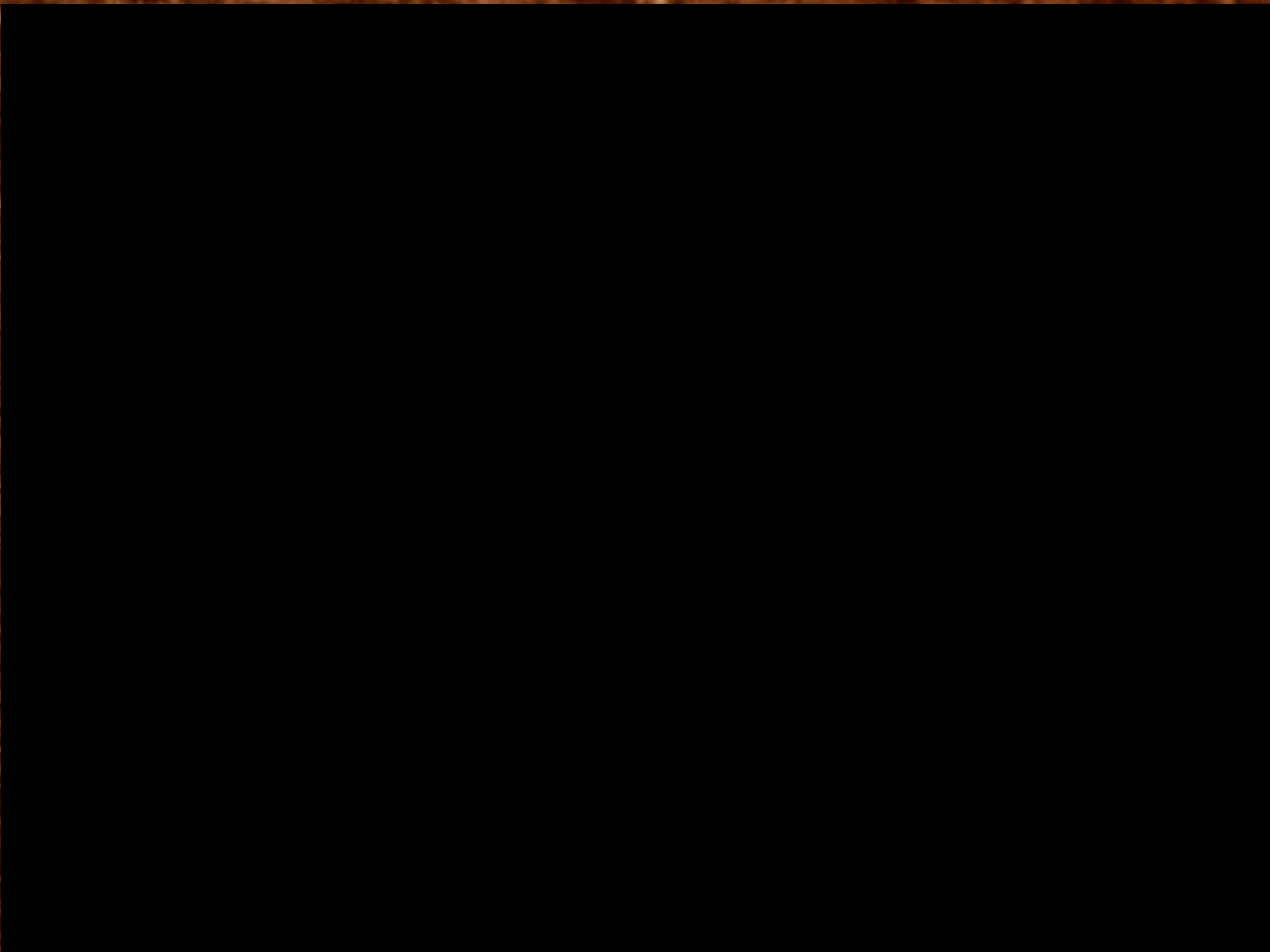


Helping Ourselves and Clients through Forgiveness



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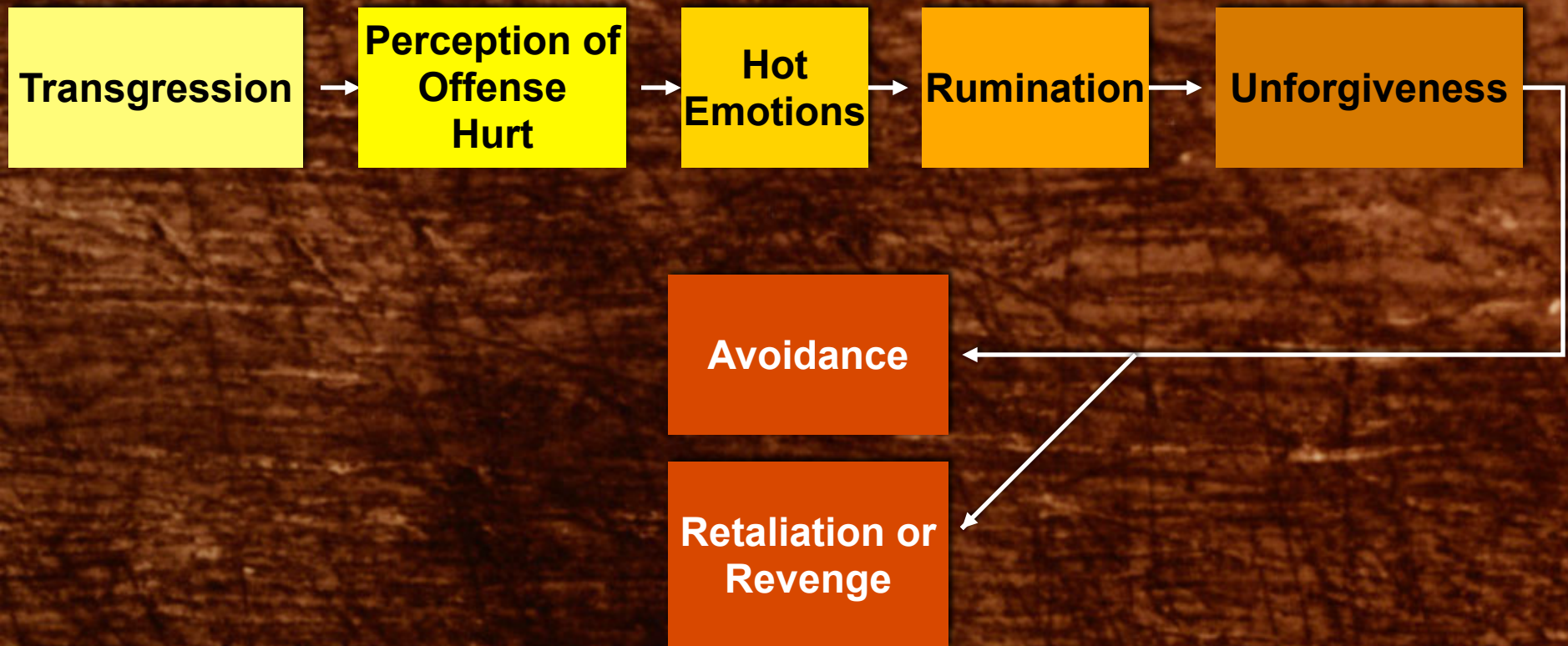
Research from
Everett L. Worthington



Unforgiveness

- In small groups
 - What is unforgiveness?
 - Think of a time when you have struggled to forgive and share it?
- A cold emotional complex of **resentment, bitterness, hostility, hatred, residual anger, and residual fear** in response to ruminating about a transgression perceived as an

Unforgiveness Process



Forgiveness

- What then is forgiveness?
- It is the emotional **replacement of the hot emotions** of unforgiveness with **pro-other emotions**.
- Like?
 - Love, empathy, compassion, or romantic love.
- Forgiveness is enhanced by humility and gratitude over one's own forgiveness.
- Forgiveness does not turn a wrong into a right.

How to Forgive

- What messages have you received about forgiveness from your FOO or those around you?
- What is your response when you hear the cliché “forgive and forget”?
- What if we were to replace it with “remember and forgive”?
- Remember and forgive in order to remember differently.

