, Worthington, and Meyer (2005) found that treatment effect size was significantly related to the amount of time devoted to helping clients develop empathy for their offenders.

McCullough et al. (1997) proposed that forgiveness is an “empathy-facilitated motivational change.” They further suggested that the well-established relationship between receiving an apology from one’s offender and forgiving that offender is ultimately mediated by empathy. In other words, according to this model of forgiveness, apology only has an indirect effect on forgiveness: apology initiates empathy for the offender, and empathy then makes forgiveness possible. Receiving an apology may lead to the offended party to believe that the offender feels guilt, shame, and/or other distress as a result of his or her own recognition of how the transgression hurt the offended party (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). McCullough and colleagues tested their hypothesis with a racially diverse sample of 134 undergraduates (mean age = 22 years) who reported suffering varying offenses. They used a between-subjects design in which participants were assigned to one of three 8-session treatment conditions: (a) one in which forgiveness is encouraged by means of building empathy; (b) one in which forgiveness was encouraged by means of nonspecific curative factors from the empathy intervention but no explicit empathy work [called the comparison intervention]; or (c) a waiting-list condition in which no treatment was provided during the time that data were collected. Results indicated that those in the empathy intervention showed greater forgiveness at the conclusion of the treatment than did

those in either of the other conditions, and that those in the comparison and waitlist conditions did not differ in post-treatment forgiveness. They also found, however, that a 6-week follow-up measurement showed that the difference between the empathy and comparison conditions was no longer significant due to an increase in forgiveness among comparison participants. Nevertheless, McCullough and colleagues concluded from their results that empathy causally precedes forgiveness.

In addition to the basic association between empathy and forgiveness, in light of the potential sex differences in forgiveness, there emerges a more complex question: do sex differences exist in the relationship between empathy and forgiveness? In a series of seven studies that were not specifically designed to identify sex differences, Exline et al. (2008) encountered an intriguing answer. In a sample composed primarily of undergraduates at a college in the Midwestern United States, they found that seeing oneself as capable of committing a similar offense resulted in a greater likelihood of forgiveness in males, but not in females; however, this link between empathy and forgiveness was only moderated by sex in their experimental studies. In a correlational study, they found both sexes to be more forgiving if they were able to conceive of themselves as being capable of committing similar offenses.

Exline et al. (2008) suggest that this finding may be a result of the tendency of males to value justice over empathic concern or relationship repair (Baron-Cohen, 2002; Singer et al., 2006) and to value agency, or self-assertion, over communion, which involves concern and consideration for others (Bakan, 1966; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), while women tend to have opposite preferences (i.e., valuing relationship repair and communion. Research also indicates that males tend to be more vengeful than females (Frodi, 1978; Gault &



Sabini, 2000; Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). In light of these facets common to the male experience, the authors proposed that seeing oneself as capable of committing a similar offense serves to weaken men's motives for justice and revenge. Change among women, who are thought to have higher levels of empathy and lower levels of vengefulness than men (DiLalla, Hull, & Dorsey, 2004; Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; Gault & Sabini, 2000; Macaskill et al., 2002), might thus be limited by a floor effect. A second possible explanation might be that seeing oneself as capable of offending or recalling one's past offenses against others may disproportionately initiate a negative mental state in women that is less conducive to forgiving. This idea finds support in the work of Nolen-Hoeksema (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, Larson, & Grayson 1999), who has consistently found a greater tendency in women than in men toward negative rumination. Forgiveness, even for those who want to forgive, can be difficult for a victim of an interpersonal offense. Once in a negative mood state, a person has a restricted "thought-action repertoire" in which he or she is less likely to think in new or innovative ways to reach a goal (Fredrickson, 2001, 2003). Thus, a person who struggles with the question, "How can I forgive such a hurtful or malicious transgression?," is less likely to see forgiveness as an option once a negative mood state has been activated.

While research such as that by Exline and her colleagues (2008) has uncovered sex differences in the relationship between empathy and forgiveness, few studies have been designed with the explicit intention of understanding whether such a difference exists. Notably, three empirical studies have explicitly sought to answer this question. The first was conducted by Macaskill et al. (2002). Unlike Exline et al., Macaskill and her colleagues did not utilize any sort of experimental manipulation. As such, they did not measure change

in empathy or forgiveness, but merely the existence of a relationship between the constructs. In a study of 324 British college students, females showed higher levels of emotional empathy than their male counterparts, but not higher levels of forgiveness. Nonetheless, empathy and forgiveness were significantly correlated for both sexes, such that individuals higher in empathy had an easier time forgiving regardless of sex. While the correlation between empathy and forgiveness was smaller for males than for females, the investigators did not report any statistical analyses of the difference between these correlations. In summary, these investigators found that emotional empathy was positively related to forgiveness for both sexes, though no evidence was offered as to whether this link is stronger for males or for females.

In a separate study, Fincham et al. (2002) examined the role of sex in the relationship between empathy and forgiveness in 171 married adults in Italy who were asked to imagine a hypothetical offense committed by their partners. Interestingly, this investigation did not measure between-group (males vs. females) differences, but instead limited its investigation to within-group differences. They found an overall positive correlation between empathy and forgiveness. Unlike Macaskill et al. (2002), who found a stronger (though not necessarily significantly stronger) link between empathy and forgiveness in females, Fincham and his colleagues found that this correlation is stronger for males than for females. Unfortunately, similar to Macaskill et al., these investigators did not report any statistical evaluation of the significance between these correlations. These authors also did not utilize an established measure of empathy with satisfactory psychometric properties.

Noting the consistent positive correlation between empathy and forgiveness, but the seemingly contradictory results regarding the strength of this association for males and

females, Toussaint and Webb (2005) set out to replicate the positive correlation, while also performing a between-groups (males *vs.* females) comparison of the difference in the size of this association. They recruited a diverse (i.e., ethnicity, religion, sex, and relationship status) sample of 127 community-dwelling adults from southern California between the ages of 25 and 45. Contrary to their expectations, when adjustments were made for the severity of the offense reported, empathy (across sexes) was *not* significantly related to forgiving thoughts or feelings, but only with forgiving behavior. In line with some of the previous findings (Gault & Sabini, 2000; Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987; Macaskill et al., 2002), women were found to be more empathic than men. Perhaps their most telling finding, though, was that sex indeed moderated the relationship between empathy and forgiveness. Empathy was significantly correlated with forgiving affect, behavior, and cognition for males, but not for females. These findings challenge those of Macaskill et al., who found a significant positive association between empathy and forgiveness for both sexes, and who suggested that this association was stronger for females than for males. One possible explanation for this disparity might be that the two studies used different populations (British *vs.* American, as well as student *vs.* community adults), as sex differences are known to vary across cultures (Kadiangandu, Mullet, Vinsonneau, 2001; Takaku, Weiner, Ohbuchi, 2001). A second reason for the inconsistency in the findings of these studies could be due to their utilization of different measures of forgiveness. The forgiveness measure used by Toussaint and Webb was the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI: Enright, 2005), a well-established forgiveness assessment. The measure used by Macaskill et al., however, was that of Mauger et al. (1992), which actually measures unforgiveness. As previously discussed, these two

constructs – forgiveness and unforgiveness – are maintained to be distinct constructs, and not merely opposite ends of a single, bipolar construct (e.g., Worthington & Wade, 1999).

Thus, empathy may be an important construct in understanding differences in the promotion of forgiveness in males and females. While females tend to exhibit higher levels of trait empathy than do males, it appears that males may stand to gain more, in terms of being able to forgive, from increasing their empathy for an offender (Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Toussaint and Webb recommend that in light of these findings, psychotherapeutic attempts at promoting forgiveness in male clients would benefit from a focus on increasing empathy, whereas this strategy may not be as effective with female clients.

A third variable that may ultimately play a significant role in the development of forgiveness and in the relationship between forgiveness and well-being is *ruminatio*n. Rumination can be understood as a self-focused attention to the negative aspects (e.g., events, feelings) of one's life, with particular focus on their potential causes and consequences (Lyubomirsky & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1995; Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001). Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood (2003) defined rumination as “passive and repetitive focus on the negative and damaging features of a stressful transaction” (p. 242). Rumination thus has a tendency to cultivate and perpetuate a cycle of negative affective experiences. For instance, when people ruminate about their depressive symptoms, they stay depressed longer (Mor & Winquist, 2002).

Rumination has an important relationship with forgiveness and unforgiveness. Specifically, research has shown that rumination makes both unforgiveness more likely to occur and forgiveness less likely to occur (Worthington & Wade, 1999). Rumination has been shown to be positively correlated with a measure of unforgiveness (i.e., motivations for

revenge and avoidance; McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough et al., 1998). McCullough, Bono, and Root (2007), in a longitudinal study, provided 'credence to the possibility' that the relationship between rumination and unforgiveness is a causal one, with rumination being preceding unforgiveness. They found that, across a period of three weeks, increased rumination correlated with reduced forgiveness. Additionally, Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, and Wade (2005) reported that rumination effectively mediated the association between revenge motivation and trait forgiveness.

Negative associations are commonly reported between rumination and forgiveness<sup>1</sup> (Barber, Maltby, & Macaskill, 2005; Berry et al., 2005; Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Connor, & Wade, 2001; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001). This research indicates that individuals ruminate less tend to be more forgiving (Berry et al., 2001; Thompson & Snyder, 2003). Worthington and Wade (1999) suggest that rumination may impede forgiveness by encouraging and evoking hurtful memories (Lyubomirsky, Caldwell, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). The likelihood that forgiveness will take place decreases if a person, in re-experiencing the hurt emotionally and/or cognitively, comes to believe that the offense is likely to re-occur. Ruminating on a transgression may also make a victim feel overwhelmed by the perceived magnitude of the offense, further making forgiveness seem untenable to the victim (Worthington & Wade, 1999).

Though few intervention studies have examined the role of rumination in forgiveness and unforgiveness, preliminary findings support the importance of further examining this potential link. McCullough et al. (1998), for example, found that helping clients who were struggling with a past hurt reduce rumination led to increased forgiveness. More recent studies have found that participants instructed to imagine forgiving responses to an offense

or to recall a time they forgave someone experienced significantly lower blood pressure and heart rate than those instructed to imagine responding in an unforgiving way or to recall a time they chose not to forgive an offender (Lawler et al., 2003; Witvliet et al., 2001).

Rumination also has an important relationship with anger and hostility. Rumination often leads to the preservation of feelings of anger (Martin & Tesser, 1989; Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). When people ruminate about a past offender, they become more aggressive and angry (Bushman, 2002); when they then ruminate about their anger, they stay angry longer (Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). Rumination, it seems, enhances aggression by prolonging the aggressive emotional and or/cognitive condition that is triggered by an interpersonal offense (Bushman, Bonacci, Pederson, Vasquez, & Miller, 2005). Berry et al. (2005) suggest that ruminative thinking mediates the well-established relationship between anger and forgiveness.

Research indicates that rumination is more prominent among females than among males (Butler & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1994; Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001). Nolen-Hoeksema and colleagues (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987, 1991; Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001) reported that female are more likely to ruminate after a sad mood was induced than were males, and also proposed that women's greater tendency to ruminate accounted for the differences in depressive symptoms between men and women. Women have not always shown a preference for rumination, though. For instance, Rusting and Nolen-Hoeksema (1998) found that when an angry mood was induced, females tended to choose self-distraction over rumination as a coping mechanism. In some cases, sex differences were reported in correlates of rumination. Verona (2005) found that among a sample of 50 undergraduates (26 female, 24 male), rumination was negatively related to hostility in

women but positively related to hostility in men. At other times, however, sex differences in rumination were not found. In a sample of 200 British undergraduates (109 female, 91 male), Barber et al. (2005), for example, found no differences for males and females on a measure of anger rumination. As such, it is clear that future research should pay closer attention to precisely how – if at all – males and females differ in rumination.

#### *Future Research Directions*

A meta-analysis performed by Wade, Worthington et al. (2005) shows that treatment interventions specifically designed to promote forgiveness are more successful to this end than are treatments that are not expected to yield powerful effects or no-treatment conditions. With few exceptions, however, outcome studies have not sufficiently explored whether forgiveness interventions are more effective than well-established treatments, employed and researched for decades to reduce or allow clients to better cope with difficult emotions, that do not explicitly aim to bring about forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2005; Wade, Worthington et al., 2009). A recent study by Wade and his colleagues (Wade, Worthington et al., 2009) failed to establish the superiority of treatments explicitly designed to promote forgiveness over bona fide treatments that were not designed specifically to promote forgiveness. However, this study failed to include a no-treatment condition, thereby leaving open questions about whether any gains made were due to these specific treatments or to the mere passage of time.

Existing research has by now established fairly well that forgiveness is in fact related to a number of indicators of psychological and physiological well-being. A need exists, however, for researchers to pay greater attention to the potential role that mediating and/or moderating variables may play in this relationship. Research teams have hypothesized and

begun to explore the mediating role of certain variables (e.g., *anger*, Carson et al., 2005; *empathy*, McCullough et al., 1997). In light of the considerable number of personality traits, emotions, and cognitive styles that have been associated with forgiveness (Emmons, 2000; McCullough et al., 2005; Seybold et al., 2001; Toussaint & Webb, 2005), the existing examination of third variables as mediators and/or moderators has only begun to scratch the surface.

Among potential mediating variables, few researchers have offered any insight into the role of sex and gender-related variables in the process of forgiveness (Miller et al., 1997; Worthington, Sandage et al., 2000). In exploratory analyses conducted during a meta-analysis, Worthington, Sandage et al. (2000) reported a correlation between sex and forgiveness of .34, such that females tend to be more forgiving than males, though this correlation was not statistically significant. Perhaps sex is only part of the picture, then. It may be that the truly significant gender-related variable in forgiving is gender role-orientation. Based on the existing literature, one might predict that sex-typed (gender role-adherent) males will be less likely to forgive, whereas sex-typed (gender role-adherent) females will be more likely to forgive. Empirical testing of this hypothesis would begin to inform researchers and clinicians as to whether there is a need to develop and tailor treatments for men and women who hold tight to culturally prescribed conceptions of how they should behave.

Along these lines, there exists a very interesting research question: what has a stronger effect on forgiveness: *sex* or *gender role-orientation*? In other words, existing research on the influence of gender role on behavior has by-and-large focused on sex-typed individuals (those who *adhere* to culturally-prescribed gender roles) and has largely ignored



cross-sex-typed individuals (those who *do not adhere* to culturally-prescribed gender roles). Thus, this question could be addressed by employing a sample of individuals who are cross-sex-typed. Will cross-sex-typed (non-gender role-adherent) males be more similar in forgiveness to (a) sex-typed (gender role-adherent) males, with whom they share the same sex; or to (b) sex-typed (gender role-adherent) females, with whom they share similar personality characteristics? Similarly, will cross-sex-typed (non-gender role-adherent) females be more similar in forgiveness to (a) sex-typed (gender role-adherent) females, with whom they share the same sex; or to (b) sex-typed (gender role-adherent) males, with whom they share similar personality characteristics?

## CHAPTER 2

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Human interaction is laced with experiences that are both good and bad. Who among us has not been hurt or offended in some way by others? Who among us will not be hurt or offended in some way by others in the future? Unfortunately, interpersonal hurts are a part of being in relationships and coping effectively with those injuries is an important task for both personal and relationship well-being. One way to cope with past hurts that has received recent attention from psychological researchers is forgiveness.

Empirical research has linked both the tendency to forgive and forgiveness of specific offenses with higher levels of overall physical health (Worthington & Scherer, 2004), meaning in life (Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006), life satisfaction (Bono et al., 2008), and lower levels of depression (Brown, 2003), anxiety (Reed & Enright, 2006), anger (Coyle & Enright, 1997), and blood pressure (Lawler et al., 2003). Existing research has also linked forgiveness (either positively or negatively) with a number of personality traits, such as agreeableness and neuroticism (Brose, Rye, Lutz-Zois, & Ross, 2005; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002), narcissism (Eaton, Struthers, & Santelli, 2006), and religiousness (McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2005; Tsang, McCullough, & Hoyt, 2005). Of particular interest to the proposed investigation are a number of studies that have reported a positive correlation between forgiveness and empathy (McCullough et al., 1997; Root & McCullough, 2007; Wade, Worthington et al. 2005).

In addition to predictors and correlates of forgiveness, researchers have also explored the efficacy of psychological interventions that are intended to promote interpersonal forgiveness. Although this research is still in its adolescence, a number of promising

findings have emerged. For example, in their meta-analysis of forgiveness interventions, Baskin and Enright (2004) reported that individuals taking part in process-based group interventions designed to promote forgiveness experienced outcomes equal to or better than 75% of control group participants, an effect size of 0.82. In a meta-analysis published the following year, Wade, Worthington, et al. (2005) reported a smaller, yet still impressive, effect size for theoretically-derived interventions designed to promote forgiveness of 0.56. Interestingly, though, Wade and his colleagues also found an effect size of 0.43 for comparison interventions, and reported that the difference between these values was not statistically significant. This finding raised the question for future research as to whether interventions designed specifically to promote forgiveness are actually more effective at doing so than other bona fide treatment interventions.

Despite considerable advances in the understanding of interpersonal forgiveness and the role of interventions to promote forgiveness, one area that has been largely neglected has been the relationship between forgiveness and gender (cf. Miller et al., 2007). It is largely unknown to what extent males and females differ in how and on what terms they forgive others. What's more, a related area that has received even less attention than biological sex is gender role orientation (i.e., the adherence to the socialized gender norms of masculinity and femininity). Masculinity and femininity have been shown to be related to a variety of mental health variables, such as anxiety (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), depression (Good & Mintz, 1990), and self-esteem (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). Decades of research on gender socialization indicates that males and females are directly and indirectly taught to behave according to cultural and societal norms (e.g., Eagly, 1987; Gilligan, 1994; Kohlberg, 1984). However, research that focuses on sex differences but ignores gender role orientation

assumes either that gender role has no additive effect over biological sex or that each person adheres to the role prescribed to his or her sex. Either assumption may include critical oversights.

Whereas, as previously stated, forgiveness researchers have largely neglected to either investigate or report sex-related differences, there exists a small body of research that suggests that some differences can be predicted in constructs related to forgiveness. For instance, a number of researchers have reported differences between males and females in anger (Biaggio, 1989; Lerner, 1988), empathy (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; Gault & Sabini, 2000), and rumination (Nolen-Hoeksema & Jackson, 2001; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1999). Similarly, research on gender roles has shown differences in forgiveness-related variables. Blazina & Watkins (1996), for example, reported that gender role is related to anger in men, while others have found that gender role adherence predicts both anxiety and depression (Good & Mintz, 1990; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991).

The proposed study will seek to establish whether changes in forgiveness-related variables can be predicted based on a person's masculine or feminine gender role orientation. The intention of this study is to determine whether: (a) group counseling interventions can assist individuals dealing with past hurts by cultivating forgiveness for their offenders; (b) gender role orientation will moderate overall treatment effects; and (c) differing treatments will have differential efficacy for individuals with high adherence to traditionally masculine gender roles.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### *Participants*

*Group members.* A total of 111 individuals participated in the study. Detailed descriptive statistics for the sample are reported in Table 2. Females comprised 63.1% of the participants ( $n = 70$ ) with males making up 36.9% of the sample ( $n = 41$ ). Participants' ages ranged from 17-46, with a median age of 20.0 yrs and 80.2% of the sample ( $n = 89$ ) between the ages of 18-22. Two participants did not indicate their age. The majority ( $n = 97$ , 87.4%) were single, 7.2% ( $n = 8$ ) were engaged, and 5.4% ( $n = 6$ ) were married. In regard to religious affiliation, 42.3% ( $n = 47$ ) were Protestant, 26.1% ( $n = 29$ ) were Catholic, 19.8% ( $n = 22$ ) indicated "None," 6.3% ( $n = 7$ ) indicated "Other," 1.8% ( $n = 2$ ) Hindu, and 0.9% ( $n = 1$ ) Jewish. Three participants (2.8%) did not indicate a religious affiliation. The majority of participants were Caucasian ( $n = 100$ , 90.1%), with a smaller proportion identifying as Asian-American ( $n = 5$ , 4.5%), Hispanic/Latino(a) ( $n = 3$ , 2.7%), and African-American ( $n = 2$ , 1.8%). One participant (0.9%) did not indicate race/ethnicity. The racial/ethnic composition of the sample was approximately proportional to that of the undergraduate population of the university; although participation was not limited to undergraduates, this statistic serves as perhaps the best indicator of the representativeness of the sample. At the start of the study, 9.0% ( $n = 10$ ) participants reported that they were currently receiving counseling outside of the intervention study, having taken part in an average of 7.9 sessions.

*Group facilitators.* Facilitators ( $n = 5$ ) were one male and four female doctoral students in an APA-accredited counseling psychology program. All facilitators had

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations on Dependent Measures by Demographic*

Category			Desires for Revenge		Rumination		Empathy		Psychological Symptoms	
	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
	N	N	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
<u>Sex</u>	111	75								
Male	41	28	9.80 (5.18)	8.21 (3.93)	16.45 (6.68)	14.60 (5.41)	19.58 (8.34)	19.40 (9.72)	.86 (.77)	.67 (.66)
Female	70	47	10.73 (4.90)	8.30 (3.65)	18.03 (5.90)	14.55 (5.92)	18.26 (8.98)	16.34 (7.52)	.74 (.59)	.55 (.54)
<u>Religion</u>	111	72								
Protestant	47	34	9.77 (4.64)	8.41 (3.68)	17.92 (6.15)	14.59 (5.52)	18.52 (8.04)	16.53 (6.68)	.78 (.61)	.48 (.48)
Catholic	29	17	9.97 (4.70)	7.65 (3.79)	14.14 (5.64)	13.18 (4.77)	19.09 (9.90)	19.66 (11.91)	.59 (.60)	.51 (.57)
Other	10	5	10.70 (7.50)	8.80 (6.50)	20.10 (6.42)	14.80 (6.76)	21.90 (9.95)	15.40 (3.79)	.86 (.88)	.63 (.81)
None	22	16	11.59 (4.16)	8.25 (2.84)	19.45 (5.86)	19.18 (4.77)	17.43 (8.60)	18.44 (9.11)	.94 (.67)	.90 (.55)

Table 2 (Continued)

Category			Desires for Revenge		Rumination		Empathy		Psychological Symptoms	
	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
	N	N	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
<u>Race</u>	111	74								
White	100	69	10.25 (4.67)	8.20 (3.74)	17.23 (6.22)	14.43 (5.66)	18.17 (8.64)	17.42 (8.46)	.77 (.63)	.56 (.54)
Other	10	5	11.20 (7.81)	9.80 (3.70)	19.60 (6.40)	15.40 (6.88)	24.80 (8.11)	14.80 (5.22)	.93 (.92)	.88 (1.09)
<u>Marital</u>	111	75								
Single	97	66	10.27 (4.74)	8.20 (3.68)	17.32 (6.21)	14.47 (5.80)	18.94 (8.84)	17.69 (8.72)	.81 (.68)	.58 (.57)
Other	14	9	11.21 (6.70)	8.78 (4.92)	18.31 (6.41)	15.33 (5.15)	17.42 (8.13)	16.00 (6.58)	.65 (.52)	.70 (.72)

completed a course in group psychotherapy and a minimum of two semesters of practicum in individual counseling. Facilitators also received three hours of specialized training and instruction from a licensed counseling psychologist to conduct the interventions from the manuals. In order to help control for potential facilitator effects, each facilitator led at least one six-session group for each experimental intervention, and an effort was made to have each facilitator lead an equal number of each intervention. Weekly supervision was provided by a licensed counseling psychologist. None of the facilitators were involved in the design or analysis of the study, and all remained blind to the investigators' hypotheses.

### *Procedures*

All participants entered the study via one of two recruitment avenues. First, undergraduate students in psychology courses were invited to participate as follow-up to their participation in a mass-testing data collection session conducted by the university's Department of Psychology. Second, fliers were posted in campus buildings and advertisements were placed in the campus newspaper seeking participants (see Appendix B). Admission to the study was based on responses to an initial screening questionnaire (see Appendix C). In order to meet the criteria to take part in the study, potential participants must have responded affirmatively to a single item assessing forgiveness ("Can you think of a time when someone hurt or offended you in a significant way? [Yes or No].") Those who answered "Yes" were then directed to complete the TRIM (McCullough et al., 1998). Individuals scoring at or above a 24 on the TRIM-12 were deemed eligible for the study. Wade, Worthington et al. (2009) determined 27 to be a clinically significant cut-off based on criteria set forth by Jacobson and Truax (1991). Using 27 as an anchor, the cutoff score for the proposed study was lowered slightly to 24 in order to insure that there would be enough



participants. This score reflected an average item response of two on the TRIM (for which item responses can range from 1 to 5), suggesting that a respondent who responded in this manner would still have a legitimate hurt to overcome. Individuals who did not meet these cutoff criteria for eligibility were given referral information about local mental health service providers where they could address any concerns they might have.

All groups were primarily psychoeducational in nature, involving a mix of didactic materials, interactive exercises, and personal sharing. Each treatment intervention followed a specific treatment manual (see Appendices D & E). Participants attended six, biweekly, 90-minute group sessions that took place over three consecutive weeks. All six sessions were led by the same facilitator according to a manual developed by the study's authors. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: an intervention tailored to the masculine gender role (hereafter referred to as "Anger reduction"), an established intervention to promote interpersonal forgiveness (hereafter referred to as "REACH"), and a waitlist control condition. Data were collected at two time points: immediately prior to participation in the first treatment session (hereafter referred to as *pre-treatment*), and immediately following participation in the sixth (final) treatment session (hereafter referred to as *post-treatment*).

Participants were provided monetary compensation for their time (fifteen dollars for completing each of up to 4 questionnaire packets). In addition, most participants were enrolled in psychology classes in which they were awarded partial credit toward research participation requirements in their courses.

### *Treatment Interventions*

Treatment interventions were developed according to key theoretical constructs from previous forgiveness intervention research. Worthington et al. (2000) identified three critical components of an intervention: (a) identifying a common definition of forgiveness, (b) explicitly noting goals of the intervention, and (c) basing the intervention on theory. In a meta-analysis of forgiveness group intervention studies, Wade et al. (2005) found (d) developing empathy for one's transgressor, (e) committing to forgiving, and (f) anger management and relaxation techniques to be significantly correlated with treatment effect size. To this, Root and McCullough (2007) suggested the inclusion of (g) reducing rumination, (h) encouraging positive/generous attributions to the offender and the offense, and (i) identifying potential benefits that resulted from the transgression.

