Meanings of forgiveness in psychotherapy

A hermeneutic literature review

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Abstract

This study takes a hermeneutic approach, informed by existing empirical and theoretical literature that considers the relevance, role, and meanings of forgiveness as a component of psychotherapy. The research question was "meanings of forgiveness in psychotherapy."

The situation considered throughout the study, is that of a person presenting in therapy who has been impacted by an interpersonal grievance or psychological hurt because of trauma or pain inflicted by another person. Forgiveness by the client, of the person who caused the distress, was the focus of the study. This might also be expressed as the question, how can psychotherapy that includes support of the client to forgive the offender, enhance the wellbeing of the client, and the wellbeing of the client's interpersonal relationships?

Forgiveness is defined, and the elements of the definition used to inform understandings of the various aspects of forgiveness. The pitfalls, false mimics of forgiveness, and what forgiveness is not, are discussed. Forgiveness is related to relationship restoration (reconciliation), reparation, revenge, and repentance.

In this hermeneutic study, the source of material was previous research completed and interpreted by researchers who in some cases had followed a hermeneutic approach themselves. In the analysis of key themes discovered in this research, I brought the different researcher's perspectives together to discover more general interpretations.

Klein's (1946) concept of the depressive position as a needed starting point for forgiveness is discussed. Attachment theory as described by Bowlby (1982) and Ainsworth (1977) is used as a basis for understanding underlying reasons leading a client to be disposed, or otherwise, towards forgiveness. Models of forgiveness are discussed in detail, and include interpersonal models, intrapersonal models, process models, emotion centred models, and a biopsychosocial stress and coping theory. A process model of forgiveness therapy is outlined.

This study suggests that forgiveness in conjunction with other aspects of psychotherapy, can be advantageous for clients. Forgiveness may serve to facilitate resolution of inner issues such as hatred, and bitterness contributing to healing and wellbeing. Forgiveness is also discussed as a step towards reconciliation and a way of repair for some dysfunctional relationships in which relationship restoration is desirable. Care is needed to avoid both the therapist and the client from misunderstanding forgiveness. A variety of mimics exist in popular psychology that can readily distract from genuine forgiving, and lead to an unhelpful illusion of forgiveness and reconciliation, that accomplishes little of real relationship repair or improvement in wellbeing.

Examples from the public domain are used to illustrate many key aspects of forgiveness.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institute of higher learning.

Signed:

Name: Rodger Chesterfield

Dated: 14 February 2022

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The research and writing of this dissertation has coincided with the world event of Covid 19. There have been many weeks of lockdown with associated stresses which have added significant pressure.

Part time study in parallel with the many other responsibilities of an older student in employment, at home and in the community is a significant challenge and commitment. Though managing this pressure reasonably effectively during the six years of part time study including papers and clinical work for the master's of psychotherapy degree, the final element of the programme, this dissertation, seemed to be a significantly more demanding hurdle to complete.

A student completing their dissertation at the same time, Bridget, has provided peer support. Exchanging emails and occasional meetings at a café has been a means of encouragement, helping each other retain focus. Having a fellow student's support while engaged with the same process has been a significant benefit. Thank you, Bridget.

I appreciate all who have contributed to supporting me in this research endeavour. Thank you.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Contextualising examples

In September 2021, in Timaru, a town in Aotearoa New Zealand, a mother took the lives of her three young children. The family (husband, wife and three children) had arrived from South Africa three weeks earlier to start a new life in Aotearoa New Zealand. The husband and wife were apparently in a stable relationship, and both were professionally trained with occupations in medicine. Graham, the husband, arrived home at 9:40 pm one evening to find his wife injured; she had taken the lives of their two-year-old twins and their six-year-old sister. The whole country was deeply shocked and horrified at this tragedy. The event and the circumstances associated with it were a focus of media attention over several weeks, attracting intense public interest, and disbelief. Two weeks later, the husband Dr Graham Dickason is quoted as having said, "I have forgiven my wife and feel she is as much a victim in this tragedy as the slain siblings" (Leask, 2021). He went on to add, "I have already forgiven her (his wife) and I urge you in your own time to do the same; it is the key to healing this loss we have all experienced" (Leask, 2021).

In March 2019, Muslims were attacked while praying at a mosque in Christchurch, another city in Aotearoa New Zealand. The attacker held radical anti-Muslim views. He killed 50 people. The people of New Zealand were outraged and disgusted that such an atrocity could occur. During the prosecution of the gunman, the following responses were reported from the court room proceedings in 2020. Speaking to the killer, one person, a Muslim, who's relative had been killed, said, "I do not forgive you for what you have done. While you are in prison you will come to realise that you are now in hell – and only the fire awaits you" (Brown, 2020). The father of the youngest person murdered said he would "never forgive" the terrorist for the loss of his three-year-old son (Brown, 2020).

In the same proceedings, it was reported that Janna Ezat, whose son Hussein Al-Umari was murdered at the Al Noor Mosque, also of Muslim faith, told the gunman she forgave him. "I decided to forgive you Mr Tarrant because I don't have hate. I don't

have revenge," she said directly to the terrorist in the court room. "In our Muslim faith we say . . . we are able to forgive, forgive." "I forgive you. Damage was done and Hussein will never be here, so I have only one choice, to forgive you." (Graham-McLay, 2020). Tarrant is reported as having nodded in acknowledgment of her words before blinking profusely and wiping one of his eyes. It was Tarrant's only show of emotion reportedly seen by the court room observer that day (Graham-McLay, 2020).

Another relative, Ahmed, whose wife Husna was one of the 50 killed, told the crowd that as a man of faith, he had forgiven his wife's killer because he did not want to have, "a heart that is boiling like a volcano." "I want a heart that will be full of love and care and full of mercy and will forgive easily, because this heart doesn't want any more lives to be lost," he said, to applause in the court room (Graham-McLay, 2020).

Many more stories could be recounted from different cultural contexts and different times in history; some stories of forgiveness, and some of refusal to forgive. The foregoing stories were chosen because they were Aotearoa New Zealand stories at the time of writing this dissertation. The stories are like a seed plot for several concepts that are discussed in this research on forgiving. The forgiving recounted, seemed generous to the point of being beyond belief. Was the forgiveness part of self-healing? In one account the forgiver asserts it was, and in others it is implied. In one account, the aggrieved is unforgiving and vindictive; was this also healing?

There are ancient Biblical accounts of forgiveness, showing a long history of forgiving in human history. An account from approximately 1500 BC is in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. Joseph when 17 years old, was sold by his brothers into a foreign country as a slave, suffered false accusations, and was imprisoned for years in Egypt. His brothers had lied to their father, alleging Joseph had been killed. When Joseph was 30, he was appointed as Vizier of Egypt (the highest official under the pharaoh). Joseph's brothers came to Egypt because of a famine. Joseph met his brothers and said to his brothers, who were amazed to meet him, and were dependent on his mercy,

> "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. Joseph said to his brothers, "please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother,

whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life" (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis, 45:3-5).

Joseph, now in a position of power, expressed the desire that the offenders, his brothers, should not be self-angry, but seek reconciliation, thereby making forgiveness implicit.

As I write these accounts, I notice a mingling of emotional responses within myself. They include surprise, awe, admiration, relief, and amazement. I am aware some readers may respond to these stories of forgiveness with disappointment, anger, or exasperation at the inappropriateness of forgiving, feeling forgiveness is superficial abdication of needed deep healing of inner hurt.

Reflecting on these examples, I wondered what the outcome would have been, if Dr Graham Dickason (the husband of the mother that killed their children in Timaru), the relative of a slain child at the mosque, Janna Ezat, or Joseph of the Old Testament, had experienced therapy conversations after experiencing the hurt they suffered.

These stories are linked to concepts discussed in the literature review and findings, as they illustrate key features of forgiveness and provide a human face to the concepts discussed.

Research focus

Damaged relationships are significant contributors to the difficulties that people have in their lives, not only in respect to relationships in which the hurt has occurred, but in the wider context of living effectively in society (Mitchell, 1988). This research is designed to understand the relevance, role, and importance of forgiveness as a component of psychotherapy. The consequences of unforgivingness seem to be far reaching, impacting relationships, wellbeing, thought life, and emotions. The issue of focus in this research is, can psychotherapy help by including attention to forgiveness in therapy?

This study is focused on the situation in which a person presenting for therapy has been hurt or traumatised by an interpersonal grievance. The association between being wronged and the experience of psychic pain may be identified by the client, or pain may emerge in therapy, brought to awareness in conversation with the therapist. The hurt may be recognised as impacting on general wellbeing as well as impacting the clients' relationships. Forgiveness may be identified as an aspect of therapy that can be helpful, possibly complementing other therapy focused on the client's wellbeing. The focus of attention in this research, in the context of psychotherapy, is forgiveness between the client and the person who caused the distress. Hence the research focus, meanings of forgiveness in psychotherapy.

Forgiveness is defined and discussed. The discussion also identifies pitfalls and false mimics of forgiveness, what forgiveness is not, and the psychological elements of a person that impact on forgiveness. The discussion includes relating forgiveness to interpersonal reconciliation, reparations, revenge, repentance, and the experience of forgiveness that may occur between client and therapist. A discussion of Klein's concept of the depressive position as a needed starting point for forgiveness is important. Attachment theory as described by Bowlby and Ainsworth (Ainsworth et al., 1977; Bowlby, 1982) provides insights into factors that affect the client's disposition or otherwise, towards forgiveness. Models of forgiveness are discussed: interpersonal models, intrapersonal models, process models, emotion-centred models, and a biopsychosocial stress and coping theory. A process model of forgiveness therapy is also outlined, and alternatives to forgiveness are identified.

The approach was a hermeneutic study of literature that researched forgiveness in the context of therapy. This dissertation presents secondary research based on publicly available material. The literature reviewed is focused primarily on empirical and theoretical studies that discuss the role of forgiveness in psychotherapy. Other literature referenced contributes to the understanding of forgiveness both from a theoretical and experiential perspective. Literature that discusses the psychological aspects of people that impact on their inclination or capacity to forgive is also included.

No primary research material collected from interactions with people is included, and no information that identifies any individuals is divulged unless already in the public domain.

Literature introduction

This section introduces some literature related to forgiveness. It aims to outline the concept of forgiveness, and how literature related to forgiveness informs therapeutic practice in the framework of therapy, particularly psychotherapy. A definition and a more comprehensive discussion of the elements of forgiveness are included in the literature review of this dissertation. This introduction intends to only introduce some elements of the notion of forgiveness.

A primary focus of forgiveness is that there are benefits for the forgiver. Forgiveness may therefore be seen as an emotional strategy for self-care. Forgiveness is a way of dealing in grace with the destructive character of anger and retribution that can keep people stuck with unresolved painful interpersonal difficulties (Byock, 2014). Another important focus is that forgiveness is a means to restore normative relationships with the people who have caused offence or harm (Alford, 2013). Forgiveness is not only focused on self-care but on establishing healthier relationships (Alford, 2013). The latter view embraces reconciliation as a concept associated with forgiveness. These two elements are more clearly differentiated in the findings chapter. Both descriptions are depicted in the stories of forgiveness that open this chapter. Ahmed said, "I want a heart that will be full of love and care and full of mercy." In this statement, Ahmed recognises the need for inner repair, and for relationships characterised by mercy.

Forgiveness may be considered by some as a virtue (Alford, 2013), and a distinctive virtue, because anger is given up without compromising wise judgement (Roberts, 1995), although this is not a universal perspective. Forgiveness is an appropriate response to an interpersonal injustice (vanOyen Witvliet & Luna, 2017) although it may be argued that not all interpersonal injustices should be forgiven (Erskine, 1973; Wahking, 1981).

A transgressor's actions have hurt a victim in some way, so forgiveness may be a useful response (vanOyen Witvliet & Luna, 2017), but there may be other responses as outlined in the foregoing stories, and which may have therapeutic value. When hurt occurs in relationships, a variety of responses may occur, including holding a grudge, seeking revenge, bitterness, resentment, and hate, or conversely, mercy and kindness may be expressed in forgiveness (Martin et al., 2011). Forgiveness was found in this study to be a useful therapeutic means of healing, but not without caveats. There is no universal consensus for a definition of forgiveness, or what forgiveness is not, but there are some common understandings that are introduced in this chapter and further elaborated in the literature review.

Forgiveness may be defined as the achievement of a realistic, balanced view of a relationship, a release from being controlled by negative affect towards another person, or a lessened desire to punish or obtain retribution (Gordon & Baucom, 1998). Forgiveness also includes increases in positive thoughts, feelings, and motives towards the offending person (Wade & Worthington, 2003), although this is not a universal perspective. Forgiveness recognises the humanity of the offender, does not minimise the reality of the offence or injustice, and desires a positive change for the offender (vanOyen Witvliet & Luna, 2017). An alternative definition describes forgiveness as increased understanding of the other, with the objective of being less conditioned by negative thoughts, feelings or behaviours (Gordon et al., 2005). Forgiving is more significant than simply excusing or forgetting a perceived injustice. These distinctions are discussed in the findings of this research.

A person who has been offended is likely to feel sadness, fear, and humiliation and possibly desire retribution. However, merely changing the emotions does not constitute forgiveness (vanOyen Witvliet & Luna, 2017). To help clarify the meaning of forgiveness, it is helpful to identify what forgiveness is not. Forgiveness is not excusing, minimising, tolerating, or denying that an offence has occurred (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; vanOyen Witvliet & Luna, 2017; Worthington et al., 2016; Worthington, 2009). Forgiveness is not the same as the restoration of a relationship (Smedes, 1996). Forgiveness requires a transformation within the victim, which is distinct from building

trust, however, building trust is necessary if reconciliation is to follow (Worthington, 2003).

