

Giving the Gift of Forgiveness to Our Children

Firenze, Italia

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I. Introduction

A. Overview (short-term benefits and long-range goals)

B. Forgiveness is a choice

II. What is person-to-person forgiveness?

A. The oldest preserved accounts are within the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 37-45)

B. Christian (aphiemi), Muslim (afo), Confucian (shu), and Buddhist perspectives all make room for forgiveness and see it as a morally worthwhile activity. In fact, we have never examined an ancient text with a moral basis to it that did not value forgiveness. Forgiveness cuts across many different philosophies and religions.

III. More on what forgiveness is and what it is not. Chapter 2, Forgiveness Is a Choice (Enright, 2001)

IV. We find, from scientific analyses, considerable emotional, relational, and even physical health benefits from forgiving (see page 3). Teacher evaluations of the forgiveness education programs are positive (see pages 4 and 5.)

V. The school as transmitter of forgiveness

A. The teacher should consider *first forgiving, then teaching* about forgiveness. As children advance in grade level, they too will learn about forgiveness in greater depth.

B. Forgiveness is developmental.

1. Children are able to see that people possess inherent worth. They are able to give and receive love, especially if they are loved. They are able to forgive.

2. Eventually, children realize that they can generalize their forgiving----If a child forgives her brother, she understands that she can try to forgive her aunt, cousin, or friend.

3. Still later, older children and adolescents begin to see, as they practice forgiveness, that it is important to them in their personal lives. They *consciously* embrace it as a meaningful and even essential activity.

4. In later adolescence and adulthood, some people realize that forgiveness is far more than an activity, it is far more than something *out there*. Now, the developing person realizes that forgiveness is “*part of my very identity, part of who I am.*” It is here that forgiveness is embraced and expressed in many and varied situations, for to do otherwise is to *contradict the self*.

C. We have forgiveness curricula developed from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. We currently are developing the ninth grade curriculum in cooperation with Edgewood High School in Madison, Wisconsin.

D. After trying this forgiveness curriculum for awhile, you might wish to extend forgiveness to handle discipline problems, as they spontaneously arise, with the addition of forgiveness. We know that some of you routinely do this now. You, those who courageously go into the school every day to serve the children, are the important ones to deliver the curriculum and to use your wisdom regarding discipline.

E. The-School-as-Forgiving Community will be alive and well as a school delivers forgiveness curricula within the classrooms of all the grades and deliberately makes forgiveness an integral part of the everyday aspects of the school.

F. The Forgiving Community (across school, home, and so forth) ought to be alive and well as principals, teachers, and parents in the family unite for the sake of the children. What better legacy can we leave our children than to equip them to be forgivers as adults, in their own marriages, with their own children, in their places of worship and employment, and wherever there is injustice and hurt?

VI. First forgive, then teach about forgiveness. Road map for forgiving, Chapter 4, p. 78 in particular, Forgiveness Is a Choice. Please see page 12.

VII. The forgiveness curricula

A. All currently available teacher curriculum guides are listed on page 6 of this handout. See the list of materials from pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade (pages 7-11). The curriculum guides for each of the grades Pre-K through grade 8 will be available on the IFI website (forgiveness-institute.org) in June, 2011.

B. Each curriculum guide introduces forgiveness through stories. The students see how a story character deals with injustice and then there is discussion about how forgiveness might play a part in the story. The students are then encouraged to forgive someone who has been unfair.

C. Each lesson takes between 30 minutes and one hour once per week. Most grade levels have between 12-15 lessons. (Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are 8 lessons).

Examples of Experimental Studies (with Randomized Experimental and Control Groups)
in which People Forgive or Learn about Forgiveness

Incest survivors. The forgiveness group became emotionally healthier than the control group after 14 months. Differences between the groups were observed for depression, anxiety, hope, and self-esteem. The results were maintained in a 14-month follow-up.

Drug rehabilitation. The forgiveness group became emotionally healthier than the control group, similar to the above study. The experimental participants' need for drugs declined substantially, relative to the control group. Results were maintained at a 4-month follow-up.