Based on these recommended elements, as well as on additional forgiveness theory (e.g., Worthington, 1998, 2001), two treatment interventions were developed by the researchers. The treatments, each with an accompanying workbook for participants and manual for group leaders, were developed to allow an empirical comparison between an intervention focusing on (a) reducing unforgiveness (Anger reduction), and one focusing on (b) reducing unforgiveness as well as cultivating prosocial attitudes toward one's offender (REACH).

*REACH intervention.* One treatment intervention was developed in accordance with Worthington's (2001) Pyramid Model to REACH Forgiveness (see *Worthington's REACH Model* in the literature review section for discussion of the model). The manual used by facilitators during treatment illustrated the primary tasks of each group session, and is reprinted in full in Appendix D. The six sessions were developed to progressively enable participants to develop the tools to forgive. The first tool, developed in the first session, was

a better understanding of what it means to forgive. Time was spent developing an understanding of what forgiveness is and what forgiveness is not, with special emphasis given to the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. Participants were encouraged to come up with images or metaphors of what forgiveness might ultimately be like for them (e.g., “To forgive is to write in large letters across a debt, ‘Nothing owed’,” and “To forgive is to untie the moorings of a ship and release it into the open sea”). The second session was devoted to recalling the hurtful experience and sharing it with the group. The third session gave additional time to the disclosure experience and to the processing of one’s emotions regarding recalling and sharing the experience. The fourth session focused on understanding the concept of empathy. Included in this session was a video clip from a popular film that illustrates empathy and demonstrates how empathy can be utilized in situations in which one might not normally think to be empathic. The fifth session then helped the participants take the next step, which was to develop empathy for the person who hurt them. Participants were encouraged to think of times when they have transgressed upon others and then wished to be forgiven. This forgiveness, which participants can now envision themselves receiving and giving, was framed as an altruistic gift. In the sixth and final session, participants who felt they were ready to forgive their offenders were helped to develop ways to commit to their decisions to forgive. Various strategies were discussed (e.g., “Write out a list of all the hurts and then burn, bury, or shred the paper”), and participants were encouraged to write a letter of forgiveness to their offender (though explicit mention is made that the letter need not actually be sent to anyone). Participants were then encouraged to share with one another their experiences over the six sessions, after which the treatment was concluded.

*Anger reduction intervention.* The other experimental intervention was focused on reducing anger and hostility, but did not include any attempt to encourage the development of positive feelings or prosocial attitudes toward one's offender. This intervention utilized a symptom-focused approach that attempted to help identify specific experiences associated with anger, vengeance, and hostility. The manual used by facilitators during treatment illustrated the primary tasks of each group session, and is reprinted in full in Appendix E. Notably, the first session in this intervention was practically identical to the first session in the REACH intervention; the sole exception is that any mention of forgiveness was replaced with discussion of letting go of or releasing a grudge (e.g., "To release a grudge is to write in large letters across a debt, 'Nothing owed'," or "To release a grudge is to untie the moorings of a ship & release it into the open sea"). The second session was devoted to developing insight into one's anger and style of experiencing and expressing anger. In the third session, participants were asked to take note of how they experience anger as they recalled the hurtful event. They were led through exercises in which they were taught to listen to their anger and to manage their anger. Session four explored alternatives to dealing with the anger from past hurts by retaliating. For instance, participants were asked to pay attention to the lyrics of a popular song in which the central character is forced to choose whether or not to retaliate following a vicious attack. In the fifth session, participants were shown how harboring a grudge, and thereby continuing to feed their anger, is ultimately hurtful to themselves. To help with this point, metaphors and quotes were shared (e.g., "Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die," and "To carry a grudge is like being stung to death by one bee"). The sixth and final session mirrored the final session of the REACH intervention in that the primary emphasis was placed on committing to release

the grudge. Various strategies were discussed (e.g., “Take something that represents the grudge [object, written description] and then break it, bury it, burn it, or otherwise do away with it”), and participants were encouraged to complete a “contract” to release the grudge. Participants were then encouraged to share with one another their experiences over the six sessions, after which the treatment was concluded.

*Waitlist condition.* Data were collected from participants assigned to the waitlist control condition at the same times they were collected from those assigned to one of the experimental interventions. Notably, however, waitlist controls did not receive any treatment during the time they completed the measures. Once data collection had been completed, all waitlist participants were offered the opportunity to participate in a one-day intensive group experience on anger reduction.

*Hypothesis 1.* Participants in both of the two treatment interventions should experience greater improvements on proximal (forgiveness-related: desires for revenge, rumination, and empathy for the offender) and distal (psychological symptoms) outcome measures than participants in the no-treatment condition. Neither treatment intervention was predicted to prove significantly more effective than the other at producing these results.

*Hypothesis 2.* Participants with a traditionally feminine gender role should experience greater changes on outcome measures than participants with a traditionally masculine gender role.

*Hypothesis 3.* Participants whose gender role is traditionally masculine (sex typed males and non-sex typed females) should experience greater improvements on outcome measures when in the anger reduction intervention than when in the REACH intervention.

*Measures* (see Appendix A)

Descriptive statistics for the following measures are reported in Table 3.

*Gender Role Orientation*

*Bem Sex Role Inventory.* The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) is a measure of gender role identification. The BSRI treats masculinity and femininity as two orthogonal constructs, conceptually and empirically distinct from one another, and not as opposite poles of a single bipolar construct. As such, it allows for the differentiation of those who adhere to traditional gender roles from those who incorporate both (or neither) masculine and feminine qualities into their self-concept. Since its inception, the BSRI has become the most commonly used measure in gender-related research (Hoffman, 2001). By the end of the 1980s alone, Beere (1990) had identified 795 articles that had used the BSRI. According to Galea and Wright (1999), “there now exists a large and well supported empirical literature on the psychometric properties and correlates of masculinity and femininity as measured by Bem’s scale (see Cook, 1985; Ashmore, 1990; Lenney, 1991)” (p. 94). Respondents indicate how well they believe a particular descriptive characteristic describes them using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always). Items include 60 descriptive words or phrases that describe personality characteristics. Of the 60 words or phrases, 20 describe traits judged to be more desirable for men (*i.e.*, stereotypically masculine; *e.g.*, *independent, assertive, ambitious*), and 20 describe traits judged to be more desirable for women; (*i.e.*, stereotypically feminine; *e.g.*, *sensitive to others’ needs, gentle, does not use harsh language*). According to Bem (1981), an item was counted as feminine “if it was independently judged by both females and males to be significantly more desirable for a woman than for a man” (p. 19), and vice versa for masculine items. The final 20 items

Table 3

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Range of Scores on Measures of Non-Dependent Variables by at Pretest*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Masculine Role Orientation	110	3.05	6.55	4.86	.60
Feminine Role Orientation	110	3.35	6.00	4.78	.59
Offender Contrition	111	3	15	6.55	3.76
Relationship w/ Offender	110	5	25	9.28	5.41
Physical Aggression	109	3	21	14.30	5.14
Verbal Aggression	109	2	14	8.88	3.23
Anger	110	5	21	15.08	4.17
Hostility	110	3	21	13.11	4.83
State Hostility about the Offense	111	24	109	67.43	17.17
Self-Esteem	107	15	48	30.35	5.03
Religious Commitment	108	10	47	22.73	9.93
Trait Forgivingness	111	13	49	30.58	6.33

describe traits that were judged as no more desirable for either men or for women (*e.g.*, *happy, unpredictable, truthful*). Though they are sometimes regarded as filler items, as the items making up this last scale are all deemed to be attractive in either sex, Bem deemed this scale to be a sex-neutral measure of social desirability. Using two large samples ( $n_s = 723$  and 816) of college students, Bem (1974) reported suitable alpha coefficients for the masculinity scale (.86 and .86), the femininity scale (.80 and .82), and the social desirability scale (.75 and .70), as well as four-week test-retest reliabilities ranging from .76 to .94. Subsequent studies have found the BSRI to have strong convergent validity with the Personality Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975), another leading measure of gender role identification. For instance, Kelly, Furman, and Young (1978) found a correlation of .85 between the two measures.

Bem's (1977) revised scoring system utilizes a median-split procedure that classifies respondents into one of four groups: those high on the masculine dimension and low on the feminine dimension ("masculine"); those high on the feminine dimension and low on the masculine dimension ("feminine"); those high on both the masculine and feminine dimensions ("androgynous"); and those low on both the masculine and feminine dimensions ("undifferentiated"). Males falling in the masculine classification can then be understood as *sex-typed* or *gender role-adherent*, whereas males falling in the feminine classification can be understood as *cross-sex-typed* or *non-gender role-adherent*, and vice versa for females. Bem (1987) asserts that sex-typed individuals integrate established cultural meanings of masculinity and femininity into their self-concept.

*Forgiveness-Related Constructs*



*Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale.* One measure utilized to assess forgiveness-related dimensions is the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation Scale – 12-Item Form (TRIM-12; McCullough et al., 1998). Specifically, the TRIM-12 measures state levels of unforgiveness toward an offender. This brief self-report measure operationalizes unforgiveness as desire or motivation to avoid an offender and to seek revenge against him or her. As such, the TRIM-12 is designed assesses two factors: motivations for *avoidance* [7 items] and *revenge* [5 items]. Participants are instructed to “please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you.” Items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). As such, subscale scores range from 7-35 for avoidance and 5-25 for revenge, with a total score ranging from 12-60. Sample items include “I keep as much distance as possible between us” [avoidance subscale] and “I want him/her to get what he/she deserves” [revenge subscale]. McCullough and his colleagues have reported both subscales to have high internal consistency (alphas  $\geq .85$ ), moderate nine-week test-retest reliability ( $r_s = .64$  and  $.65$  for avoidance and revenge, respectively), and adequate convergent and discriminant validity (McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 2001). The measure has also been correlated in empirical studies with empathy (negative correlation) and rumination (positive correlation).

*Batson's Empathy Adjectives.* Emotional empathy for one's offender was assessed using Batson's Empathy Adjectives (BEA; Batson, 1987, 1991). The scale is comprised of eight affective terms, such as “softhearted” and “compassionate.” Participants are instructed to rate their “attitudes toward the offender ... right now as you think about this event” using a six-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all, 6 = extremely). Reliability estimates for this

scale have generally been high, with Batson (1991) reporting estimates ranging from .79 to .95. Indeed, researchers have found the scale to have high internal validity ( $\alpha$ s = .94, .95) in previous forgiveness intervention studies (Wade & Goldman, 2006). Batson has reported extensive research on this instrument demonstrating the construct validity (1991) and convergent validity with other measures of empathy (1987) and perspective-taking (Batson et al., 1986).

*Rumination about an Interpersonal Offense Scale.* The Rumination about an Interpersonal Offense Scale (RIO; Wade, Vogel, Liao, & Goldman, 2008), a six-item scale, is used to measure rumination in the past seven days about the specific interpersonal offense being reported by participants. Participants are instructed to “indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current experience with the person who hurt you.” Sample items include “I find myself replaying the events over and over in my mind” and “Memories about this person’s wrongful actions have limited my enjoyment of life.” Items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses have established a single-factor structure for the RIO. Construct validity was established by Wade, Vogel et al. (2008) by comparing responses on the RIO with those of inventories measuring related constructs, including anger (Anger Rumination Scale; Sukhodolsky et al., 2001), unforgiveness (TRIM-12; McCullough et al., 1998), forgiveness (TFS; Berry et al., 2005), and aggression (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992). While the RIO measures situation-specific rumination, it is moderately correlated ( $r = .51$ ) with measures of dispositional rumination (Wade, Vogel, et al., 2008). In Wade et al.’s study, the internal consistency was estimated to be .90, and corrected item-total correlations ranged between .50 - .85.

### *Psychological Distress*

*Brief Symptom Inventory.* The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI; Derogatis, 1993) is a 53-item inventory used to assess a variety of psychological symptoms. The BSI evaluates nine core dimensions of symptoms (*e.g.*, depression, anxiety), and offers more comprehensive indices of distress (*e.g.*, Global Severity Index). Participants respond to statements about symptoms that all followed the stem, “In the past 7 days, how much were you distressed by.” All items are rated using a five-point Likert-type scale (0 = not at all, 4 = extremely). The scale of interest in the proposed study is the Global Severity Index (GSI), which has been shown to have a high internal consistency (.77 - .90) and one-week test-retest reliability (.80 - .90) with a diverse population (Derogatis, Rickels, & Roch, 1976). Convergent validity of the GSI has been demonstrated with the clinical, Wiggins, and Tryon scales of the MMPI, while predictive validity has been indicated in the adjustment of cancer patients, bereaved adults, and drug-dependent clients (Derogatis, 1993).

### *Potential Covariates*

*Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire.* The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992) is a 29-item inventory designed to measure key dimensions of aggression. These dimensions include physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. Items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = completely uncharacteristic of me, 5 = extremely characteristic of me). Buss and Perry (1992) established subscale reliabilities with adequate test-retest correlations ( $r_s = .80, .76, .72,$  and  $.72$  for physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility respectively) and internal consistency estimates (Cronbach’s alphas =  $.85, .72, .83, .77,$  respectively). Construct validity has been

supported through correlations with inventories measuring related constructs, such as impulsiveness and emotionality.

*Perceived offender contrition.* Participants' perceptions of their offenders' contrition was measured using the three-item Scale of Offender Remorse, Regret, and Yearning for Forgiveness (SORRY-F, Wade & Worthington, 2003). Participants rated the items (e.g., "My offender seemed genuinely sorry for what he/she did") on a three-point scale from "Not at all" to "Extremely." In reliability analyses, the SORRY-F has shown high estimated internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ ) and construct validity in previous research (Wade & Worthington, 2003). In the present study, the SORRY-F showed high internal consistency at pretest and posttest administrations, with Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$  and  $.94$ , and with corrected item-total correlations of  $.77$  to  $.93$ .

*Current relationship with one's offender.* Participants' current relationship status with their offenders was measured using a five-item measure developed by Wade and Meyer (unpublished). Participants rated the items (e.g., "My relationship with him/her has more benefits than drawbacks") on a five-point scale from "Not at all true" to "Extremely true." Participants who are no longer in contact with their offenders are instructed to select "Not at all true" for all five items, as all are keyed in the direction of having a positive relationship. In a principal components analysis of the dimensionality of the scale, Wade and Meyer's rotated solution yielded one interpretable factor, victim's relationship with the offender, which accounted for 80.4% of the variance. In reliability analyses, the scale has shown high estimated internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88 - .95$ ) and corrected item-total correlations of  $.61$  to  $.92$ . In the present study, the SORRY-F likewise showed high internal

consistency at pretest and posttest administrations, with Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$  and  $.95$ , and with corrected item-total correlations of  $.77$  to  $.90$ .

*State Hostility Scale.* The State Hostility Scale (SHS; Anderson, Deuser, & DeNeve, 1995) is purported to measure situation-specific hostility. The scale contains 35 mood statement items (e.g., "I feel like yelling at somebody"), though due to low item-total correlations for three items, the scale's authors recommend using a revised 32-item version (C. Anderson, personal communication, January 28, 2006). Most of the remaining items by and large yield item-total correlations  $\geq .90$  [Anderson et al., 1995; Anderson, Anderson, & Deuser, 1996]. Anderson et al. (Anderson, Deuser, & DeNeve, 1995; Anderson, Anderson, & Deuser, 1996; Anderson, Anderson, Dill, & Deuser, 1998) reported excellent internal reliability across multiple samples ( $ns = 107, 47, 451, \text{ and } 159$ ), with alphas of  $.93, .81, .95,$  and  $.96$ , respectively. All items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

*Trait Forgivingness Scale.* The Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS; Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005) is a 10-item self-report measure of proneness to forgive interpersonal transgressions across time and situations. Sample items include "I can forgive a friend for almost anything" and "I have always forgiven those who have hurt me." Participants are instructed to "indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement" using a five-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Berry and his colleagues reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients between  $.74 - .80$ , as well as an eight-week test-retest reliability of  $.78$ . The scale's validity was further corroborated through correlations with other measures of dispositional forgiveness and a variety of other personality traits in expected directions (Berry et al., 2005).

*Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.* Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1989). This measure is a ten item inventory consisting of five positively worded items (e.g., I feel that I have a number of good qualities) and five negatively worded items (e.g., “I certainly feel useless at times). It items were rated on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha is was .88 in the present investigation and has been reported as high as .99 in past studies (Damji, Clement, & Noles, 1996). Fleming and Courtney (1984) reported one-week test-retest reliability of .82.

*Religious Commitment Inventory.* Religious commitment was measured using the Religious Commitment Inventory – 10 (RCI-10; Worthington, Wade, Hight, Ripley, McCullough, Berry, et al., 2003). The RCI-10 includes ten items that assess one’s commitment to her or his religion (e.g., “I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith”), and items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale. Cronbach’s alpha was .94 in the present study and corrected item-total correlations ranged from .67 to .81.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### *Preliminary Analyses*

*Client attrition.* A total of 111 participants took part in this study (see Figure 1). Of those 111 individuals, 40 (36%) were assigned to the anger reduction intervention, 40 (36%) were assigned to the REACH intervention, and 31 (28%) were assigned to the waitlist control (no treatment) condition. Of the 80 participants randomly assigned to participate in an intervention group, 66 (82.5%) attended at least half the sessions (see Figure 2). The mean number of sessions attended out of six was 4.28 (SD = 1.56), with a range of one to six sessions attended and a median of five sessions attended.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-four (60%) of the 40 participants in the anger reduction intervention completed both pretest and posttest measures, as did 28 (70%) of the 40 participants in the REACH intervention and 23 (74%) of the 31 participants in the no-treatment control condition. Overall, 75 (67.57%) of the 111 participants completed both pretest and posttest measures. The rates of attrition were similar between the three experimental conditions (see Table 4). One reducing anger trial only collected attendance for four of the six sessions. Attendance rates adjusted for this data collection error are also presented in Table 4.

Independent-samples *t* tests were conducted to test for relationships between scores on conceptually-relevant measures of continuous variables at pretest and attrition.<sup>3</sup> Since sex was a conceptually-relevant categorical variable, sex was crossed with attrition and a subsequent chi-square analysis conducted. All tests (*t* and chi-square) failed to indicate a statistically significant difference between those who completed the interventions and those who dropped out.

Figure 1

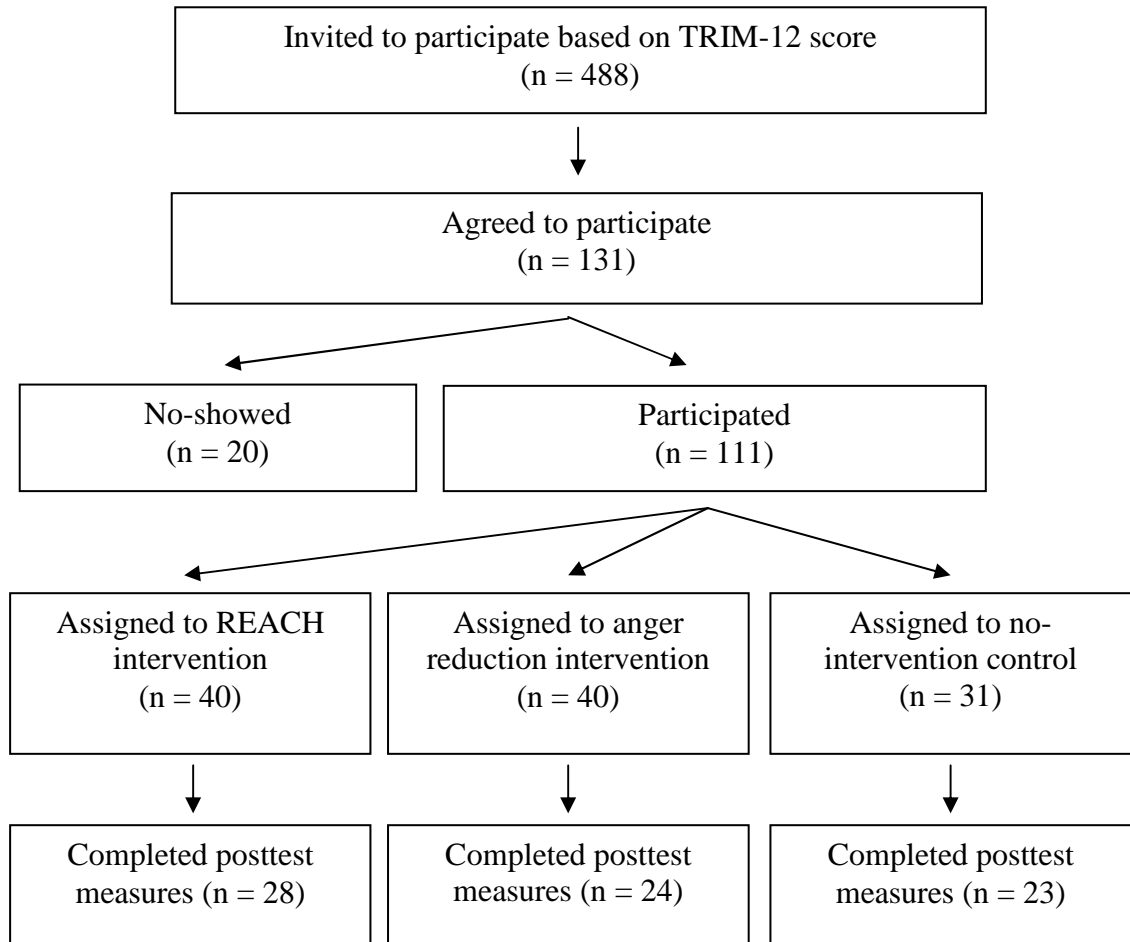
*Flow of Participants Through the Study*



Figure 2

*Participant Attendance in Experimental Interventions*

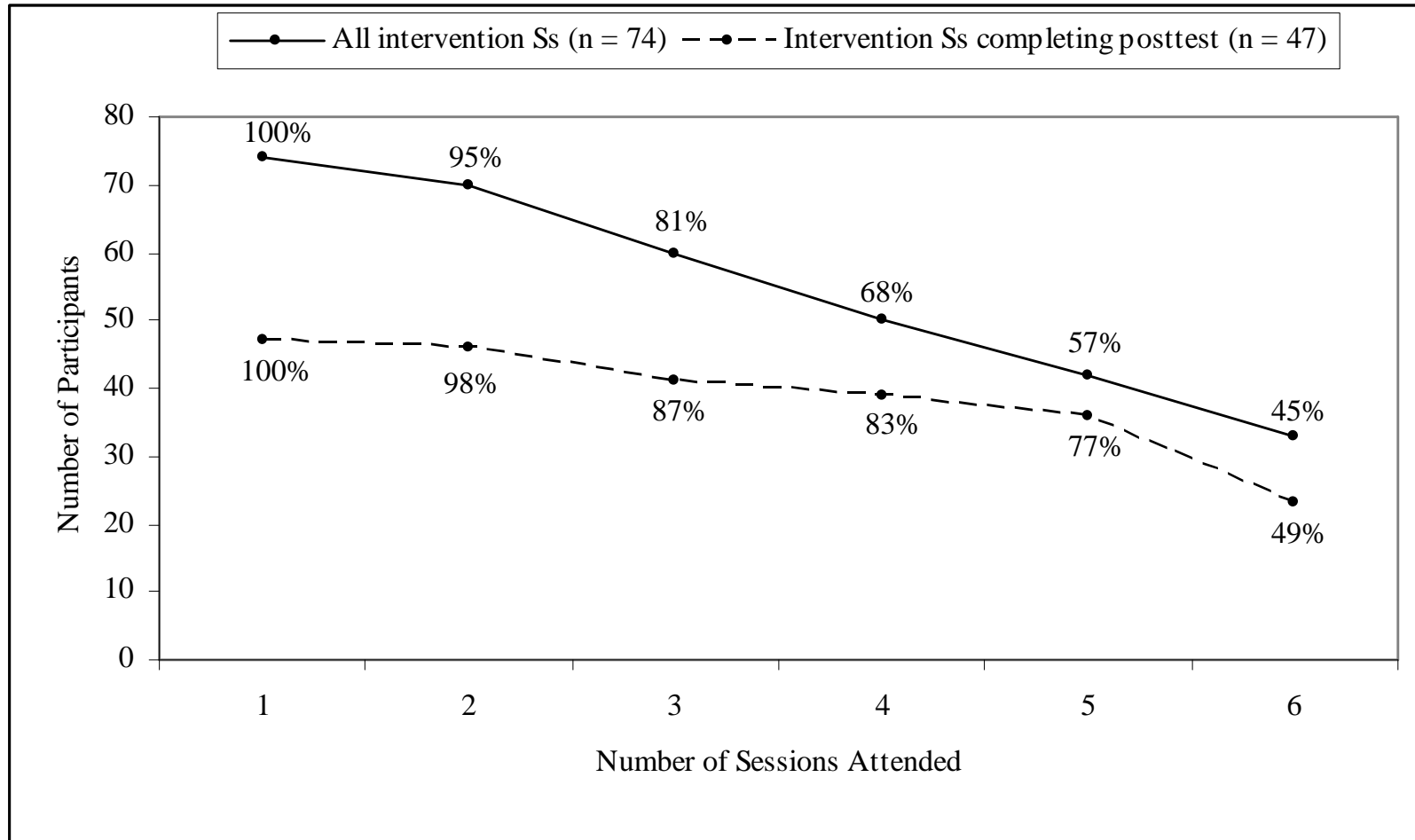


Table 4

*Participant Attendance in Treatment Interventions*

Number of Sessions Attended	All Intervention Ss ( <i>N</i> = 80)		Excluding Ss with missing data ( <i>N</i> = 74)	
	Anger Reduction <i>N</i> (% of Total)	REACH <i>N</i> (% of Total)	Anger Reduction <i>N</i> (% of Total)	REACH <i>N</i> (% of Total)
1	40 (100%)	40 (100%)	40 (100%)	34 (100%)
2	38 (95%)	38 (95%)	38 (95%)	32 (94%)
3	32 (80%)	34 (85%)	32 (80%)	28 (82%)
4	28 (70%)	27 (68%)	28 (70%)	22 (65%)
5	23 (58%)	19 (48%)	23 (58%)	19 (56%)
6	11 (28%)	12 (30%)	11 (28%)	12 (35%)

*Categorization of Offenses.* Offenses reported by participants are reported in Table 5 and displayed in Figure 3. Classification of interpersonal offenses was performed by trained research assistants in accordance with guidelines developed by Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, and Evans (1998), and utilized by Wade (2002) in his forgiveness intervention study. The majority (57.7%) of offenses described by participants were classified as interpersonal betrayals, with 29.7% of reported offenses being betrayals by a romantic partner. Such offenses are found to be common in forgiveness studies (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; Wade & Worthington, 2003), especially with college student samples (Rye & Pargament, 2002). Aside from betrayals, no other specific category of offense accounted for more than 10% of the reported transgressions.