Forgiveness may be a significant therapeutic remedy (Hertlein & Brown, 2018); hence its importance in the context of psychotherapy. The healing power and transformational effects of forgiveness are significant, suggesting forgiveness may be an appropriate focus for treatment of deep relationship-related hurts (Hannon et al., 2012). Using theoretically grounded forgiveness interventions appears helpful for clients dealing with past offences against them (Wade et al., 2014).

Personal perspective

My interest and sense of significance of forgiveness has arisen from a combination of several parts of my life. My experience as a business manager for over 20 years, often gave me opportunities to observe the impact of past unresolved hurts in the lives of colleagues. From these observations I became increasingly aware of my own attitudes, and thinking about forgiveness in my business dealings, my personal relationships, and in family contexts.

I have noticed in my practice as a trainee psychotherapist, that clients with unresolved past relationship hurts seem to be encumbered with a burden they struggle to be freed from. They seem caged, weighed down with pain, anger, and hurt, and I feel being in their presence, their emotions become transferred to me. I have wondered if in some cases the emotional burden would be relieved by forgiving those who offended against them. I have noticed a growing curiosity about whether, and how, forgiveness may inform psychotherapy practice and add a dimension to therapy that may be helpful to clients.

I am married and have children. In marriage and family life there are many times I hurt and am hurt. I have noticed that for me, personally holding, even nurturing hurt, and seeking retaliation, adversely impacts not only my relationships, but also my state of mind and emotions.

If I had not undergone major surgery 15 years ago, my life expectancy would have been significantly shorter than is now the case. This experience served to sharpen my awareness of what is important, making me more aware of barriers in my interpersonal relationships. I felt encouraged to be more active in seeking to address inconsistencies between my espoused beliefs (which included the need to forgive others) and my practice. Forgiving took on a greater significance than before and was also challenging.

I am now in my final year of psychotherapy training. The importance of supporting clients to address dysfunctional relationships has been a key feature of therapy during my training, but there has been no attention to the subject of forgiveness. This observation, in conjunction with the experiences I have outlined, has aroused interest in the concept and practice of forgiving in the context of psychotherapy. This research identifies forgiveness as an important part of psychotherapy, that when integrated with other aspects of the practice of psychotherapy, can lead to improved outcomes for clients.

I am aware that the subject of forgiveness has received scant attention in psychodynamic literature but is prevalent in the popularised self-help literature. Freud, often thought of as the father of psychotherapy, made minimal reference to the concept of forgiveness. The topic was not referenced in any systematic way in his writings.

I perceive forgiveness to be regarded with suspicion by some therapists, who may understand forgiveness to be a superficial way to escape hurt, and a mechanism to avoid facing the real psychological damage that may have been inflicted on a person's psyche by others' wrongdoing. Others share this view (Murphy, 2002). Revenge, or other processes rather than forgiveness, may be seen to be more effective ways to deal with deep hurts inflicted by others (McCullough, 2008). The consequences of hurts are significant, so the question grappled with is how to effectively facilitate healing. I sense that overtones of religiosity associated with forgiving may also contribute to caution in the minds of therapists who understand psychotherapy as

being science based, and therefore likely to be warped if religious concepts are introduced.

Dissertation structure

Following this introduction, chapter two is a literature review presenting key concepts of forgiveness. The literature review provides a brief history of forgiveness in the context of psychology, then using a definition for forgiveness, discusses key aspects of forgiveness, the characteristics of unforgiveness, and what forgiveness is not, including a variety of concepts that may be mistaken for forgiveness. These sections are designed to clarify the meaning of forgiveness and identify the components of change needed for forgiveness to occur. A variety of concepts associated or contrasted with forgiveness are also discussed, such as revenge, repentance, reconciliation, and self-forgiveness.

Chapter three discusses the hermeneutic methodology used in this research and the methods adopted within the hermeneutic framework.

Chapter four discusses the research findings, psychological insights related to forgiveness relevant in psychotherapy, and models of forgiveness. These include the topics of hope, mentalisation, and the significant focus on the depressive position, as described by Klein (1946). Attachment theory is discussed to assist understandings of a person's barriers against, or predisposition towards forgiveness. Finally in Chapter four, models of forgiveness therapy are outlined. Linked with both findings' chapters are references to the connections between the concept of forgiveness, and the relevance and application of forgiveness in the context of therapy.

Chapter five, the concluding discussion, summarises the research findings, presents the implications and limitations of the research, and suggests future possible opportunities for research related to forgiveness.

Chapter 2.   Literature Review – History, Definitions, and Key Concepts

This literature review provides a brief history of forgiveness in the context of psychology, then, based on a definition, discusses key aspects of forgiveness, the characteristics of unforgiveness, and what forgiveness is not, including a variety of concepts that may be mistaken for forgiveness. These sections were designed to clarify the meaning of forgiveness and encourage understanding of the elements of forgiving that may need attention in therapy, as well as clarifying what forgiveness is not. A variety of concepts associated or contrasted with forgiveness is then discussed, including why not to forgive, trauma, revenge and reparation, reconciliation, repentance, receiving forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and alternatives to forgiveness. The contents of the chapter are linked to therapy practice. The accounts of forgiveness and refusal to forgive outlined in the introduction, are used to illustrate several key points.

Brief history: Forgiveness from a psychological perspective

This history is focused on the psychology of forgiveness. The history of forgiveness as a notion has a much longer heritage than its association with psychology. For Judaism, the origins are in the Old Testament of the Bible, and for Christianity its origins are in the Bible's New Testament. Many religions espouse forgiveness, and the concept is embedded in each of their relevant foundational documents and has been encouraged for thousands of years (Rye et al., 2000). The religious overtones associated with the ideas of forgiveness may have contributed to the neglect and suspicion of the topic in psychotherapy literature and practice.

Religion, and in particular forgiving, may be perceived as providing a way to evade personal issues, an avoidance mechanism that is unhealthy and validates not facing or grappling with relationship dysfunction deeply. The hesitancy to discuss or include forgiveness as part of therapy may arise because forgiving has been associated with religion, and not science (Denton & Martin, 1998). Forgiving, along with religion, has often been understood as a shallow and superficial way to avoid important internal psychological issues. Forgiving may be perceived as likely to suppress issues for a time

rather than provide underlying psychological solutions. Non-religious people may perceive forgiving as an unhelpful defence used to justify fleeing their own emotional and mental reality. The defence of forgiving for religiously inclined people may furthermore evolve into pride, and a shallow self confidence that issues are resolved because they have forgiven. The superficial comfort of having forgiven offences may fortify or insulate them from facing inner truths. This discomfort with forgiving may have some validity, depending on what understanding of forgiveness is held.

In the initial years of scientific psychology there was little reference to the subject of forgiveness. This lack of interest included Freud and others that followed him, as well as those from different psychological traditions such as Carl Jung, Alfred Adler and others (McCullough et al., 2000). Forgiveness, however, may be viewed as a concept that blends psychological and interpersonal constructs (Akhtar, 2002). Forgiveness has emerged as a concept in therapy in clinical practice for a few practitioners. Forgiveness may be perceived as distinct from psychological phenomena such as anxiety, narcissism, and hate, which have often been the focus of psychotherapy rather than courage, love, wisdom, and hope (Akhtar, 2002).

From the perspective of the history of forgiveness in the social sciences, the history can be divided into two periods. The first period, 1930-1980, was characterised by theoretical considerations, and minimal empirical work was designed to understand forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2000). In this period, Piaget and Behn discussed forgiveness, focusing on the capacity to forgive growing out of the development of moral judgement, while Litwinski in 1945 described the affective structure needed for interpersonal forgiving (McCullough et al., 2000). Also during this period, some theological commentators articulated from a pastoral or religious perspective, that forgiving of offences, and the sense of being forgiven by God, helped maintain mental health (Beaven, 1951 ; Johnson, 1947). The idea was also expressed that forgiveness could be described as the foregoing of revenge, which was linked to an effort to be consistent with personally held ethical standards (Emerson, 1964; Heider, 1958).

The second of the two periods identified, 1980 to the present, has seen a significant increase in research and emphasis on the importance of forgiving those that have

offended against victims, as part of therapy (McCullough et al., 2000). During this period there was an increased focus on how forgiving related to mental health, and the treatment of mental health from a clinical perspective (Fitzgibbons, 1986; McCullough et al., 2000). This developed into encouraging forgiveness in therapy as a means to address the hurt of being a victim, with the intention of improving mental health (Hebl & Enright, 1993) and demonstrated as relevant to a variety of populations in empirical research (Freedman & Enright, 1996). In addition, several researchers explored the social and psychological issues that underlie forgiving, finding that a person's willingness to forgive an offender can be explained by understanding an offender's perceived responsibility, motives and intentionality, and the severity of the offence (Boon & Sulsky, 1997). A large body of research was generated on the subject of forgiveness when the John Templeton Foundation funded 30 separate research efforts at different institutes in the late 1990s (McCullough et al., 2000).

Having briefly reviewed the historical context of forgiveness, a more detailed consideration of forgiveness is needed. The following is not only intended to clarify a definition, but also to identify the key elements of forgiveness that need to be part of psychotherapy when a client is seeking to understand forgiveness in their personal circumstance.

What is forgiveness?

This discussion builds on the concepts introduced in Chapter one. Clarity of definition is of practical value in applying conceptualisations of forgiveness to clinical practice. If therapists and clients do not understand forgiveness, this will contribute to potentially unhelpful therapeutic interventions in cases of unresolved interpersonal resentments, bitterness, hatred, and anger (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Without a clear understanding of forgiveness, therapists are at risk of falsely representing what is involved in forgiveness. A shallow mimic of forgiveness will inadvertently accentuate client pain and generate false hope of personal healing. The features of forgiveness that require focus in therapy are discussed in this section.

Most definitions include several core aspects of forgiving. One such definition proposes that the act of forgiving is to give up resentment or claim to requital, to grant relief from payment or reparations, to cease resentment against the offender (Merriam-Webster, 1998). A key observation from this definition is that the offended person needs to give up what would otherwise be perceived as their right to retribution. Also implied, is the need to resolve unpleasant angry emotions and adopt a change of attitude to the offending person. These implications provide the groundwork for being free of claims over the offender (Akhtar, 2002). As a result, the changes lead to a change in relationship to the offender.

The next definition is the basis of a discussion in the subsequent paragraphs. Key aspects of forgiveness are identified and discussed, and sometimes illustrated, drawing on the stories recounted in the introduction chapter that contextualised the subject in human narratives. The intent in this chapter is not only to clarify understandings of forgiveness, but more importantly, an understanding of what a client's experience of forgiveness is likely to entail. This will be needed if clients are going to receive the benefits of forgiveness.

The definition used in this dissertation is that *forgiveness* requires first rationally determining unfair treatment or hurt. Forgiving is a choice to abandoning resentment and endeavouring to respond to the wrongdoer based on the principles of beneficence and unconditional worth, which may include compassion, generosity, and love (to which the offender has no right) (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Some definitions of forgiveness notably neglect reference to the idea of forgiveness requiring compassion or some similar responses to replace the abandonment of resentment, but are similar in most other respects (Denton & Martin, 1998; Hargrave & Sells, 1997). The consensus view spanning most definitions is that forgiveness is interpersonal and intrapsychic, and that it takes place over time and requires choice (Konstam et al., 2002). The following section explores the key concepts of forgiveness, and therefore, what is needed in the experience of a forgiver. The structure of the definition and the following discussion has an embedded progression, and each element is needed. Forgiveness has experiential steps, each building on the previous.

The forgiveness process though unique to every individual, is also a process with ordered features that need to be experienced for forgiveness to be appropriated. It is important that a therapist working with a client is aware of the various components of forgiveness that are now discussed, so that a therapy conversation related to forgiveness is appropriately informed. The absence of any of the features may compromise a client's experience of forgiving and the associated benefits.

Rational assessment

Rationally determining, means that the offended person makes a considered judgement and seeks to be as realistic as possible, deliberately desiring not to distort the reality of the nature and motives of the hurt or offence suffered. This is inevitably subjective and impacted by emotions, the relationship history, the history of other relationships, the personality of the person, the psychological state of the person, and current pressures the person is coping with. For example, a therapist needs to assess if a borderline personality disorder is evident, and whether an injustice may have been manufactured in the imagination of the client (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

A claim of injustice may reflect a defence mechanism warranting a very different understanding, so forgiving may not be relevant. Supporting a client to focus on concrete incidents is likely to be helpful. Without this initial clarity, a false or inappropriate forgiveness may develop and be a distraction from addressing the real issues of importance to the client. I suggest it may be argued that this element in forgiveness, rationally determining, may in some instances become problematic because the notion of rationality is subjective, reality being whatever is real to a person at a particular point in time. An offended person is often in an emotionally aroused state, which complicates rational determination.

Joseph in the Old Testament was able to rationally respond to his brothers who had sold him into slavery. He explained, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here." (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 45:4,5). Joseph did not minimise the offence, but plainly stated it, and required his brothers to face the reality of his family relationship with him. Their victim (Joseph) was now facing them in a new

position of power. This would be difficult for them to cope with probably, arousing their sense of guilt. Joseph did not express anger towards them. He understood they were likely to be angry at themselves, as they were now forced to confront their behaviour towards him when he was a teenager. Joseph realised that self-anger was appropriate but not sufficient for his brothers to move from self-condemnation to receive forgiveness. He demonstrated a capacity to rationally understand the situation but not ignore the emotion of the situation. Joseph as recorded in the narrative, spoke rationally and with tears.

Choosing to change

To choose to abandon has two components, choosing and abandonment. Both these elements rely on the capacity of the person involved, that capacity being a mix of will (mind strength) and emotional strength. Neither choosing nor abandonment are reached easily. Therapy may be helpful in building the capacity needed if a client desires the capacity to choose or abandon hurt. This is a key entry to the experience of forgiving. The abandonment of holding the offence, although needed for forgiving (as per the definition given), is only a component of forgiving, and is necessary, but not sufficient for forgiveness. In the Mosque killings, Ahmed had the strength to make a definite choice to change his attitude to the Mosque killer, and had the strength to say so with clarity, knowing his statement would receive national reporting.