REACH for forgiveness

(Everett Worthington, 1999)



R: Recall the Hurt

- Remembering but not Ruminating
 - What is the difference?
- Instead of suppressing or justifying feelings of hurt, we experience them and come to grips with them
- If I am ruminating I will only remember the offense and not my provoking or my gossip.
- If I am ruminating I will circulate self-pity and ill feelings, resulting in a loss of perception and a ongoing growth of anger, revenge, and avoidance

E: Empathize

There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. – Martin Luther King Jr.

The three levels of empathy

Understanding: Understanding the point of view of the other person

Emotional Identification: Identify emotionally with the other person (feeling and thinking with the other person)

Compassionate Empathy: Feel compassion toward the person

Encouraging Clients to Develop Empathy Through Reflection?

Access the soft emotions underneath

- Beneath most any attack is fear, stress, worry, and hurt.
- Rather than viewing the attacking person as strong intimidator, view the soft or primary emotions underneath.

Helping Clients Understand the Social Pressure

- People are sensitive to social pressure and will often times will choose popularity or acceptance over fairness and mercy.
- Milgrim Study

Explaining to Clients that we are Hardwired for

- We are hardwired for survival.
- When people perceive threat they attack in return.
- Remember it is a perceived threat so they cannot be condemned on the objective truth.
- So even though I may not have threatened them they feel as if I did.

Showing Clients How We are Conditioned by Past Experiences

- Conditioned reactions (Pavlov)
- People who hurt or offend us often do this because they have been conditioned by their past in order to protect themselves from hurt.
- We can have empathy for them if we know that at one time their attack was needed in order to protect themselves.

Exposing Clients to their and others Lizard Brain

- When feeling **hurt** or **attacked** people resort to our primitive mid-brain which tells us to fight or flight.
- Boxers-punch and counter punch
- Our instincts are free to act unless we contain them. Under anxiety and stress they are more difficult to contain.

Encouraging Clients to Develop Empathy through Action

- Have your clients write a descriptive letter
- Encourage clients to write a letter as if they are the person who hurt you. Be sure that you include the offenders motives, thoughts, and feelings.
- Write a letter of apology
- Write an empathetic letter from the point of the offender.

Empathy through Action Continued

- Write a poem from the view of the transgressor
- Talk with friends that may help you understand the offender
- Empty Chair Technique (client example video)

A: Altruistic Gift of Forgiveness

- Giving to the other person simply for their good
- An altruistic gift of forgiveness requires humility. Humility is earned by recognizing our own brokenness

Show Clients How They Have Hurt Others

- Because we have recklessly and carelessly hurt those around us we should not hold them to a level of accountability that we do not hold ourselves to.
- Feelings of revenge are minimized when we realize what revenge is due us.

Guilt

Ask the client to recall a specific incident in which they did something to hurt or offend a person and afterward, the person completely forgave them even though they didn't deserve it

Gratitude

The counselor then instructs the person to talk (or write) about how it felt to be forgiven. Ask them to describe the good feelings of gratitude and release and freedom in detail.

Gift

The counselor gives a summary of the guilt, gratitude and then asks the client if they would like to give the altruistic gift of forgiveness.

C: Commit Publicly to Forgive

- *I am ashamed that my tongue cannot live up to my heart. –AUGUSTINE*
- Convince the client that commitment is necessary because they will almost certainly be ambushed by past fear
 - You see the offender
 - You are hurt similarly by someone else
 - Under high stress
 - Or the offender re-hurts you

Encourage Clients to:

- Say aloud that you have forgiven
- Talk about having forgiven and express your resolve to maintain forgiveness
- Write a certificate of forgiveness for the offense
- Write a letter to the offender expressing forgiveness for the act (but don't send it)
- Read the letter aloud to the counselor
- Send the letter if determined appropriate between the counselor and client.

H: Hold onto Forgiveness

- Six actions that you can encourage clients to take
 - Remind the client that recalling the hurt, feeling the pain of the hurt, or being afraid that the person will hurt again does not mean that forgiveness is void
 - Encourage client not to dwell on negative emotions
 - Tell client's not to stop the unforgiving thoughts (Daniel Wegner's white bear. Occupy yourself with other things)

Last Three

- Have clients focus on the steps that they have completed on the forgiveness pyramid.
- Encourage them to re-read the certificate of forgiveness or the letter forgiving the hurt
- Determine whether additional forgiveness is indeed necessary
- If you have completed the model and the negative feelings continue to exist there may be a part of the transgression that is still not forgiven