*Manipulation check.* Preliminary analyses of treatment fidelity revealed that both treatment interventions were administered in accordance with the treatment manuals. Waltz, Addis, Koerner, and Jacobson (1993) define adherence as the “extent to which a therapist used interventions and approaches prescribed by treatment manual, and avoided the use of interventions and procedures proscribed by the manual” (p. 620). In order to measure adherence to the manuals, two research assistants who were blind to the hypotheses of the investigation were trained to analyze video recordings of the group sessions to see if the interventions matched the prescribed foci of the treatment manuals. For each session of each trial conducted, three numbers between 0-89 were randomly generated by a computer program. These numbers represented the minutes of each session, which ranged from 0-90. Research assistants were instructed to cue the video of each session to the time cues (i.e., number of minutes into the session) corresponding to the generated numbers and then watch

Table 5

*Types of Offenses Reported by Participants*

Category <sup>a</sup>	n	Percentage
Betrayal		
Romantic Partner	33	29.7%
Friend	18	16.2%
Family member	13	11.7%
Teasing	11	9.9%
Disassociation		
Passive <sup>b</sup>	7	6.3%
Active <sup>c</sup>	4	3.6%
Criticism	5	4.5%
Being taken for granted	2	1.8%
Unclassifiable <sup>d</sup>	15	13.5%
Missing <sup>e</sup>	3	2.7%

<sup>a</sup> The classification system for offenses was developed by Leary et al. (1998).

<sup>b</sup> This refers to implicit rejection such as being ignored or left out of others' activities.

<sup>c</sup> This refers to acts of explicit rejection, ostracism, or abandonment.

<sup>d</sup> Unclassifiable offenses are those that are clearly depicted by the participant but that did not fit into any of the other categories. Examples include theft, physical violence, or offenses in which the victim was a third party.

<sup>e</sup> Missing offenses include those in which the description was overly vague or illegible, or in which the original data were missing.

a three minute clip starting from that time point. As such, for each six-session intervention, 18 time points were generated (three times for each of six group sessions).

A total of 13, six-session trials were carried out, for a total of 234 time points assessed. A total of 44 time points (19%) were not assessed due to technical problems, such as no sound or no video. Two time points did not match the manual because the sessions started late and three time points did not match because the sessions finished earlier than anticipated. This left 185 (79%) time points that raters were able to assess, of which 183 (99%) were rated as adhering to the manual. After accounting for technical problems, both of the research assistants concluded that four of the five group leaders had a 100% adherence rate, and both assessors agreed that all leaders had an adherence rate > 95%. Inter-rater reliability was excellent (99%), as the raters agreed on 183 of 185 assessments.

*Facilitator Effects.* In order to control for potential facilitator effects, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with facilitator as the independent variable and each of the four outcome change scores as dependent variables. In all cases, the facilitator was found to have no significant impact on the outcomes. As previously indicated, all facilitators were found to strictly adhere to the treatment manuals.

*Pre-treatment differences among treatment conditions.* Correlational analyses were conducted at pretest between conceptually-relevant variables [trait forgivingness, anger, verbal and physical aggression, hostility toward the offender, current relationship with the offender, contrition by the offender, religious commitment, and self esteem] and the dependent measures. Three variables – physical aggression, current relationship with the offender, and perceived contrition by the offender – were found to correlate significantly with at least one dependent variable. Intercorrelations between these variables, the four

dependent variables [desires for revenge against the offender, rumination about the offense, empathy toward the offender, and overall psychological distress], and predictor variables [trait masculine gender role orientation and feminine gender role orientation] are reported in Table 6.

### *Main Analyses*

In order to allow the hypotheses regarding the treatment conditions to be tested in a hierarchical regression, two new variables were created to account for the categorical variable of treatment condition. The purpose of the first variable, labeled *absolute efficacy*, was to enable a direct comparison of the efficacy of treatment to that of no treatment. For this new variable, levels were recoded such that each of the two treatment interventions carried a value of 0.5, while the no-treatment condition carried a value of -1. The purpose of the creation of the second variable, labeled *relative efficacy*, was to enable a direct comparison of the efficacy of the two treatment interventions. For this new variable, levels were recoded such that the anger reduction intervention carried a value of 1, the REACH intervention carried a value of -1, and the no-treatment condition carried a value of 0.

A hierarchical regression equation was constructed to test the hypotheses that forgiveness would be predicted by treatment and gender role. A series of four hierarchical regressions were conducted, one for each of the four primary criterion variables (change scores in desires for revenge, rumination, empathy, and psychological symptoms).<sup>4</sup> Changes in the outcome measures and effect sizes ( $d$ )<sup>5</sup> are also reported in Table 7. In the first step of the equation, three covariates – physical aggression, relationship with offender, and offender contrition – that were previously found to significantly correlate with outcome variables were entered. In the second step of the regression, four predictor variables were entered:

Table 6

*Intercorrelations Between Potential Covariates and Dependent Variables at Pre-Test*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	---	-.02	-.19	-.07	.02	-.16	.10	.11	-.04	.13
2. Physical Aggression		---	-.03	-.09	.46**	-.17	-.12	-.09	-.09	-.31**
3. Offender Contrition			---	.51***	-.01	.05	-.26**	-.06	.55***	-.06
4. Relationship with Offender				---	.06	.11	-.20*	-.07	.63***	.07
5. Fem. Role Orientation					---	-.18	-.07	-.11	.02	-.10
6. Masc. Role Orientation						---	.08	.02	.10	-.07
7. Desire for Revenge							---	.37***	-.27**	.36***
8. Rumination								---	.09	.42***
9. Empathy									---	.14
10. Global Symptoms										---

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

\*\*\* Correlation is significant at the .001 level.

Table 7

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Effect Sizes on Dependent Measures by Treatment Condition*

	Desire for Revenge		Rumination			Empathy			Psychological Symptoms							
	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	Cohen's	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	Cohen's	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	Cohen's	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	Cohen's
Treatment	N	N	Mean	Mean	Cohen's	Mean	Mean	Cohen's	Mean	Mean	Cohen's	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Cohen's
Cohen's			(SD)	(SD)	<i>d</i> <sup>a</sup>	(SD)	(SD)	<i>d</i>	(SD)	(SD)	<i>d</i>	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	<i>d</i>
Condition																
Anger Reduction	40	22	10.45 (4.73)	8.13 (3.73)	.54 <sup>b</sup>	17.79 (5.74)	14.92 (5.67)	.50	18.61 (8.86)	16.22 (7.56)	-.29	.81 (.65)	.59 (.60)	.35		
REACH	40	29	10.25 (5.23)	7.79 (3.78)	.54	17.23 (6.40)	13.54 (5.62)	.61	18.16 (8.01)	20.07 (9.17)	.22	.77 (.68)	.43 (.56)	.55		
No Treatment	31	24	10.48 (5.20)	9.00 (3.72)	.33	17.29 (6.73)	15.48 (5.88)	.29	19.70 (9.63)	16.65 (8.05)	-.34	.78 (.66)	.81 (.56)	-.05		

a = Positive Cohen's *d* coefficients indicate an improvement (desired direction of change), whereas negative Cohen's *d* coefficients indicate a deterioration away from the desired direction. See <sup>b</sup> below.

b = Cohen's  $d = M_1 - M_2 / \sigma_{\text{pooled}}$ , where  $\sigma_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{[(\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2) / 2]}$ , except for Empathy, for which Cohen's  $d = M_2 - M_1 / \sigma_{\text{pooled}}$ .



masculine role orientation, feminine role orientation, absolute efficacy, and relative efficacy. In the third and final step of the regression, the interaction between masculine gender role and the intervention comparisons were entered, creating two interaction terms, one for masculine gender role  $\times$  absolute efficacy as well as one for masculine gender role  $\times$  relative efficacy. The variables in these last two steps were entered into the equation regardless of significance, as they were the variables of primary interest.

For the first dependent variable – change in desires for revenge – offender contrition was a significant predictor of outcome in the first step of the regression,  $B = -.23$  ( $SE = .10$ ),  $t(1, 70) = -2.30$ ,  $p = .025$ , such that the less apologetic the offender appeared, the greater the reduction in desires for revenge over the course of treatment. Neither physical aggression nor relationship with the offender were significant and therefore were not entered into the regression equation. All of the other variables entered in the second and third steps of the regression were nonsignificant (see Figure 4). The results of each step of the regression are presented in Table 8.

For the second dependent variable – change in rumination – no variables in the regression were found to be significant predictors (see Figure 5). The results of each step of the regression are presented in Table 9.

For the third dependent variable – change in empathy – offender contrition was a significant predictor of outcome in the first step of the regression,  $B = -.62$  ( $SE = .21$ ),  $t(1, 70) = -2.99$ ,  $p = .004$ , such that those who perceived less offender contrition gained more empathy for their offenders over time. Neither physical aggression nor relationship with the offender was significant and therefore neither was entered into the regression equation. In the second step of the regression, absolute efficacy was a significant predictor of outcome in

Figure 3

*Mean Changes in Desires for Revenge by Treatment Type*

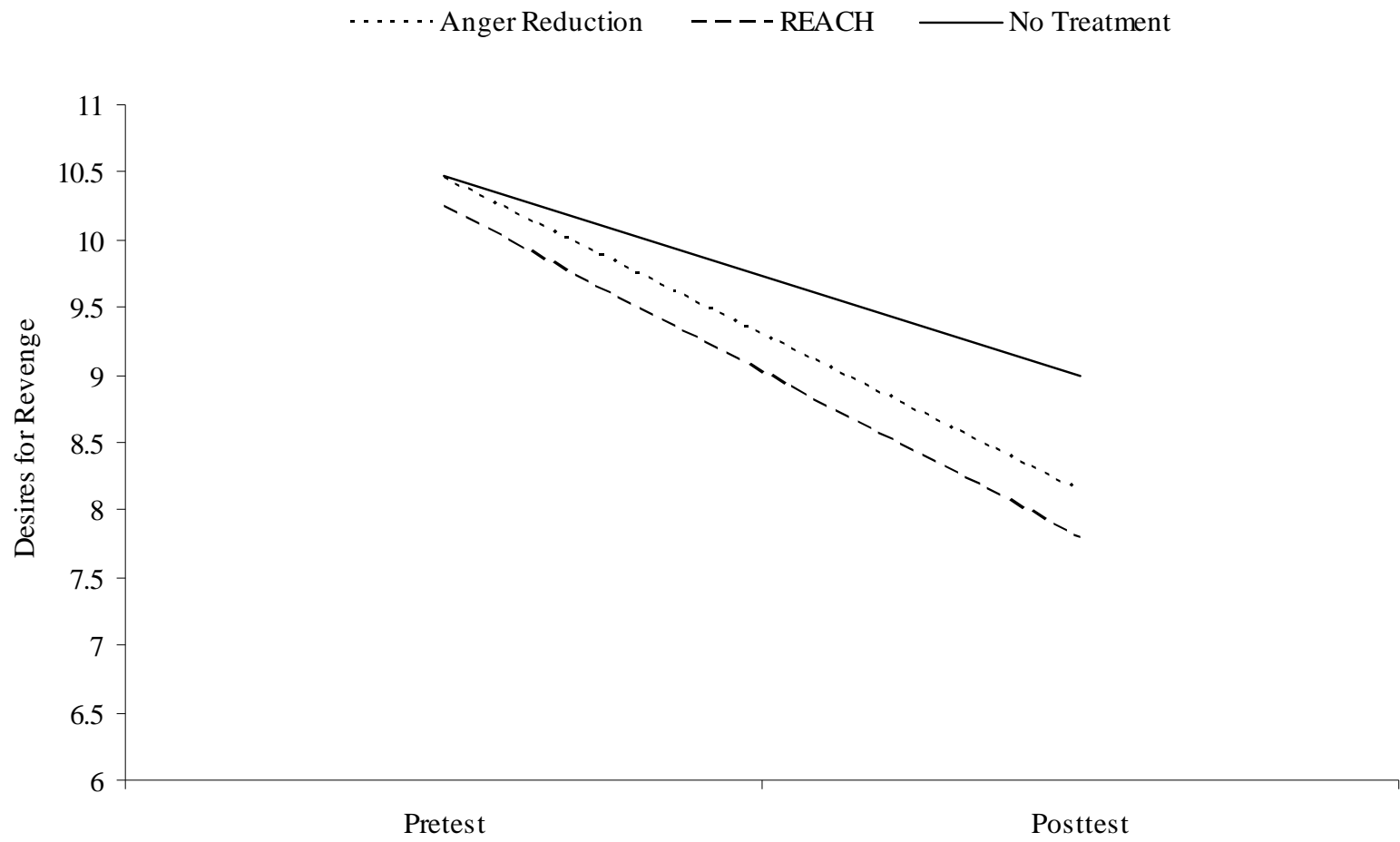


Table 8

*Hierarchical Regression for Pre-to-Post Intervention Change in Desire for Revenge*

Model	Predictor	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE$	$\beta$	$t$	$p$
1		.132*	.132*					
	Offender Contrition			-.15	.11	-.18	-1.39	.168
	Relationship w/ Offender			-.10	.09	-.15	-1.19	.238
	Physical Aggression			.14	.08	.20	1.78	.079
2		.178	.046					
	Offender Contrition			-.17	.11	-.20	-1.53	.129
	Relationship w/ Offender			-.12	.09	-.19	-1.41	.165
	Physical Aggression			.14	.08	.20	1.65	.103
	Masc. Role Orientation			.78	.62	.15	1.26	.213
	Fem. Role Orientation			.32	.71	.06	.45	.653
	Absolute Efficacy			.24	.54	.05	.44	.661
	Relative Efficacy			-.58	.47	-.15	-1.23	.223
3		.179	.001					
	Offender Contrition			-.16	.12	-.19	-1.39	.168
	Relationship w/ Offender			-.13	.09	-.19	-1.40	.165
	Physical Aggression			.14	.08	.20	1.64	.106
	Masc. Role Orientation			.83	.69	.15	1.20	.237
	Fem. Role Orientation			.34	.73	.06	.47	.644
	Absolute Efficacy			.25	.56	.05	.45	.651
	Relative Efficacy			-.56	.48	-.14	-1.16	.251
	MRO x AE			-.11	.89	-.02	-.12	.905
	MRO x RE			-.24	.87	.04	.27	.788

\*  $p < .05$ 

MRO = Masculine Role Orientation AE = Absolute Efficacy RE = Relative Efficacy

Figure 4

*Mean Changes in Rumination by Treatment Type*

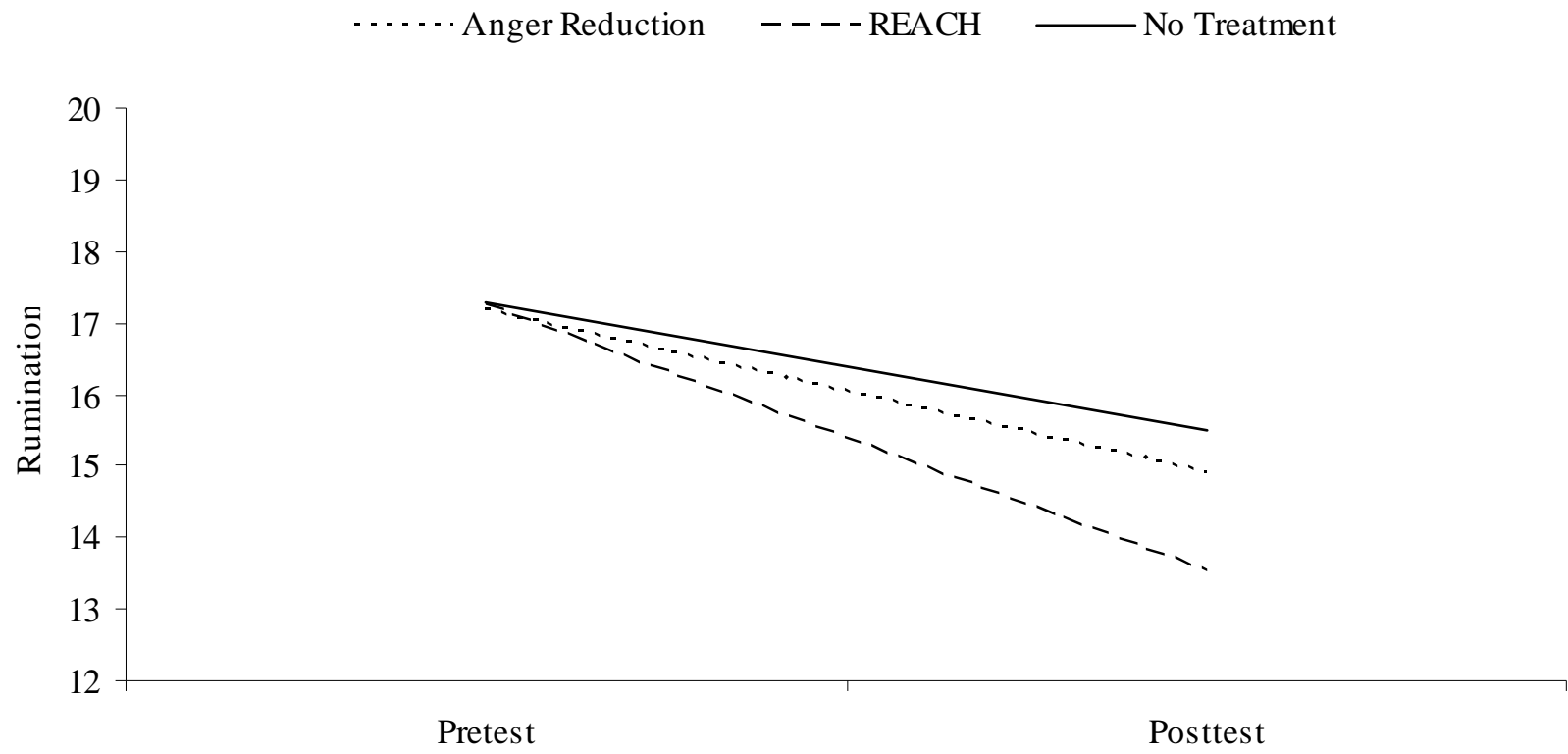


Table 9

*Hierarchical Regression for Pre-to-Post Intervention Change in Rumination*

Model	Predictor	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE$	$\beta$	$t$	$p$
1		.029	.029					
	Offender Contrition			-.07	.16	-.06	-.42	.679
	Relationship w/ Offender			.07	.12	.08	.58	.562
	Physical Aggression			.14	.11	.16	1.31	.193
2		.048	.019					
	Offender Contrition			-.08	.16	-.07	-.48	.631
	Relationship w/ Offender			.07	.13	.08	.54	.588
	Physical Aggression			.19	.12	.21	1.57	.122
	Masc. Role Orientation			-.33	.91	-.05	-.36	.721
	Fem. Role Orientation			-.96	1.04	-.12	-.92	.360
	Absolute Efficacy			.25	.80	.04	.32	.751
	Relative Efficacy			-.23	.68	-.04	-.34	.739
3		.053	.006					
	Offender Contrition			-.08	.17	-.07	-.49	.628
	Relationship w/ Offender			.06	.13	.07	.49	.623
	Physical Aggression			.19	.12	.21	1.54	.128
	Masc. Role Orientation			-.13	1.01	-.02	-.13	.894
	Fem. Role Orientation			-.99	1.06	-.13	-.94	.353
	Absolute Efficacy			.28	.81	.04	.35	.731
	Relative Efficacy			-.19	.70	-.04	-.27	.788
	MRO x AE			-.78	1.30	.08	.60	.549
	MRO x RE			.31	1.27	.03	.24	.810

MRO = Masculine Role Orientation AE = Absolute Efficacy RE = Relative Efficacy

the second step of the regression,  $B = 2.52$  ( $SE = 1.06$ ),  $t(5, 66) = 2.38$ ,  $p = .020$ , such that those who took part in an intervention experienced greater increases in empathy than those in the no-treatment condition. Likewise, relative efficacy was a significant predictor of outcome in the second step of the regression,  $B = -2.37$  ( $SE = .95$ ),  $t(5, 66) = -2.50$ ,  $p = .015$ , such that participants in the REACH intervention experienced greater increases in empathy than those in the anger reduction intervention (see Figure 6). This outcome was expected, as one of the distinct differences between the two treatment conditions is the inclusion of empathy training in the REACH condition. Neither masculine gender role orientation nor feminine gender role orientation was a significant predictor of empathy gained. In the third step of the regression, neither interaction term was a significant predictor of empathy gained. These results are presented in Table 10.

For the fourth dependent variable – change in psychological symptoms – no variables in the regression were found to be significant predictors of outcome (see Figure 7). The results of each step of the regression are presented in Table 11.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that participants in each of the two intervention conditions would experience greater improvements on proximal (forgiveness-related) and distal (psychological symptoms) outcome measures than participants in the no-treatment condition. The results of the regression indicated that participation in an intervention condition (as opposed to the no-treatment condition) was a significant predictor for empathy gained,  $B = -2.36$  ( $SE = .95$ ),  $t(5, 66) = -2.50$ ,  $p = .015$ . However, it was not a significant predictor of decreased desires for revenge, decreased rumination, or the reduction of psychological symptoms.

Figure 5

*Mean Changes in Empathy by Treatment Type*

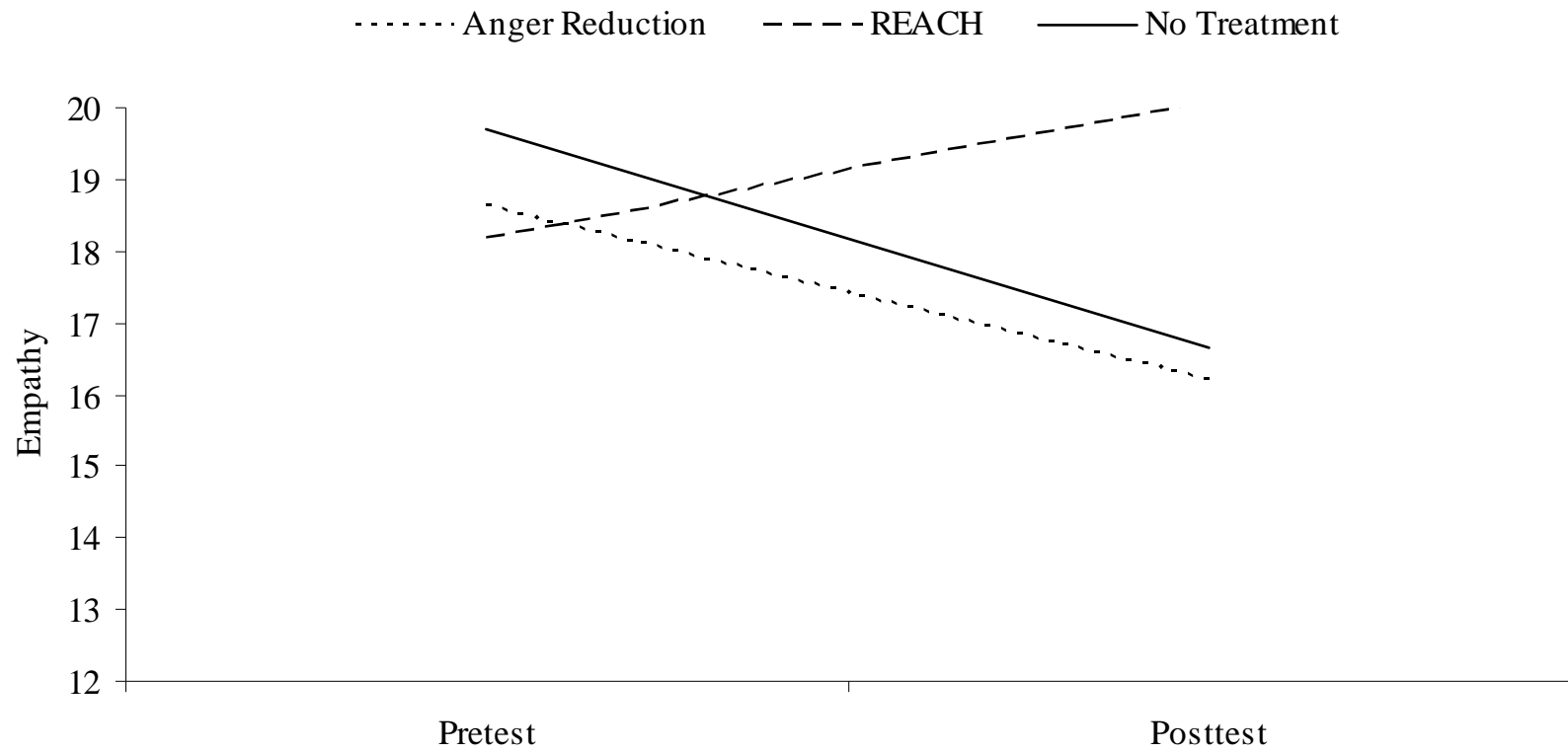


Table 10

*Hierarchical Regression for Pre-to-Post Intervention Change in Empathy*

Model	Predictor	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE$	$\beta$	$t$	$p$
1		.136*	.136*					
	Offender Contrition			-.48	.24	-.26	-2.02*	.047
	Relationship w/ Offender			-.22	.18	-.16	-1.23	.220
	Physical Aggression			-.10	.16	-.07	-.60	.551
2		.298***	.019**					
	Offender Contrition			-.56	.22	-.31	-2.53*	.014
	Relationship w/ Offender			-.22	.17	-.16	-1.26	.213
	Physical Aggression			.00	.16	.00	.01	.996
	Masc. Role Orientation			-1.04	1.24	-.09	-.84	.405
	Fem. Role Orientation			-.64	1.42	-.05	-.45	.656
	Absolute Efficacy			2.55	1.09	.25	2.35*	.022
	Relative Efficacy			-2.43	.94	-.28	-2.60*	.012
3		.299**	.001					
	Offender Contrition			-.56	.23	-.31	-2.42*	.018
	Relationship w/ Offender			-.22	.18	-.16	-1.26	.214
	Physical Aggression			.00	.17	.00	.01	.995
	Masc. Role Orientation			-.86	1.38	-.08	-.63	.530
	Fem. Role Orientation			-.65	1.45	-.05	-.45	.653
	Absolute Efficacy			2.58	1.11	.26	2.33*	.023
	Relative Efficacy			-2.39	.96	-.28	-2.49*	.016
	MRO x AE			.59	1.78	.04	.33	.743
	MRO x RE			.33	1.74	.02	.19	.851