Forgiveness is not generally binary. As a person progressively forgives, so the anger and hurt within the offended diminishes (Enright & Rique, 2004). The shifts in emotions, thoughts, and behaviour may be so gradual that they are barely perceptible by either the offended or offender. The changes may not necessarily grow out of a conscious decision to be different, but may be very gradual, emerging from imperceptible gradual shifts of thinking and emotion. The shift towards forgiving may not progress linearly, but rather fluctuate over time, depending on factors such as stress levels, physical health, and the stability of other relationships in the life of the offended person. As the process of forgiving progresses, the aspects of emphasis may also change, initially perhaps with a focus on understanding the severity of the hurt,

then focusing on resentment reduction, and then on compassion, but the sequence may be unique to each forgiving experience (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Forgiveness requires a change of attitudes and emotions over time, and is not likely to be instantaneous, but rather, gradual (Worthington, 2006). This is particularly true when a close relationship has been adversely impacted, as forgiveness in its fullness is often difficult to assess for all involved. Forgiveness is subjective, it may be tenuous (Worthington, 2006), and the durability of forgiveness may be impacted by subsequent events.

About 22 years had passed between Joseph being sold by his brothers into slavery and his meeting his brothers. The narrative account includes multiple interactions with his brothers over about a year after they first came to Egypt for food (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 42-44), before Joseph revealed himself to them and expressed forgiveness. This period included harsh responses from Joseph to his brothers, apparently designed to discover if his brothers were prepared to repent of their behaviours and perhaps also provide an opportunity for him to express his anger or enact revenge. These interactions seem to present a progressive evolving of change, bringing Joseph to a position in which he was prepared to forgive, and a parallel process for his brothers to come to repentance. It seems reasonable to surmise that the forgiveness Joseph expressed towards his brothers emerged progressively over time. This emergence of forgiveness may have been in part enabled by his position as a vizier, when he would have experienced a variety of situations that would not have been related to his family relationships but would have informed his attitudes and thinking.

Abandoning past thinking and emotions

To *abandon* means that an offended person is actively engaged in changing their response to the offender, actively recognising inner resentments, and making a cognitive decision to abandon any resentment. This flows from inner change in the offended. Although this definition includes the term "resentment," resentment may in some cases be euphemistic, and an understatement of what could be hatred. The therapy process needs to address the fullness of the hatred within a client to enable

substantive forgiveness. I recall as a teenager being advised that to forgive required that the issue would not only need to be never raised again to the offender, but that I would commit to not raising it again with myself. Therapy can support the process of grieving, surrendering hurt that was felt to be justified. This insight raises the bar of abandonment to a highly challenging level; some may wonder if this takes forgiving out of reach. Forgiveness is not presented here as a one-time glib concept, but rather, a psychological struggle facilitated in therapy. The use of the word "choose" is not intended to convey the notion that forgiving is accomplished by a simple one-time decision process. The duration of the struggle may vary from person to person and circumstance to circumstance (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

The forgiving process, involving abandonment of resentment or hatred, is an inner process, that may not necessarily be disclosed to the offender. However, if forgiving is to evolve into reconciliation, as discussed later, then the forgiving must be made known. If the person being forgiven is deceased, or for some other reason inaccessible, disclosing the abandonment of resentment and reconciliation may be impossible, or seem irrelevant for healing. The value of abandoning resentment or hatred is not devalued just because it cannot be communicated to the offender.

Harboured resentments can fester in minds for long periods, often as grudges and enduring chronic hatred (Blum, 1997; Kernberg, 1992; Socarides, 1966). Thoughts may, or may not, be of a vindictive character (Akhtar, 2002). This dynamic is often given expression in the political arena, for example with ex-president Donald Trump supporters (and non-supporters) in the United States, Brexit supporters (or non-supporters) in the United Kingdom, along with many other examples. I suggest this may be the dynamic that contributes to racism or other negative group stereotyping. Perhaps a particular offence by an individual becomes generalised to a whole group in the mind of an offended person. This may lead to abiding resentment of a group of people who happen to have the same feature as the person that caused a particular offence.

When Joseph's father later died, Joseph's brothers were sceptical about whether the forgiveness towards them would remain. When his brothers saw that their father was

dead, they said, "perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him." (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 50:15). Joseph's forgiveness however, was unchanged, and he seemed to be aggrieved at the suggestion that his forgiveness may have been circumstantially based. He responded, "now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." He comforted his brothers and spoke kindly to them (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 50:21). This seems to be a character of sincere forgiveness; the decision to change and forgive endures.

Offender perspective

An offender is never entitled to be forgiven; this is a choice of the forgiver (Enright et al., 1998b). Accordingly, to forgive is to offer a gift to the offender, which cannot be demanded, but only given freely (Richards, 2002). There may be situations in which the offended has misunderstood the offender, and so after more clearly understanding the situation, forgiving seems a reasonable obligation, or less difficult choice (Richards, 2002). The converse may also be true, as over time, the understanding of the offence may magnify perceptions of the offence and cause the decision to forgive to be more difficult, or for the offender to feel it is beyond the reach of forgiveness. This may be fuelled by rumination, which is likely to exaggerate perceptions of the offence rather than leading to a realistic assessment. Other factors are likely to influence this process, such as the history of the relationship and the influence of other significant people on the offended person. For a person in therapy, the therapeutic process can contribute by identifying obstructions such as counter-productive advice from significant others.

When the desire to forgive is communicated to the offending person, it is possible that the offender will not value being forgiven, nor believe their actions need to be forgiven, as they may feel fully justified in their actions. As a result, offering forgiveness, which seems to the offended to be a valuable gift, may be valueless to the offender, or even despised, which could accentuate the offence and further hurt the offended. The choice to abandon resentment is therefore immediately tested, and the offended may find harbouring resentment more attractive. An alternative strategy is to

write to the offender but not actually send the communication. This may accomplish much for the offended without risking a hurtful response.

When Joseph forgave his brothers, the response of the offending brothers was expressed simply, yet poignantly. "Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph; does my father still live?' But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. And Joseph said to his brothers, 'Please come near to me.' So they came near" (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 45:3,4). It seems his brothers never expected to meet Joseph after selling him as a slave, and never expected forgiveness, so were overwhelmed at discovering themselves in his presence, but were able to be silently responsive to forgiveness, and came near to Joseph. "Came near," are seemingly simple words, but rich with significance. Joseph's brothers seemed to find the forgiveness compelling, or perhaps they felt they had no options with the power disparity now reversed between themselves and Joseph.

Change of response

This section continues with definitions of forgiveness. To respond is inclusive of feelings, thoughts, and behaviour associated with benevolence that replace the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours associated with resentment (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). *Resentment* is a sense of hostility or anger directed towards an object that is identified as the cause of frustration, and forced an unwanted situation that feels unfair (Menahem & Love, 2013). The abandonment of resentment means an offended person is likely to exhibit a pattern of fewer negative emotions such as hatred, fewer negative thoughts of judging the offending person as evil, and fewer negative behaviours such as revenge seeking (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). With forgiveness, resentment is replaced with mindful awareness and empathy, enabling the reconceptualising of past transgressions with a kind perspective that increases the forgiver's sense of peace both towards self and others (Menahem & Love, 2013).

The sense of forgiveness is associated with an emotional experience that is likely to vary over time (Worthington, 2006). This is connected to the ability to replace negative unforgiving stressful emotions with positive feelings towards the other person,

expressed as an emotional replacement process (Worthington & Scherer, 2004; Worthington & Wade, 1999).

The way that forgiveness is expressed in thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, is likely to vary by culture and religion (Hoffman & Terry, 2011), and perhaps, depending on the personal history of the individual, their personality. Similarly, the expression of forgiveness may be cognitive, emotional, behavioural, or spiritual, or a combination of two or more of these aspects. These different aspects may develop at different times during the forgiveness process, and may be related to the depth of the hurt experienced (Fitzgibbons, 1986).

Other variations may also occur. Forgiving may not always be within a one-to-one relationship, but may occur where the offender is a family, or some other group member (Shriver, 1995). There may be times when an individual within a group can be forgiven more rapidly than can the group, as the evolution of the forgiving process may not be consistent. The quality or depth of forgiving may not always be clear; forgiving may develop or regress like a skill or coping strategy (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Joseph reinterpreted the events to take the focus away from their offending, and away from the repugnant behaviour of selling him as a slave. He said:

> I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 45:4-7).

Joseph's reconstruction of events was not untruthful, but shows he had understanding, context, and insights beyond the bad behaviour of which he had been a victim. His forgiveness enabled him to see his brothers from a different perspective and adopt behaviours that were not vindictive or revenge seeking. Joseph attached an existential meaning to the events, saying "God sent me before you to preserve life," suggesting this strengthened his capacity to forgive. Religious beliefs are significant,

and need to be engaged with in therapy, as they affect the experience of forgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Beneficence

Beyond the abandonment of resentment, benevolence can also be displayed, with positive emotions such as liking the person, positive thoughts such as wishing the person good, and positive behaviours such as interest in the other person's welfare (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). The principle of *beneficence* is a genuine sense of goodness towards the offender in which the offended is now able to aid the offender after forgiving (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). This seems like a high expectation that would be very challenging in many situations of offending, and borders on the unrealistic and idealistic, beyond the attainment of most people. The concept at first consideration may evoke a reaction of being impractical, justifying sceptics desire to consign the idea of forgiveness to something detached from reality. This genuine sense of goodness towards an offender is likely to be a progressive shift rather than a single switch action and would need to grow over time and be expressed in progressively greater ways. This parallels a progressive shift to abandon past thinking and emotions as previously discussed.

Joseph's attitude to his brothers was one of care and thoughtfulness. After disclosing his forgiveness, he said, "hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'thus says your son Joseph: God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay'" (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 45:9). Joseph realised the shame that his brothers would feel telling their father that they had found him (his brothers had told their father at the time they sold him, that he was dead), and were now dependent on him for survival. Joseph constructed what his brothers could say to their father to minimise the shame they would feel telling him what had happened - a generous act of empathy smoothing the way for them. Joseph understood their feelings, and acted to minimise their hurt, acting counter-intuitively, not as a brother that was sold as a slave, but as a forgiver. This type of significant shift in attitude could be facilitated in therapy as the adoption of benevolence, although this is unlikely to be easily embraced by a client.

Compassion, empathy, unconditional worth, generosity, and love

Compassion implies a recognition that there are sympathetic feelings that spring from the understanding that an offender is also a vulnerable human being, just like the offended (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Compassion requires humility. Forgiveness as previously defined, is not only the reduction of resentments as some have suggested (McGarry, 1989), but also, the expression of compassion. The definition of forgiveness as compassion is more than the cessation of hostile feelings, but includes movement towards accepting an offender's inadequate and frail humanity (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). This is not universally accepted as being a necessary part of forgiveness (Denton & Martin, 1998), and seems in some circumstances to relegate forgiving to being either inappropriate or too demanding.

Unconditional worth is the insight that an offender is a failing person with significance and value, and intrinsic worth by virtue of being a part of humanity. This view is independent of a person's behaviour, disposition, or other externalities. A person may be perceived to exhibit little extrinsic value but being part of humankind, is recognised as having value. This insight then becomes recognised by the offended person. This may be discovered as the offended person finds some element in the offender or their history that can be identified with, and therefore is able to establish a small fragile link with the offender.

Generosity involves giving more than what is perceived as warranted, based on the offender's behaviour. Generosity replaces what the offender perceives as being deserved because of the offence. The offended person makes a judgement about what is deserved, somewhat akin to the assessment that a judge makes when specifying a penalty. A judge in a court determines the penalty based on law, and past comparable situations. Those who have been offended against have embedded in them a moral code that will vary from person to person, and this forms the basis of determining in their mind, what is deserved by the offender. Love requires investing in the other person's well-being, rather than an expression of resentment (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Two key ideas in the definition given in the previous section, and which are linked, are that the offended gives up what they perceive as justified resentment and gives mercifully that which is undeserved. To reach this position, at least to a significant extent, anger and hatred need to be faced and resolved. The elements that are likely to be ignored and therefore thwart forgiving, are the need to carefully understand the full extent of the wrongdoing prior to forgiving, and the interconnections between abandoning resentment and offering beneficence (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). This process mitigates against a shallow or superficial response that would otherwise trivialise the hurt experienced.

Replacing resentment with positive feelings or compassion towards an offender (Wade & Worthington, 2003) has a high threshold, and is a contentious idea that may be perceived as unrealistic in some situations (Richards, 2002). Why is replacing resentment necessary for forgiveness? The relationship between a victim and offender may have no experience of goodness, for example, when the victim is attacked by a stranger, and assaulted and robbed. It has been argued that this threshold of forgiving is inappropriately and unnecessarily high (Richards, 2002). If a key purpose of forgiving is for the victim to be free of destructive resentments, then arguably, the lower threshold of resentment elimination would serve as a valuable therapeutic objective (Richards, 2002). It may be argued that without compassion, resentment remains (Richards, 2002). Furthermore, it is likely that the principle of benevolence is situation or person specific. It is also debateable whether the replacement of resentment with positive regard is needed for enduring forgiveness, or whether indifference may be adequate.

Joseph showed growing evidence of his forgiveness. He said to his brothers:

> Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'thus says your son Joseph: 'God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks, and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine.' (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 45:9-11).

Not only did Joseph not resent his brothers, but showed them positive regard by providing for them in the following years of famine, and creating a situation for their comfort close to himself, and not just tolerance at a distance. Joseph also provided care for his brothers beyond the famine period, an over and beyond type of response that demonstrated generosity beyond what could possibly be expected or contemplated as possible.

Joseph's forgiveness is like that of Dr Graham Dickason in Timaru, who encouraged others to forgive his wife for murdering their three children. His concern for her extended beyond his forgiving to include the desire that she did not become the object of hate by others.