Cardiac patients. Again, the experimental (forgiveness) group became emotionally healthier than the control group. At a 4-month follow-up, the experimental group had more efficiently functioning hearts than the control group.

Emotionally-abused women. Results are similar to the above studies in terms of emotional health (decreased anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms, increased self-esteem).

Terminally-ill, elderly cancer patients. After a 4-week intervention, the forgiveness group showed greater improvement in psychological health (less anger, more hopefulness toward the future) than the control group. Physical indicators of both groups showed declines.

At-risk middle school students in Wisconsin. Those in the experimental group not only improved more in emotional health than those in the control group, but also they improved more in academic achievement than the control counterparts. **At-risk middle school and high school students in Seoul, Korea.** The findings are similar to the above study.

First-grade (Primary 3) children in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Those in the experimental group were less angry than those in the control group. Randomization is by group; analyses are on each individual. **Third-grade (Primary 5) children in Belfast, Northern Ireland.** Those in the experimental group were less angry and depressed and more forgiving than those in the control group.

First-grade and fifth-grade children in Milwaukee's central city. Those in the experimental group were less angry than those in the control group.

Parents of third-grade (Primary 5) children in Belfast, Northern Ireland improved statistically (the parents improved) as they taught forgiveness to their children. The comparison group parents taught art to their children.

Forgiveness Education in Milwaukee's Central City:
Report of Findings, 2007-2008

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August, 2008

Executive Summary

In the 2007-2008 school year, we sent an evaluation form to 58 teachers in Milwaukee's central-city, who had taught the forgiveness education program that year. We had a 33% response rate for a total of 19 teachers. Because we offered a monetary incentive to each, it is unlikely that the results are biased toward only those teachers who liked (or did not like) the program. Highlights of the evaluation are as follows:

- 100% of the teachers found the forgiveness curriculum materials easy to use.
- 68% of the teachers observed that, as a whole, the students decreased in anger as a result of learning about forgiveness.
- 68% of the teachers observed that, as a whole, the students improved in their academic achievement as a result of learning about forgiveness.
- 95% of the teachers thought that they became a better overall instructor as a result of teaching the forgiveness curriculum.
- 95% of the teachers thought that they became a better person as a result of teaching the forgiveness curriculum.
- 95% of the teachers thought that their classrooms as a whole began to function better as a result of the forgiveness curriculum.

Forgiveness Education in Milwaukee's Central City:
Report of Findings, 2008-2009

Robert Enright
August, 2009

Executive Summary

In the 2008-2009 school year, we sent an evaluation form to 85 teachers in Milwaukee's central-city, who had taught the forgiveness education program that year. We had a 38% response rate for a total of 33 teachers. Because we offered a monetary incentive to each, it is unlikely that the results are biased toward only those teachers who liked (or did not like) the program. **Highlights of the evaluation are as follows:**

- 94% of the teachers found the forgiveness curriculum materials easy to use.
- 85% of the teachers observed that, as a whole, the students decreased in anger as a result of learning about forgiveness.
- 75% of the teachers observed that, as a whole, the students improved in their academic achievement as a result of learning about forgiveness.
- 95% of the teachers thought that they became a better overall instructor as a result of teaching the forgiveness curriculum.
- 95% of the teachers thought that they became a better person as a result of teaching the forgiveness curriculum.
- 80% of the teachers thought that their classrooms as a whole began to function better as a result of the forgiveness curriculum.
- 92% of the teachers thought that the school has shown improvement, in part, because of the forgiveness program.

Forgiveness Curriculum Guides for Teachers

Enright, R.D. & Knutson Enright, J. A. (2010). *I can love!: A building block of forgiveness*. Madison,

WI: International Forgiveness Institute. [This is the pre-kindergarten curriculum for ages 4-5]

Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2008). *The heart of love as the building blocks of forgiveness*. Madison,

WI: International forgiveness Institute. [This is the kindergarten curriculum]

Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2002, revised 2008). *The adventure of forgiveness: A guided curriculum*

for children, ages 6-8. Madison, WI: International Forgiveness Institute. [This is the first-grade curriculum.]

Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2003, revised 2008). *Discovering forgiveness: A guided curriculum for*

children, ages 6-8. Madison, WI: International Forgiveness Institute. [This is the second-grade curriculum.]

Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2005, revised 2008). *The joy of forgiveness: A guided curriculum for*

children, ages 9-11. Madison, WI: International Forgiveness Institute. [This is the third-grade in curriculum.]

Enright, R. D. & Knutson, J.A. (2010). *Reaching out through forgiveness*. Madison, WI: International

Forgiveness Institute. [This is the fourth-grade curriculum.]

Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2010). *The journey toward forgiveness*. Madison, WI: International

Forgiveness Institute. [This is fifth-grade curriculum.]

Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2007, revised 2008). *Be your best self: A guided forgiveness education*

curriculum. Madison, WI: International Forgiveness Institute. [This is the sixth-grade curriculum.]

Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2008). *Be your best self: Giving and receiving forgiveness*. Madison, WI:

International Forgiveness Institute. [This is the seventh-grade curriculum.]

Flesch, A. & Enright, R.D. (2010). *Healing through the heroic gift of forgiveness*. Madison: WI:

International Forgiveness Institute.[This is the eighth grade curriculum]

To obtain a curriculum guide, please [go to forgiveness-institute.org](http://forgiveness-institute.org) .

Materials Needed for the Forgiveness Education Curriculum

Pre-Kindergarten Materials (K-4)

► Pre-kindergarten curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classroom year after year)

You Are My I Love You
No Matter What
Fill a Bucket
I Love My New Toy
A Birthday for Frances
Papa, Do You Love Me?

Kindergarten Materials (K-5)

► Kindergarten curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classroom year after year)

I Love You Stinky Face
Little Fur Family
It's Not Easy Being a Bunny
Will You Forgive Me?
The Runaway Bunny

New materials (replenished each year)

Bear Pluffies (one per student or one “mascot” per classroom)

First Grade Materials

► First grade curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classroom from year to year)

Horton Hears a Who
The Sneetches and Other Stories
Horton Hatches the Egg
Yertle the Turtle
The Grinch that Stole Christmas DVD
Tears of the Dragon
The Butter Battle Book
My Many Colored Days
Pumpkin Soup
Activity Sheets to accompany lessons

New materials (replenished each year)

Elephant Pluffies (one per student or one “mascot” per classroom)

Popsicle sticks (one per student)

“Caught you with a softened heart” certificate copies (several per classroom)

Second Grade Materials

► Second grade curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classroom from year to year)

The Fox and the Hound (book and poster)

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs DVD

The Adventures of Winnie the Pooh DVD

Dumbo

You’re Not My Best Friend Anymore

The Fox and the Hound DVD

Cinderella video

Mad Isn’t Bad

New materials (replenished each year)

Dog Pluffies (one per student or one “mascot” per classroom)

“Caught you with a merciful heart” certificate copies (several per classroom)

Third Grade Materials

► Third grade curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classroom from year to year)

Rising Above the Storm Clouds (one book per student)*

The Velveteen Rabbit

The Velveteen Rabbit DVD

The Giving Tree

All the Places to Love

Matthew and Tilly

Caleb’s Story

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

The Quiltmaker’s Gift

You’re Not My Best Friend

Give a Little Love; Put a Little Love CD

Quilting instructions

New materials (replenished each year)

Pipe cleaners (two per student)

1.5 yards of white broadcloth fabric (one per classroom)
Fine tip multi-colored Sharpies (one per classroom)
“Love can make us whole” certificates

Fourth Grade Materials

► Fourth grade curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classroom from year to year)

The Butter Battle Book

Rising Above the Storm Clouds

The Tale of Despereaux (one book per student)*

New materials (replenished each year)

None

Fifth Grade Materials

► Fifth grade curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classroom from year to year)

Summer Wheels

I Had Trouble Getting to Solla Sollew

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe DVD

Ruby Bridges

I'm Furious

New materials (replenished each year)

Tiger in the Tall Grass (one book per student)*

“Sancti Says” certificates (several per classroom)