\*  $p < .05$       \*\*  $p < .01$       \*\*\*  $p < .001$

MRO = Masculine Role Orientation    AE = Absolute Efficacy    RE = Relative Efficacy



Figure 6

*Mean Changes in Psychological Symptoms by Treatment Type*

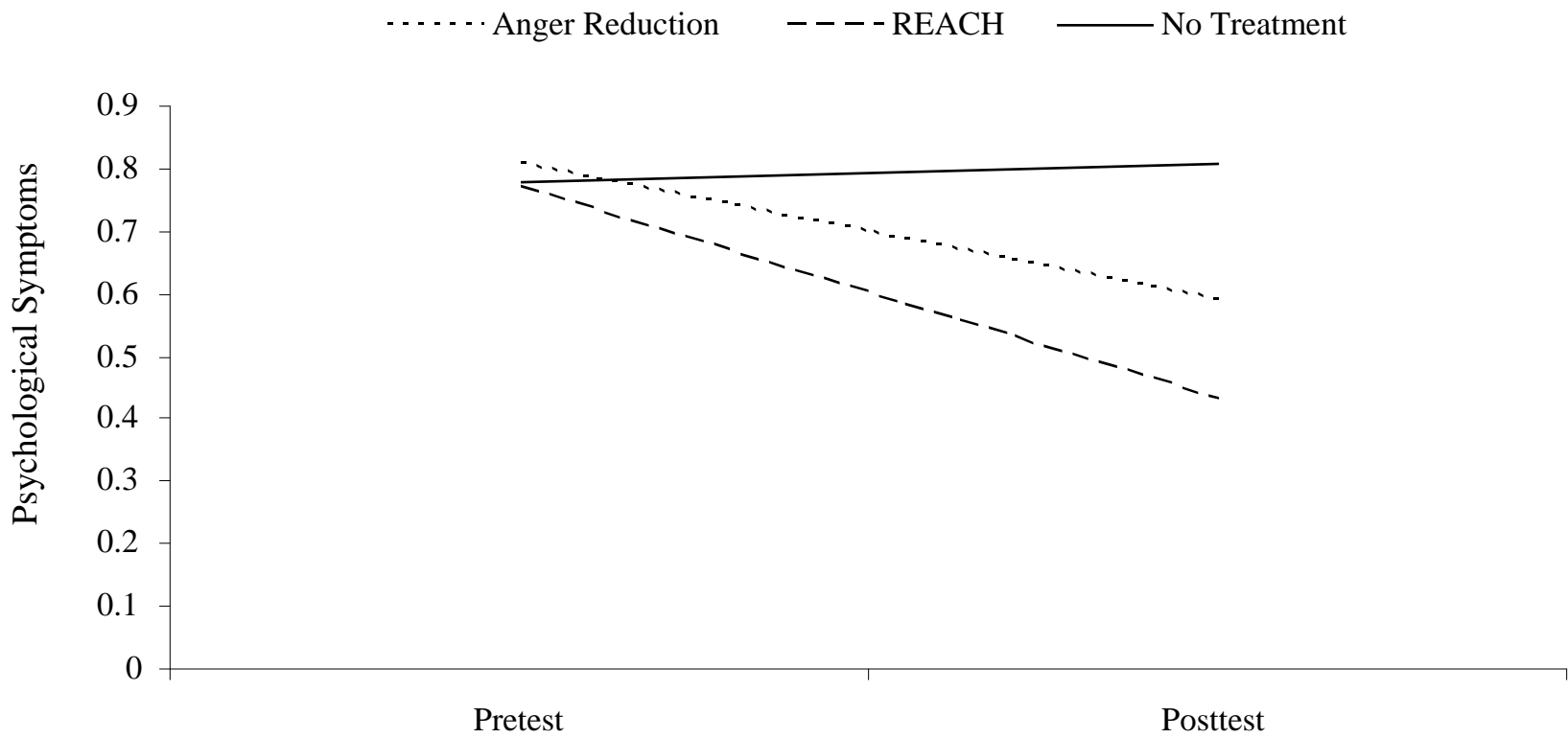


Table 11

*Hierarchical Regression for Pre-to-Post Intervention Change in Psychological Symptoms*

Model	Predictor	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE$	$\beta$	$t$	$p$
1		.055	.055					
	Offender Contrition			-.01	.02	-.07	-.53	.599
	Relationship w/ Offender			.01	.01	.15	1.10	.277
	Physical Aggression			-.02	.01	-.20	-1.61	.112
2		.093	.038					
	Offender Contrition			-.01	.02	-.09	-.62	.537
	Relationship w/ Offender			.01	.01	.15	1.00	.321
	Physical Aggression			-.02	.01	-.16	-1.25	.215
	Masc. Role Orientation			.02	.09	.02	.19	.845
	Fem. Role Orientation			.01	.11	.01	.06	.954
	Absolute Efficacy			.09	.08	.14	1.07	.287
	Relative Efficacy			-.07	.07	-.13	-1.00	.323
3		.107	.014					
	Offender Contrition			-.01	.02	-.10	-.67	.506
	Relationship w/ Offender			.01	.01	.15	1.00	.320
	Physical Aggression			-.02	.01	-.17	-1.30	.199
	Masc. Role Orientation			.06	.11	.08	.51	.614
	Fem. Role Orientation			.01	.11	.01	.04	.969
	Absolute Efficacy			.09	.08	.14	1.11	.271
	Relative Efficacy			-.06	.07	-.12	-.87	.387
	MRO x AE			.13	.14	.13	.95	.344
	MRO x RE			.05	.15	.05	.31	.761

MRO = Masculine Role Orientation AE = Absolute Efficacy RE = Relative Efficacy

Hypothesis 2 predicted that participants with higher feminine gender role orientations would experience greater changes on the criterion measures than participants with lower feminine gender role orientations. The results of the regressions indicate that feminine gender role orientation was not a significant predictor of any of the primary outcome variables. Hypothesis 3 predicted that participants whose gender role is traditionally masculine (sex typed males and non-sex typed females) would experience greater improvements on outcome measures when in the anger reduction intervention than when in the REACH intervention. As previously reported, an interaction term of interest – masculinity  $\times$  relative efficacy – was incorporated in the final step of each of the four outcome regressions. This variable did not account for a significant difference on any of the outcome variables, and as such failed to support the expected outcome of differential intervention efficacy for traditionally masculine participants.

## CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Key elements of the theory that guided this study were supported by the findings. Most notably, an absolute efficacy effect was found such that participants who took part in a group treatment intervention reported significant increases in empathy for their offenders compared to participants who did not take part in a group treatment intervention. A relative efficacy effect was also obtained, such that participants in the REACH intervention reported significant increases in empathy for their offenders compared to participants in the reducing anger intervention. The potential value and impact of these results should not be underestimated. Recall that development of empathy for one's offender is one of the most reliable predictors of forgiveness (Root & McCullough, 2007), and that data from McCullough et al. (1997) supported the premise that empathy causally precedes forgiveness. The finding of absolute efficacy is encouraging in light of past intervention research showing that regardless of the intervention used, individuals who felt greater empathy toward their offenders were more likely to forgive (McCullough et al., 1997). In combination with prior findings that treatment effect size is related to the amount of time devoted to helping clients develop empathy for their transgressors (Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005), the finding that the REACH intervention – which, unlike the reducing anger intervention, allocates time expressly for empathy development – was superior to the anger reduction intervention in generating empathy is key in continuing support for the use of the REACH model in clinical and research settings.

The finding that intervention participants failed to show significantly greater improvements on other proximal and distal dependent measures (desires for revenge,

rumination, and psychological symptoms) than no-treatment participants was enigmatic, especially in light of past findings. Although historically some have criticized psychotherapy's effectiveness – Eysenck (1952), for instance, notoriously asserted that it was no better than spontaneous remission – empirical studies have by and large supported its clinical value for a host of outcomes (Wampold, 2001), and for forgiveness specifically (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Root & McCullough, 2007; Wade, Worthington, et al., 2005; Worthington, Sandage, et al., 2000). Why, then, did the present investigation fail to find significant differences on conceptually important measures between the treatments and no treatments? It should first be noted that on the whole, participants in the treatment conditions *did* show meaningful improvements. The nonsupport for absolute efficacy of intervening on desires for revenge, rumination, and psychological symptoms resulted from the observable fact that on average the no-treatment participants also reported meaningful improvements. This finding is not completely without precedent; Rye and Pargament (2002), for instance, found that six weeks after treatment had concluded, participants in a no-treatment control condition indicated significantly increased levels of forgiveness. Worthington, Kurusu, et al. (2000) reported that individuals taking part in a brief intervention did not report diminished unforgiveness compared to no-treatment controls. As such, to say that the treatments were ineffective is not justified. Instead, the researchers are faced with an odd phenomenon in which, conventionally speaking, everyone got better. Also, while these outcomes may not differ at a statistically significant level, an argument can be made that the differences are clinically significant. Specifically, the effect sizes were more favorable for both interventions than for the no-treatment condition for each of the

primary dependent variables, and were markedly larger for three of the four dependent variables (see Table 7).

The second question was whether gender role orientation was related to improvements. It was hypothesized that gender role orientation would indeed influence outcomes, such that participants (men and women) with more traditionally feminine gender role orientations would experience greater overall improvements on outcome variables. This prediction was based on gender theory that proposes that forgiveness fits more closely with feminine orientation, which emphasizes interpersonal harmony, than masculine orientation, which emphasizes justice (Miller, Worthington, & McDaniel, 2007; Wade & Goldman, 2006). The results indicated that feminine gender role did not significantly impact any of the outcome variables of interest.

The impact of feminine gender role orientation on forgiveness may have been muted by the fact that all participants in the study – even those with very high feminine gender role orientations – reported that they were holding a grudge toward their offenders. While feminine gender role orientation may be theoretically linked to aptness to forgive, the screening procedures used in this investigation only admitted those who were still clinging to unforgiveness. Thus, while a traditionally feminine gender role orientation may be enough to lead many individuals to forgive, the participants (with a feminine gender role orientation) in the present investigation seem to have come from the subset of the population whose grudges seem to be immune from the effects of their gender orientations.

Another possibility is that the clinical skill of the facilitators and/or the group climate may have somehow created a more “level playing field” for the more masculine participants to accept empathy, and ultimately forgiveness, as viable options. Gender role orientation is

believed to be a relatively stable trait (Bem, 1981; Ray & Gold, 1996), and as such was only measured once in this investigation, prior to participation. It may be, however, that the interventions actually led those with traditionally masculine attitudes to adopt a more androgynous (high masculine *and* high feminine) approach to dealing with the past hurt. While relatively stable over time, personality traits are not fixed, and are most likely to be malleable prior to age 30 (Costa & McCrae, 1997), an age group accounting for more than 95% of the participants in the current study. It would have been interesting to measure gender role orientation at posttest to see if the interventions in fact resulted in changes indicated not just in attitudes toward the one offense, but also in changes indicated at the trait level.

Another factor that must be considered is the validity of the scale used to assess gender roles. Gender roles are defined as expectations about personality traits and behaviors that are appropriate or desirable for each sex (Holt & Ellis, 1998; Weiten, 1997). The Bem Sex Role Inventory, which is widely used and was utilized in the present investigation, was developed in 1974. The item content has not been updated in the past 35 years, and some have expressed concern that the instrument may be outdated and that its validity may have decreased since the time of its inception. Notably, the roles of men and women have changed since this time, and attitudes regarding those roles have become more liberal (Holt & Ellis, 1998; Loo & Thorpe, 1998; Twenge, 1997). Recent studies testing the continuing validity of the BSRI have yielded mixed results. Holt and Ellis (1998) validated 38 of the 40 items used to measure masculinity and femininity and concluded that the BSRI may still be a valid measure of gender roles. They admit that attitudes toward gender roles seem to have changed over the years, but not enough to mitigate or undermine the utility of the

BSRI. In an attempt to replicate these results, though, Konrad and Harris (2002) concluded that the desirability of traits for males and females, as portrayed by the BSRI, is “valid for some groups and partially or completely invalid for others” (p. 270), specifically that this varied by race and by region. Auster and Ohm (2000) likewise reported mixed results. In their re-analysis of the BSRI, they reached the conclusion that people believed that society found the same traits desirable for men and women in 1999 that it did in 1972 when Bem first collected her data. At the same time, though, they noted that when females were asked to report on which traits were most important *for them* (the female respondents) to have, more than half of the top 15 rated traits came from Bem’s list of masculine traits, and one-third of the top 15 traits for men as rated by males were from Bem’s list of feminine traits. Additional research has replicated the finding that a bias exists in the way that individuals rate the desirability of traits “for a man” or “for a woman” in American society (as was done in Bem’s development of the scale) versus traits desired in oneself (Choi, Fuqua, & Newman, 2008).

The final question was whether the specific treatment interventions used in this study in fact have differential effectiveness for a specific population, namely those with high traditional masculine gender role orientation. It was hypothesized that a difference would emerge, such that this subgroup of participants would be more likely to experience improvements when in a treatment intervention that (a) focused on the reduction of negative thoughts and emotions, and (b) paid no heed to the development of prosocial attitudes. This prediction was based on the gender role theory previously discussed, which suggests that traditionally masculine individuals may not be as willing to develop empathy for offenders, and thus may reject the treatment with this focus. The results indicate that contrary to the



hypothesis, those with traditionally masculine gender role orientations were not better off in the anger reduction intervention than in the REACH intervention.

Regrettably, none of those highest in masculine gender role orientation were randomly assigned to the anger reduction intervention. Of the 75 participants who completed both pretest and posttest measures, only eight were categorized as high masculine (>1 SD above the mean), of which four took part in the REACH intervention and four were in the no-treatment waitlist condition. Thus, there is limited information available on the relative efficacy of the interventions for this particular subset of the sample. If this study were to be conducted again in the future, the investigators may consider the merits of circumventing true random assignment in favor of creating roughly equivalent assignment to treatment groups based on masculinity scores.

### *Limitations*

It may be somewhat imprecise to characterize the control condition utilized in this investigation as a “no-treatment” condition. While participants in this group did not receive any theoretically or empirically derived treatment, they were asked, just as frequently as those in the treatment conditions, to complete questionnaires relating to the offenses they suffered. In the early stages of participation, all participants were asked to recall the offense and provide a qualitative, first-person account of it. Prior research suggests that merely providing an account of the offense helped participants to feel better (Lepore, 1997; Pennebaker, 1997a, 1997b). It is also possible that the forgiveness questionnaires might constitute a compelling intervention in their own way (Wade, 2002). Hebl and Enright (1993), for instance, intentionally decided against incorporating pre-intervention forgiveness measures for fear that doing so would generate measurement biases. Also, on numerous

occasions, participants were confronted with rating the accuracy of items such as “I am a forgiving person,” “I want to see [the offender] hurt and miserable,” and “Memories about this person’s wrongful actions have limited my enjoyment of life.” It is quite plausible that doing so was enough to help some participants decide that they no longer wanted to hold a grudge and that holding the grudge was ultimately self-defeating. Were an attempt made to replicate this study, investigators might revise the experimental design to control for this factor. One such possibility would be the utilization of a revised (to six groups) Solomon four-group design. The Solomon four-group design is a modification of the pretest-posttest control-group design utilized in the present investigation, in which, for each treatment condition that completes pretest and posttest measures, there is a corresponding group that completes only posttest measures, thereby preventing bias resulting from pretest exposure to the dependent measures (Finger & Rand, 2003).

Repeated exposure to the forgiveness-related questionnaires may also have contributed to demand characteristics. It was clear from the start that the present investigation was somehow concerned with how individuals responded to past interpersonal hurts, and the concept of forgiveness was repeatedly presented in the questionnaires. This may ultimately have created expectations in the minds of the participants that they were supposed to make progress toward forgiving their offenders, and they may have answered questionnaire items accordingly. In addition, being asked to contemplate these items repeatedly may have led to a heightened social desirability effect. In other words, a person may feel comfortable endorsing a statement such as “I want to see [the offender] hurt and miserable” once, but by the third time, whether their true feelings have changed or not, some

people may begin to publicly deny it. The utilization of a measure of social desirability may have been advisable in this regard in order to control for the potential impact of this effect.

Another possible explanation for the lack of overall treatment effects is that the sample tested may not have been a true clinical sample. Indeed, the researchers utilized a convenience sample of college students, most of whose participation was likely motivated at least largely by the partial course credit and payments they received instead of by a genuine desire to overcome an interpersonal offense. In reality, everyone has likely been the victim of an interpersonal offense at some point in their lives that has not been resolved; the matter of interest in this case was the extent to which participants were still negatively impacted by the offenses. In his investigation, Wade (2002) found that although participants were asked to only participate if they had not forgiven their offenders, a significant number had indeed forgiven their offenders prior to participating in his study. In an attempt to only include individuals who were still unforgiving of the offense, the researchers in the current investigation utilized a screening procedure. In order to be included, potential participants had to (a) answer yes to “Can you think of a time when someone hurt or offended you in a significant way?” and (b) score a minimum of 24 out of 60 on the TRIM-12. This cut-off score was derived from the findings of Wade, Worthington et al. (2007), who determined 27 to be a clinically significant cut-off, and lowered three points to help insure that there would be enough participants.<sup>6</sup> In retrospect, it may have been advisable to utilize a separate measure *in addition to* the TRIM-12 to help identify the impact of a past interpersonal offense or the extent to which an individual is currently troubled by it.

A related issue of potential concern is the climate of the group. If some group members are not particularly investing in forgiveness, and are primarily motivated by

compensation, it is reasonable to expect that those who are invested will not reap the full benefits of the intervention. One reason for this phenomenon involves what Yalom (1985) termed *group cohesiveness*, which reflects the degree to which one feels she or he can trust the group as well as how attractive the group is to the person as a setting for opening up to others. Group cohesiveness is analogous to the concept of therapeutic or working alliance in individual counseling. Wampold (2001) considers the therapeutic alliance to be a critical factor in therapeutic success, and reports an overall effect size of .45 on outcome. In fact, group cohesiveness, in addition to the general esprit de corps, is thought to be imperative to the success of any type of group counseling and even a prerequisite for other therapeutic factors to operate advantageously (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). In a group situation with insufficient cohesiveness, basic therapeutic factors such as *universality* (the sense that others have problems similar to yours) and *imitative behavior* (modeling another group member's recovery skills) cannot effectively take place. In other words, many of the benefits inherent to group therapy require effort not just on the part of the individual but engagement by others in the group.

While the impact of group climate and exposure to pretest measurements are unknown, a far more evident hindrance was the size of the sample employed in the investigation. The sample size of 111 seemed reasonable, but in the end was not quite adequate for a study testing multiple interventions against a control group on multiple dependent variables. The fact that the interventions each involved a series of six sessions likely led to missed data collection points and higher levels of attrition than one would expect from a shorter intervention. At the same time, it often happens that those who are suffering the most from unforgiveness are the most likely to drop out of interventions

designed to promote forgiveness (Worthington, Sandage, et al., 2000). Missing or invalid data for a single variable or time point often rendered the remainder of the data collected from that participant worthless from the point of data analysis. Unfortunately, practical and logistical limitations on the investigators rendered a larger study unfeasible.

Another reason for the surprising results may have to do with a phenomenon known as the “file drawer problem.” The file drawer problem suggests that there exists a publication bias in which null results rarely if ever get published. Though perhaps unlikely, it is possible that the results found in the present investigation – i.e., that the null hypothesis was in some cases supported – are not at all unusual; instead, the tendency for publications to accept only studies in which the null hypothesis is rejected may create a misperception that general treatment effects are the norm.

In addition, the characteristics of effective forgiveness intervention group facilitators have not been established, and almost all studies of forgiveness interventions have been conducted by graduate students, so it is not known whether amount of counseling experience is a factor (Worthington, Sandage, et al., 2000). While all group facilitators were trained to use the manual and exhibited superlative adherence to the treatment manuals, it is ultimately difficult to know how effective the facilitators were. Another uncharted therapist variable may merit discussion in light of the findings as well. Wampold (2001) concluded that therapist allegiance, the extent to which a therapist believes in the efficacy of the treatment she or he is utilizing, is critical to successful counseling, and reported an overall effect size of up to .65. Berman, Miller, and Massman (1985) found that allegiance to a specific type of therapy was more predictive of therapeutic success than the type of therapy itself. In practice, allegiance effects are rarely a concern, as most therapists freely choose their

methods of counseling based on compatibility with their understanding of theory, their personal skills, and past success. Wampold (2001) noted that in clinical trials the treatment being utilized is usually imposed upon the therapist, and as such one should expect that allegiance will vary considerably. In the current investigation, neither therapist allegiance nor familiarity with the literature on forgiveness theory or interventions was measured. As such, the extent to which facilitators believed in the treatments – as a whole, or differentially between the two interventions – and expressed as much to their groups had the potential to impact the outcome of the interventions.

Additionally, the generalizability of the results may be limited by the age of the participants. As previously noted, the sample was comprised of college students with a median age of 20 yrs and with 80.2% of the sample ( $n = 89$ ) between the ages of 18-22. Previous research suggests that forgiveness is developmental, and that the understanding of forgiveness is cultivated with age (Enright, Santos, & Al-Mubak, 1989). Support for this notion can be found in the literature on forgiveness and aging. In their study, Mullet, Houdbine, Laumonier, and Girard (1998) found that among physical, social, and psychological circumstances potentially affecting forgiveness, age had the strongest effect. They found that young adults were more prone to take revenge and less prone to forgive than the elderly. Similar results were found a decade later by Allemand (2008), who reported that younger adults (ages 18-35) were less forgiving than older adults (ages 60-83). Girard and Mullet (1997) also found an overall rise from adolescence to old age in the inclination to forgive. In a generational comparison, Subkoviak, Enright, Wu, Gassin, Freedman, Olson, et al. (1995) compared college students with their same-sex parents on measures of interpersonal forgiveness. College students were found to have lower levels of

forgiveness, higher levels of negative affect toward their offenders, and lower levels of positive affect toward their offenders than their middle-aged parents.

#### *Future Research Directions*

While noteworthy results emerged for the absolute and relative efficacy of therapeutic interventions for promoting empathy, and thus ultimately interpersonal forgiveness, future research might help in understanding why similar results did not emerge for other conceptually important variables such as desires for revenge and rumination. In keeping with a previous concern noted in the section, it would be premature and hasty to chuck the “non-results” away into the file drawer. Instead, the fact that these results were not in line with the prevailing theory is in itself intriguing, and investigation of this outcome may yield enhanced understanding of forgiveness and therapeutic interventions that promote forgiveness. Future research might examine the influence of merely recalling a past hurt and periodically assessing one’s thoughts and feelings about the offense and the offender, as was done by this investigation’s no-treatment “control” group. Based on the current findings, as well as the conclusion that time is an important variable in the process of forgiveness (Wade, 2002; Worthington, Sandage, et al., 2000), researchers could then investigate the hypothesis that periodic (and perhaps systematic) recollection/assessment of a past hurt across an extended period of time is sufficient to reduce interpersonal unforgiveness.

Although the hypothesized gender role orientation differences were not found, future research should continue to investigate the role that both sex and gender role orientation play in mental health. While this investigation primarily explored desires for revenge, rumination, and empathy, it is conceivable that gender role orientation may differentially impact other mental health variables. In addition, the present investigation was unique in

that instead of merely looking for sex differences in the outcome variables, it focused on the impact of gender role orientation. This shift in focus is compatible with the growing recognition of the variance in thinking, emotion, attitudes, and behaviors among women and among men. Perhaps no topic plays a greater role today in shaping the emerging identity of the field of counseling psychology than diversity. The study of diversity reminds us that not only do men think and act differently than women, but that men think and act differently from other men and women think and act differently from other women. The extent to which men and women adhere to traditionally prescribed and proscribed behaviors is their gender role orientation. Currently, there are few tools available to measure gender role orientation, and there is some criticism that the existing inventories are outdated (Auster & Ohm, 2000; Ballard-Reisch & Elton, 1992).

### *Conclusion*

In the present investigation into the efficacy of group interventions for interpersonal forgiveness, the REACH intervention showed greater efficacy in increasing empathy than either the anger reduction condition or the no-treatment control condition. Furthermore, the effect size of the REACH intervention was more than double that of the no-treatment control condition for each of the four dependent variables. This outcome was in accordance with the investigators' expectations and with the model upon which this treatment manual was conceived. This is an important finding in light of the operational definition of forgiveness that was employed, in which forgiveness is conceived as a two-part construct consisting of (1) reduction of negative feelings, thoughts, motivations, and/or behaviors associated with the offense; and (2) development of positive, prosocial behaviors, thought, and feelings toward the offender (Wade, Johnson, et al., 2008; Wade & Worthington, 2005). In this



light, while the two treatment conditions and the no-treatment condition showed similar efficacy in helping participants to reduce unforgiveness, the REACH intervention alone led to greater levels of forgiveness. Worthington, Kuru, et al. (2000) remind us that “the main lesson is that the amount of forgiveness is related to the amount of time that participants spend empathizing with the transgressor” (p. 3). This finding corresponds with previous studies which show that the development of positive, prosocial attitudes toward one’s past offender do not naturally develop with time (McCullough & Worthington, 1995; Wade, 2002). While the passage of time or nuisance factors may help people let go of some of the resentment and anger they have regarding past hurts, this investigation lends credence to the likelihood that specific treatment may be required to assist them in developing positive emotions and thoughts as a means to forgive past offenses.