Decisional and emotional forgiveness

It is accepted that forgiveness is complex (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). There are several aspects to forgiveness, such as the cognitive (Flanigan, 1992), affective (Malcolm & Greenberg, 2003), behavioural (Gordon et al., 2005), motivational (McCullough et al., 1997), decisional (Diblasio, 1998) and interpersonal (Baumeister et al., 1998) dimensions. It is not clear which of these dimensions is the most important. Two of these are briefly discussed in this section.

Decisional forgiveness is a behavioural intention in which an offended person seeks to act towards a transgressor as if the transgression had not occurred, based on a decision to release the offender from the debt (Baumeister et al., 1998; Diblasio, 1998). Cognitive decisional forgiveness rather than emotional forgiveness may be present, although a decision to forgive may stimulate emotions congruent with the cognitive decision (Worthington, 2006). Decisional forgiveness is connected to rational logic and an act of will, which may be driven by a desire to be consistent with the belief systems of the offended individual (Worthington, 2006). Behavioural changes are likely to occur subsequent to decisional forgiveness (Worthington, 2006).

Emotional forgiveness is based on emotions that affect motivations (Berry & Worthington, 2001; Exline et al., 2003; Wade & Worthington, 2003). Berry and Worthington (2001), Exline et al. (2003) and Wade and Worthington (2003) suggested

that the magnitude of an injustice gap is inversely proportional to the ease of emotional forgiving. As emotional forgiveness progresses, an offended person will progressively replace the negative emotion of unforgiveness with positive emotions such as empathy, sympathy, compassion, and even altruistic love (Worthington, 2006).

Joseph blended in his demonstration of forgiveness, both cognitive processes leading to specific supportive actions, and expressions of emotional acceptance of his forgiven brothers, demonstrated in his tears. Joseph was not acting in a detached intellectual capacity. The narrative explains that Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, but cried out, "make everyone go out from me!" No one therefore, was with him when he made himself known to his brothers, and when he wept aloud (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 45:1,2). Emotion had its part in Joseph's forgiveness. He also had a plan thought out to care for them, saying, "bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the best of the land" (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 45:18). Both decisional and emotional forgiveness are evident in Joseph's response.

Having discussed forgiveness, it is important to have clarity on what the experience of unforgiveness is.

What is unforgiveness?

Unforgiveness, often associated with emotions, can be understood as a stress reaction responding to a challenge or threat which is felt as resentment, bitterness, hatred, anger, and fear (Berry & Worthington, 2001; Worthington & Wade, 1999). Unforgiveness may be a delayed response, but is likely to be an enduring reaction to transgression, motivated by revenge or avoidance (Worthington, 2006).

Unforgiveness is not a universal response to a transgression, but is usually nurtured by angry rumination, mingled with anxiety (Worthington, 2006). Rumination is a key aspect of unforgiveness, often described as stewing, holding grudges, replaying in the mind the past hurt, elaborating on hurt, and reflecting on the unfairness of the offence (Worthington, 2006). Rumination is the replaying of offences in the mind, often elaborating on the offences and exploring negative consequences for the offended

person and their relationships (Worthington, 2006). Ruminating on injustice tends to lead to anger (Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998), and ruminating on potential harm leads to fear, anxiety, depression, and unforgiveness (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). The level of negative emotion, vengeful thoughts, and aggressive behaviour towards an offender, often manifest as physiological changes such as raised blood pressure (Berry et al., 2005). There is a positive connection between rumination and unforgiveness (Berry & Worthington, 2001; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). People may seek to cope by reducing the experience of unforgiveness by narrowing the injustice gap (i.e., the gap between what is perceived as fair and what is actually experienced), or by seeking to manage their emotions (Worthington, 2006).

Unforgiveness can be further understood by recognising what emotions are juxtaposed with unforgiveness: empathy, sympathy, compassion, and altruistic love. Empathy occurs when a person accurately empathises with an offender, seeing they have acted as a fallible human being (Rowe et al., 1989), which tends to lessen a victim's sense of unforgiveness. Sympathy, a little different to empathy, involves understanding the emotions, and to some extent the experiences, of the other person, generating positive emotions towards the offender (Eisenberg et al., 1989), and mitigating against unforgiveness. Compassion may also dispose an offended person towards forgiveness (Berry et al., 2005). Altruistic love has the wellbeing of the other person as an objective, and may encourage a person towards forgiving.

The unnamed person speaking in the court case related to the mosque killings in Christchurch, said "I do not forgive you for what you have done. While you are in prison you will come to realise that you are now in hell – and only the fire awaits you." The unforgiveness expressed feels resolute, involving a wish that while incarcerated, the offender will reflect with pain on his actions, and receive no relief from painful remorse, and further, will receive severe retribution forever in hell for his offences. This statement conveys an inability to connect to the offender's behaviour, which seems to the offended, to be completely reprehensible.

Having discussed both forgiveness and unforgiveness, it is important to understand that forgiveness has many shadows, mimics, or deceptions, that create

misunderstandings that distort and misrepresent forgiveness. These mimics are often used to discredit the notion of forgiveness and to justify the perceived inadequacies of forgiveness. The following section addresses these.

What forgiveness is not

The perception of the value of forgiveness is often diminished because the concept is mistaken for other concepts that may contain some of the elements of forgiveness, or be a distortion of the key elements of forgiveness. Therefore, having briefly discussed what forgiveness is, it is particularly important to clarify what it is not. Some of the concepts discussed may initially appear to be close to, or synonyms for forgiveness, and require scrutiny to clarify understanding.

The question may be asked, why is it important to have clarity on the definition of forgiveness? A therapist's understanding of what forgiveness is, and is not, informs the focus of therapy, and impacts on the health outcomes of a client. The aspects discussed next, are compromised concepts of forgiveness, and can be distractions from therapy that could otherwise lead to client healing. When the distinction between what is forgiveness and what it is not is understood, a clearer therapeutic way forward is possible. There is a significant risk that clients may believe or be led to believe they have forgiven, when they have not, and therefore miss the healing benefits that forgiveness offers. Pseudo forgiveness may be a source of disillusionment. Therapy can be a useful forum for exploring and clarifying a client's understanding of the issues that are discussed next.

Pardoning

It is often misconstrued that pardoning is similar to forgiving, but the general consensus amongst researchers refutes this perception (Enright, 2012; Murphy, 1982). "Pardon" is a legal term and has little to do with forgiveness. A judge as a neutral third person may pardon, but only a person offended against can forgive (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). When clients confuse the two issues, they are likely to be hesitant to forgive, as the concept of pardoning suggests that the offender is set free without accountability. Forgiveness does not imply that legal processes of redress should

necessarily be ignored (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Forgiving, and legal redress that is appropriate under law, are two separate issues. This notion requires some personal reflection. Is it possible with integrity to forgive and to also be at peace with supporting a legal process in which laws set up by government, may impose punishment on the offender? It may be that personal forgiving does not negate supporting the law being upheld, is an issue of justice as defined in the law. Perhaps more challenging, is the question around potential scope for self-deception. If an offended person accepts the distinction between pardoning and releasing an offender from the legal consequences of offending, this may be a subtle way of minimising the genuineness of forgiveness. The secret desire for the offender to be punished seems to compromise forgiveness. These are practical issues that need attention in therapy, so that misunderstandings are not an obstacle to forgiveness.

Absolving of failures

Absolving of failures has a religious connotation and may be confused with forgiving. In a religious context, absolution of sins means that sins are remitted, and the moral consequences of the sins are eliminated (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). The important distinction between religious and other absolution, is that a person who forgives is not making a judgement about the offender's culpability (Enright, 2012). To forgive is not to commute a punishment. There is no implication that a forgiver is acting as God might be perceived to act, absolving an offender of any punishment for failure. However, the two types of absolution are similar, in the sense that, both forgiving and absolving are acts of mercy. To personally forgive shows mercy, but mercy in an ecclesiastical sense as described here, is different. Confusion in the mind of a client can be an obstruction to forgiveness, and therapy can clarify these issues.

Condoning or justifying

Some people are hesitant to forgive because they feel that to forgive is to condone what has been done. Forgiving does not justify wrongful behaviour. When a person condones a moral wrong, they are recognising it as an offence but considering it to be tolerable because of the circumstances of the offence (Kolnai, 1973-1974). Condonation may result in ongoing resentments, and a sense of reluctantly

exonerating the offender. A person who seeks to forgive seeks to end resentments (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). To overlook this distinction, may result in the offended person deepening their resentment, so a sense of unfairness may grow and a client's symptoms may worsen (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

To justify a behaviour suggests it was a right behaviour, and therefore, forgiving is not an appropriate response. A clinical therapeutic response of suggesting forgiveness in this situation would not be appropriate (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Care is needed to understand when forgiving is an appropriate response, and when it is not an appropriate way forward.

Excusing

Excusing needs to be differentiated from forgiving. Distinct from condonation, excusing does not focus on moral rightness or wrong, but rather rationalises acceptance of the behaviour (Kolnai, 1973-1974). There may be situations in which to excuse is a more appropriate response than forgiveness. Disappointment in another person may be more appropriately excused, and points to the need in therapy to understand the nature of the alleged offence or unfairness. A person needs to be morally wronged for forgiveness to be appropriate (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Tolerating

Forgiving may be mistaken for tolerating hurtful behaviour. In some contexts, tolerating may be perceived as accepting the idiosyncratic but insignificant behaviour of others. Forgiving is not relevant in this context. Forgiving is relevant when there has been hurt that is beyond offending personal sensitivities or preferences. This type of situation is not to be mistaken for a situation warranting forgiveness, because there is no ethical wrong (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). This implies that forgiveness is not relevant when the offending person has a reasonable right to behaviours that may be inconvenient or irritating for the offended.

Forgive and forget

A popular phrase is to forgive and forget, but the two concepts are different (Kolnai, 1973-1974; Smedes, 1996). The forgetting of a traumatic or painful event too early in

the forgiving process may imply a defence distortion of both internal and external reality, and is likely to be unhelpful (Akhtar, 2002). However, following forgiveness, the memory of an offence is likely to diminish over time because there is no repeated regurgitation or dwelling on the offence and injury. However the memory of the hurt may still remain available to the consciousness, and is likely to be reactivated when a similar event occurs again (Akhtar, 2002). An alternative view is that forgetting is an almost inevitable consequence of forgiving, although it may take a long time. When eventual forgetting does not occur, it is likely that there has not been forgiveness (Hunter, 1978). The advice to forgive and forget adopted lightly and early in the forgiving process without significant mourning, may become a pretence or defensive distortion of inner realities, and therefore be unhelpful (Akhtar, 2002). A therapist may need to work with clients who have received and accepted forgive and forget advice from friends or family, and as a result, have become confused about genuine forgiving.

When there is forgiveness, the nature of the offence that is remembered is likely to progressively change. As a result, an offended person can perceive an offender as a fallible person rather than as a person of ill intent. The actual content of an event may still be remembered but the intensity of pain is likely to be diminished (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). From a therapeutic perspective this distinction is important and may have repercussions if not recognised. Some may be concerned that if they have not forgotten past trauma, they have not forgiven, while others may be anxious that having forgiven, they will not forget. The real goal is not loss of memory, but rather, for the symptoms of anxiety and depression to reduce, and the possibility of hope and stronger relationships to be developed (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). An offended person may cling to the strongly held belief that the offender is bad, and even fear losing this perspective because it may strip them of a defence against forgiving. Continuing rumination keeps the memory of the offence alive and cherished, perhaps secretly, as a validation for unforgiveness. Joseph forgave, but did not forget, seemingly not ruminating on the pain inflicted on him.

Other mimics of forgiveness

Other mimics of forgiveness have some characteristics of forgiveness, but miss the essential elements. Over time there may be a reduction of resentments against an offending person, however, forgiveness is not the same as waiting and hoping time will heal wounds (Kolnai, 1973-1974). In contrast, forgiveness is generally an active struggle, as resentments embedded in the psyche cause debilitation that is not readily overcome.

Saying "I forgive you," or any other form of words in and of itself is not forgiving, as this may just be a socially acceptable mask that fails to address the deeper issues of pain within the offended person (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Similarly, the intent or decision, stated or not, to forgive, is not of itself forgiveness; an inner process of forgiving is required, the components of which have been discussed. Forgiveness requires not only a cognitive resolve (Worthington & Diblasio, 1990). A decision is needed, but that needs to become associated with an inner forgiving process that generally takes time to develop.

Other criticisms of forgiveness are that it is a quick, and by implication, a superficial fix. This view lacks understanding of the definition of forgiveness, and of the process involved. An interesting example sometimes cited, is that of an Amish community, who seemed to rapidly forgive a man who gunned down children in a school in 2006 in Pennsylvania. Although a rapid response of forgiveness was unexpected, it appears that the underlying attitude of forgiveness in the Amish community may have facilitated a quicker forgiving response than is common (Kraybill et al., 2010). A similar example was given at the start of this dissertation. Dr Graham Dickason was quick to forgive his wife for the murder of their three children. The ability to quickly forgive does not imply either a shallow or sincere response, although a quick response may be cause for a therapist to pause with a client and review the depth of sincerity of the forgiveness.

Various expressions may be used to provide the illusion of forgiving, but need to be regarded with reserve. They include: "I have accepted what happened," "I accept what happened knowing God will punish appropriately," "I have moved on," "I have the

satisfaction of not letting the person get to me," and other similar expressions. Each may have an element of the concept of forgiving but is deficient, often used glibly as an avoidance mechanism, leaving inner hurts unresolved. They can amount to self-deception, and an attempt to convince or delude themselves and others that some undefined and poorly understood process has accomplished healing. I suggest care may be needed in therapy to work with clients to discover the hurts often lingering below the surface when these dismissive expressions are used. The use of the word "forgiveness" does not necessarily mean the term is understood or been experimentally put into practice; in fact it may mask a defence. This is not a semantic issue but rather an issue related to self-delusion.

