

# FORGIVENESS AS THE PATH TO PEACE

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Conflict in this world pervades all cultures and can deepen and divide if not corrected. Negotiation, dialogue, and the quest for understanding and reconciliation will not happen if resentment is borne in the heart. The only effective way to cure the disease of resentment is to forgive those who have been unfair. Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has identified a reliable pathway to forgiving that can lead to the cessation of resentment and the advent of healthy emotions and relationships.

To forgive is to see the other person, who did the injuring, as a person of inherent (built-in) worth. To forgive is not to find excuses for unjust behavior, or to forget (lest the injustice happens again), or even to reconcile (because to reconcile is not a virtue in and of itself, but instead is a negotiation strategy of two or more people coming together again in mutual trust). One can forgive unconditionally without necessarily reconciling until the other is trustworthy, at least to a degree. Forgiveness and justice grow up together side-by-side. When one forgives by offering a cessation of resentment and the acknowledgement of the other's inherent worth, the forgiver still asks something of the other in terms of justice.

Forgiveness education is a concept which we have developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We now have 17 forgiveness education curriculum guides, from age 4 through age 18, an anti-bullying forgiveness guide, and two guides to help parents work on forgiveness themes with their children. Forgiveness education now is in 31 countries of the world. We at the International Forgiveness Institute personally shepherd forgiveness programs in Madison (Wisconsin), Belfast, Liberia, Athens and Thessaloniki, Greece, Northern Israel, and the Philippines. We have branches of the International Forgiveness Institute ([internationalforgiveness.com](http://internationalforgiveness.com)) in Greece, Lebanon, Liberia, the Philippines, Slovakia, and South Africa. Forgiveness therapy, as a major form of psychotherapy to help adults reduce in depression, anxiety, and anger and increase in hope and joy, is considered by the American Psychological Association to be a sound, scientifically-tested approach to psychotherapy.

## References

- Enright, R.D. (2015). *8 Keys to Forgiveness*. New York: W.W. Norton  
Enright, R.D. and Fitzgibbons, R. (2015). *Forgiveness Therapy*. Washington, DC: APA Books.