The hypotheses that outcome would be moderated by gender role orientation and that masculine gender role orientation would moderate the effects of the interventions on forgiveness were not supported. In addition, aside from the finding on empathy reported above, the intervention groups failed to significantly outperform the no-treatment condition. As Wade (2002) notes, while the majority of published reports indicate that interventions specifically aimed at promoting forgiveness are uniquely effective at doing so, the results are sufficiently heterogeneous to generate skepticism. Instead, participants in all research conditions showed similar improvement.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Though relatively rare, some studies have not reproduced relationships of rumination with forgiveness or unforgiveness. Lawler-Row et al. (2008) utilized a sample of 114 undergraduates who were asked to recall a time their parents upset or hurt them and failed to find a significant relationship between rumination and forgiveness. They recommended that future studies pay careful attention to differences that may exist among the numerous measures of rumination, which may have contributed to the different findings.
2. Of the 74 intervention participants for whom full attendance records were available, four withdrew from the study after one session, six after the second session, three after the third session, five after the fourth session, and seven after the fifth session, leaving 49 who attended the final session and completed the post-session measures.
3. Variables tested were desires for revenge, rumination, empathy for one's offender, psychological symptoms, masculine gender role orientation, feminine gender role orientation, relationship with one's offender, perceived offender contrition, physical aggression, verbal aggression, trait hostility, state hostility, anger, self-esteem, religious commitment, and trait forgivingness.
4. The aim of regressions such as those conducted in this investigation is to compare interventions and control condition on  $Y_2$  while by some means controlling for  $Y_1$ . Doing so by entering  $Y_1$  into the equation as a regressor variable may lead to under-adjustment for prior disparities (Reichardt, 1979). In using change scores as the dependent variables in the regressions,  $Y_2 - Y_1$  is regressed on  $X$ , where  $Y_1$  and  $Y_2$  are measurements of the same variable at times 1 and 2, respectively, and  $X$  is predictor variable. When  $X$  is a categorical variable, the use of change scores as dependent variables is equivalent to a repeated

measures ANOVA; in the case of an ANOVA, the effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  is determined by assessing the interaction of  $X$  and the within-subjects factor (Maxwell & Howard, 1981).

The use of change scores as dependent variables has been shown to be a reliable method so long as  $X$  is temporally subsequent to  $Y_1$  but precedes  $Y_2$ , and  $Y_1$  does not determine treatment assignment (Allison, 1990).

5. Cohen (1988) defined  $d$  as the difference between the means of two groups divided by the standard deviation of either group, or  $[M_1 - M_2] / \sigma$ . The customary way of performing this calculation is to order  $M_1 - M_2$  so that a positive difference is indicative of improvement (or change in accordance with hypotheses) and a negative difference is indicative of deterioration (or change contradicting the hypotheses). While Cohen states that it is acceptable to use the standard deviation of either group in the calculation, according to Rosnow and Rosenthal (1996), it is now common practice to utilize the pooled standard deviation. The pooled standard deviation can be obtained by calculating the square root of the mean of the squared standard deviations, or  $\sqrt{[(\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2) / 2]}$  (Cohen, 1988).

6. To ensure that the investigator's decision to lower the cutoff score to 24 from Wade, Worthington et al.'s (2007) recommendation of 27 did not significantly impact the results, the four main regression analyses were re-run on only that portion of the participant pool scoring  $\geq 27$  on the TRIM-12 screening. This reduced the size of the sample that completed both pretest and posttest measures from 75 participants to 64 participants. Only two minor statistically significant differences from the original regressions emerged. First, in regard to desires for revenge, the second step of the regression became significant, though no new significant predictor variables emerged. Second, in regard to empathy, relationship to the

offender, which was entered in the first step of the regression, became a significant predictor in each step of the regression.

There is another factor that may have complicated the legitimacy of this being a clinical sample. TRIM-12 measurements were first taken – as a screening measure – prior to participants being invited to take part in the study. “Pretest” TRIM-12 measurements were then taken immediately before the first intervention session and “posttest” measures immediately following the last intervention session. The investigators originally assumed that those with TRIM-12 above the cutoff at the time of screening would subsequently have a score above the cutoff a few weeks later when completing the pretest measurement. In fact, seven participants with scores  $\geq 27$  at screening no longer had a score  $\geq 27$  at pretest. As such, the regressions were re-run, this time excluding these seven participants in addition to the 12 previously excluded participants whose screening and/or pretest TRIM-12 scores fell between 24 and 26. Only one minor statistically significant difference from the original regressions appeared, namely that whereas offender contrition was a significant predictor in the original regression for desires for revenge, it was no longer significant.

APPENDIX A  
MEASURES

*Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale*

(TRIM-12; McCullough et al., 1998)

**Directions:**

For these questions, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the statements.

**1 = Strongly Disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Neutral    4 = Agree    5 = Strongly Agree**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I'll make him/her pay.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I want him/her to get what she deserves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I am going to get even.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I keep as much distance as possible between us.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I don't trust him/her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I avoid him/her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I cut off the relationship with him/her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I withdrew from him/her

*Bem Sex Role Inventory*

(Bem, 1974)

**Directions:**

The following items represent traits, characteristics, and behaviors that have been used to describe similarities and differences among individuals. For each one of the items, please indicate how well that characteristic actually describes you. Use the 7-point scale provided below

	<u>never</u>	<u>always</u>		<u>never</u>	<u>always</u>
self-reliant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		makes decisions easily	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
yielding	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		compassionate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
helpful	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		sincere	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
defends own beliefs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		self-sufficient	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
cheerful	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		eager to soothe hurt		
moody	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		feelings	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
independent	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		conceited	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
shy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		dominant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
conscientious	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		soft spoken	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
athletic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		likable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
affectionate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		masculine	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
theatrical	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		warm	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
assertive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		solemn	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
flatterable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		willing to take a stand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
happy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		tender	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
strong personality	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		friendly	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

loyal	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	aggressive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
unpredictable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	gullible	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
forceful	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	inefficient	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
feminine	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	acts like a leader	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
reliable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	childlike	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
analytical	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	adaptable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
sympathetic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	individualistic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
jealous	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	does not use harsh	
has leadership abilities	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	language	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
sensitive to others' needs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	unsystematic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
truthful	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	competitive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
willing to take risks	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	loves children	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
understanding	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	tactful	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
secretive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	ambitious	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
gentle	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	conventional	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

*Batson's Empathy Adjectives*

(Batson, 1991)

**Directions:**

As you think about this hurt, please answer the following questions about your attitude toward the offender. We do not want your ratings of past attitudes, but your rating of attitudes right now as you think about this event. After each item, please **CIRCLE** the word that best describes your current feeling.

**Not** = Not at all    **Lit** = Little    **Som** = Somewhat    **Mod** = Moderately    **Qui** = Quite a lot    **Ext** = Extremely

- |    |                |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|----|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | sympathetic:   | Not | Lit | Som | Mod | Qui | Ext |
| 2. | empathic:      | Not | Lit | Som | Mod | Qui | Ext |
| 3. | concerned:     | Not | Lit | Som | Mod | Qui | Ext |
| 4. | moved:         | Not | Lit | Som | Mod | Qui | Ext |
| 5. | compassionate: | Not | Lit | Som | Mod | Qui | Ext |
| 6. | softhearted:   | Not | Lit | Som | Mod | Qui | Ext |
| 7. | warm:          | Not | Lit | Som | Mod | Qui | Ext |
| 8. | tender:        | Not | Lit | Som | Mod | Qui | Ext |



*Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire*

(Buss &amp; Perry, 1992)

**Directions:**

Please rate each of the following items in terms of how characteristic they are of you. Use the following scale for answering these items:

- |   |  |          |  |          |  |   |  |          |  |          |  |          |
|---|--|----------|--|----------|--|---|--|----------|--|----------|--|----------|
| <b>1</b>                                      |  | <b>2</b> |  | <b>3</b> |  | <b>4</b>  |  | <b>5</b> |  | <b>6</b> |  | <b>7</b> |
| <b>extremely<br/>characteristic<br/>of me</b> |  |          |  |          |  | <b>extremely<br/>uncharacteristic<br/>of me</b> |  |          |  |          |  |          |
- 
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Once in a while I can't control the urge to strike another person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Given enough provocation, I may hit another person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. If somebody hits me, I hit back.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I get into fights a little more than the average person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. If I have to resort to violence to protect my rights, I will.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. There are people that pushed me so far that we came to blows.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I can think of no good reason for ever hitting another person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I have threatened people I know.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I have become so mad that I have broken things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I tell my friends openly when I disagree with them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I often find myself disagreeing with people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. When people annoy me, I may tell them what I think of them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. My friends say that I'm somewhat argumentative.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I flare up quickly but get over it quickly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. When frustrated, I let my irritation show.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I am an even-tempered person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Some of my friends think I'm a hothead.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Sometimes I fly off the handle for no good reason.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I have trouble controlling my temper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I am sometimes eaten up with jealousy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. At times I feel I have gotten a raw deal out of life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. Other people always seem to get the breaks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I know that "friends" talk about me behind my back.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I am suspicious of overly friendly strangers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I sometimes feel that people are laughing at me behind my back.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. When people are especially nice, I wonder what they want.

*Global Severity Index of the Brief Symptom Inventory*

(Derogatis, 1993)

0 = "Not at all", 1 = "a little bit", 2 = "moderately", 3 = "quite a bit", and 4 = "extremely".

**Directions:**

In the last seven (7) days, how much were you distressed by:

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Nervousness or shakiness inside                       | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Faintness or dizziness                                | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. The idea that someone else can control your thoughts  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Feeling others are to blame for most of your troubles | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Trouble remembering things                            | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Feeling easily annoyed or irritated                   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Pains in heart or chest                               | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. Feeling afraid in open spaces or on the streets       | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. Thoughts of ending your life                          | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. Feeling that most people cannot be trusted           | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. Poor appetite  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. Suddenly scared for no reason                        | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. Temper outbursts that you could not control          | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. Feeling lonely even when you are with people         | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. Feeling blocked in getting things done               | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. Feeling lonely                                       | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. Feeling blue   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

18. Feeling no interest in things	0	1	2	3	4
19. Feeling fearful	0	1	2	3	4
20. Your feelings being easily hurt	0	1	2	3	4
21. Feeling that people are unfriendly or dislike you	0	1	2	3	4
22. Feeling inferior to others	0	1	2	3	4
23. Nausea or upset stomach	0	1	2	3	4
24. Feeling that you are watched or talked about by others	0	1	2	3	4
25. Trouble falling asleep	0	1	2	3	4
26. Having to check and double-check what you do	0	1	2	3	4
27. Difficulty making decisions	0	1	2	3	4
28. Feeling afraid to travel on buses, subways, or trains	0	1	2	3	4
29. Trouble getting your breath	0	1	2	3	4
30. Hot or cold spells	0	1	2	3	4
31. Having to avoid certain things, places, or activities because they frighten you	0	1	2	3	4
32. Your mind going blank	0	1	2	3	4
33. Numbness or tingling in parts of your body	0	1	2	3	4
34. The idea that you should be punished for your sins	0	1	2	3	4
35. Feeling hopeless about the future	0	1	2	3	4
36. Trouble concentrating	0	1	2	3	4
37. Feeling weak in parts of your body	0	1	2	3	4
38. Feeling tense or keyed up	0	1	2	3	4
39. Thoughts of death or dying	0	1	2	3	4

40. Having urges to beat, injure, or harm someone	0	1	2	3	4
41. Having urges to break or smash things	0	1	2	3	4
42. Feeling very self-conscious with others	0	1	2	3	4
43. Feeling uneasy in crowds, such as shopping or at a movie	0	1	2	3	4
44. Never feeling close to another person	0	1	2	3	4
45. Spells of terror or panic	0	1	2	3	4
46. Getting into frequent arguments	0	1	2	3	4
47. Feeling nervous when you are left alone	0	1	2	3	4
48. Others not giving you proper credit for your achievements	0	1	2	3	4
49. Feeling so restless you couldn't sit still	0	1	2	3	4
50. Feelings of worthlessness	0	1	2	3	4
51. Feeling that people will take advantage of you if you let them	0	1	2	3	4
52. Feelings of guilt	0	1	2	3	4
53. The idea that something is wrong with your mind	0	1	2	3	4

*Rumination about an Interpersonal Offense Scale*

(Wade, Vogel, Liao, &amp; Goldman, 2008)

**Directions:**

Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current experience with the person who hurt you.

**1 = Strongly Disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Neutral    4 = Agree    5 = Strongly**

**Agree**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I can't stop thinking about how I was wronged by this person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Memories about this person's wrongful actions have limited my enjoyment of life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I have a hard time getting thoughts of how I was mistreated out of my head.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I try to figure out the reasons why this person hurt me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The wrong I suffered is never far from my mind.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I find myself replaying the events over and over in my mind.

*Scale of Offender Remorse, Regret, and Yearning for Forgiveness*

(Wade &amp; Worthington, 2003)

**Directions:**

How true are the following statements about the person who hurt you? Please circle the number that best represents your perspective, using the following scale:

**1 = not at all   2 = somewhat   3 = moderately   4 = very much   5 =  
extremely**

1   2   3   4   5   He/She asked for forgiveness.

1   2   3   4   5   He/She seemed genuinely sorry for what he/she did.

1   2   3   4   5   He/She felt guilty about what he/she did.

*Untitled Scale of Relationship with One's Offender*

(Wade &amp; Meyer, unpublished)

**Directions:**

Rate how true each of the following items are about your current relationship with the person who hurt you (as described above). If you are no longer in contact with them, please write a "1" next to each item.

**1 = Not at all true    2 = Somewhat true    3 = Moderately true    4 = Very true    5 = Extremely true**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. My relationship with him/her has more benefits than drawbacks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. In general, my relationship with the person who hurt me is positive.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I have regular, positive interactions (at least weekly) with her/him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I feel close to the person who hurt me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I value the relationship that I share with him/her.



*Trait Forgiveness Scale*

(Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005)

**Directions:**

Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by using the following scale:

**1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Agree and Disagree Equally   4 = Agree**

**5 = Strongly Agree**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. People close to me probably think I hold a grudge too long.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I can forgive a friend for almost anything.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I try to forgive others even when they don't feel guilty for what they did.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I can usually forgive and forget an insult.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I feel bitter about many of my relationships.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Even after I forgive someone, things often come back to me that I resent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. There are some things for which I could never forgive even a loved one.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I have always forgiven those who have hurt me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I am a forgiving person.

*State Hostility Scale*

(Anderson, Deuser, &amp; DeNeve, 1995)

**Directions:**

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following mood statements. Use the following 5 point rating scale. Write the number corresponding to your rating on the blank line in front of each statement.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

“When I recall the wrongdoing that was done to me by this person ...”

- |                                     |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ____ I feel furious                 | ____ I feel like I'm about to explode |
| ____ I feel aggravated              | ____ I feel friendly                  |
| ____ I feel understanding           | ____ I feel amiable                   |
| ____ I feel stormy                  | ____ I feel mad                       |
| ____ I feel polite                  | ____ I feel mean                      |
| ____ I feel discontented            | ____ I feel bitter                    |
| ____ I feel like banging on a table | ____ I feel burned up                 |
| ____ I feel irritated               | ____ I feel like yelling at somebody  |
| ____ I feel frustrated              | ____ I feel cooperative               |
| ____ I feel kindly                  | ____ I feel like swearing             |
| ____ I feel unsociable              | ____ I feel cruel                     |
| ____ I feel outraged                | ____ I feel good-natured              |

\_\_\_\_ I feel agreeable

\_\_\_\_ I feel angry

\_\_\_\_ I feel offended

\_\_\_\_ I feel disgusted

\_\_\_\_ I feel disagreeable

\_\_\_\_ I feel enraged

\_\_\_\_ I feel sympathetic

\_\_\_\_ I feel tame

## APPENDIX B



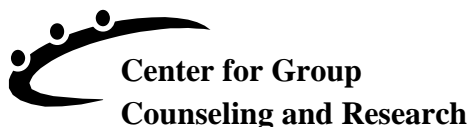
# Struggling with a grudge? Hurt by someone you trusted?

WE ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE NEW SUMMER WORKSHOPS:

DESIGNED TO HELP YOU DEAL WITH ANGER & HURT.

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- Get paid \$\$ for your participation.
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For more information:

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*or*

email [goldmand@iastate.edu](mailto:goldmand@iastate.edu) with questions

APPENDIX C  
SCREENING MEASURES

FIQ

Use the following scale: 1 = YES, 2 = NO

1. Can you think of a time when someone hurt or offended you in a significant way?

If YES, please complete the following two measures with that person and that specific hurt or offense in mind.

If NO, you may skip the SIF and TRIM.

SIF

If FORGIVENESS is defined as replacing the bitter, angry feelings of vengefulness that often result from a hurt with feelings of good will toward the person who hurt you, then . . .

2. To what degree have you forgiven the person who hurt or offended you?

1 = NOT AT ALL      2 = A LITTLE      3 = MODERATELY      4 = VERY MUCH      5 = COMPLETELY

TRIM

For these questions, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the statements.

1= STRONGLY DISAGREE    2= DISAGREE    3= NEUTRAL    4= AGREE    5= STRONGLY AGREE

3. I'll make him/her pay.
4. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.
5. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.
6. I'm going to get even.
7. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.
8. I keep as much distance between us as possible.
9. I live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around.
10. I don't trust him/her.
11. I find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.
12. I avoid him/her.
13. I cut off the relationship with him/her.
14. I withdrew from him/her.

APPENDIX D

# Overcoming the Hurt

## Learning to Forgive Past Offenses

### Facilitator Manual



This workshop on forgiveness has been generously funded in part by the Center for the Study of Violence, Iowa State University, and the Department of Psychology, Iowa State University, and sanctioned by the Institutional Review Board of Iowa State University [Office of Research Compliance, 1138 Pearson Hall, Ames, IA 50011-2207] in compliance with federal regulations, and conducted under the supervision of Nathaniel Wade, PhD [Department of Psychology, W112 Lagomarcino Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA, 50011].

# Session 1: Getting Started

## I. INTRODUCTION (45 MINUTES)

- ☑ **Materials** – Participant manuals, pencils/pens, confidentiality contracts
- ☑ **Overview**
  - Overall Workshop
    - What it will include: 2x/wk for 3 wks, discussions and info
    - Goals: understanding and moving toward forgiveness
  - Today's session
    - Introductions b/c we want to get to know each other
    - Your goals for the workshop
    - Start discussing forgiveness
- ☑ **Ground Rules (to protect group trust and safety)**
  - Be on time
  - Actively participate (of course, one can do this in ways other than talking)
  - If you have to be absent, please tell the leader (provide contact info)
  - And most importantly, keep all material confidential (see below)
- ☑ **Confidentiality**
  - Explain policy & rationale (to make participants more comfortable sharing)
  - Sign and collect confidentiality contracts
- ☑ **Questions?**
- ☑ **Introductions**
  - Introduce yourself to the group: Make it informally professional. You will start the tone, so if you are relaxed and share about yourself (including some personal info) this will encourage them to do the same.
  - Ask group members to introduce themselves, one at a time, by sharing their name, class standing, major, and future plans/career.
  - Now, have them say their names again and share why they chose to participate in this workshop.
- ☑ **Group Icebreaker**
  - Introduce the icebreaker and then start by sharing your expectations, hopes, and uncertainties about the workshop. Try to share at least one uncertainty, this will encourage them to do the same.
  - Have them share and discuss their expectations, hopes, and uncertainties about the workshop.
- ☑ **Making it Worthwhile**
  - Finally, encourage them to complete the question in their workbooks on page 2, "What would make this experience worthwhile to you?"
  - Have those who are willing share with the group (try to get as many people involved as possible).



## II. DISCUSSION OF FORGIVENESS (35 MINUTES)

- ☑ **Defining Forgiveness** – Ask participants to offer definitions of what forgiveness is. Encourage a variety of definitions.
- ☑ Next, ask them to provide imaginary examples of forgiving.
- ☑ **Recalling Unforgiveness** – Ask participants to take a moment to recall instances from their pasts when *they* were not forgiven for a transgression (real or perceived). Encourage them to recall more than one instance if possible.
- ☑ Then, ask them to take a moment to recall instances from their pasts when they were forgiven for a transgression (real or perceived). Encourage them to recall more than one instance if possible.
- ☑ Now, encourage them to share with the group similarities between the two sets of hurts. What are the common themes? Are there any notable differences?
- ☑ **Images of Forgiveness** – From the list below, ask each person to select 3 images that have significance for them personally, and then rank those selections in the order of their meaning.
  - ✚ To *forgive* is to clean & straighten a room that has been neglected too long.
  - ✚ To *forgive* is to write in large letters across a debt, “Nothing owed.”
  - ✚ To *forgive* is to bundle all the garbage & dispose of it, leaving the house clean.
  - ✚ To *forgive* is to untie the moorings of a ship & release it into the open sea.
  - ✚ To *forgive* is to relax a stranglehold on a wrestling opponent.
  - ✚ To *forgive* is to sandblast a wall of graffiti, leaving it looking like new.

If you're comfortable doing so, please take this opportunity to share with the group the image that is most meaningful to you. What about it makes it so meaningful?

Thank you all for sharing – (others in the group seemed very interested in what you had to say). Before we move on to the next activity, I want you all to have the opportunity to make up an original, personally meaningful image that you would like to add to the list. Have them share these with the group.

Ask for a volunteer to read the description of forgiveness aloud. Talk them through the following elements of the definition.

- ✚ *process*
- ✚ *suffer an unjust injury*
- ✚ *positive change in feeling*
- ✚ *choose mercy over retribution*
- ✚ *voluntary*
- ✚ *unconditional*
- ✚ *no apology required*

Encourage discussion on what does not constitute forgiveness. The discussion should include – but not be limited to:

- ✚ reconciling
- ✚ forgetting
- ✚ pardoning
- ✚ excusing
- ✚ denying

Discuss the following quote w/ the group. Encourage participants to look for personal meaning in it.

**Quote:** Forgiveness is freeing up and putting to better use the energy once consumed by holding grudges, harboring resentments, and nursing unhealed wounds. It is rediscovering the strengths we always had and relocating our limitless capacity to understand and accept other people and ourselves. ~ Sidney and Suzanne Simon

Encourage the group to process these aspect of forgiveness. As an example, lead them in a discussion on the differences between forgiveness and reconciling. Use the table and chart provided below to guide them through the discussion.

**Forgiving an offender**

- § Intrapersonal (internal)
- § Need not entail restoration of relationship
- § Gift given to one by one person to another

**Reconciling w/ offender**

- § Interpersonal (between 2 or more people)
- § Results in restoration or relationship
- § Earned through trustworthy behavior

	<u>RECONCILING WITH OFFENDER</u>		
		YES	NO
<u>FORGIVING</u> <u>OFFENDER</u>	YES	Relationship is restored	Relationship is restored, but offender is still unforgiven
	NO	Offender is forgiven, but relationship is not restored	Offender is still unforgiven & relationship is not restored

Continue the conversation using the following questions as a guide:

- ✚ Can you come up with examples for each of the 4 categories above?
- ✚ When would someone forgive but not reconcile?... reconcile but not forgive... both forgive and reconcile... neither forgive nor reconcile?
- ✚ See if they can apply this in their own lives. Have they experienced any of these situations? Can they share them with the group?
- ✚ Discuss: Given this definition of forgiveness that we have been developing today, how difficult do you think it will be for you to forgive the person who hurt you?

**III. WRAP UP (10 MINUTES)**

To conclude the first session, ask participants to reflect on today’s session. Cover the following topics in a wrap-up discussion:

1. What are your thoughts and ideas about the content of today’s session?
  - a. Forgiving
  - b. Distinction between forgiving and reconciliation
2. How do you feel about the group now that you’ve completed the first session?
  - a. Are your thoughts about the group the same or different from when you first arrived today?
  - b. How comfortable do you feel with the group? How can that be improved?
3. Remind them about the next session, date and time.
4. Have them complete the post session feedback forms.

# Session 2: Recalling the Event

## I. INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

1. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
2. Then, recap the last session.
  - a. Introductions
  - b. What is forgiveness?
  - c. How is forgiving different than reconciling?
3. Ask them for feedback/comments about the first group.
4. Finally, provide an overview of today's session.
5. Boundary breaking – Sharing personal events with the group.

What is something significant that occurred for you in the last week that you haven't told anyone about yet.

Give everyone an opportunity to answer 1<sup>st</sup> question before moving on to the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

What is the most significant thing that has happened to you in the past year.

## II. REMEMBERING THE HURTFUL EVENT (10 MINUTES)

Everyone undergoes negative life events at some time or other. How well they cope depends a great deal on how they manage what they're feeling at the time. Failure to understand and digest upsetting experiences is linked with the development of lasting psychological and physiological hurt.

Fortunately, according to one psychologist, 95% of personal emotional experiences are shared the same day they occur (Rime, 1995). The irony, of course, is that the most painful experiences are the ones we most need to disclose and seek support for, yet they also often happen to find their way into that 5% we don't disclose. Recalling and talking about these events can help people to gain new perspectives that make hurtful experiences easier to live with.

**Recollection exercise – Guided Recollection Exercise** – Ask them to follow your cues as you read the follow:

**I would like for us to take some time to remember the offense, what happened, how you reacted, and what the result was. To do this, I invite you to imagine a scene with me. First, I would like for you all to take a few deep breaths, and if you are comfortable, close your eyes. (PAUSE) Allow the sights and sounds of the room, your thoughts, and any other distractions to leave your mind. Take another deep breath. (PAUSE) Imagine now that you are leaving this room from the door you entered. You get up, walk to the door and leave. (PAUSE) Follow the hallway to the exit and leave the building. As you step outside, you notice that the sun is shining brightly and a cool, clear sky greets you. The temperature is comfortable and a quiet breeze is blowing. Now imagine that you look down and the familiar sidewalk outside this building is actually a smooth dirt path bordered by lush green grass. The path stretches off out of sight into a forest of tall trees. Follow the path toward the trees. (PAUSE) As you do, the path begins weaving among the large trees. You feel light and relaxed, your steps are effortless. The path leads you deep into the woods, away from town, away from the distractions of schoolwork, and away from your current responsibilities. (PAUSE)**

**Up ahead, you notice a clearing. In the center of the clearing is a large television screen, with**

large old fashioned knobs for the power and the volume. Walk up to the screen and imagine turning the power on. When you do, you can see two people interacting. You realize that it is you and the person who hurt you. It appears that you are having a conversation with the offender just after the offense occurred. You can now listen in on this conversation. To do so, turn up the volume on the television. If you feel uncomfortable at any point you can always turn down the volume or turn off the television. (PAUSE) Listen now to the conversation. What are you saying to the offender? What are you experiencing? (PAUSE) How are you experiencing your emotions? Do you feel tense? Is there anything that you haven't said that you would now like to? Go ahead and say that to the person. (PAUSE) What is the individual saying back to you? As you watch the person who hurt you from this new vantage point, what do you think he or she is experiencing? (PAUSE) After a few minutes of discussion, the conversation ends. How does it end? Do you feel the same hurt, or have you been able to resolve the conflict? As you continue watching, you see yourself eventually leave the person who hurt you. You see on the screen that the offender is now alone. Not knowing that you are listening, she or he begins thinking aloud. What is the offender thinking? What does she or he express now that you are not there? (PAUSE)

It is now time to return. First, turn the television off. Now, slowly turn and find the path that took you into the clearing. (PAUSE) Follow the path back out of the woods until you are standing before this building. Enter the building and walk to the door to this room. Now enter the room and find the seat you are now sitting in. (PAUSE) When you are ready slowly open your eyes.