The forgiveness of Joseph exhibits the features of real forgiveness. Joseph did not pardon. This suggests that moral responsibility was not taken away from his brothers. Joseph did not in any way exonerate or excuse their conduct, or indicate it was tolerable; no whitewashing of their sins occurred. He did not speak of the offence as being tolerable or easily forgotten, but he did seem to genuinely forgive with emotion and thoughtfulness.

Why, or why not, forgive?

As evidenced in the stories provided in the introduction, events may produce an equally strong desire to either forgive or not forgive. It is also recognised that forgiveness may not be simply binary, that is, one forgives or one does not. There may be intermediate positions that may fluctuate over time, and which may provide lesser or greater personal healing from the hurt experienced. In recent decades it has become more widely accepted (but not without doubts by some) that forgiving people who have caused hurt, can be a significant way to increase personal wellbeing and improve interpersonal relationships (Konstam et al., 2002). It is unclear how partial forgiveness, which has not been clearly defined in the literature, impacts on healing.

In the introductory stories, it is evident that some plainly embraced the belief that forgiving was advantageous for themselves. At a national level, forgiving was espoused at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission overseen by Nelson Mandela and

Desmond Tutu at the commencement of the post-apartheid era in South Africa, using a slogan banner, "Healing our Past." In stark contrast, the reverse of forgiving is also strongly espoused on the international stage, and with intensity. For example, in late August 2021, the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, said concerning ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), as a result of their terrorist attack on Americans and others at the Afghanistan Kabul airport, "we will not forgive, we will not forget, we will hunt you down and make you pay" (Haines, 2021). This suggests Biden wants to retain the sense of vengeance, fearing forgiveness may dilute the intensity of anger feelings. Biden seemed to want the nation to retain angry feelings to heighten indignation and inflame the intensity of retaliation. To forgive would be counterproductive to retaining the passion for the revenge Biden espoused. This situation is an example of Klein's paranoid schizoid position discussed in Chapter four. Biden wanted to retain a strongly negative view of the Taliban in the American public's perception; the Taliban are all bad. I recall as a small boy awakening in the morning and discovering with disgust, I no longer felt the anger towards my mother of the previous day. I noticed healing in myself and was not sure I wanted it.

Some scientific literature agrees that forgiving can be an effective way of resolving feelings of remorse, anger, fear, anxiety, and guilt, as opposed to harbouring unforgiveness, which nurtures these feelings (Cerney, 1988; Fitzgibbons, 1986). In startling contrast to President Biden, Jesus was reported as speaking to God about his executers while hanging on a Roman cross with death imminent, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Luke 23:34). Jesus was benevolent and forgave, having an existential understanding of the consequent good resulting from His death, which empowered Him to bear the immediate pain. Jesus recognised the inability of his executors to understand what they were doing; this facilitated His ability to forgive. Existential understanding of meaning beyond the current circumstance seems to enable a greater capacity and willingness to forgive. This may be a useful focus in therapy depending on the belief systems of the client.

The benefits of forgiving have been found in diverse populations, including incest survivors (Flanigan, 1987; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Phillips & Osborne, 1989;

Worthington et al., 2000). An example of this is in a study of incest survivors, which found reduced anxiety and depression and increased hope for those who were able to forgive (Freedman & Enright, 1996). It has been suggested that the experience of forgiving is a needed part of personal growth, but this is not universally agreed upon (Hargrave & Sells, 1997). Studies show reductions in anxiety and depression linked with increased self-esteem for those who have forgiven offences (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Hebl & Enright, 1993; McCullough et al., 1997). This contains some aspects of the phrase in Jesus's prayer in the New Testament: "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Matt 6:11-13), an implicit suggestion that forgiving perhaps facilitates a sense of personal healing. The healing of inner emotional wounds and the restoring of relationships is connected to the ability to forgive (Diblasio & Proctor, 1993). The replacement of resentment with positive feelings without reducing self-respect can be beneficial (Richards, 2002).

Anger can be very debilitating. A feature of forgiving is the need to understand, confront and reduce anger that is a consequence of hurt (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). The debilitating aspects of anger may be alleviated through forgiving. Anger that is focused on other people can be intense, and may lead to incapacitating patterns of thinking and emotions. People report that holding hatred against others and not forgiving, is stressful, whether this occurs in workplaces or in personal relationships (Worthington, 2006).

There is evidence to suggest forgiveness can be beneficial, healing personal hurt (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). There is however, still some uncertainty about what psychotherapy approaches are most beneficial for supporting forgiveness (Konstam et al., 2002). Care is needed to avoid encouraging forgiveness when a different diagnosis of need is more appropriate, and could prove more beneficial for a client (Richards, 2002). Richards provided an example of a women who is raped, and who therefore suffers serious violations of her personal boundaries, which may result in significant self-image and self-respect issues that would not likely be addressed by forgiving the rapist. Forgiving should not therefore be perceived as a solution for all aspects of pain and hurt that are a consequence of being offended against (Richards, 2002). Therapy other than assisting forgiveness may be appropriate instead of, or in addition to,

supporting forgiveness (Richards, 2002). For healing after being offended against, forgiving may be necessary, but may not be sufficient. Other aspects of inner healing may be needed and should be identified and facilitated in therapy.

Some of the recent events in Aotearoa New Zealand overviewed in the introduction, provide personal testimony of why to forgive. For Dr Graham Dickason, forgiveness "is the key to healing this loss we have all experienced," and for Al Noor Mosque, forgiveness enabled peace: "I don't have hate. I don't have revenge." For Ahmed, forgiveness was the solution to inner turmoil, as he did not want "a heart that is boiling like a volcano," but chose to forgive as a way of healing: "I want a heart that will be full of love and care and full of mercy and will forgive easily."

Having discussed why, or why not to forgive, the next section discusses the relationship between trauma and forgiveness. Personal hurt often arises because of deeply disturbing traumatic events that should not be underestimated. How is forgiveness relevant in the context of trauma?

Trauma and forgiveness

Many clients that need psychotherapy will have experienced trauma of various kinds. Trauma can involve threats of extreme danger to physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual aspects of life. Trauma can activate overwhelming levels of attachment anxiety, which can lead to hyperarousal, dissociation, and emotional numbing (Schore, 2012). These experiences can sometimes shift a person's basic belief patterns (Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013), which in turn may impact on their capacity to forgive. Empathetic engagement in therapy is therefore essential.

Very difficult events that are potentially traumatic may not be experienced as trauma by all (Bonanno, 2005). Personal growth can follow traumatic events, and these growth experiences may include forgiveness (Bonanno, 2005; Bonanno et al., 2010). After a traumatic event there can often follow a time of seeking existential meaning or understanding of what has happened (Marcia et al., 2011). Traumatic experiences can also freeze a person's capacity to make sense of what has happened. In these cases it is unlikely that forgiveness will be contemplated as a possibility (Marcia et al., 2011). In

the latter situation, symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder are typically negatively associated with forgiveness (Dekel, 2010; Orcutt et al., 2008; Reed & Enright, 2006). In trauma survivors, unforgiveness may be related to anxiety and self-protection, particularly if there is ongoing danger (Worthington et al., 2016). In addition, there maybe fantasies of revenge, and seeking of justice and restitution (Herman, 1992). Those with disorganised styles of attachment are more likely to stay with feelings of anger for a long time (Worthington et al., 2016).

Trauma often causes often a deep sense of personal shame, and feelings of worthlessness and self-hatred that may be associated with humiliation (Budden, 2009). The shame associated with trauma may govern a person's whole emotional state (Schore, 1994). Shame can lead to withdrawal from relationships, increased anger, and unforgiveness (Sandage & Worthington, 2010). Self–forgiveness and self-compassion are often elusive for trauma sufferers, who become locked in a deep sense of shame that may even prevent specific memory of the events (Worthington et al., 2016). Self-forgiveness and self-compassion may therefore become important goals of psychotherapy (Worthington & Langberg, 2012).

Joseph's experience of being sold by his brothers into slavery, and into a foreign country, as a teenager, could reasonably be described as a traumatic event. Joseph also suffered multiple painful experiences after being sold, which would have accentuated his pain. These events include being falsely accused of rape (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 39:14-15), being imprisoned (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 39:20), and forgotten in prison (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 40:23). Joseph seems to have found existential meaning in rationalising what happened to him. He said, "God sent me before you to preserve life" (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 45:5). In the situation discussed, the finding of existential meaning is shown to help a trauma sufferer to forgive (Marcia et al., 2011).

Revenge and reparation

Akhtar suggested that revenge, reparation, and reconsideration, are all needed as part of forgiving (Akhtar, 2002). It has been argued that the desire for revenge, and equally

the desire to forgive, are natural features of humanity, built into human nature (McCullough, 2008). Some revenge, in reality or fantasy, may impart a sense of mastery, improving self-esteem and allowing a victim to taste a retaliation pleasure, balancing the sense of power and thereby preparing the victim to forgive (Akhtar, 2002). This suggests that the more simplistic model which sees revenge as an illness and forgiveness as a cure, may not be a useful model on which to base therapeutic support (McCullough, 2008).

Revenge can be extremely destructive, like anger, but if these potentially damaging forces can be recognised, acknowledged, and redirected constructively, then very different outcomes can occur (McCullough, 2008). In the first instance, revenge can be constructive, deterring aggressors from aggression, and warning them of consequences (McCullough, 2008). Observing relationships between animals suggests that although conflict may produce an initial revenge response, it is built into the natural functioning to realise that members of a group need each other for survival; revenge becomes limited so that the longer-term wellbeing of the group is not jeopardised. A proxy for forgiveness and reconciliation seems to exist naturally (McCullough, 2008). This shift in a victim may initiate some empathy with the aggressor, making the possibility of forgiving realistic and desirable. However, not all human offending against others directly parallels this observable natural phenomenon.

Reparation, the second factor outlined in the previous paragraph, facilitates forgiving by the victim, because it is a tangible acknowledgement that harm has been inflicted, rather than glossing over, minimising, or denying that harm has been caused (Herman, 1992; Madanes, 1990). Care is needed, as the gift of reparation may be perceived as buying back favour from the victim, and may be less effective than evidence of remorse, and the offering of what is perceived as a sincere apology (Saunders, 1995). A multi-faceted response by a perpetrator is likely to be perceived as more genuine.

A libido-aggression shift because of revenge, along with some narcissistic appeal that arises from receiving an apology and reparation, results in shifting to the Kleinian depressive position described in more detail in the next chapter. These combined effects may help a victim reconsider their memories of trauma, and not to suppress

them, but to perceive them differently (Kafka, 1992). This implies that reliving past traumatic pain is not needed. A revision, not suppression of memories is needed, leading to new insights (Akhtar, 2002). The three factors of revenge, reparation, and reconsideration can lead to the emergence of mature and thoughtful forgiveness (Gartner, 1988).

Forgiving that relinquishes vengefulness likely requires that pride or malice is overcome (Durham, 2000). Forgiving is not an action subsequent to the exhausting of revenge possibilities, but is rather a moderating agent resulting from introducing a new perspective, and a different way of handling response to hurt (Durham, 2000). Revenge aspirations, though often sapping an offended person's energy, may produce healing via a route quite distinct from forgiving. Revenge may only be displaced where there is some positivity towards the offender. Some aspects of revenge may provide therapeutic healing on a pathway towards forgiving. Another view promoting forgiving is to have positive attitudes towards the offender (Casarjian, 1992), without requiring the reduction of resentments. This seems to sidestep a core element of forgiving, that of dealing with resentments and hurts that have been inflicted.

The response of one relative to the Mosque shootings, was "I do not forgive you for what you have done. While you are in prison you will come to realise that you are now in hell – and only the fire awaits you." This suggests revenge was being indulged in, leaving no room for forgiveness. In contrast, another relative said "I forgive you. Damage was done and Hussein will never be here, so I have only one choice, to forgive you." This person did not perceive revenge as an enduring option; for them, the only long-term option for meaningful coping was forgiveness. This personal testimony suggests a belief that forgiveness is likely to lead to healing, but this is conjecture, and the study of these two lives in the future would be needed to obtain insight.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation and forgiveness are sometimes thought of as being tantamount to synonymous (Hargrave, 1994; Lauritzen, 1987). This is typically true when the conceptualisation of forgiveness is interpersonal. Both forgiving and reconciliation

require a change of relationship between the offender and the offended, but I suggest they are not equivalent. If the conceptualisation of forgiveness is intrapersonal, there is likely to be separation between forgiveness and reconciliation. An intrapersonal conceptualisation understands forgiveness as a resolve to abandon resentment, and to build positive regard. In contrast, reconciliation is a strategy agreed between two people (one or both may be a group) to work together to establish mutual trust (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). The implication is that reconciliation is a further step beyond forgiving. The practical approach in therapy will be different, depending on the conceptualisation of forgiveness. For example, interpersonal forgiveness, reconciliation is included as part of forgiving, whereas in intrapersonal conceptualisation of forgiveness, reconciliation is therapeutically separated. In either conceptualisation, reconciliation is important, but only when this does not increase risk to the hurt person; this is an important caveat. Some clients may seek to invoke this defence against reconciliation, exaggerating risk to themselves as an avoidance of reconciliation. The underlying reasons for reconciliation avoidance would need exploration in therapy.