Sixth Grade Materials

► Sixth grade curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classroom from year to year)

Island of the Blue Dolphins (one book per student)*

A Week in the Woods

Horton Hears a Who

Seventh Grade Materials

► Seventh grade curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classrooms from year to year)

The Mysterious Benedict Society (one book per student)*

The Magic in You
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian DVD

Eighth Grade Materials

► Eighth grade curriculum guide

Carryover materials (stay with classrooms from year to year)

Books:

- *The Year the Swallows Came Early* by Kathryn Fitzmaurice (one per student)*
- *Forgiveness is a Choice* by Dr. Enright, pp. 56-57

Videos and DVDs:

- *Mahatma Gandhi: Pilgrim of Peace* Biography Documentary (A&E Television Networks)
- *Anne of Green Gables* by Sullivan Entertainment, a Kevin Sullivan Production

Internet Resources (Websites and Video Clips):

- The Champions of Forgiveness Website found at <http://www.forgivenessalliance.org/index.html>
- *My Hero Website* at <http://myhero.com/go/home.asp> or at <http://myhero.com>
- Video clip from The Humanity Healing Foundation (5:45) entitled *The Gift of Forgiveness*: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erqJF_ppqb&feature=Playlist&p=02223225426A49D4&index=1
- Video clip from 60 Minutes (00:59 seconds). Immaculee Ilibagiza, who survived the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, discusses her feelings about forgiveness and revenge. <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=2219923n>
- Websites: Pay It Forward Foundation at <http://www.payitforwardfoundation.org/excerpt-older.html> and this teacher resource link: <http://www.payitforwardfoundation.org/educators/projects.html>
- Pay It Forward Day (April 30,2009) Website: <http://www.payitforwardday.com/index.htm>
- Video clip: Charla's Courage Gives Father Beck Pause (02:48) at <http://abcnews.go.com/video/playerIndex?id=9079449>
- “A Quality of Mercy” clip from www.hulu.com or www.theinsider.com (½ hr) http://www.theinsider.com/videos/1331980_The_Twilight_Zone_1_2_hr_A_Quality_Of_Mercy

- A clip about Ruby Bridges: <http://www.forgiving.org/video/Coles&Bridges.wmv> (less than 5 minutes long) from “A Campaign for Forgiveness Research” <http://www.forgiving.org/>.**
- Video clip from the Gill Deacon Show (9:57): <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5367565298748350476&ei=gJ4YS4WIDJHKqwLF68C0DQ&q=forgiveness#>
- Read the continued story of Katy and Ryan at The Forgiveness Project Web-page: <http://www.theforgivenessproject.com/stories/katy-hutchison-ryan-aldrige>

* To best implement the curriculum, each student should have an individual copy of this book but the books remain in the classroom for use by students in the subsequent year.

** To play this video you will need a Windows Media Player or Real Player program.

Forgiveness Process Model

preliminaries

Who hurt you?
How deeply were you hurt?
On what specific incident will you focus?
What were the circumstances at the time? Was it morning or afternoon? Cloudy or sunny? What was said? How did you respond?

PHASE I—UNCOVERING YOUR ANGER

How have you avoided dealing with anger?
Have you faced your anger?
Are you afraid to expose your shame or guilt?
Has your anger affected your health?
Have you been obsessed about the injury or the offender?
Do you compare your situation with that of the offender?
Has the injury caused a permanent change in your life?
Has the injury changed your worldview?

PHASE 2—DECIDING TO FORGIVE

Decide that what you have been doing hasn't worked.
Be willing to begin the forgiveness process.
Decide to forgive.

PHASE 3—WORKING ON FORGIVENESS

Work toward understanding.
Work toward compassion.
Accept the pain.
Give the offender a gift.

PHASE 4—DISCOVERY AND RELEASE FROM EMOTIONAL PRISON

Discover the meaning of suffering.
Discover your need for forgiveness.
Discover that you are not alone.
Discover the purpose of your life.
Discover the freedom of forgiveness.

R. Enright (2001). Forgiveness Is a Choice. Washington, D.C.: APA Books.

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