

Forgiveness

There is no known way to enhance forgetting and suppressing of memory directly. Can try and live in denial.

What happens when we use denial as our main of coping with strong emotions from the past?

- Denial is useful in the short term. It allows us to deal with the situation or event, and then to move on.
- Denial blocks our ability to live life
- Denial blocks the grieving process and doesn't allow us to move on
- Denial does not allow us to deal with the emotional pain. The pain remains the same.

One way to change the past and the way we think about it is to forgive. Forgiving leaves the memory intact but removes and even transforms the sting of the emotional pain. Giving the memory either a neutral or even possibly a positive emotion.

Forgiving self is an important part of our moving forward in maintaining positive mental health.

What happens when we are not able to forgive ourselves?

- Pain of past events stays at the same level in the present
- Lowering of self esteem
- Guilt becomes toxic
- Continue to be the victim
- Grieving over illness and life style is hindered

What happens when we are able to forgive ourselves?

- Reduction of pain so that we are better able to deal with the present more effectively
- Increase in self esteem
- More empowered to make decisions about what we want to do with our lives
- Able to grieve over the past and move through the grieving process to the place where life has more hope and meaning

Blame Theory:

“The most natural reaction in the world is to look for someone or something to blame when a hurt is present.

You might fix blame on the doctor or the hospital – or even on other people.... Somehow the blame has to be put somewhere.... As most people do, you may have put blame on yourself..... ‘If only I had’,

becomes the beginning phrase of most of your sentences”, especially when thinking about the past may mean that you have become trapped in blame.

You may find yourself fixing guilt on yourself. If there is no guilt, you will manufacture some. You may feel the need to punish yourself. It may be that you feel hurt and anger. Hurt and anger may need a place to fixate. You do not know where to put it, so you put it on yourself.

What makes us prone to blame.

- Illness often makes us vulnerable. More prone to the negative
- Hindsight projection onto the past
- Perfect Person
- Cultural expectations
- Systems of blame that focus blame onto individual
- Stigma – deficient, weak, guilty
- Perpetrator blames victim
- Theology that permits blame.

If we accept the blame, then we become over responsible for what has happened and often carry guilt that is not ours to carry

Amy had been diagnosed with a mental illness some years ago. And even though she had been able to manage her illness to the point where she no longer required hospitalization she was still dogged by a low self esteem and still looked back on what had happened as a sense of failure on her part. She had lost friends because of the illness, and many times her friends had made comments about how difficult it had been to be around her. Her boyfriend of the time found it difficult to deal with her and after her first hospitalization had expected her to get better, and when she hadn't he had left. Amy had found it hard to develop new friendships, and tried various groups with little success. She found it too hard to sustain at this stage. Her parents were supportive of her, and yet at times she feels a burden to them. Amy looks back on what has happened to herself and feels as if she has somehow failed and should have prevented this from happening. She feels like she has let her parents down and her friends.

How does Amy go about the process of forgiving herself?

Using the reach model

Important:

Find people who will value and esteem you. This helps deal with the shame.

Deal with the perfect person. Shut it down.

Work through issues dealing with blame

Beliefs, deal with beliefs that reinforce blame theory

R: Recall what happened to you during the illness, using the third person, or journalist model. Give the facts of what happened.

E: Empathize with what has happened. Give possible explanations as to why this person developed their illness. We know there are many reasons why people develop mental health problems

A: A stands for giving yourself the gift of forgiveness. Realize that no one is perfect. Every one makes mistakes. Take yourself off the pedestal. Stop being your worst critic. Start being a friend.

If you have a Christian faith, then God forgave us long ago. Need to accept the gift God has given.

C: Stands for commit yourself to forgive publicly. Write a certificate of forgiveness. Continue to acknowledge that you are human. And when the issue comes up, look at the possible reasons for what has happened. Learn to stop being over responsible for what has happened. Paul Nestor, a peer support worker, says that "Mental Illness is a no blame illness." It is better to focus on the issue of getting better than it is to focus on the why. We don't often know why.

H: Stands for hold onto forgiveness.

Boundaries

Reclaiming our boundaries so that we are safe, and able to manage conflict. We have codes of conduct that we are expected to adhere to, these codes keep the people that we provide a service for safe. We also need boundaries that keep us safe in roles, and manage conflict without the default position having effect

Boundaries and conflict.