An offender must make significant and evident commitment to not repeat the offending behaviour for reconciliation to be pursued. The offender and offended may then exhibit a mutual capacity (i.e., have the will) to build trust, which like forgiveness, will probably take time and be a progressive process (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). This is important, particularly for a therapist when a client is in an abusive relationship, as there needs to be evidence of the continuing abatement of abuse before reconciliation growing out of trust is possible. To seek reconciliation without forgiveness is unhelpful and would need to be addressed in therapy. In the case of an ongoing abusive relationship, it may be dangerous and destructive, unless the abusive behaviour ceases. A therapist needs comprehensive understanding of the situation to appropriately guide therapy. The criteria for reconciliation seem to be greater than for forgiveness, and though ideally reconciliation would follow, it may not, because change from both those affected is needed for reconciliation (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). The offended person may convince themselves that the offender has not changed to self-justify not seeking reconciliation. This would need to be explored in

therapy. Forgiving and being reconciled are not about pretending that things are resolved, but rather, exposing the awfulness of the abuse and consequent pain, and undertaking the risky but worthwhile process of healing (Tutu, 1999). When the offender is deceased, reconciliation is impossible, but forgiveness remains possible and maybe a helpful focus of therapy.

In nature, conflicts arise because of competing interests in securing food, space etc., but sometimes group cooperative action has benefits that outweigh individual advantages. When this cooperative strategy is adopted, individual conflict is sacrificed, and social relationships are restored for the greater good (Silk, 1998). Post conflict reconciliation calms and dissipates aggression between perpetrators of violence and victims in monkeys (Silk, 1998). In monkeys, perpetrators of violence who attempt to make amends are responded to positively by their victims. Behaviour in the animal world can provide insights to stimulate useful therapy processes.

Joseph went beyond forgiveness and facilitated reconciliation with his brothers; family relationships were re-established. Furthermore, Joseph demonstrated reconciliation by providing for his brothers: He said:

> You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty. (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 45:10)

Although I have suggested that reconciliation is distinct from forgiveness, forgiveness is a prerequisite for reconciliation. Reconciliation seems to tangibly verify the reality of forgiveness, but it should not however, be thought that when reconciliation is not possible, forgiveness cannot occur. Therapy processes that reach beyond forgiveness to reconciliation in many cases can be beneficial for client healing.

Repentance, apology, and reparation

Does forgiveness require as a prerequisite that the offending person has repented, or at least in some part acknowledged their responsibility, and regrets their behaviour? This is a contentious issue (Konstam et al., 2002). Some have argued that forgiving is

an act of compassion independent of whether the offender is repentant or remorseful (Enright et al., 1998b), while others have considered that demonstrated behaviour changes are needed for reconciliation (Hargrave & Sells, 1997). I suggest the issue discussed earlier of differentiating between forgiving and reconciliation is helpful, enabling both views to be reconciled. A person's desire to be forgiven implies that there is an acknowledgement that hurt has been inflicted on someone else, that the relationship has been significantly damaged, and there is a desire to restore the relationship; reconciliation is wanted. Seeking forgiveness furthermore also implies remorse and some sense of empathy for the hurt person (Akhtar, 2002). For credibility, it is necessary that the perpetrator is perceived to genuinely take responsibility for the hurt inflicted (Moses, 1999). The seeking of forgiveness usually requires the acknowledgement and then overcoming of narcissistic resistance. This leads to humility, a necessary disposition for seeking forgiveness (Akhtar, 2002). If forgiveness is offered, it then needs to be accepted, which involves letting go of guilt, adjusting the self-view, and acknowledging the kindness of forgiveness from the victim, who may have been vilified (Akhtar, 2002).

Some individuals are profuse in offering apologies for minor offences that most would not notice or dismiss as the normally expected errors of daily life. Such people convey a burden of unconscious guilt, and seem, perhaps unwittingly, to cheapen forgiving, so that the understanding of forgiving is held in a shallow almost insincere way (Akhtar, 2002). This can be a strategy to avoid personally facing hurt they have caused, and a superficial plastering over of their actions, a pretence that distracts from coping with their own inner wounds (Akhtar, 2002). Offering an apology may be perceived to be socially expedient, offered grudgingly, and may not reflect underlying repentance.

Offering an apology and reparation serves to validate the victim's response, that an offence really occurred; the offence was not purely a construction of the victim, and the reparation serves as a confirmation of the offence, improving self-esteem and validating mourning (Ohbuchi et al., 1989). An apology may shift the psychological load, not by undoing what has been done, which is impossible, but by introducing a transitional quality for the victim that blunts some of the hurt, making the pain more tolerable and held less tenaciously (Tavuchis, 1991).

This discussion informs therapy, identifying issues that need to be faced in therapy. It is common for an offended person to insist on repentance before offering forgiveness. This inadvertently and unintentionally increases power for the offender, as the offender by implication becomes the decider of whether there will be forgiveness and personal healing for the offended, based on whether or not they will repent (Smedes, 1996). This maybe an unconscious and unfortunate self-sacrificing strategy for the offended, unwittingly accentuating their victim position.

In Joseph's situation, there was a process of repentance that his brothers experienced prior to Joseph's revealing himself and reconciliation occurring. At one point, Judah, the eldest brother, spoke on behalf of his brothers, asking,

> What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found. (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Genesis 44:16).

The discovery of the apparent dishonesty of the brothers seemed to touch their consciences, reminding them of their wrongful behaviour towards Joseph. An event seemingly disconnected to the selling of their brother was a trigger leading them towards repentance. Supressed guilt was recalled, and perhaps some empathy with Joseph felt. The narrative does not record any apology, but there is a form of reparation. Joseph's father, and favoured brother Benjamin, were restored into a relationship with Joseph, which was very significant for Joseph. This suggests that reparation may be achieved in unexpected ways. A therapist may alert a client to signs of repentance in the offender to ease the pain of forgiving for the offended. Although not a focus of this work, a therapist may work with an offender to support them on a journey towards repentance.

Receiving forgiveness

When forgiveness is communicated to an offender, how are they going to respond? Some may be unable to accept forgiveness, resulting in an ongoing sense of remorse leading to depressive consequences (Akhtar, 2002). Ongoing self-condemnation may

be associated with unconscious guilt and severe super-egos linked with masochistic inclinations (Akhtar, 2002).

Those lacking in empathy often lack the desire to seek or receive forgiveness (Akhtar, 2002). They may lack insight, minimising in their minds the hurt and injuries that have been inflicted. This lack of perception can result from super-ego deficiencies, a lack of love, and therefore a low capacity for remorse, or a denial of failure in self (Akhtar, 2002). This type of denial may arise from a fear of being severely shamed by others when apologising (Kernberg, 1984), Narcissistic personalities are particularly prone to this behaviour, as they are self-assured, and confident their behaviour was appropriate (Akhtar, 1992).

Therapeutic implications arise. When the super-ego becomes less demanding of perfection, then a person becomes more capable of accepting an internal object that is not perfectly repaired, and there is a capacity for compromise, and therefore an increased readiness to forgive and be forgiven (Rey, 1986).

Self-forgiveness

Self-forgiveness is complex, addressing self-condemnation arising from perceived transgressions by oneself (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2020). Self-forgiveness may be thought of as a process of releasing resentment towards oneself for some perceived wrong doing, while fostering compassion and generosity and love towards oneself (Tangney et al., 2005). This may seem a rather strange idea; surely there must be two people involved for forgiveness to make sense (Smedes, 1996). There is sometimes a need to forgive oneself because a part of us gets blamed for failure and feels split off from the rest of ourselves, causing us to feel what can become unbearable internal rupture; hence the need to self-forgive (Smedes, 1996). The need for self-forgiveness arises when a person perceives themselves to have transgressed against their own values, often with associated emotional and cognitive self-reproach, holding oneself responsible for failure (Woodyatt et al., 2017). Is it an adequate response to release adverse feelings or is it necessary to move towards a benevolent attitude to oneself? The need for self-forgiveness may be expressed in therapy in a variety of ways,

including affective, cognitive, and behavioural manifestations (Cornish et al., 2017). It is not uncommon for people to feel self-condemnation and experience the need for self-forgiveness when they are the real victims (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2020). Self-forgiveness should be understood as more than merely excusing oneself or having improved feelings about oneself, but rather, feeling and doing what is right, regaining a sense of moral integrity (Woodyatt et al., 2017).

As explained in the earlier discussion of forgiveness of others, self-forgiveness is likely to be a process that may take time and be painful (Hall & Fincham, 2005). This process is likely to involve understanding one's emotions relating to the event causing the pain (Wilson & Gilbert, 2008), and the associated self-anger, remorse, guilt, and shame (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2020). Cognitively, this may need a significant change in self-assessment, and behaviourally, there may need to be changes in avoidance or otherwise of some people, or things, and the relinquishing of self-punishing behaviours (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2020).

Psychotherapy addressing self-forgiveness may need to include tasks that focus on both the emotional and cognitive aspects of self-forgiveness (Scherer et al., 2011). There is some evidence that clients who are supported in therapy to reflect on unresolved offences which they assess themselves to be the cause of, can produce physical advantageous changes, such as a lowered heart rate, self-assessed reduced negative rumination, and reduced emotions associated with guilt (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2020). Self-forgiveness seems to require breaking the cycle of self-condemnation. Three steps have been suggested to achieve this: moving from self-rumination to self-reflection, moving from emotions as stressors to emotions as indicators of inner turmoil, and moving from avoidance to repair (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2020). Psychotherapy is an ideal activity to facilitate these shifts.

A gross discrepancy can exist between the capacity to forgive others and self-forgiveness. Paranoid and narcissistic individuals tend to minimise their need to accept responsibility for having harmed others, often denying they caused harm, or justifying the harm they caused as being fair in the circumstances (Akhtar, 2002). These same people, though reluctant to forgive others, find it is easy to forgive themselves for

inflicting hurt. Masochistic individuals in contrast are the opposite, lacking the capacity to face their own pain, but readily forgiving others while punishing themselves (Akhtar, 2002).

Joseph's brothers accepted the forgiveness offered in that they accepted the benefits offered by Joseph. They may have also self-forgiven, but the narrative is not clear on this. They did retain a sense of guilt however, because they were fearful of retribution from Joseph when their father died, but this may not be related to self-forgiveness. It could be argued that they had no option other than to receive the forgiveness Joseph offered (an unusual situation, as they needed the food Joseph was able to offer), but self-forgiveness is, as discussed, a different issue.

Alternatives to forgiveness

Revenge may be the most likely apparent alternative to forgiveness, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Another alternative may be clemency, which is the moderation or suspension of punishment (Alford, 2013). This seems like a generous offer to an offender without any change of thinking or emotions towards this person. Clemency appears to offer little to minimise the psychological pain of the victim, but does benefit the offender. This may occur in a law court when a victim suggests to the judge that the punishment be reduced from what is allowed under law.

A suggested alternative strategy is mercy, in which the idea of clemency is expanded to express pity towards the offender (Alford, 2013). Mercy requires a psychological shift for the victim, but not to the extent that forgiveness requires. Mercy is partial forgiveness, suspending or suppressing ill thoughts, but not replacing them with any form of positive regard (Alford, 2013). It may occur when the process of forgiveness is commenced but the fullness of the shift in the victim becomes too hard, and a less painful option than forgiveness is sought. This may be an appropriate outcome from therapy for some people.

A form of reconciliation may also be an option (Alford, 2013), when a pragmatic way forward is needed, but which is only a mimic of reconciliation as discussed earlier. This may occur (for example) when a separated couple reaches an agreement over childcare. A workable solution is needed, but without any inner change of thought or emotion towards the other person.

Another option is to refuse forgiveness, revenge, or other discussed solutions, and proceed with a stoic frame of mind, holding anger but perhaps seeking to suppress the expression of anger or any faint desire to resolve the consequent inner hurt and pain. This position may approximate what Klein describes as a paranoid schizoid position; this is discussed in the following chapter.

In the introductory stories to this dissertation, a member of the Al Noor Mosque community proclaimed, "I forgive you. Damage was done and Hussein will never be here, so I have only one choice, to forgive you." He perceived himself as having only one option, to forgive, and there were no other options evident in his thinking. His thinking was perhaps framed by his Muslim faith, compelling him to forgive. This suggests that a person's underlying belief system impacts the options they perceive as appropriate or available to them, seeking to maintain an inner moral consistency.

This literature review has provided a brief history of forgiveness in the context of psychology, then, has discussed key aspects of forgiveness, the characteristics of unforgiveness, and what forgiveness is not, including a variety of concepts that may be mistaken for forgiveness. These sections were designed to clarify the meaning of forgiveness and encourage understanding of the elements of forgiving that may need attention in therapy, as well as clarifying what forgiveness is not. A variety of concepts associated or contrasted with forgiveness have been discussed, including why not to forgive, trauma, revenge and reparation, reconciliation, repentance, receiving forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and alternatives to forgiveness. The contents of the chapter have been linked to therapy practice. The accounts of forgiveness and refusal to forgive outlined in the introduction, have been used to illustrate several of the key points.

Chapter 3.   Methodology and Method

Introduction

This research was designed to understand the relevance, role, and importance of forgiveness as a component of psychotherapy. The approach used was a hermeneutic study of literature that researched forgiveness in the context of therapy. This chapter outlines the methodology and method followed in this research.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was chosen for this secondary research. "The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.426). Denzin and Lincoln discussed qualitative research as sometimes having a focus on the socially constructed nature of reality, which was relevant for this research. Although there are many approaches to qualitative research, two important elements are: observing the 'real world', and studying what is observed inclusive of its complexity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The secondary research approach to this study was assessed as being the most appropriate to explore aspects of forgiveness in psychotherapy. Forgiveness is an unique and intense experience so it is valuable to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experience, qualitative research is particularly effective accessing these insights (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This secondary research accessed both qualitative and quantitative research to understand forgiveness.

In psychotherapy there are often many layers of meaning present and needing to be discovered and understood. This is particularly relevant for the chosen research question focused on forgiveness, itself likely to have several perspectives, implications, and understandings. The hermeneutics methodology provided a structure for how understanding was achieved in this study. Hermeneutics as a research method, gives a voice to those experiencing complex relationships and seeks to hear their perspective (McCaffrey et al., 2012).