### III. SHARING THE HURTFUL EVENT (45 MINUTES)

#### **Sharing & Understanding the Hurt**

Discuss the guided imagery experience: Help the group to explore how they handled the situation and how they wish they would have handled it. Try to solicit perspectives and support of other group members. Try to also acknowledge that painful events *did* occur that are understandably hard to forgive. *Empathize, empathize, empathize.*

- ✚ Let's discuss this exercise. I'd like to hear from as many of you as possible. If it's too uncomfortable, you may certainly pass, but I encourage you all to share at least a part of your story with the group if you are comfortable doing so. What happened? How did you get hurt? What was your experience of this exercise? (As follow-up if they don't understand: "To what degree were you really able to imagine this scenario? Could you follow a conversation between yourself and the person who hurt you," etc?)
- ✚ Summarize common themes and close discussion. Interpersonal hurts can create a lot of different emotions and reactions. It seems many of these hurts have had some significant impact in your lives.
- ✚ Ask participants to use the 10-point scale provided to denote how they felt when they thought about the incident. Discuss.
- ✚ Ask participants to use the 10-point scale provided to denote how they felt *after* having shared their story with others. Discuss. Encourage individuals to who experienced a change in their rating during the previous exercise to put forward what they think led to the change?

## IV. “OWNING” YOUR EXPERIENCE (20 MINUTES)

This exercise is intended to help participants recognize, allow and accept their experiences, and thereby take control of them. Explain each of the steps below and provide practice and/or discussion as you go through them.

- ✚ **Recognize** your experience, your thoughts & bodily sensations
  - Often we experience things that we are not even aware of. It might be an emotion, a sensation in the body, or thoughts that happen so automatically we aren’t even aware of them. (Ask for some examples, or provide them if they can’t think of any.) The first part of understanding your experience is to take time to be aware of yourself and recognize your own experience. Let’s practice that now. (Walk them through a mindfulness exercise, focusing on the sensations they are currently having. Discuss their experience of this.)
  
- ✚ **Allow** yourself to experience them
  - The second part of owning your experience is to allow yourself to really experience whatever is going on for you. Sometimes we learn to avoid our experience, to ignore the sensations we have, or to suppress our awareness of ourselves. (Provide examples.) One way of thinking about this is with the analogy of a house that contains all of our experiences. Imagine a house right now that can contain your memories, experiences, and reactions from throughout your life. If you disallow an experience (disregard, ignore, or suppress it), it is like stuffing a bag full of garbage and tossing it behind a closed door. Now, any house can withstand a little hidden garbage, but not much before it starts to rot and stink up the whole house. To avoid storing away trash, you need to allow yourself to experience your reactions.  
Discussion: When is it easiest for you to fully experience your reactions? When is it hardest?
  
- ✚ **Accept** your experience (“they are what they are”)
  - Finally, after recognizing and allowing your experiences, you can accept them. Understanding that experiences are what they are, and that they do not necessarily have to control you, you can accept them as a part of you without being ruled by them. Discussion: What of this makes sense to you? Does anyone have an example of this from their own life? What is one part of the specific events we talked about earlier that you have not recognized, allowed, or accepted?

## V. WRAP-UP (5 MINUTES)

- Wrap up** – The main goal in the wrap-up will be to give them some decompression time. To do this, facilitate a process-oriented discussion of what it was like for them to come back today, and share their hurts with others.
- Remind them about the next session: date and time.
- Ask them to complete the post-session feedback form.

## Session 3: Returning to the Event

### I. INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

1. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
2. Recap the last session.
  - a. Remembering the hurtful event
  - b. Sharing the hurtful event – difference in how they felt (measured by 10-pt continuum) after they thought about the event vs. after they shared the event with others.
  - c. Owning your experience – *recognize* your experiences, *allow* yourself to experience them, *accept* them for what they are.
3. Ask them for feedback/comments about the last group.
4. Finally, provide an overview of today's session.
  - a. Discuss more about anger, its expression, and how to use it for your benefit.
5. Boundary breaking – One at a time, ask group members:

What is something important about you that few people know?

### II. OPENING DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

- Summary and Check up: Discuss with the group the progress they feel they have made so far. Use the following questions to stimulate conversation about what they have learned. (If they have trouble responding, have them write the answers to the questions in their manuals first and then discuss what they wrote.)

What have you learned so far in this group that might be helpful for you?  
 Compared with when you first started this group, how are you doing now?  
 What has been the most helpful thing about this workshop for you so far?

### III. RETURNING TO THE HURTFUL EVENT (35 MINUTES)

- Encourage participants – to the extent that they are comfortable – to once again share their recollection of the hurtful event with those in the group. This will serve to remind their fellow group members of the episode. This time, however, the speakers' task is to pay attention to what they are feeling as they retell the story. The focus should not be on what the person felt when the event happened, but instead on what he or she is currently feeling as the story is being told.
- Discuss the pros and cons of recalling hurtful events. As the group offers suggestions, create a list. Once the list has been completed to the group's satisfaction, discuss the items one by one, beginning with the cons.
- Ask everyone to choose the one pro and the one con that are most significant for them as a unique individual. Once they have done so, ask them to share these with the group. Stress to them how valuable this will be to the group, since there may be both others who feel as they do and/or others who once felt that way (about the con) and now have a new approach to the matter that they can share.

#### IV. THE ACT OF SHARING ONE'S STORY (25 MINUTES)

**Group discussion:**

- ✚ Ask participants to use the 10-point scale provided to denote how they feel after having shared their story with others? Encourage individuals who experienced a change in their rating during the previous exercise to put forward what they think led to the change?
- ✚ Ask participants to indicate on the continuum provided in their manuals how comfortable they are sharing with the group
- ✚ What would make it easier for you to share a hurtful experience *with this group*? Really challenge everyone to come up with something. Even if they struggle to find an answer, encourage them to share something with the group that might make it easier for them to share.
- ✚ Who would you share a hurtful experience with (friend, family member, clergy) were you to do so? What would make it easier for you to share *with that person*? Help them explore this question and share their insights with the group.
- ✚ What would make it easier for you to share a hurtful experience *with the offender*? Take lots of time on any discussion that ensues. Again, really challenge them to explore possibilities – it may never be easy, but surely something would make it a little easier. Reinforce any empathy, encouragement, or validation that other group members offer.

#### V. WRAP-UP (10 MINUTES)

- Wrap up** – The main goal in the wrap-up will be to give them some decompression time. To do this, facilitate a process-oriented discussion of what it was like for them to come back today, and share their hurts with others.
- To conclude on a positive note, ask everyone in the group to share one thing that they liked most about this group today.
- Remind them about the next session: date and time.
- Ask them to complete the post-session feedback form.

# Session 4: Building Empathy

## I. INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

1. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
2. Recap the last session.
  - a. How it feels to share
  - b. Dynamics of sharing
3. Ask them for feedback/comments about the last group.
4. Provide an overview of today's session.
  - a. Identifying with and understanding of the unique situations, feelings, and motives of others.
5. Boundary breaking – One at a time, ask group members:  
If you could magically have one talent, what would it be?

## II. DEALING WITH PERSONAL OFFENSES (15 MINUTES)

- Defining empathy** – Before proceeding to the following discussions and activities, it is important that everyone gain an understanding of what empathy is. Empathy can mean different things to different people, and that doesn't make one person right and one person wrong. What we are concerned with is how participants in the group *personally experience* empathy.

The group's first task is to define empathy, then. Ask them to take a moment to write down in the space provided what empathy means to them. Once they have done this, ask them to share their definitions with the group. Group members should be encouraged to write down the key words from definitions given by others in the group in the next space provided. **\*[Pay close attention to the definitions provided, and try to remember 2 individuals whose definitions differ in an important way].\***

Once everyone in the group has gone, say the following:

“Take a moment to notice and think about the differences between your own definition of empathy and those provided by others. [Give them about 30 seconds]. The definitions may be similar, but surely there will be differences. For example, think about the differences between \_\_A\_\_'s definition and \_\_B\_\_'s definition [Have 'A' & 'B' restate their definitions if necessary]. The differences between \_\_A\_\_'s definition and \_\_B\_\_'s definition may not seem significant to \_\_A\_\_, but they may in fact be very meaningful to \_\_B\_\_. Understanding the differences from both perspectives is the heart of empathy.”



Facilitate a discussion based on this example of empathy. Topics could include (but not be limited to):

- Why it's not necessarily important who's right and who's wrong.
- The appreciation felt when one's perspective or subjective experience is validated.
- Why having different perspectives can be a positive thing.

Being careful not to invalidate contributed definitions (unless truly incorrect), go through the following elements of what empathy is and is not with the group.

#### EMPATHY IS ...

- ⊕ ... an emotional phenomenon
- ⊕ ... a cognitive phenomenon
- ⊕ ... a vicarious emotion, or experiencing what another person is feeling
- ⊕ ... seeing things from another person's point of view
- ⊕ ... understanding the offender and the possible motives the offender had for committing the offense

#### EMPATHY IS NOT ...

- ⊕ ... sympathy
- ⊕ ... justifying hurtful acts
- ⊕ ... freeing others from responsibility

### III. WHY DO PEOPLE COMMIT OFFENSES? (30 MINUTES)

- ☑ Show clip from *Shawshank Redemption* (4 min.). In the clip, Brooks, the elderly librarian who has spent 50 years in prison, learns that he has been paroled. In an act of desperation, he seizes a fellow inmate and threatens to slit his throat. While the other inmates eventually convince Brooks to let the man go, this man expresses no empathy for Brooks. Morgan Freeman's character, the prison sage, explains why it's understandable that Brooks did this. After the clip is over, ask for a volunteer to explain how the clip is related to empathy. Try to get multiple perspectives. Also, ask the group:

- Was there a cost associated with being empathic toward Brooks.
- What are some possible benefits (either to others or to oneself) of having empathy in situations like this?

If you feel there is time, you can show the concluding clip from the scene (5:30), in which we see what became of Brooks' and why he was so desperate.

### IV. DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES (25 MINUTES)

- ☑ The purpose of the following exercise is to understand that regardless of right or wrong, different people can and often do experience/remember the same event quite differently. I am going to read a brief story that was used in a psychology experiment a number of years ago. After I've

have finished the story, I will explain the experiment, so it's important that you listen closely as I read.

#### STORY:

Harold and Arthur were suite mates here at ISU. They knew each other fairly well but did not consider themselves to be "best friends." One fall semester, Arthur was enrolled in an upper-level engineering class that Harold had completed the previous spring.

Harold had prepared very thoroughly for this class and, as a result, had done very well (A+, quite an accomplishment). One day, he made a vague sort of offer to assist Arthur on any course work in that particular class. As it turned out, there were to be no exams, rather a final paper that counted as 75% of the grade. This paper was due the Wednesday before reading days started.

The semester passed without incident, as both suite mates attended classes, prepared assignments, and tried to squeeze in some fun as well. One week before the paper was due, Arthur reminded Harold of his earlier offer, stating, "I need you to help me write this paper." Harold responded, "No, I said that I would help you with exams in the class." Arthur replied, "But there are no exams this semester, just this big paper!" Harold sighed, "Oh. Well, I guess I can help you." (Harold didn't mind helping Arthur with an exam, just not a paper.) The two suite mates decided to get together to work on the paper the Tuesday afternoon before it was due.

On the designated day, 1 week later, Harold did not show up for his appointment. He stumbled in 2 hours later, drunk and a bit surly. It seems that he forgot about having promised to assist Arthur with the paper and made plans to go out drinking with his buddies. (It was "\$2 pitcher night" for margaritas.) As you might expect, Harold was of little help to Arthur. To add to the pressure, Arthur's computer was on the blink, making it difficult to get any work done. While in his inebriated state, Harold again promised to help Arthur with the paper, although not until Thursday. Arthur was forced to ask his professor for an extension (due supposedly to his computer problems). The professor was not happy with the request, but he agreed to the extension.

On Thursday afternoon, Arthur went looking for Harold and found him in his suite. Harold now refused to help Arthur, as he had too much to do and time was running out. He did apologize for the situation but was firm in his refusal to help. Later on that night, Arthur hit a snag in his paper and stopped by Harold's room to ask a quick question. Harold was on the phone and motioned for Arthur to come back later. Arthur stopped back at 11:45 pm and again at 12:15 am, but Harold was still on the phone. (Arthur found out later that he was talking long distance to his girlfriend. It seems that they were discussing a change in their Christmas vacation plans because their relationship had not been going well.) After a time, Arthur gave up and returned to his room to complete the paper on his own.

This particular class was central to Arthur's major. Before the paper, he had a B in the class. After turning in the paper, his grade dropped to a C, as he received only a C on the paper. The TA who graded the paper made comments that included "Good ideas, but where is the theory?" and "Your reasoning is faulty. What are you trying to say?" As a result of this experience, Arthur ended up majoring in English at another university.

#### EXPERIMENT:

Using this story, the experimenters (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997) then asked the participant to "Think back to when you were Harold/Arthur. I want you to `become' Harold/Arthur again and to write the story as you remember it happening to you." Participants were then given a sheet

of lined paper and told to write the story in either the first person or the third person (randomly assigned).

1. **“Which group do you think remembered the facts of the narrative most accurately?”**  
[Discuss]
2. **“Which group do you think remembered the facts of the narrative least accurately?”**  
[Discuss]

### RESULTS:

Victims who wrote in the first person made an average of 25.5 distortions per story, perpetrators made an average of 25.8 distortions per story, and control participants made an average of 17.8 distortions. Thus, perpetrators and victims made nearly the identical number of mistakes. However, both perpetrators and victims made significantly *more* errors than did the control participants.

3. **“Why did perpetrators and victims make an equal number of mistakes, but significantly more mistakes than controls?”**

Perpetrators were the most accurate in their inclusion of the mitigating and positive details, while victims were the least accurate in their inclusion of these details. Similarly, victims were the most accurate in their inclusion of details that exacerbated the offense or described the severity of the offense, while perpetrators were the least accurate in their inclusion of these details. Victim stories tended to highlight details that reflected the negative outcome and the perpetrators' role in that outcome, while ignoring details that might have justified or mitigated the perpetrators' actions. On the other hand, perpetrators prominently featured this information and were also less likely to discuss the negative outcome that the victims experienced.

These results suggest that taking a singular perspective caused people to both include and exclude pertinent details. Thus, it is apparent that people in differing circumstances may remember the same event in very different ways.

## V. WRAP-UP (10 MINUTES)

- Wrap up** – The main goal in the wrap-up will be to give them some decompression time. To do this, facilitate a process-oriented discussion of what it was like for them to come back today, and share their hurts with others.
- To conclude on a positive note, ask everyone in the group to share one thing that they liked most about this group today.
- Remind them about the next session: date and time.
- Ask them to complete the post-session feedback form.

# Session 5: Empathy for the Person Who Hurt You

## I. INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

1. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
2. Recap the last session.
  - a. Understanding empathy
  - b. The prison break & Taylor and Jamie
  - c. Recalling a time someone was hurt by your actions
3. Ask them for feedback/comments about the last group.
4. Provide an overview of today's session.
  - a. Understanding the person who hurt you
  - b. The altruistic gift of forgiveness
5. Boundary breaking – One at a time, ask group members:
  - What do you consider your greatest fault?
  - What is the greatest value that guides your life?

## II. RETURNING TO THE OFFENSE (15 MINUTES)

This exercise will gauge where members of the group are in their willingness to forgive. Regardless of where they stand, stress that the most important thing is that they be honest about how they really feel.

Think back to last week's exercise in which (a) you practiced building empathy for others by imagining possible scenarios that help explain their actions; & (b) you listened as your partner empathized with you when they told the group what might have led you to inadvertently/deliberately hurt or offend someone else.

“Your task is to try to imagine in the same way you did last session:

- (a) What circumstances or perspectives might have motivated *your* perpetrator to inadvertently/deliberately hurt or offend you?
- (b) How might your perpetrator remember the event that was hurtful to you in such a way that the hurt is not apparent to him/her?

## III. FORGIVENESS AS AN ALTRUISTIC GIFT (40 MINUTES)

### **Recalling our own transgressions exercise [Part I]**

Facilitate a silent recollection exercise in which they are to recall the time (discussed in Session 1) when they did something that hurt somebody, and were ultimately forgiven by that person. Discussion questions should include:

- What did it feel like for their forgiveness to be in someone else's control?

- What did it feel like to want to be forgiven?
- What did it feel like to have received the gift of forgiveness [e.g., relief, release, freedom, redemption]?

This activity serves to:

- Remind them that they too have hurt others and experienced the feeling of guilt that goes along with that.
- Allow them to feel positive emotions that accompany being forgiven.
- Hopefully associate the positive emotions they are presently feeling with their offender, who they will soon be thinking of.

### **Recalling our own transgressions exercise [Part II]**

Give the following instructions:

In the following exercise, each of you will be asked to tell the group about the time when you offended / mistreated / transgressed upon / betrayed the trust of another person. As you tell your story, try to be aware of the natural human tendency to recall the event in a way that makes you seem less culpable (like Taylor and Jamie last week), and resist the temptation to do so – the group will be appreciative of your willingness to be honest and vulnerable.

When someone else is retelling their personal event, your job is to listen closely and try to imagine to what the offended person might have attributed the speaker's motives. When the speaker is done with the recollection, share with the group possibilities of what the victim of the transgression might have assumed and felt.

Once each listener has empathized with the offended party, he or she should then each take turns empathizing with the offender. If you feel you understand what the speaker was going through, try to voice your understanding ...

For instance:

- What might the speaker have been feeling at the time he or she committed the offense?
- What might his or her intentions or motivations have been at the time?
- Are there any vicarious emotions that you as listeners might have been feeling for the speaker while the story was being told?

Each participant will be asked to participate in the role of listener (for all the other group members) and as the speaker (one who is imperfect and who has at one time hurt another person).

## IV. GIFT GIVING (15 MINUTES)

Return the group's attention to the previous discussion and of what was learned today. Ask the group:

Having been in the shoes of someone who needed to be forgiven, you can now see how much power you have to help someone else experiencing that same need. Forgiveness is not

mandatory – forgiveness is a gift. What’s more, it is a gift that costs little to give. Would you like to give your offender a gift of forgiveness?

Urge them to be honest – they are not being judged or rated. Some group members may still need more time. Explain to those who are ready to forgive that the fear of hurt may lead them to question giving this gift, and they should try to be mindful of this.

It may be helpful to ask them to do a cost-benefit analysis. Ask them first to list the costs of forgiving the person who hurt them. Then, ask them to list the benefits of forgiving this person

Finally, ask them to report next session on any doubts or feelings they experience between now and the next session.

## V. WRAP-UP (10 MINUTES)

- Wrap up** – The main goal in the wrap-up will be to give them some decompression time. To do this, facilitate a process-oriented discussion of what it was like for them to come back today, and share their hurts with others.
- To conclude on a positive note, ask everyone in the group to share one thing that they liked most about this group today.
- Remind them about the next session, date and time.
  - Remind them that they will only have one more session together.
- Ask them to complete the post-session feedback form.

# Session 6: Committing to Forgiveness

## I. INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

1. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
2. Lead a brief discussion:
  - a. How are you responding to this being the last session?
  - b. What do you each hope to get out of this last session?
  - c. Share how you are feeling about it ending. Give you honest appraisal (within limits ☺), including good and bad if appropriate.
3. Recap the last session
  - a. Understanding the person who hurt you
  - b. The altruistic gift of forgiveness
4. Provide an overview of today's session
  - a. Making a commitment to yourself
  - b. Forgiveness is possible
5. Boundary breaking – Begin today's session with a brief icebreaker to help the participants return to being a group. In a large group setting, ask group members to answer the following questions one at a time:
 

What are you most proud of?

What is the greatest value that guides your life?
6. Follow-up - Ask the group if they have anything they would like to discuss from last session. This gives them an opportunity to discuss any thinking they did about forgiving their offenders, or perhaps even contact with the offenders.

## II. MAKING A COMMITMENT TO FORGIVE (35 MINUTES)

One way of getting past hesitancy to forgive an offense you are ready to forgive is by telling others that you have committed to do so. *If* you were to do this, whom could you tell? Write the names of 3 people you would tell with the intention of following through with your commitment to forgive.

Discuss other strategies for committing to forgiveness. Samples provided in their workbooks include:

- ✚ Write out a list of all the hurts and then burn, bury, or shred the paper.
- 🌈 Complete a certificate of forgiveness, complete w/ names, dates, offense details, etc.

Next, challenge the group members to think about and write down a different forgiveness strategy that would work well for *him or her*. Make sure each takes into account his or her own personality quirks and ways of doing things. Be sure that they understand what you mean by this, and discuss if necessary.

- ☑ **Letter of Forgiveness** – Another way of committing to forgive an offense is by writing a letter to the person who hurt you and telling this person that you have forgiven him or her. Be clear

that they **do NOT need to send the letter** – it is only a means for them to *express* their forgiveness. If at a later time they wish to send their offender this letter, they can do so then.

### III. EVALUATING THE LETTER OF FORGIVENESS (25 MINUTES)

- ☑ **Group Discussion** – Ask the group how it felt to write a forgiveness letter to the person who hurt them. Encourage each person to share his or her feelings.

Another question to spark discussion and personal insight is what the most difficult part for them to write was. Again, encourage each person to share his or her response, even (or especially) if they were not able to complete the letter. Ask them what insight they have as to what this says about their individual needs and what thoughts and emotions are especially powerful for them.

Finally, ask what the easiest part for them to write was. This can be just as telling as the former question. Ask them what insight they have as to what this says about their individual strengths.

### IV. FORGIVE FOR NOW, FORGIVE FOREVER [WRAP UP – 20

MIN]

- ☑ **Closing Discussion** – To complete today’s session, facilitate a discussion using the following “take-home points” as a foundation. Push the group to really take this exercise over, so that you have to do as little moderating as possible. Really encourage each participant to express everything they have inside them, as this is the final group discussion they will have; let them know that this is their final chance to really share their support and understanding with the group. Try to get them to really *own* their responses to these topics:

1. What it really means to forgive
2. Definition of forgiveness
3. Recalling the hurtful experience and sharing it with others
4. Building empathy for others, even one’s offender
5. How it feels to be forgiven
6. Giving an altruistic gift to your offender
7. Making a commitment to forgiveness

- ☑ **Saying farewell**

- ✚ Debriefing

Thank participants for their contributions to the group.

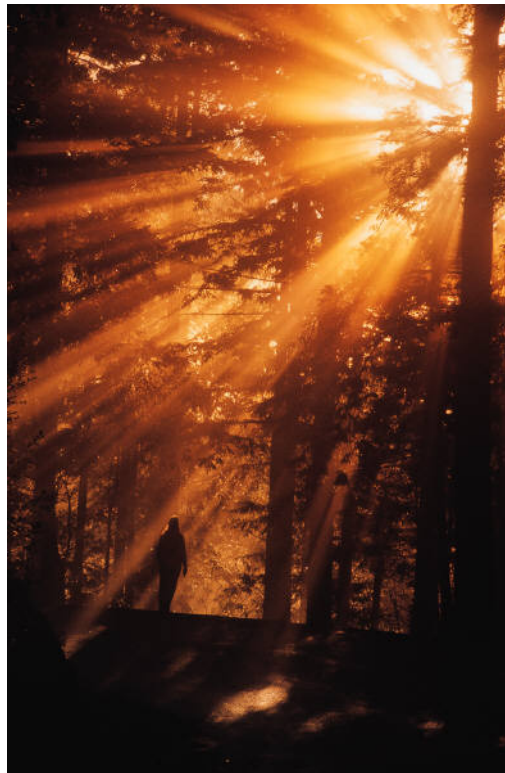


APPENDIX E

# ***Reducing the Anger***

## ***Living Free of Harbored Grudges***

### **Facilitator Manual**



This workshop on forgiveness has been generously funded in part by the Center for the Study of Violence, Iowa State University, and the Department of Psychology, Iowa State University, and sanctioned by the Institutional Review Board of Iowa State University [Office of Research Compliance, 1138 Pearson Hall, Ames, IA 50011-2207] in compliance with federal regulations, and conducted under the supervision of Nathaniel Wade, PhD [Department of Psychology, W112 Lagomarcino Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA, 50011].

# Session 1: Getting Started

## I. INTRODUCTION (45 MINUTES)

- ☑ **Materials** – Participant manuals, pencils/pens, confidentiality contracts
- ☑ **Overview**
  - Overall Workshop
    - What it will include: 2x/wk for 3 wks, discussions and info
    - Goals: understand and cope with personal grudges
  - Today's session
    - Introductions b/c we want to get to know each other
    - Your goals for the workshop
    - Start discussing “grudges”
- ☑ **Ground Rules (to protect group trust and safety)**
  - Be on time
  - Actively participate (of course, one can do this in ways other than talking)
  - If you have to be absent, please tell the leader (provide contact info)
  - And most importantly, keep all material confidential (see below)
- ☑ **Confidentiality**
  - Explain policy & rationale (to make participants more comfortable sharing)
  - Sign and collect confidentiality contracts
- ☑ **Questions?**
- ☑ **Introductions**
  - Introduce yourself to the group: Make it informally professional. You will start the tone, so if you are relaxed and share about yourself (including some personal info) this will encourage them to do the same.
  - Ask group members to introduce themselves, one at a time, by sharing their name, class standing, major, and future plans/career.
  - Now, have them say their names again and share why they chose to participate in this workshop.
- ☑ **Group Icebreaker**
  - Introduce the icebreaker and then start by sharing your expectations, hopes, and uncertainties about the workshop. Try to share at least one uncertainty, this will encourage them to do the same.
  - Have them share and discuss their expectations, hopes, and uncertainties about the workshop.
- ☑ **Making it Worthwhile**
  - Finally, encourage them to complete the question in their workbooks on page 2, “What would make this experience worthwhile to you?”
  - Have those who are willing share with the group (try to get as many people involved as possible).

## II. DISCUSSION OF GRUDGES (35 MINUTES)

- ☑ **Workbook exercises** - Have participants turn to page 3 and complete the questions and exercises.