Need boundaries that allow us to deal with conflict constructively. Boundaries assist us to take responsibility for our own attitudes, feelings and behaviours. Boundaries also assist us to be aware of what is not our responsibility. Boundaries also assist us to keep the good in and the bad stuff out. Boundaries assist to create personal integrity. Boundaries create limits and help us to be heard. If we don't have clear boundaries we can either become compliant or bullies/boundary breakers.

Some people will have compliant boundaries. There is a fear that love will be withdrawn or that we will not be heard. Can develop fears that make our boundaries soft, or compliant

Fear of:

- Hurting the other persons feelings
- Being abandoned
- Someone else's anger
- Being punished
- Being seen as bad or selfish
- Being seen as spiritual

Become sensitive to criticism, fear of judgement. In conflict cannot hear any kind of criticism even if it is given out of love and care

We can also become boundary breakers, and not hear people's no's

Fear of:

- Losing control
- Of being abandoned
- Being isolated
- Not being loved

It often means that cannot take responsibility for own issues.

Boundaries: What are they?

- Skin: the most basic of boundaries. It defines you in a physical reality as being separate from others. It keeps the good in and the bad out. It protects blood and bone and guts and keeps the bad out like germs, protecting you from infection.
- Words: no and yes. Learning to let your yes be yes and your no, no.
- Truth: knowing the truth about who are you and not allowing someone to undermine that truth is important.

Where do you get your truth from?

- Geographical and emotional distance
- Time
- Others
- Consequences

Need to take the time to reset boundaries.

Owning the gift:

- Feelings
- Attitudes and beliefs
- Behaviours
- Choices
- Values
- Limits
- Talents
- Thoughts
- Desires
- Love

Identify the Symptoms; where have I lost control? Who am I around when this happens?

Identify the conflict in yourself; the need to be liked vs the need to be heard.

Take in and receive the good; learning to have needs met in a healthy manner

Practise boundary skills on trusted people before having a go at the boundary breakers

Say no to the bad; you don't have to be put in a situation that compromises who you are as a person.

Don't fall into the traps

- Why did you say, do, try that?
- Didn't you once say/ isn't it true
- What did you mean by that? What are you waiting for?
- Who do you think you are?
- What gives you the right?
- You are so good, how do we manage without you?
- Using body language to manipulate or control or inflame
- Using gossip to manipulate or inflame.

Forgive the person. Disentangle the person from your life.

Practise responding and not reacting. Set the time and place to discuss issues. Take time out as needed. Breathe deeply

My gift to give; do I want to give it?

Getting rid of the judge, reclaiming the gavel!

If life is a courtroom dealing with conflict will always be an issue. "But when you put yourself on trial, criticism is seen as a rejection and praise is viewed as acceptance." You are constantly worried about what other people think. How will it look to others? What will others think if I do this? What will people say? There is the constant need to please people and to not make a mistake. A constant vigilance, watching, being alert for criticism.

Matt is twenty years old and for many years has believed that he is not as good as his father or brother. Both his father and brother are out-going, can make conversation with others, are able to make decisions quickly and because of their outgoing nature are able to interact

with others with little stress. Matt on the other hand is quiet and reflective, takes time to make decisions and finds it difficult to make conversation. For years he has compared himself to them and often makes judgements against himself. That he is not good enough, that he is not as important and that his needs are not important.

What happens to Matt in conflict situations?

Claire is not known for her tolerance of criticism by others. People are frightened to say anything. She flares when she gets into conflict with others, and yet she is always worried about what other people are thinking about her. She goes out of her way to please people and to make sure she is liked. She is always worried that she will not be like or loved anymore. She hates it when she over-reacts and finds herself having to constantly apologise.

What happens to Claire in conflict situations?

Who is in your arena?

Removing the judge.

Challenging the Judge; Refusing the gavel; refusing the gavels of others.

Claiming love for yourself. Often people can have an underlying message that says, I will not be loved, I will not be loved unless I perform, if I make a mistake I will be rejected, I am not a good Christian unless I do..., I will not be cared for or heard. These statements allow the judge to be in court and your life to be a courtroom drama. Problem is that people will assume this to be true about every relationship they have.

Is the judge in?

Need to reclaim who we are, either through changing our theology of personhood, through a cognitive therapy approach, and or through having a community that allows us to make mistakes and learn that we are still loved and who will celebrate our successes.