Hermeneutics has its origins in the study and interpretation of the ancient scriptures, and requires that a section of text should not be considered in isolation from its wider context (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Collis & Hussey, 2003). The hermeneutic method has evolved since its conception in the late 18th century by Fredrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher perceived the understanding of texts to be akin to understanding people, an ever-developing process, and the embryo of the hermeneutic circle concept (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) described next. Heidegger added the perspective that the context or background of text impacted the hermeneutic circle, or put differently, modified the hermeneutic circle to include history and context. Heidegger also enhanced the hermeneutic circle concept to be more than purely cognitive, to include a more subjective aspect of practical human existence. This recognised that at the time of understanding, there are also undisclosed or hidden elements (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000).

In the 20th century, Gadamer further developed the hermeneutic method by asserting that we understand through dialogue that surprises us - dialogue with content that is outside our existing understanding (Gadamer, 2007). Gadamer (2007) also asserted that our understanding is anchored in historically affected awareness. To learn from experience, we need to be "radically undogmatic" (Orange, 2011).

A key feature of the hermeneutic methodology is that the meaning of a section of text can only be properly understood if it is connected to the whole (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). The hermeneutic circle can be presented as a circle linking in both directions, the part and the whole, (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). The process of exploration and searching for meaning in a text, although increases understanding, also recognises that insight at any point is limited. This includes awareness of connections between history, the present, and the future. History is acknowledged as shaping all that follows (McCaffrey et al., 2012). In the context of this study, the whole includes: the research papers studied, the researcher, and if possible, some understanding of the context in which the research being studied was conducted. The hermeneutic circle approach may be better thought of as a spiral, in which iterations of cycling as described lead to ever deepening levels of understanding, rather than using a circle metaphor, which

may imply repeated iterations without deepening understanding. Hermeneutics is not a linear process, but rather, iterative (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014).

An underpinning principle of hermeneutics is that understanding is always incomplete, and full understanding is not available. The researcher can however, engage with the perspectives and understanding of others with the intent to seek understanding, and so insight can grow (Gadamer, 2007). It is recognised that interpretation implies that there are always some elements of a subject that remain hidden. Some element of mystery always remains, and that is to be embraced (McCaffrey et al., 2012); a mystery presents difficulty and ambiguity, the basis of hermeneutics (Caputo, 1987). A useful focus is to explore meaning that is expressed in metaphors and images, which often requires reading between the lines, or standing back and considering what is read from a distance, using all approaches designed to help see what is contained in the text (Smythe & Spence, 2012).

Hermeneutics research may be based on material from a variety of sources. In this study, the source of material was previous research completed and interpreted by researchers who in some cases had followed a hermeneutic approach; these researchers will have already been influenced by their preunderstandings. The making sense (Mishler, 1986) of the experience they discovered, is personal and unique to their research. Such researchers gently nursed to coherent expression (Mishler, 1986), their understanding of material they discovered. In the analysis of key themes discovered in this research, I assessed individual parts, bringing them together to discover more general interpretations.

Several principles guide the hermeneutics process (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Klein & Myers, 1999). These principles include contextualisation, interaction between the researcher and the material on which the research is based, dialogical reasoning, multiple interpretations, and suspicion. The principle of contextualisation came from Gadamer's awareness that there is inevitably a difference of understanding between the author and the reader of a text (Klein & Myers, 1999). This principle came about because of the time distance between the writing of the ancient manuscripts and the

interpretation. The fundamental need for a text to be understood in its historical and social context remains.

The principle of generalisation and abstraction places responsibility on a researcher to show the connection between suggested concepts arising from the literature and the content of the texts.

The principle of dialogical reasoning required the researcher to clearly describe his own pre-understandings and preconceptions, and actively challenge those predispositions in the process of text evaluation. This is different from holding the assumption that prejudice is non-existent, but rather, acknowledges the reality of prejudice and actively manages prejudice in the analysis that produces the research findings.

The principle of multiple interpretations focuses attention on the need to challenge any conflict of reasoning or understanding (Ricoeur, 1974) in the study of the research used in this study. In the current research, this required that individual pieces of text interpreted differently or explored from different perspectives needed to be examined in detail to uncover divergent thinking.

Finally, the principle of suspicion (Ricoeur, 1976) requires that text that may initially have been perceived to camouflage other ideas, is examined with the intention of discovering any underlying meaning.

The hermeneutic circle is the overarching paradigm within which the principles outlined were pursued. When these principles are applied collectively, the hermeneutic circle becomes a converging spiral of understanding. It is this method of enquiry that was at the heart of the current research. Using the hermeneutic process outlined, a credible understanding was derived by collecting the data and the insights they provided.

Method

Searching the academic literature using the PsycINFO database was a practical beginning point. This database was used to access a range of literature that discussed a variety of aspects of forgiveness as related to psychotherapy. Aspects of forgiveness that were not specifically related to psychotherapy were also considered, so that a comprehensive understanding of the subject of forgiveness could be developed, informing the intersection of psychotherapy and forgiveness, particularly the role forgiveness may have in psychotherapy. I was constantly alert to finding literature at the intersection of forgiveness and psychotherapy, which became a focus for the selection of what was relevant for inclusion in the study.

Having identified literature of relevance, the reference lists in the identified articles and books became a source for discovering material that informed the research being studied, revealing a snowball effect of increasing literature sources. A variety of perspectives were unlocked, and a range of insights and understandings were discovered. The use of books and academic article reference lists proved to be a productive way to deepen understanding without losing the focus of the research topic, the role of forgiveness in psychotherapy. The rich array of understanding from theoretical and empirical work informed the findings presented and discussed in Chapters three and four.

I looked beyond the obvious content to identify symbolism that provided important latent data (Minichiello, 1990). The hermeneutic process just outlined, cycling deliberately between the helicopter view of the whole and the microscopic view of the data elements, describes the way the data analysis proceeded. This process of discovery began early when I started reading, even before all the literature to be reviewed was assembled (Morgan, 1997). On the one hand, this provided the opportunity to explore in the literature themes that were emerging, but on the other hand, care had to be taken not to develop a bias from the insights from literature examined later, by slanting judgements towards a predetermined structure of thinking. I became aware of this tension as the data gathering and data analysis phase of the qualitative research inevitably overlapped. This overlap was not deliberately avoided

or even minimised, but I was aware of the need to manage these merged yet distinct phases of the qualitative research process. The key elements emerge as the literature material becomes increasingly familiar (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). An iterative approach was taken, moving from the initial emerging themes and back again, many times.

My role was one of interpretation. I was not purely passive during the examination of the literature. My perspective is outlined in this and the introduction chapter, and unashamedly brings prejudice and particular perspectives to the material reviewed. I recognised preconceptions but sought to listen to and hear the data as intended by the writers, albeit through the inevitable perspective I brought with me. Being both faithful to the data and aware of my bias, mingling the two, contributed to making this work original and unique.

The topic of forgiveness features in several bodies of literatures: psychotherapy, mental health, behavioural science, philosophy, and religion. Because of the limited size and therefore scope of this study, the findings presented are primarily derived from the psychotherapy literature. Some references reach beyond this primary focus, in part influenced by the researcher's own background, to enrich understandings of the topic. The findings chapters in this dissertation represent the output of an iterative process of restructuring, deleting, editing, and rearranging material as my understanding and insights on the subject developed.

Researcher's background

The hermeneutics approach used in this study recognises that a researcher does not come to the research without bias, but rather, with a pre-understanding that needs to be recognised and revealed. My pre-understanding, in the process of the research analysis, interfaced in a dynamic way with the researched material, influencing my perceptions. This section outlines my self-perceptions, and my pre-understandings. Training and experience have shaped me as a person and influenced the perspective that I had when approaching this research on forgiveness. My background is briefly outlined to ensure that my position within the context of the research is transparent.

My academic training was initially in engineering, and then management. Engineering training cultivated discipline, appreciation of process, and emphasised logic in my approach to life. My management training and experience increased sensitivity to the complexities of people and business. Over a period of more than 20 years, I held a variety of middle and senior management positions in several large New Zealand public companies. This experience provided many insights into human behaviour, particularly how past hurtful experiences contributed to shaping current behaviours. The engineer in me constantly sought for logic, emphasising cause and effect relationships, and the manager within, noticed the impact of past complex personal histories. Subsequently, for several years I have been teaching in tertiary institutes in management and systems related subjects before commencing psychotherapy study. The experience of supporting students to learn helped me understand how strongly learning is coloured by past experiences.

A parallel set of experiences occurred outside my employment context. A variety of people over many years have sought support from me with a variety of personal problems that seemed often to have their roots in unresolved relationship issues in their past. I met with some of these people on a regular basis, some individually, and some as couples. It seemed the desire and ability to forgive past wrongs contributed significantly to their wellbeing.

I have held Christian beliefs for most of my life. Central to my understanding of Christianity is the importance of forgiveness. Forgiving is exemplified in the life of Jesus, when dying and praying, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing" (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Luke 23:34). Forgiving was also encouraged by New Testament biblical writers, when they wrote (for example) "be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you," (New King James Bible [NKJB], 2020, Ephesians 4:32). A forgiving God, and the need to forgive others, is fundamental to the Christian ethos.

An understanding I have of Christianity is that God establishes relationships with people, and that God has a desire and ability to righteously forgive wrongs, and establish a closeness with forgiven people. Christianity encourages people to have a

similar attitude of forgiveness to others. This theological perspective influences my understanding of forgiveness. Perhaps more significantly, the observation of myself and others is that although the principle of forgiving is a deeply espoused value, the actual practice of forgiving is difficult and painful, and often influenced by a wide variety of factors.

For the initial years of my life, I was in a legalistic religious group. My mother left the group but my father stayed, and the group insisted on my parents' separation. We then lived in the same home, but quite separately, and my father did not communicate at all with the family, and never communicated with me for the remaining ten years of his life. These painful experiences have undoubtably impacted my personal development. How I choose to now respond as an adult to the opportunity to forgive has been confronting for me in this personal context.

My background positions me appropriately to engage with the subject of forgiveness, but also handicaps or has the propensity to blinker my understanding. The critical reflexive approach to this research was built on recognising the challenge to underlying assumptions, including those of the researcher (Cunliffe, 2004). It is through the telling, representation or revealing of self, that an important foundation is put in place for reflexive analysis (Skeggs, 2002).

Context of the research

It is acknowledged that this research may have a limitation by being primarily based on Western literature that is not cognisant of the unique circumstance of Māori in bi-cultural Aotearoa New Zealand. I am a white Caucasian male brought up in lower middle working-class Aotearoa New Zealand, whose life spans the second half of the 20th century into the early part of the 21st century.

The overseas country of most influence on my life has been India. I have over several visits stayed for several months in India in rural villages, provincial towns, and a smaller amount of time in cities. Several aspects of Indian society have impacted me, such as the poverty in villages where people living in harsh environments are constrained by meagre resources. I have particularly noticed the oppression of women in village

contexts where many carry a heavy burden of responsibility. Men seem often to adopt a demeaning attitude to women, reflected in ill-treatment, and allowing them only minimal voice. The strongly hierarchical structure of Indian society often seems to assume that the oppression of women is acceptable. This informs the current study in that significant parts of Indian society seem to have institutionalised gender interrelationship discrimination with minimal opportunities for women to remedy hurts inflicted on them. This greatly tests forgiveness and may in fact mean forgiving is interpreted as overlooking abuse, a damaging distortion of forgiving discussed in the research findings.

A limitation of my research is that I am a psychotherapist in training with limited experience as either a psychotherapist or as a researcher. My earlier academic training was in disciplines unrelated to psychotherapy. The experience prior to training in psychotherapy both enriches and potentially blinds me. I was aware of this during this research.

Chapter 4. Findings - Psychological Insights Related to Forgiveness Relevant in Psychotherapy and Models of Forgiveness

This chapter of findings presents psychological perspectives related to forgiveness that are relevant to psychotherapy. The discussions initially focus on the importance of hope and mentalisation. The insights gained from Klein's (1946) depressive position help understand the psychological preparation needed for forgiveness. Bowlby (1982) and Ainsworth's (1977) understandings of attachment inform the discussion of why some seem to possess a propensity to forgive, while others are reluctant to forgive those who offend against them. In the second part of this chapter, models of forgiveness that draw on the concepts discussed in the literature review are discussed, followed by a process model of forgiveness.

Hope

Hope has been identified as an important factor in therapy (Frank & Frank, 1993). Clients in therapy often have limited hope, that is, they have a low level of optimism about the future. Hope may include the idea that the goals set for oneself are achievable (Worthington, 2006). Studies have shown that there is a correlation between hope and forgiveness, particularly where forgiving is encouraged, but the causal relationship is unclear (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Worthington et al., 2016). Such studies suggest that forgiving may increase hopefulness, or the converse, and those with a hopeful outlook may be more inclined to forgive. However, only correlations are evident in prior research, and not the direction of any cause-and-effect relationship.

Therapists and the therapy experience may be objects of hope for clients, as they represent a possible access route to hope, and of being supported to understand experience in a way that brings hope (Cooper, 2000). Often clients with minimal hope defend against hopefulness, not believing that their emotional hurts and attachment deficiencies can be healed (Wallin, 2007). This defence may link despair to unforgiveness. Holding on to negative experiences of others and self seems imminently appropriate without a mechanism such as forgiveness, and there seems to be no way

through, only inescapable pain (Worthington, 2009). I suggest that just as holding negative feelings is painful, the process and results of forgiving may seem equally painful, hence the inescapable pain referred to may be anticipated, regardless of either forgiving or not forgiving. Either path forward may be defended against, and clients therefore left without hope. For some I also suggest, forgiveness may be a helpful component for the healing process, but possibly not sufficient.