Conduct a discussion of the following exercises:

- ☑ **Defining Grudges** – Ask participants to offer their definitions of what a grudge is. Encourage a variety of definitions. Have them talk about their examples as well, clarify any that are not adequate and highlight relevant examples.
- ☑ **Recalling Grudges** – Ask participants to take a moment to recall instances from their past when they *held a grudge against someone else*. Then, ask them to share the instances from their pasts when a *grudge was held against them*. Be supportive and empathic of their answers.
- ☑ **Discussion Questions** – Get the group to discuss the following:
  - How do you know when you are holding a grudge?
  - What is your experience when someone holds a grudge against you?
  - How do you typically respond in each of these situations?
- ☑ **Images of releasing a grudge** – From the list below, ask each person to select 3 images that have significance for them personally.
  - 🌈 To *release a grudge* is to clean a room that has been neglected too long.
  - 🌈 To *release a grudge* is to write in large letters across a debt, “Nothing owed.”
  - 🌈 To *release a grudge* is to bundle garbage & dispose of it, leaving the house clean.
  - 🌈 To *release a grudge* is to shoot an arrow so high that it will never be found again.
  - 🌈 To *release a grudge* is to loose the lines of a ship & release it into open water.
  - 🌈 To *release a grudge* is to relax a stranglehold on a wrestling opponent.
  - 🌈 To *release a grudge* is to sandblast a wall of graffiti, leaving it looking like new.

If you’re comfortable doing so, please take this opportunity to share with the group the image that is most meaningful to you. What about it makes it so meaningful?

Thank you all for sharing – (others in the group seemed very interested in what you had to say). Before we move on to the next activity, I want you all to have the opportunity to make up an original, personally meaningful image that you would like to add to the list. Have them share these with the group.

### **Defining “Releasing a Grudge”**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the description of releasing a grudge atop page 4 in their manuals. Talk them through the following elements of the definition.

- 🌈 process
- 🌈 suffer an unjust injury

- ✚ takes the high road
- ✚ positive change in feeling
- ✚ voluntary
- ✚ unconditional
- ✚ no apology required

Encourage discussion on what does NOT constitute forgiving. Be sure to go over each item below and discuss the differences between them and honestly releasing a grudge. At the end, finish with reconciling and go over the distinction between releasing a grudge and reconciling in some detail. Ask for examples for each block.

- ✚ forgetting
- ✚ pardoning
- ✚ excusing
- ✚ denying
- ✚ reconciling

RELEASING A GRUDGE

		YES	NO
<u>RECONCILIATION</u>	YES	Relationship is restored	Relationship is restored, but grudge still lingers
	NO	Grudge is released, but relationship is not restored	Grudge lingers and relationship is not restored

III. WRAP UP (10 MINUTES)

To conclude the first session, ask participants to reflect on today’s session. Cover the following topics in a wrap-up discussion:

5. What are your thoughts and ideas about the content of today’s session?
  - a. Releasing the grudge
  - b. Distinction between releasing a grudge and reconciliation
6. What are your feelings about the group now that you’ve completed the first session?
  - a. Are your thoughts about the group the same or different from when you first arrived today?
  - b. How comfortable are you feeling with the group? How can that be improved?
7. Remind them about the next session, date and time.
8. Have them complete the post session feedback forms.

# Session 2: Understanding Anger

## I. INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

6. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
7. Then, recap the last session.
  - a. Introductions
  - b. What is a grudge? What is releasing a grudge?
  - c. How is releasing a grudge different than reconciling?
8. Ask them for feedback/comments about the first group.
9. Finally, provide an overview of today's session.
  - a. We will be focusing on anger.
  - b. We'll explore some of the benefits and drawbacks of anger
  - c. Try to discover your anger expression type
  - d. Lastly, we will begin talking about managing your anger
  - e. Boundary breaking – Ask for each participant to share some recent life events with the group. Give everyone an opportunity to answer the first question before moving on to the second. The significant events might be positive, or negative, or perhaps neither – it is completely up to you what you choose to share. The only specifics are:
    - ✦ Something significant that occurred for them in the last week that they haven't told anyone about yet.

So, let's start by talking about anger in general ...

## II. UNDERSTANDING ANGER (20 MINUTES)

- ☑ **Defining Anger** – What is anger? (Everybody knows what it is, but it's hard to define). Encourage them to try to define anger.
  - Share with the group the categorical understanding of anger. Anger can be defined as an emotion that includes cognitive, physiological, and/or behavioral elements that result from a felt grievance, annoyance, or injustice.
 

**Emotional** – Basically, anger is an emotion, something that we feel. But it has other elements, such as cognitive, physiological, and behavioral elements. All these come together to give us the experience of anger, even though the individual experience of anger may vary widely.

**Cognitive** – What thoughts typically come along with being angry? What state is your mind in when you are angry (e.g., calm and rational or excited with racing thoughts)?

**Physiological** – What sorts of bodily reactions do you get when angry?

<b>Heart rate increases</b>	<b>Muscles tighten</b>
<b>Feel hotter or flushed</b>	<b>Clenching fists/jaws</b>

**Behavioral** - What sorts of things do you *do* when you are angry?

**Act it out (stomping, crying, yelling, hitting things, etc)**

**Shut down (get quiet, depressed, super nice, withdrawn, etc)**

Ask them to engage in an honest discussion comparing the pro's and con's of experiencing anger. Acknowledge both the ups and downs of anger and help them to provide examples from their own experiences.

**Benefits of Anger** – Anger has its benefits. What are some of those benefits?

Spend a few minutes on this, acknowledge the usefulness of anger.

Provides protection by showing people your limits

Energizes you to act:

to make a difference

protect yourself or someone else

to change things for the better

What are some of the benefits that you have experienced? Can you give an example?

**Drawback of Anger** – Spend time exploring the different drawbacks. In addition to providing factual info, ask them to contribute examples from personal experience. Also, frame the drawbacks as something that results from not dealing with anger appropriately, rather than something that results from anger itself.

 **Physical strain**

Of course, you have all heard that unresolved anger leads to a greater chance of heart disease and other health complications in the long run. These are certainly serious. But, what about more immediate physical reactions?

E.g., muscle tension, headaches, indigestion, heart burn, etc.

 **Emotional strain**

When we carry unresolved anger it can “eat us up inside” and leave us less able to experience the full vitality of our lives and positive emotions, such as happiness, joy, and peace. In what other ways does unresolved anger create emotional strain?

 **Relationship strain**

Certainly, carrying anger can have a negative impact on our relationships. It can make resolving differences and moving on almost impossible with the people we are angry at. It can also put a strain on other relationships, even if we are not specifically angry with them.

### III. ANALYZING YOUR ANGER (30 MINUTES)

In this section, you will help participants label their “anger type.” Have everyone complete the measure below, add up their answers, and place themselves on the continuum provided in their manuals.

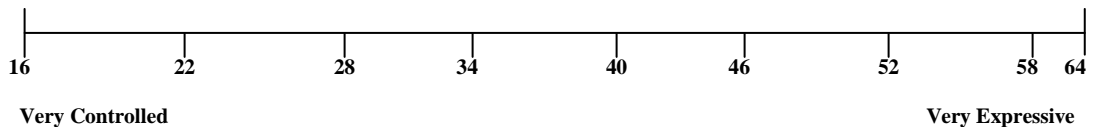
**NOTE: Be sure they reverse-code the items in Group B.**

	1 = Not at all true	2 = Somewhat true	3 = Moderately true	4 = Extremely true
1. I am comfortable with confrontation.	1	2	3	4
2. I have a tendency to say things I regret later.	1	2	3	4
3. Things people say and do tend to “roll off my back.”	1	2	3	4
4. I can’t remember being angry very often in my life.	1	2	3	4
5. Others clearly know where I stand on things.	1	2	3	4
6. People are “put off” when I get angry.	1	2	3	4
7. I have difficulty confronting others.	1	2	3	4
8. Others have described me as “diplomatic.”	1	2	3	4
9. When angry I have thrown things or slammed doors.	1	2	3	4
10. I can be persuaded to do things even when I don’t want to.	1	2	3	4
11. I have the tendency to lose my temper.	1	2	3	4
12. Others have said that they don’t really know what I want.	1	2	3	4
13. I find “other ways” to repay an injury, like gossip or cutting off a relationship.	1	2	3	4
14. I express anger directly.	1	2	3	4
15. I am “hot-headed.”	1	2	3	4
16. I have often thought of a retort only after the fact, when it is too late to say it.	1	2	3	4

Directions: Put your answers to the items in Group A on the lines provided. For Group B, reverse the score (1 = 4, 2 = 3, 3 = 2, 4 = 1) and enter the new number on the line provided. Then sum each group for subtotals and sum those for a grand total.

Group A:	Group B:	
1. _____	3. _____	
2. _____	4. _____	
5. _____	7. _____	Subtotal A: _____
6. _____	8. _____	+
9. _____	10. _____	Subtotal B: _____
11. _____	12. _____	
14. _____	13. _____	TOTAL: _____
15. _____	16. _____	

Now, place your number on the continuum below to see your style of anger.



**Discussion: Process this exercise with the group.**

Ask participants (and have them each report):

1. What “type” are you?
2. Does this description fit your personal experience?
3. Can you give examples from your life?

How might the extreme of each “type” respond to being hurt or offended? Also, when is each type likely to hold a grudge? Does this fit with your experience?

## IV. EXPLORING ANGER (25 MINUTES)

☑ **Interview exercise** – Pair up expressers and controllers and have them interview each other on their experience of anger. Specific questions are provided for them in their manuals. Encourage them to ask follow-up questions and to really understand the other person, because they will be sharing what they learned with the larger group. Allow no more than 15 minutes for both interviews.

☑ **Discussion**

- Bring students back to the large group
- Have the group discuss:
  - How was it to interview each other and to be interviewed?
  - How were you and your partner similar? How were you different?
  - What did you learn about anger through the interview?
  - Any other reactions or comments?

## V. WRAP UP (5 MINUTES)

Provide a summary of today's session:

1. Understanding anger – benefits and drawbacks.
2. Determined your anger style and how that might play out for you.
3. If time allows, check in with the group:

What thoughts or reactions do you have about the material covered today?  
How might this information be helpful to you?

4. Remind them about the next session, date and time.
5. Have them complete the post session feedback forms.



# Session 3: Dealing with Your Anger

## I. INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

6. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
7. Recap the last session.
  - a. Understanding anger – what is anger and how is it helpful/harmful.
  - b. Analyzing your anger – determined your anger type.
    - i. For a reminder, ask: What type you are?
  - c. Exploring anger – interviews and discussion about the different types.
8. Ask them for feedback/comments about the last group.
9. Finally, provide an overview of today's session.
  - a. Discuss more about anger, its expression, and how to use it for your benefit.

## II. FALSE BELIEFS ABOUT ANGER (20 MINUTES)

Our thoughts and beliefs have significant influence over the ways we respond to things. This is true of the way we experience anger as well. So, let's return to discussing anger by looking at some common beliefs about anger that are often not true and if held too rigidly can get us into trouble. Let's generate a list of "false beliefs about anger" together. On page 7 of your manuals are a few starters (see below).

- ✚ Good/nice people don't feel angry.
- ✚ Showing anger is the only way to get what I want.
- ✚ Anger is immoral.
- ✚ I must fully express my angry feelings.

What other ones can you think of?

- Give them a few minutes to write out their own ideas.
- Have them share some of their ideas.
- Provide a few more beliefs from the list below that haven't been mentioned.

- ✚ It's not okay to feel angry.
- ✚ Anger is pointless.
- ✚ People will go away if I get angry at them.
- ✚ If I feel angry at someone, it is his/her responsibility to fix my feelings.
- ✚ If I feel angry at someone, it means that I don't care about that person any more.
- ✚ If I feel angry at someone, I should punish him/her for making me feel that way.
- ✚ If I feel angry at someone, that person has to change what he or she is doing in order for me not to feel angry anymore.

Now, I'd like you to take a moment to reflect on those beliefs that you might hold. Circle the statements that you are more inclined to agree with. [Allow time for reflection.] Which of these did you identify as possible beliefs that you hold?

At this point, you might start the sharing by picking one of the false beliefs and disclose how this has been a false belief of yours. You can tell a story illustrating how the belief got you in trouble or made anger a problem for you (either as an expresser or controller).

Then, engage them in a discussion of their own false beliefs. Highlight any reports of discarding false beliefs in the past and ask how they changed.

### III. MANAGING YOUR ANGER (35 MINUTES)

Last time we determined what type of anger expression you each had, and discovered whether you tended to be an expresser or a controller. We've just looked at some beliefs that you might hold about anger. Now, I'd like to teach you an exercise for relaxing. It is called Deep Muscle Relaxation. This is a great way to release tense muscles and to manage anger and other stress.

#### **□ Deep Muscle Relaxation (Part I)**

Read the following, pausing frequently: (10 min)

Start by finding a comfortable position in the chairs you are sitting in. It helps to have your feet uncrossed and placed flat on the floor. You may want to place your hands in your lap. Now, if you're comfortable, close your eyes. Take several deep breaths, holding each one for at least five seconds. (Pause) Good. Now clench the muscles in your right arm, making a fist as you do. Clench the muscles and fist tightly, noticing the tension in your right arm and hand. (Pause) Now let go. Feel the relaxation in your hand and the difference from the tension before. (Pause) Now clench your left arm and make a fist with your left hand. Feel the tension build as you hold the muscles. Now relax. Focus on the difference between the tension and the release. (Pause)

Flex the bicep of your right arm and notice the tension. Hold the tension. Now relax. (Pause) Notice the warm feelings of relaxation spread through your arm. Now flex the bicep of your left arm. Again, focus on the tension in your muscle. Let it go. Now repeat with both arms, taking your time to build and notice the tension and then relax. (Pause) Now take several, slow deep breaths and notice the relaxation in your arms. (Pause)

Now let's move to the muscles in your face. Tense the muscles of your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as possible. Hold this for five seconds and feel the tension building in your forehead. Relax. Notice the difference in the forehead muscles. (Pause) Now repeat.

Close your eyes tightly. Feel the tension in the muscles around your eyes. Now release. Repeat.

Next clench your jaws by biting your teeth together, hard enough to feel the tension, but not so hard that your teeth hurt. (Pause) Pull the corners of your mouth back into an exaggerated smile. Hold and notice the tension in your face. Now relax and notice the difference. (Pause) Now press your lips together tightly, and notice the tension. Relax the muscles around your mouth. (Repeat this last paragraph). Take a few slow, deep breaths and notice how warm and relaxed your arms, face, and mouth feel. Enjoy these feelings of relaxation.

Let's move to the muscles in your neck. Try to touch your chin to your chest, at the same time apply counter-pressure to keep it from touching. Release. (Pause) Repeat and hold for five seconds. Notice the tension. Relax. Notice the difference between the tension and relaxation in your neck. Pull your head back and try to touch your back, but apply pressure from the opposite muscles as well. Notice the tension. Let go. Now repeat the procedure and hold for five seconds. (Pause) Release. Feel the relaxation in your neck.

Now pull back your shoulders and until the blades almost touch. Hold. Then relax. (Pause) Repeat. Next, try to touch your shoulders together by bringing them forward as far as you can. Hold. Then release and feel the difference. Repeat this. Now, shrug your shoulders and try to touch them to your ears. Hold. Let go. Enjoy the relaxation in you neck and shoulders.

Continue down from the shoulders and focus on your stomach muscles. Tighten your stomach muscles, making your stomach hard and tight like a knot. Relax those muscles. Repeat. (Pause)

Tense your thigh muscles. Release the muscles quickly and notice the difference. Repeat and study the difference between the tension and the relaxation. (Pause)

Point your toes toward your head. Hold the tension. Relax. Repeat this, noticing the relaxation when you do. Now point your feet outward. Allow the tension to build. Release quickly and notice the difference. Point your toes inward and hold. Release and enjoy the relaxation. (Pause)

We have now worked through the major muscle groups. When you are ready you may open your eyes. (Pause) That is the process of deep muscle relaxation.

Discuss: Engage group in a discussion of the experience.

Were they able to relax? What worked best for them? What was most difficult?

Transition: Now we are ready to take a look at how your anger and other reactions play out specifically in your life. If you recall, when you started this study, you identified and described a time that you were offended or hurt by someone else. I'd like for you to remember that event now. To help you with this, I'd like to have you imagine the following scenario...

**Guided Recollection Exercise** –Ask them to follow your cues as you read the follow: (5 minutes)

**I would like for us to take some time to remember the offense, what happened, how you reacted, and what the result was. To do this, I invite you to imagine a scene with me. First, I would like for you all to return to that place of relaxation, take a few deep breaths, and if you are comfortable, close your eyes. (PAUSE) Allow the sights and sounds of the room, your thoughts, and any other distractions to leave your mind. Take another deep breath. (PAUSE) Imagine now that you are leaving this room from the door you entered. You get up, walk to the door and leave. (PAUSE) Follow the hallway to the exit and leave the building. As you step outside, you notice that the sun is shining brightly and a cool, clear sky greets you. The temperature is comfortable and a quiet breeze is blowing. Now imagine that you look down and the familiar sidewalk outside this building is actually a smooth dirt path bordered by lush green grass. The path stretches off out of sight into a forest of tall trees. Follow the path toward the trees. (PAUSE) As you do, the path begins weaving among the large trees. You feel light and relaxed, your steps are effortless. The path leads you deep into the woods, away from town, away from the distractions of schoolwork, and away from your current responsibilities. (PAUSE)**

**Up ahead, you notice a clearing. In the center of the clearing is a large television screen, with large old fashioned knobs for the power and the volume. Walk up to the screen and imagine turning the power on. When you do, you can see two people interacting. You realize that it is you and the person who hurt you. It appears that you are having a conversation with the offender just after the offense occurred. You can now listen in on this conversation. To do so, turn up the volume on the television. If you feel uncomfortable at any point you can always turn down the volume or turn off the television. (PAUSE) Listen now to the conversation. What are you saying to the offender? What are you experiencing? (PAUSE) How are you experiencing and expressing your anger? Is there anything that you haven't said that you would now like to? Go ahead and say that to the person. (PAUSE) What is the individual saying back to you? As you watch the person who hurt you from this new vantage point, what do you think he or she is experiencing? (PAUSE) After a few minutes of discussion, the conversation ends. How does it end? Are you still angry with the person, or have you been able to resolve the conflict? As you continue watching, you see yourself eventually leave the person who hurt you. You see on the screen that the offender is now alone. Not knowing that you are listening, she or he begins thinking aloud. What is the offender saying? What does she or he express now that you are not there? (PAUSE)**

**It is now time to return. First, turn the television off. Now, slowly turn and find the path that**

**took you into the clearing. (PAUSE) Follow the path back out of the woods until you are standing before this building. Enter the building and walk to the door to this room. Now enter the room and find the seat you are now sitting in. (PAUSE) When you are ready slowly open your eyes.**

**Understanding the Anger Response** (10 minutes)

Discuss the guided imagery experience: The key is to focus on their “experience” (not “feelings”) with particular emphasis on their anger and how they experienced and expressed it. Also, explore how they handled the situation and how they wish they would have handled it.

Let’s discuss this exercise. I’d like to hear from as many of you as possible.

What was your experience of this exercise? (As follow-up if they don’t understand: To what degree were you really able to imagine this scenario? Could you follow a conversation between yourself and the person who hurt you, etc?)

In what way did you respond with your typical “anger style”? Explore this with them.

Is there anything that you wish you would have done differently? What?

**Understanding Other Responses** (10 minutes)

Although anger is a natural response to being offended or hurt, a lot of times there are other reactions as well. To help you think of possible ways you might also be reacting to your specific experience, your manual has a list of words and phrases that describe possible reactions. You might have felt many of these or only a few. Take a few minutes now and circle all the words or phrases that describe your reaction to the offense (past or present).

Encourage as many as possible to share what they identified. (Discussion questions follow on the next page.)

Abandoned	Uncared for	Upset	Solemn	Worthless
Embarrassed	Nervous	Afraid	Confused	Ashamed
Aggressive	Drained	Suspicious	Screwed up	Vicious
Nervous	Agonized	Sorry	Demanding	Alone
Disappointed	Walked on	Betrayed	Guilty	Jittery
Frightened	Rejected	Empty	Unhappy	Put down
Exhausted	Humiliated	Weak	Defeated	Hopeless
Inadequate	Crushed	Hurt	No good	Left out
Despondent	Judged	Used	Inferior	Ridiculed
Dejected	Wounded	Timid	Fed up	Desperate
Childlike	Flustered	Torn	Cowardly	Unconfident
Obsessed	Unsafe	Petty	Awkward	Bitter
Burdened	Helpless	Ugly	Cheated	Longing
Combative	Condemned	Mean	Confused	Jealous
Miserable	Cruel	Dependent	Hateful	Let down
Unimportant	Isolated	Pained	Unwanted	Distracted
Frustrated	Anxious	Fearful	Dismayed	Depressed
Annoyed	Gloomy	Sulky	Hostile	Gullible
Quarrelsome	Pressured	Wary	Servile	Violent
Vindictive	Frantic	Tense	Envious	Silly

Follow-up discussion questions:

- Are any of these responses new to you? (Now that you see the words, are you recognizing responses you didn't know you had?)
- What do the words that you circled have in common?
- Which of these responses do you experience strongest?

Goal of this exercise: Try to help participants see that anger is an important response by itself, but it can also cover over other responses that we might have to a hurtful situation. Often our anger can be a clue that we are experiencing other "responses." Pausing to understand those other responses allows us to understand ourselves, our reactions, our desire to protect ourselves (often by getting angry), and our need to address some violation, offense, or insult by those around us.

## IV. "OWNING" YOUR EXPERIENCE (20 MINUTES)

This exercise is intended to help participants recognize, allow and accept their experiences, and thereby take control of them. Explain each of the steps below and provide practice and/or discussion as you go through them.

- **Recognize** your experience, your thoughts & bodily sensations
  - Often we experience things that we are not even aware of. It might be an emotion, a sensation in the body, or thoughts that happen so automatically we aren't even aware of them. (Ask for some examples, or provide them if they can't think of any.) The first part of understanding your experience is to take time to be aware of yourself and recognize your own experience. Let's practice that now. (Walk them through a mindfulness exercise, focusing on the sensations they are currently having. Discuss their experience of this.)
- **Allow** yourself to experience them
  - The second part of owning your experience is to allow yourself to really experience whatever is going on for you. Sometimes we learn to avoid our experience, to ignore the sensations we have, or to suppress our awareness of ourselves. (Provide examples.) One way of thinking about this is with the analogy of a house that contains all of our experiences. Imagine a house right now that can contain your memories, experiences, and reactions from throughout your life. If you disallow an experience (disregard, ignore, or suppress it), it is like stuffing a bag full of garbage and tossing it behind a closed door. Now, any house can withstand a little hidden garbage, but not much before it starts to rot and stink up the whole house. To avoid storing away trash, you need to allow yourself to experience your reactions.  
Discussion: When is it easiest for you to fully experience your reactions? When is it hardest?
- **Accept** your experience("they are what they are")
  - Finally, after recognizing and allowing your experiences, you can accept them. Understanding that experiences are what they are, and that they do not necessarily have to control you, you can accept them as a part of you without feeling ruled by them. Discussion: What of this makes sense to you? Does anyone have an example of this from their own life? What is one part of the specific events we talked about earlier that you have not recognized, allowed, or accepted?

## V. WRAP UP (10 MINUTES)

Provide a summary of today's session:

1. False beliefs about anger
2. Managing your anger
  - a. Point out the summary of steps to managing anger in their manuals.
  - b. Discuss this with them.
3. Owning your experience

4. If time allows, discuss:

What thoughts or reactions do you have about the material covered today?

How might this information be helpful to you?

5. Remind them about the next session.
6. Inform them that they will now complete a questionnaire packet in addition to the normal post session feedback form.

# Session 4: Resolving Your Anger

## I. INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

6. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
7. Recap the last session.
  - a. False beliefs about anger
  - b. Managing your anger
  - c. Owning your experience
8. Ask them for feedback/comments about the last group.
9. Provide an overview of today's session.
  - a. Working to resolve your anger
10. Boundary breaking – Begin today's session with a brief icebreaker to help the participants return to being a group. In a large group setting, ask group members to answer the following question one at a time:
  - o If you could magically have one talent, what would it be?

## II. OPENING DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

Summary and Check up: Discuss with the group the progress they feel they have made so far. Use the following questions to stimulate conversation about what they have learned. (If they have trouble responding, have them write the answers to the questions in their manuals first and then discuss what they wrote.)

- What have you learned so far in this group that might be helpful for you?
- Compared with when you first started this group, how are you doing now?
- What has been the most helpful thing about this workshop for you so far?

## III. PARADOX OF NOT RETALIATING (30 MINUTES)

Transition: We've been spending time so far in this group primarily focused on your personal experiences of anger. I wonder what sorts of messages or ideas you have heard about how to express anger or deal with those who hurt you. For example... [provide a relevant personal example of a message about anger expression. You might use yourself, a friend, or a client you've worked with. Try to make it personal and specific, but it's ok to make it more general like, "many people hear from friends that they are weak if they don't retaliate following a hurt."]

What sorts of messages have you heard? Let's start by thinking of messages from the general media. How do movies and music portray retaliation, revenge, and anger? Let me give you an example from a song.

Point out lyrics in the handbook as you play *Coward of the County* (see next page). Have them complete the questions in their workbooks (i.e., What is your reaction to the story in this song? Can you finish the story? What would happen next? Over the next 5 years?). Discuss their responses to these.

Then, encourage an exploration of the messages in the song. Help them to challenge the song's underlying messages (i.e., to be a man you have to fight back, physical violence is often justified, if you don't respond you'll just bottle it up). Ask for other examples, such as all the vigilante-style revenge movies, e.g., Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis, Mel Gibson, etc.

Discuss: How do you resist these messages? How can you release grudges when the overwhelming message is that unless you retaliate you cannot move on?

Lyrics for *Coward of the County*

Ev'ryone considered him the coward of the county.  
He'd never stood one single time to prove the county wrong.  
His mama named him Tommy, the folks just called him yellow,  
But something always told me they were reading Tommy wrong.

He was only ten years old when his daddy died in prison.  
I looked after Tommy 'cause he was my brother's son.  
I still recall the final words my brother said to Tommy:  
"Son, my life is over, but yours is just begun.

Promise me, son, not to do the things I've done.  
Walk away from trouble if you can.  
It won't mean you're weak if you turn the other cheek.  
I hope you're old enough to understand:  
Son, you don't have to fight to be a man."