I remember some years ago when I told a mate and colleague that if we mentioned the word sin one more time that I would belt him and so began the reworking of a theology

What happens to our ability to manage conflict when the judge is no longer presiding at the bench?

Boundaries and work

A lack of boundaries creates problems in the work place.

- Getting saddled with another person's responsibilities.
Paul is the administrator at the local church that you are currently the minister for. Paul's role is take bookings for the church, make sure that rooms are prepared for seminars and other bookings and to look after the administration of the church

calendar and making sure those resources are available for services and the setting up of the church. Slowly over time you find that you are having to take on more of his role. You are becoming more frustrated and it is affecting your work and role within the church. In fact one person from the church comes and asks whether you are okay, that you look down and that perhaps some time off might be appropriate. You only started 6 months ago.

You speak with your supervisor about the comments from the person from church and on speaking further with your supervisor you discover that Paul has been coming to you and making comments about problems at home and whether you could help out with doing this or that. You are worried that if you don't do it that you will be blamed for the poor performance of the church and that your ministry won't be seen as 'good'.

What is the issue here?

What Boundaries have you let go off?

How do you reset the boundaries?

- Take responsibility for your own feelings, and realise that your unhappiness is not your co-workers fault, but your own
- Act responsibly and go to your co-worker and explain your situation
- Say no to a request that is not your responsibility
- Don't get hooked in their anger and respond with anger. Use emotional distance
- Don't justify why you can't do his work for him
- There will be times when we need to assist a co-worker but not to enable them

- **Working too much overtime.**

We are often live very passionate lives being called to ministry, and there are also many expectations placed on us as ministers. I remember my first 6 months being in ministry as very busy. I was working two 0.5 positions and trying to manage chaplaincy and church roles, and working 55 hours a week trying to manage it all. I remember having just completed 7 services for the week of Christmas and feeling utterly tired and confused. I couldn't understand it. As a nurse I had run wards and units and felt very capable, and yet here I was feeling ready to leave. I realised that my passion and expectations was taking to places that were unhealthy. I asked close friends what they thought was expected of the minister. They listed 40 expectations of what they thought it meant to be a good minister. I also realised that I let my passion drive me further than was healthy.

- What are my expectations and are they healthy
- Use your job description to set limits
- Set boundaries on your time. Decide how much overtime you are willing to do. Some overtime sessional crunches may be expected.

- When will you take time off to recover
- Make a list of tasks you need to complete in the next month. Assign your own priority to the tasks and let others know
- Make sure your job description is reviewed on an annual or bi-annual basis

- **Misplaced priorities.**

We also need to set limits non ourselves. We need to realise how much time and effort we have and to manage that appropriately. Know what you can do and when you can do it and say no to everything else. Effective ministers do two things well: they strive to do excellent work, and they spend time on the most important things. Sometimes we may get side-tracked by other people claiming too much of our time, by allowing other people to set the priorities, or by our own inability to set priorities.

- Realise our limits: limits of time and energy
- Be clear about what the goals are that you have set in ministry
- Learn to say 'no'
- Allot time for certain things and stick to the time.
- Set agendas and times for meetings and committees
- Delegate were necessary

- **Difficult co-workers**

Whether we like to admit it or not we will be faced with the possibility of working with a difficult person. That person will be somebody who we feel is driving us nuts or crazy. The difficult person can have a strong influence over our emotional life and make us feel unsafe and insecure. The issue is that we need to change our response; it is our emotional issues that are at stake here. We need to change our emotional response so that we are able to respond and not react to the person.

- Emotional triggers: Past hurts, Unmet needs, Conflict problems as buttons
- Being aware of people's language
- Don't make promises you cannot keep
- Don't make promises that God cannot keep
- Don't expect adult responses
- Don't tackle the person when energy is low
- Maintain boundaries: especially 'no'
- Looking for and be aware of feeling hooks
- Team up
- Keep notes and if necessary make a complaint

- **Critical attitudes**

Working with supercritical people can be critical to one's health and mission. We can get hooked into trying win the person over, which may never happen, or by becoming defensive and angry and or listening to the criticism and compromising on goals, or affecting us by internalising their negativity

- Keep geographical distance where appropriate
- Maintain an emotional distance, don't internalise their opinion of you or their opinion of the goals and aims of ministry
- Accept them for who they are
- If it is continuing to disrupt the ministry and affecting others. Use a grievance policy to confront the person. Unfortunately most churches do not have one
- Don't get into arguments: Proverbs (:7-8)
- Don't try and gain their approval. Perfect is never good enough

- **Conflict with authority**

Two issues regarding bosses. One could be transference or when the boss has tendencies towards narcissism.