There's someone for ev'ryone and Tommy's love was Becky.  
In her arms he didn't have to prove he was a man.  
One day while he was workin' the Gatlin boys came callin'.  
They took turns at Becky.... There was three of them!

Tommy opened up the door and saw his Becky cryin'.  
The torn dress, the shattered look was more than he could stand.  
He reached above the fireplace and took down his daddy's picture.  
As his tears fell on his daddy's face, he heard these words again:

"Promise me, son, not to do the things I've done.  
Walk away from trouble if you can.  
It won't mean you're weak if you turn the other cheek.  
I hope you're old enough to understand:  
Son, you don't have to fight to be a man."

The Gatlin boys just laughed at him when he walked into the barroom.  
One of them got up and met him halfway 'cross the floor.  
When Tommy turned around they said, "Hey look! ol' yellow's leavin'."  
But you coulda heard a pin drop when Tommy stopped and blocked the door.

Twenty years of crawlin' was bottled up inside him.  
He wasn't holdin' nothin' back; he let 'em have it all.  
When Tommy left the barroom not a Gatlin boy was standin'.  
He said, "This one's for Becky," as he watched the last one fall.  
And I heard him say,

"I promised you, Dad, not to do the things you done.  
I walk away from trouble when I can.  
Now please don't think I'm weak, I didn't turn the other cheek,  
and Papa, I sure hope you understand:  
Sometimes you gotta fight when you're a man."  
Ev'ryone considered him the coward of the county.



Move on from movies and songs and talk about friends and family. Push the participants to identify different messages (both positive and negative). Pay attention to the pressure males experience to retaliate or be viewed as a sissy, wimp, “girl”, etc. Try to get them to talk this out. Does this fit for them? Is this what they really believe? Have they ever passed these messages on to others?

### **Introduce the Paradox of Not Retaliating.**

A paradox is something that doesn’t seem to be true but it is. When hurt or offended the powerful thing to do is retaliate or respond in kind, right? At least, that is what we often think and are told, and it makes sense to most of us. But, some people have argued that not retaliating when hurt is actually the strongest and most courageous response to make. That’s the paradox. That in not retaliating, not seeking revenge, and not engaging in the tit-for-tat cycle, you are actually being strong and courageous. [Have someone read the letter from me in this section of their manuals.] Do you agree with this? Why or why not.

Continue discussion, and draw out their concerns, hesitations, and disagreements. Encourage their honest replies. Try to separate submissive, fearful, and self-deprecating responses from strong, non-vengeful responses. Clarify the distinction between avoiding revenge (a strong response) and getting back into a harmful relationship (unnecessary reconciliation). Remind them that they can keep themselves safe without having to retain bitterness or without responding to the person with revenge, anger, or retaliation.

#### Potential questions:

What makes accepting this idea (of the paradox) difficult?

When is not retaliating truly “strong” and when is it weak (harmful to the victim)?

What would you have to do to be strong and courageous by not retaliating when hurt?

## V. LETTING GO OF YOUR ANGER (10 MINUTES)

When dealing with difficult experiences, like anger or even sadness or worry, people often say, “just let it go”? Has anyone else ever heard this advice? Has it worked for you? [Stay with the discussion long enough for different responses to emerge.]

To be honest, this phrase often bugs me. It is a trite solution to a very difficult thing. If it was so easy to “just let it go,” then we probably wouldn’t be dealing with it in the first place. But, letting go of anger and bitterness can happen. One of the ways to do it is to realize that you can protect yourself without retaining the anger. Remember how we said that anger is good because it protects us. It can alert us to being taken advantage of, being violated, or offended in some way. So, as an early alert system, like those really loud fire alarms, it does a great job. But can you imagine if the fire alarms stayed on continuously? [Pause and let that image sink in.] Well, that’s what a harbored grudge can do to you. Like an industrial strength fire alarm clanging in your head, harbored anger disrupts peace and affects your whole state of well being. So, letting go of anger (or turning off the alarm) is not an easy thing, but it is possible. One of the ways it occurs is when you truly believe that you can protect yourself without the bitterness. [Ask for responses, questions, or comments about this idea.]

Let’s try this now and see if you can imagine being able to protect yourself without holding a grudge or desiring revenge on the person who hurt you. [Continued on the next page.]

## VI. PROTECTING YOURSELF (20 MINUTES)

### Imagination exercise

Ask participants to close their eyes as you lead them through some deep breaths and deep muscle relaxation to help them focus and release any tension they are carrying. Take your time and allow them to experience the relaxation.

Once participants have had a chance to relax, explain the exercise to them.

They are to imagine interacting with the person who hurt them. They will be imagining what it is like to be strong without bitterness, grudges, or revenge.

Have them answer the questions to themselves: [Go SLOWLY through this.]

What do you think this person might do to you?

What do you fear is the worst they can do?

Now, imagine protecting yourself. What are you saying? What are you doing?

How is the person responding to you? Do you need to protect yourself from this response?

How can you do that?

Ask participants to take a few more deep breathes. Slowly bring them back to the room. Discuss this experience with them.

Most likely people will think of angry and vengeful responses. Try to elicit this. Provide some specific suggestions for protecting themselves, and be sure to incorporate good ideas from the group members.

You might say to the person, “This is unacceptable, I will not allow you to...”

Or, “I need you to keep your distance right now. I don’t trust you.”

You might repeat a protective statement, such as, “I can’t talk about this right now.”

If the person is open to hearing it, you can explain, “I am releasing the grudge I have against you, but it will take time for me to be able to trust you again.”

You could remind yourself that with the help of friends and family you are strong enough to protect yourself from this person.

Then, return to the imagination exercise and do it again. This time encourage them to incorporate some of these ideas, even if they feel uncomfortable or unnatural. Encourage them to see it as practice. Discuss.

## V. WRAP UP (5 MINUTES)

Provide a summary of today’s session:

1. Paradox of not retaliating
2. Living without the hurt
3. If time allows, check in with the group:

What thoughts or reactions do you have about the material covered today?

How might this information be helpful to you?

4. Remind them about the next session, date and time.
  - a. Tell them that you have two more sessions together.
5. Have them complete the post session feedback forms.

# Session 5: Moving Beyond the Grudge

## I. INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

1. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
2. Recap the last session.
  - a. The paradox of not retaliating
  - b. Letting the anger go
  - c. Protecting yourself
3. Ask them for feedback/comments about the last group.
4. Provide an overview of today's session.
  - a. Understanding how harbored anger hurts you
  - b. Exploring the good side of a bad situation
  - c. Imagining living without the hurt
5. Boundary breaking – Begin today's session with a brief icebreaker to help the participants return to being a group. In a large group setting, ask group members to answer the following question one at a time:
  - o What is the greatest value that guides your life?

## II. HARBORED ANGER HURTS YOU (20 MINUTES)

### **Exercise: Understanding that Harbored Anger Hurts You**

Today, I'd like to start by looking at the downside of anger for you, especially the kind of anger that lingers and is more like bitterness. Let's start by looking over the quotes about harbored anger in your workbooks. Read over the quotes and mark the ones that stand out to you.

Allow them to do so, and then discuss their responses, saying that you'd like to hear from everyone. Try to get at the energy behind their choices, why did they choose those, what connections does this have for them, what insights does this bring up for them, etc.

- ✦ Resentment is like taking poison & waiting for the other person to die.
- ✦ For every minute you are angry, you lose sixty seconds of happiness.
- ✦ If you kick a stone in anger, you'll hurt your own foot.
- ✦ Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.
- ✦ Resentment is an extremely bitter diet, and eventually poisonous. I have no desire to make my own toxins.
- ✦ To carry a grudge is like being stung to death by one bee.
- ✦ Consider how much more you suffer from your anger and grief, than from those very things for which you are angry and grieved.
- ✦ To take revenge is often to sacrifice oneself.
- ✦ Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves.
- ✦ A man that studies revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well.

Ask them to answer the question on the bottom of the page: What are some of the downsides to harboring anger and resentment? Allow time to complete and then discuss. Try to get them to own these "downsides" as personally relevant rather than just something that happens to other people. If necessary, have them fill in more that are directly relevant to them.

### III. DEALING WITH HARBORED ANGER (40 MINUTES)

Harbored anger and resentment can have a really negative effect on the person holding the grudge. So, what can you do about that? I want to return to an exercise that we did a few sessions back, deep muscle relaxation. As we said before, this can be a really effective way to manage stress and to overcome tension. Has anyone tried this exercise outside the group?

Allow responses. What was their result? If not positive, explore with them and see what the difficulty was (distracted, didn't really tighten their muscles before relaxing, forgot how to continue with all the muscle groups, etc.)

Like many things, techniques for relaxing work best when they are practiced. It will be difficult for you all to get the most from this technique until you've practiced it some. It's like trying to hit the winning free-throw in a basketball championship, or playing a flawless piano piece in a concert, when you haven't practiced. When the stress of our lives kicks in, we need to have well practiced techniques in order to cope with it. So, let's practice the deep muscle relaxation one more time right now and I encourage you to practice this more on your own.

Deep Muscle Relaxation Script (15 minutes): **GO SLOWLY.**

Start by finding a comfortable position in the chairs you are sitting in. If you're comfortable, close your eyes. Take several deep breaths, holding each one for at least five seconds. (Pause) Good. Now clench the muscles in your right arm, making a fist as you do. Clench the muscles and fist tightly, noticing the tension in your right arm and hand. (Pause) Now let go. Feel the relaxation in your hand and the difference from the tension before. (Pause) Now clench your left arm and make a fist with your left hand. Feel the tension build as you hold the muscles. Now relax. Focus on the difference between the tension and the release. (Pause)

Flex the bicep of your right arm and notice the tension. Hold the tension. Now relax. (Pause) Notice the warm feelings of relaxation spread through your arm. Now flex the bicep of your left arm. Again, focus on the tension in your muscle. Let it go. (Pause) Now take several, slow deep breaths and notice the relaxation in your arms. (Pause)

Now let's move to the muscles in your face. Tense the muscles of your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as possible. Hold this for five seconds and feel the tension building in your forehead. Relax. Notice the difference in the forehead muscles. (Pause) Now repeat.

Close your eyes tightly. Feel the tension in the muscles around your eyes. Now release.

Next clench your jaws by biting your teeth together, hard enough to feel the tension, but not so hard that your teeth hurt. (Pause) Pull the corners of your mouth back into an exaggerated smile. Hold and notice the tension in your face. Now relax and notice the difference. (Pause) Now press your lips together tightly, and notice the tension. Relax the muscles around your mouth. Take a few slow, deep breaths and notice how warm and relaxed your arms, face, and mouth feel. Enjoy these feelings of relaxation.

Let's move to the muscles in your neck. Try to touch your chin to your chest, at the same time apply counter-pressure to keep it from touching. Release. (Pause) Repeat and hold for five seconds. Notice the tension. Relax. Notice the difference between the tension and relaxation in your neck. Pull your head back and try to touch your back, but apply pressure from the opposite muscles as well. Notice the tension. Let go. Now repeat the procedure and hold for five seconds. (Pause) Release. Feel the relaxation in your neck.

Now pull back your shoulders and until the blades almost touch. Hold. Then relax. (Pause) Repeat. Next, try to touch your shoulders together by bringing them forward as far as you can. Hold. Then release and feel the difference. Repeat this. Now, shrug your shoulders and try to touch them to your ears. Hold. Let go. Enjoy the relaxation in you neck and shoulders. Continue down from the shoulders and focus on your stomach muscles. Tighten your stomach muscles, making your stomach hard and tight like a knot. Relax those muscles. Repeat. (Pause)

Tense your thigh muscles. Release the muscles quickly and notice the difference. Repeat and study the difference between the tension and the relaxation. (Pause) Point your toes toward your head. Hold the tension. Relax. Repeat this, noticing the relaxation when you do. Now point your feet outward. Allow the tension to build. Release quickly and notice the difference. Point your toes inward and hold. Release and enjoy the relaxation. (Pause) If there are any muscle groups that you are aware of that still feel tense go back to those and repeat the tension and relaxation. Go ahead and scan your body now. (Pause) Take your time and enjoy the relaxation. When you are ready you may open your eyes.

Discuss this briefly with the group. What helps and what doesn't? Is there a way they can adapt this to be most helpful for them individually?

Introduce next exercise: Now, I'd like to introduce one more relaxation technique that will be more directly related to the anger and resentment that you might be feeling. In this exercise, I will guide you through a visual imagery. Listen to my voice and as best you can imagine what I describe. This will be intended to help you release anger and resentment and other experiences that you are ready to be done with.

### Guided Imagery Script (10 minutes): GO SLOWLY.

In your relaxed state, allow yourself to breathe slowly and regularly. As you breathe, you are alert to my voice, but you remain relaxed and calm. I want you to imagine something with me that will represent your anger and resentment. Picture in your mind a thick oily substance. It is so thick it seems almost solid. Picture a small amount of this substance in your chest area, maybe a few large drops of it in your heart. Now allow the substance to grow so that it not only fills your heart, but it expands into your whole chest. See yourself as a reluctant container for this liquid. It covers everything. It fills in everywhere, even the smallest nooks of your body. Allow the image to grow until you see yourself completely full of the vile substance. In you it has found residence. At times, it sits heavy and still. At others, it boils and turns, bubbles popping as they reach the surface. This substance is your anger, your resentment, and your harbored grudge. Imagine the damage this is doing to you.

Now imagine with me that there are places in your body where this liquid could escape. Where are these places? Perhaps at the ends of your fingers and toes, perhaps the top of your head. All you need to do is relax and open yourself. This will allow the openings to begin releasing the substance. At first you may not notice the difference. Allow yourself to relax more fully. Slowly, you notice the smallest change. The substance is moving, slowly, slowly. You begin to see tiny drops and rivulets of the substance outside yourself. The resentment is seeping away. The pain it has brought is leaking out of you. You can see small openings in your body where the liquid has drained away. It seems as though the liquid started in your chest, and as it leaks out, it leaves the chest clean and light. You can see the last bit of substance drain from your heart, leaving you feeling renewed and light of heart. The thick stuff continues to drain from the rest of your body. As it does, it leaves behind a clean bright surface. Surprisingly, the liquid leaves no trace as it passes. In fact, you see that it might be actually leaving you cleaner than before it arrived. The liquid has completely left your central torso and is now only in your arms and legs and in your head. If you want it to pour out more quickly, all you need to do is open yourself more and relax more deeply. As you do, you can see that the liquid drains out more quickly. You feel it completely leave your head. You are feeling light and relaxed, clear headed and focused. The liquid continues to drain from your limbs. Your arms are almost free from it as well. It seeps out of you, leaving you feel refreshed and renewed. And now your arms are empty of it, and in its place you are filled with strength and a light relaxation. Finally, you focus on your legs and watch as the last of the murky stuff seeps out of you. Your legs, arms, head, and chest are all now free of the liquid. You are feeling free and relaxed, almost completely rejuvenated. Now your body can be filled with peace. The effort you were using to control the substance and to hold it at bay can now be used to fill your body with a quiet strength and an openness to your experience.

Focus on this experience. Allow yourself to enjoy your new freedom. (PAUSE) Now, as we finish, I'd like you to imagine a new scene. Imagine that you are one story below this room. You stand before a set of stairs; there are ten steps that lead right up to this room. I'd like for you to take the stairs back up to this room, slowly, one at a time. Start with the tenth step. Picture yourself stepping up onto the stairs. Now move one more, up to nine. Slowly climb the stairs, 8...7...6. As you ascend you become more aware of your surroundings, more alert, and more prepared to return to this group. Take another step, 5...and another...4. When you get to 1 you will be in this room. Continue climbing...3...2...1. Then, when you are ready you can return to the group by opening your eyes.

**Response to the imaginary experience** – Now have participants think about the experience of the imagery. Ask them to complete the exercise in their manuals (p.11). They are to circle all the words that describe their response to the imagery (or to fill in words that are not on this list).

Warm	Fulfilled	Whole	Brave	Happy	Dependable
Strong	Tranquil	Optimistic	Fair	Sociable	Tender
Free	Hopeful	Important	Relieved	Trusting	Uninhibited
Serene	Powerful	Humble	Dignified	Persevering	Peaceful
Pleased	Relaxed	Wise	Confident	Helpful	Intimate
Courageous	Satisfied	Glad	Appreciated	Positive	Sentimental
Energetic	Delighted	Considerate	Good-natured	Cooperative	Peaceful
Enthusiastic	Daring	Capable	Admirable	Grateful	Reflective
Invigorated	Worthy	Kind	Wanted	Secure	Impressive
Alive	Proud	Joyful	Excited	Friendly	Rewarded
Loving	Just	Charitable	Pleasant	Okay	Assertive
Poised	Adequate	Reasonable	Bold	Blissful	Civilized

Discuss the experience.

1. Have them each share what they circled (and/or wrote on their own) and why. Have them describe in as much detail as they can with examples from their experiences.
2. Now return to the experience itself. Get participants to talk about what they saw/imagined and how they experienced it. Ask to what degree they were really able to sense the things you described. Give them ample opportunity to process the experience and the effect it had on them.
3. Ask them if they can imagine what it would be like to live without the grudge, to truly leave it behind them, like the murky liquid.

## IV. WHEN GOOD COMES OF BAD (20 MINUTES)

Another way of dealing with anger and resentment that result from being offended or hurt by another person is to try to find any good that might have resulted from the experience. It is so easy for us to think in simple categories: good/bad, right/wrong, friend/foe, etc. But often life is not lived in simple categories. Often there is a little bit of good in bad things, and some bad in good things. Can anybody think of an example of what I am talking about? Give them an opportunity to respond, but you can also have an example ready that you can provide if they can't think of an example.

In this next section of today's group I want to challenge you to think outside normal categories of good and bad, and to stretch your understanding a bit to include potentially conflicting ideas. Let's look together and see if there might be some good things that have come from the offenses that you have been thinking about. But first, let me say that even though we will be looking at possible good outcomes, this doesn't mean that the offense was not real and painful or that the good somehow justifies the pain. Instead, let's think about it more as given that this terrible thing had to happen to you, are there any positive results that we might be able to look to that could redeem this situation, so that at least it is not a complete loss.

I am guessing that for most of you there will be some good that has resulted from your experiences. However, this may not be true for all of you. So, let's examine for each of you whether there might some good amongst all the bad. First, let's look over the list in your manuals (bottom of p.11). Discuss with the group. Encourage skeptics to voice dissent to the idea, and then throw it back to the group ("What do you all think?").

Who'd like to go first and tell us about any of the positive things that may have resulted from your unique situation? Discuss with the group.

## VI. WRAP-UP (5 MINUTES)

Provide a summary of today's session:

1. How harbored anger hurts you
2. Dealing with the stress of harbored anger
3. Seeing the good in a bad situation
4. Imagining living without the hurt
5. Remind them about the next session, date and time.
  - a. **Remind them that they will only have one more session together.**
6. Have them complete the post session feedback forms.

# Session 6: Committing to Release the Grudge

## I. INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

7. Begin the session by welcoming the members back.
8. Lead a brief discussion:
  - a. How are you responding to this being the last session?
  - b. What do you each hope to get out of this last session?
  - c. Share how you are feeling about it ending. Give you honest appraisal (within limits ☺), including good and bad if appropriate.
9. Recap the last session.
  - a. Examined how your anger can be hurtful to you.
  - b. Practiced ways of dealing with resentment and letting it go.
  - c. Looked at some positive things that have developed from the bad.
10. Provide an overview of today's session.
  - a. Continue working toward releasing the grudge
  - b. Wrap up out time together.
11. Boundary breaking – Begin today's session with a brief icebreaker to help the participants return to being a group. In a large group setting, ask group members to answer the following questions one at a time:
  - What are you most proud of?
  - What is the greatest value that guides your life?

## II. LIVING WITHOUT GRUDGES (30 MINUTES)

### What do **you** want? (10 minutes)

Begin today's discussion by returning to the idea of how good it feels to let go of a grudge and how awful it feels to hold a grudge and be angry. Discuss how it is instinctive to hold grudges, and how we can use all the help we can get to not fall into this trap. Direct the group the exercise on p.12. Have them ask themselves, "what do I want" (with regard to the offense and the hurt, anger, etc. they have been carrying). Discuss their responses.

### Potential Benefits of Holding a Grudge (20 minutes)

Some (or all) of the members may not be quite ready to release the grudge. So, introduce the idea that there may be some hesitation to releasing a grudge they have held for some time. Explore with them the potential benefits of holding onto the grudge.

Discuss: What are you getting out of keeping the grudge? Have them list all the possible benefits that the grudge might be providing (or might have provided) for them. Break participants into small groups (or pairs) to discuss. In the small groups they will generate their own lists and discuss these with their partners.

Then in the large group, responses should be shared (and listed on a board if available). Highlight understandable benefits of holding the grudge. The facilitator can add from the list below



(which is not in the participant manual). Don't allow them just to state a benefit or to say there are no benefits. Push them to share what they mean, how it plays out for them, or simply challenge the notion that there are no benefits ("As people, we are remarkably good at maintaining behaviors that have some benefit for us. The benefit might be really obscure and under the surface, but seldom do we continue to engage in things that have absolutely no benefit at all. What do you think might be a benefit, however small, of keeping your grudge?")

(A list of potential benefits is on the next page.)

Potential Benefits of Holding a Grudge:

Makes you feel morally superior, justified, or in the right.

Allows you power over the person...always have the ace in the pocket.

Provides you with strength to rally your energy to fight

Gives a purpose for your bitterness, anger, hostility, aggression, or depression

Provides a reason for others to give you support, comfort, and understanding

Provides meaning to your life, to fight against injustices, or to go on with your life

Giving up the grudge would be to embark on a whole new life, one that may at this point be so foreign as to be frightening (painful old patterns are sometimes more comfortable than unknown new ones)

### III. MAKING THE COMMITMENT (20 MINUTES)

So, we have looked at both benefits and drawbacks to releasing a grudge. It's not a simple matter one way or the other. However, for most of you, releasing the grudge and getting beyond the anger and resentment may be a real goal. So, what now? If you are ready to move beyond the anger how do you do this? A big step can be made by simply committing to release the grudge. In general, when you are trying to commit to something, like an exercise plan, studying, participating in some activity, how do you do it? Discuss. They might not be able to come up with anything, and that's ok. Try to stimulate some conversation if possible, but don't push it too much.

Specifically, how might you commit to releasing the grudge? Allow them to generate some answers, but again they may not have many. As part of the conversation, you could interject some of the following ideas.

Write out a contract, which stipulates that you will release the grudge

Make a practice of telling yourself you have "moved on" or have committed to releasing the grudge (do this for as many days as the number of months that you have held the grudge).

Take something that represents the grudge (object, written description) and then break it, bury it, burn it, or otherwise do away with it.

Practice committing to release the grudge by writing a contract.

One way of committing to release a grudge is by making a specific commitment to do so. This can be done in numerous ways. One way is by writing a contract. Let's practice this now. There is a contract template for you all to complete on p. 13 of your workbooks.

Have them complete the contract. Encourage them to work through it slowly and thoughtfully. Tell those who are not ready to commit to see this as practice for a time in the future when they might be ready to commit. (Discussion continued on the next page.)

**Evaluating the contract** – Use the following questions to discuss the exercise.

- ✚ How did it feel to write the contract?
- 🟡 What was the most difficult part for you to write?
- ✚ What part was the easiest to write?

**More images of releasing a grudge**

Think back to the end of the first session, when we offered some 'images' of releasing a grudge. Can you add any of the images on this page to your list? Discuss with the group.

Releasing the grudge against the person who once hurt you is like washing your hands clean of germs that have been making you ill for a long time.

Releasing the grudge is like finally finishing a marathon you've been running for a long, long time.

Releasing the grudge is like finally being able to laugh again after a long period of sadness.

- Now it's your turn – can you think of any images that describe the experience of releasing your grudge?

Discuss this with the participants.

## IV. WRAPPING UP THE GROUP EXPERIENCE (20 MINUTES)

We are almost done. We have come a long way together. I'd like to spend some time reflecting on our experience together.

Discuss their experiences. Start more general with summary-type questions, then try to get at their specific experience. See questions below.

General Summary:

- What do you remember from what we have covered over these last few weeks?
- What were the primary points or major themes of this group?

Specific Experience:

- What was this group like for you?
- What stands out as the most memorable (or the best) part of your group?
- What would have made this group a better experience for you?

Feel free to include your experience of the group, what you felt and thought about working with them. Feel free to reinforce and/or highlight specific gains made by participants. Encourage their continued work in this area. Also, be sure to normalize the experience of anger and overcoming a grudge by explaining:

1. Grudges don't always just go away, they may experience reactions to this same situation in the future.
2. It can be hard work, but it is worth it for them to have freedom from the pain.
3. Allow themselves time with this process, now and in the future.

## V. FINAL SUMMARY (10 MINUTES)

Provide a summary of the group:

1. Summarize the key themes, pay attention to the topics that they have not discussed above.
  - a. What it really means to release a grudge
  - b. Recognizing and appropriately expressing anger
  - c. Recognizing other painful emotions & 'owning' them
  - d. Relaxation techniques
  - e. Imaginary confrontation & releasing a grudge
  - f. How it feels to be free of the grudge
  - g. Making a commitment to release the grudge
2. See if people have any other comments or questions about the group.
3. Have them complete the post session feedback forms and the post treatment questionnaires.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a great deal of thanks to those who generously offered their time, effort, and expertise in assisting me with this project. I would like to express thanks to my committee members for their efforts and contributions to this project: Dr. Douglas Bonett, Dr. Kere Hughes, Dr. David Vogel, Dr. Nathaniel Wade, and Dr. Meifen Wei, with each of whom I genuinely looked forward to working in this process. Funding for this study was made possible by a generous grant from the Center for the Study of Violence at Iowa State University. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my fellow graduate students and the many undergraduate research assistants at *Network: A Group Counseling Program* who offered their assistance in collecting and entering the data. Julia Meyer Kidwell, whose intervention workbooks from her 2006 unpublished Master's thesis were the basis upon which the workbooks for the proposed study were built. Without Dawn Brandau, Ashley Hackler, Scott Kaplan, Julia Meyer Kidwell, and Robyn Zakalik Van Brunt, who served as group facilitators, this study could not have been carried out. Most of all, I am immeasurably indebted to Dr. Nathaniel Wade, who chaired my dissertation committee. I thank him for his truly infinite patience and for showing me that I could in fact do this. Without his guidance, I would most certainly still be spinning my proverbial wheels somewhere in the mud of data analysis and report writing. Thank you, Nathaniel.