Transference can happen with bosses because they are authority figures and it is possible to transfer our past responses to authority figures onto the current boss. It can cause a strong reaction that is not appropriate to the current relationship.

The boss or supervisor will be acting normally to us but our responses are out of proportion to requests of the supervisor/boss. We may feel like we are being put down or that we are never able to do enough to please them. The reality is that the interaction may be tapping into unresolved hurts from past authority relationships, i.e. parents or teachers. What it means is that we are acting out old patterns and causing harm to the relationship and the person is no-longer themselves but a representative of the past. The question to ask is, are they someone who reminds you of the past? If this is the case then it is time to get some counselling and deal with the past so that you can live fully in the present

A narcissist personality disorder is a completely different situation altogether. This person is very focused on themselves and obtaining kudos on many different levels. The person will have no problems accepting the praise and promotion that other colleagues have done the work for, and they will have very little insight into the feelings of others. They will have a high drive to succeed and be seen to succeed, and will push their team to succeed as well so that they continue to be promoted and noted.

- Do not expect loyalty
- If you are the person in charge let them know that you are:
 - The person in charge
 - You are not going anywhere
 - It would be better for them to direct their ambition elsewhere
 - Be proactive in keeping management aware of any problems or potential problems in this area
 - Keep your comments fair but concise
 - Don't let them know your personal business
- In supervision:
 - Use positive first and criticism later

- Keep suggestions concrete, objective and measurable
- Be aware that they will think that they are able to do your job better and be aware of splitting
- If you have to correct a mistake do not criticise but point out that even the best person can make a mistake
- Stick to your agenda and stay cool
- Make the narcissist a team player; Show them that:
 - There are personal rewards to being a team player
 - Co-workers can be resources and not competitors
 - Other people have talents that they might be able to use
 - Put them in charge of feedback
- **Expecting too much of work**

Either ourselves or others. The work place should be supportive safe and nurturing and this atmosphere should primarily support the person in work related ways, to help them learn more, so that they are able to function safely in their work role, and to get their job done in a professional manner. It does not replace the family or the counsellor and is not setup to provide the primary nurturing, relationship, self-esteem and approval. The job expects adult functioning and the person is expecting something else. There are always professional standards and codes of conduct that need to be adhered to.

Elizabeth had started working at the church office. Initially this seemed ideal as Elizabeth came recommended from her last position and had the skills needed for the position. Lately though it seemed that Elizabeth was taking up more and more of the manager's time. Elizabeth would come in depressed and flat and the manager felt obliged to spend some time talking with her. The time that Elizabeth required to speak with her manager grew to the point that both roles began to suffer. When the manager spoke with Elizabeth about this, she said that she had no-one else to talk to and that her counsellor was away on leave for six months. She also said that her manager was such an understanding person and really felt that the manager was the only one listening to her.

Paul had started as a minister at the church 12months ago. He appeared to be very dedicated and would spend many hours a week at the church preparing for worship, providing pastoral care and was involved in all the groups at the church. People were starting to get worried about Paul; some even asked whether he had a family to go home to. Paul loved being praised for his work and felt kinda special when people praised him, and made comments about how dedicated he was and how special he must be to make such big sacrifices for the ministry.

Don't fall into the trap.

Need to maintain a work family balance: What are your days off?

Make sure that you have supervision on a regular basis

Deal with issues with a counsellor/support group

Having a hobby

If it is another

Use geographical distance as necessary

Limit their time/set a time

Make sure that tasks are done and performed on time

Suggest that they get a counsellor/ not appropriate for me to do this

- **Taking work related stress home**

Need to maintain a boundary between the work place and home

- Emotional conflicts need to be debriefed before going home. If it has been a highly charged day and still hyper-vigilant then ensure more debrief time.
- Do a body check before going home and take time to breathe deeply/meditate before going home
- Exercise is important and needs to be built into the scheme of time management
- Use your diary to manage time
- Build in relaxation time and be aware of adrenaline drop and circadian rhythm