Sometimes it is necessary for a therapist to hold hope on behalf of a client who may be unwilling or incapable of holding hope for themselves. When the holding of hope for a client is perceived by the client, it may serve as a proxy for secure attachment (Cooper, 2000). Hope suggests there is a positive future beyond the current pain; pain is often felt when hurt is carried. This may seem counter-intuitive to clients, because clients forgiving seems impossible, and even undesirable at this point in the therapy process, and reconciliation may appear unrealistic. Even the processing of feelings, disappointments, and emotional harm, seems impossible (Cooper, 2000). It has been suggested that grieving may unfreeze the resistance to forgiving, and shift some underlying legacy of inadequate attachment experiences in a way that facilitates hope (Worthington & Sandage, 2015).

A possible way forward in therapy may be to facilitate the equivalent of the grieving process as a way of emerging from being stuck in the hurt of being a victim, whatever that hurt may be. The implications of underlying inadequate attachment experiences need to be recognised. The possibility of reconciliation between a victim and abuser may then also become a possibility as a later step in the process, but only if this does not create a likelihood of inflicting further hurt.

Mentalisation

Mentalisation is a term used to describe a person's ability to recognise and attend to the mental state of self and others, and the ability to self-assess realistically (Bateman & Fonagy, 2006). When mentalisation capability is deficient, it often manifests as intolerance, high levels of anxiety, and a focus on rumination (Bateman & Fonagy, 2006). It has been suggested that a lack of mentalisation skills is a common factor

featuring in many clients in therapy (Allen et al., 2008). Humility may be considered as a construct that aids accurate self-assessment, recognition of limitations, an openness with others, and a capacity to self-regulate (Davis et al., 2011; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011, 2014). Humility is thought of as a virtue in some cultures. Humility has been correlated with well-being for those who have had secure attachment (Jankowski & Sandage, 2014), and with the capacity to forgive (Davis et al., 2010). It can aid the management of subjective experience so that interpretations of others' behaviours are more realistic (Allen et al., 2008). Psychotherapy may support changes in the ability of clients to attach, fostering hope, humility, and the capacity to forgive (Worthington et al., 2016).

The depressive position – Klein (1946)

The dynamic of forgiving (or otherwise) can be relevant in a therapeutic rupture and repair dynamic, in which there has to be acceptance that the therapist and client are not all good or all bad (Gartner, 1988).

The transference experience in the therapeutic process may also colour the therapy consideration of forgiving (Akhtar, 2002). Individuals who have experienced trauma, particularly in childhood, often experience an internal world full of hurt, with a split self, and malice towards perpetrators of their pain. Internally they may strongly hold to an idealised "all good" mother figure of early infancy (Mahler et al., 1975), while also holding a conflicting image of her or other key objects. The result of this conflict may be an idealising of some aspects of the object and a venting of anger against the therapist (Akhtar, 2002). The client may feel like a victim and feel justified in attacking the perpetrators of harm. This may be transferred on to the therapist, who is perceived subconsciously to represent the offender (Akhtar, 1996). Demands of various types may be made of therapists, linked with accusations against them (Akhtar, 1999). It is as if the client has an intra-psychic terrorist organisation that tries to assassinate their own observing ego because it is siding with the therapist and unable to dismiss the past "all good" of early years and accept the present situation (Akhtar, 1999).

If forgiveness is appropriate, the factors that would move a client towards forgiveness need to be considered. The elements discussed earlier of revenge, reconsideration, and reparation, may together lead to the mourning of trauma, and facilitate the acknowledgement of intra-psychic self-destructive features leading to the capacity of allowing forgiveness to emerge (Akhtar, 2002). Revenge may be expressed as attacks on the therapist. Reparation can be available to the client in the form of therapist empathy and care (Winnicott, 1971), overcoming client attacks. Reconsideration comes from recontextualising the past (Kafka, 1992). Negative images from the past may be accepted alongside positive interactions, and the depressive position in Kleinian language may be gained (Klein, 1946). If this is going to occur, shifts will be needed in the client's understanding of the therapist, and their insight about the their intra-psychic state (Akhtar, 2002). Other elements will also be needed, including an awareness of sadomasochistic delight in ongoing hatred (Kernberg, 1995), and recognition of internal defence mechanisms of an unforgiving attitude (Fairbairn, 1946). Giving up the familiar well-rehearsed hatred and established way of unforgiveness and exploring new uncharted psychological spaces will probably make a client anxious, and stimulate the desire to cling to the victim stance that may have been held for a long time (Akhtar, 2002). The process towards forgiving may be gradual, and characterised with conflict with the therapist as described. Affirmations and clarifications of the way of forgiving may be needed (Akhtar, 2002).

I now want to extend this discussion beyond the client therapist relationship. Klein's concepts of the depressive position and the paranoid schizoid position provide insights into the psychology of forgiveness (Alford, 2013). An offended person may hold a strong view that the offender is principally bad, and at the same time their perception of themselves is that they are principally good (Klein, 1946). In effect, they are externalising their own badness and projecting this on to the offender. This is captured in Kleinian terms as the paranoid schizoid position, in which the self is regarded as the victim, and the other person as the oppressor (Klein, 1946). The difficult move to the depressive position is needed (Klein, 1946), in which a more realistic view of relationships becomes tolerated - that there is good and bad in both parties. This is the often difficult and painful psychological journey needed before forgiving is possible

(Alford, 2013). The reducing of forgiveness into an attempt to achieve inner peace is an over-simplification, and greatly reduces the significance of forgiveness. Klein started with the early developmental position of a child's struggle to grapple with hatred and rage, which was believed by Klein to be inborn. This is particularly difficult for a child who loves and hates the same person, originally its mother. The mother is the source of love, supporting, and feeding, but is also sometimes absent and not responsive to the child's desires, causing anger (Klein, 1946). This gives rise to the paranoid schizoid position described, which is an ineffectual coping defence mechanism.

As a child matures, so the depressive position emerges, which allows for the two situations of love and hate to be directed towards the same person - they are no longer all good or all bad. The fear and retaliation associated with the paranoid schizoid position is split off again and again, obtaining a more integrated position of responsibility, accommodating guilt and sadness as the ego is strengthened and destructive impulses are diminished (Klein, 1957). This is understood as normal development. This process may be false, and termed "manic denial," which is important in the context of this study, because this maladjustment or inadequate maturing stimulates a variety of false mimics of forgiveness as described in the previous chapter. In contrast, it is suggested that the development of the depressive position, which is a lifetime maturing, enables the experience of reparation for harm done to others (Alford, 2013). For the offended, a genuine expression of sympathy for the offender develops (Klein, 1937). This is the beginning point for empathy, the understanding that the other has a viewpoint, and understanding that is at least partly understood, and accepted as having some validity. This more realistic perspective opens the possibility of a reciprocal relationship being restored or developed (Akhtar, 2002).

If the caring loving nature of mother child relationships are to be safeguarded, then there needs to be forgiveness by a mother of her baby's aggressive behaviour, and similarly, the child has to overlook its mother's empathetic deficiencies (Akhtar, 2002). Klein's understanding is different; she notes that an infant develops both pleasant and hostile fantasies, depending on the mother child relationship (Klein, 1937). Klein further asserts that gradually, the child can hold both views of its mother in mind

simultaneously. As the child matures, love and hate develop, and guilt becomes a new element in the feelings of love (Klein, 1937). Klein suggested that generosity towards others arises from identification with kindness experienced from parents (or primary care givers), but also the child's desire to undo fantasy injuries that were inflicted when the parents were frustrating (Klein, 1937). This is the dynamic of reparation being paid in the parent child relationship. The child forgives its parents for being frustrating, while also seeking the parents' forgiveness for the child's aggression towards them. Klein suggested the desire to make reparation diminishes the pain of guilt while also embracing hope and love (Klein, 1937). This dynamic described by Klein, offers insights into how the inner state of the depressive position can be arrived at. The depressive position is a state which seems to be a prerequisite for forgiveness.

It is not uncommon for adults, even high functioning adults, to be stuck in the paranoid schizoid position, and as a result they find forgiveness seems impossible. It is not that forgiving is impossible, but just feels impossible in the paranoid schizoid position. A role of therapy in this situation, is to support a client in the necessary movement to the depressive position, so the client can then embrace the possibility of forgiveness and potential change, leading to greater wellbeing. Often the move to the depressive position is difficult, because it requires the surrender of narcissistic tendencies, or the sense of omnipotence (Alford, 2013). It is important to notice that the deeper work that is revealed through Klein's insights is needed for movement to the depressive position, rather than the superficial feel good therapy of "cheap grace" (Bonhoeffer, 1963) or simply inner peace, which is not the real psychological work needed for genuine forgiveness.

Klein's work helpfully informs therapy in the context of forgiveness, although she does not make the link. A therapist's work may require the support of an offended client to shift from the paranoid schizoid position to the depressive position before the elements of forgiveness discussed can be grappled with. The depressive position is likely to be a prerequisite for forgiveness; hence the importance and focuses needed in therapy of supporting a client in the difficult shift to the depressive position as a precursor to forgiveness.

For forgiveness to be morally significant, requires more than a psychological process; it also has an interpersonal element (Alford, 2013). Personal wellbeing, although a helpful by-product, is not the primary goal. If it were, the forgiveness was probably not genuine (Alford, 2013). Forgiveness has an aspect of morality, a desire that goes beyond doing the right thing for psychological repair, and a moral desire to increase the happiness of the offender (Alford, 2013). This springs from the character of what might be called "forgivingness" (Roberts, 1995). An implication from Klein's concepts is that good character requires the ability to be in the depressive position (Alford, 2013).

It appears that Dr Graham Dickason's rapidity to forgive may have been facilitated by his mature depressive position. I am not suggesting that forgiving was necessarily easy for him, but it was perhaps more attainable. It is noticeable in the narrative of Joseph's story, there is no record of statements of hatred expressed by Joseph towards his brothers. Joseph was however, not dismissive of the facts relating to their behaviour towards him. These observations point towards Joseph being in a depressive position in Kleinian language, and therefore capable of forgiveness.

Mother's forgiveness – Winnicott (1971)

Winnicott (1971) also contributed indirectly to the understanding of forgiveness. The idea of the "good enough mother" and the "survival of object" (Winnicott, 1971) are relevant. A mother allows herself to be used by a ruthless infant driven by hunger and annoyance at the mother's failures, surviving this onslaught and remaining available to her child (Winnicott, 1971). The child receives an experience of forgiveness from the mother and learns to accept the forgiveness (Akhtar, 2002). The child develops an ego capacity for containing aggression towards its mother, a needed step in the process of forgiving. Later in life, this learning can be transferred to others (Akhtar, 2002).

Winnicott's views on developing the capacity for concern further expands on this thinking; he saw two sets of experiences contributing to the development of guilt and reparation (Winnicott, 1963). One is the survival of the mother/object contending with the child's oral abuse, and the other is the mother's enduring concern and interest in the child's growing spontaneity. Though Winnicott did not use the term "forgiving," it

seems embedded in the mother child dynamic he describes. The child's annoying conflicting demands for closeness and distance, protection, and freedom, must be answered by the mother with a non-judgemental ability to contain the child's aggression and resist the temptation to abandon it. This requires a response similar to forgiving (Akhtar, 2002).

From this it can be understood that both Klein (1946) and Winnicott (1971) seem to have implied that in the early years of the mother child relationship, the roots of forgiveness versus vengeance are evident. If aggression is well metabolised and love predominates in this early relationship, forgiveness is likely to be experienced and identified with. Alternatively, revenge seeking tendencies may be sown (Akhtar, 2002). However, later developmental experiences may significantly contribute to the development of a capacity to forgive (Akhtar, 2002). This suggests it is key for non-human primates, and in human mother child relationships, that the dynamic of forgiveness functions so that effective relationships are retained. This has implications for therapy. The early developmental experiences will likely predispose or otherwise, a person's ability to embrace forgiveness. This predisposition may need to be recognised and engaged with in the therapy process.

Attachment – Bowlby (1982) and Ainsworth (1977)

The concept of attachment was introduced to the study of psychotherapy as an aid to recognising in an adult person, that there are key features as a consequence of their relationship with their primary caregivers during the early developmental years (Ainsworth et al., 1977; Bowlby, 1982). There are several ways to categorise attachment. In this discussion a model proposing four categories is used: secure, ambivalent (preoccupied), avoidant (dismissing) and disorganised (fearful) attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The focus is on the three categories that reflect inadequate attachment.

This discussion links aspects of attachment theory to the propensity or otherwise to forgive. The understanding of a client's attachment history specifically informs clinical therapy and in particular, the client's predisposition or otherwise to forgive. This

impacts on approaches to therapy and helps identify issues that need to be engaged with in therapy. The following discussion identifies these issues.

When there is insecure attachment, there is a tendency for ongoing volatile patterns in relationships, which may be connected to a lack of forgiveness for hurts that have been inflicted (Worthington et al., 2016; Worthington & Sandage, 2015). Implicit memory related to the insecure attachments seems to propel people to replicate similar relationships (Lewis et al., 2000). It has been suggested that those with insecure attachment histories are often influenced by unconscious motivations seeking forgiveness for hurt inflicted from key relational figures in their lives (Benjamin, 2003). However, such individuals also struggle with self-regulation of emotions, and forming secure attachment relationships (Worthington & Sandage, 2015). This results in distress, which can lead to hyperactivation or deactivation of their attachment systems, both responses inhibiting authentic forgiveness when offended against, and often leading to hostile relationships being sustained as a self-protective mechanism (Worthington & Sandage, 2015).

Insecure attachments tend to lead to disappointment, mistrust, and hostility in relationships, making attachment in relationships difficult (Worthington & Sandage, 2015). This suggests that meaningful new relations are difficult to form. Old psychological injuries, and painful past experiences cloud new potential relationships. A readiness to forgive may address these, clearing away the past to open up the possibility of more secure relationships (Worthington, 2009). Psychotherapy, where a client experiences a relatively secure attachment relationship with a therapist, may be able to stimulate in clients, a will to change, so that the client transfers this experience into other relationship contexts (Benjamin, 2003). This can lead to more stable relationship frameworks (Lewis et al., 2000).

Transference and countertransference dynamics are an important part of psychotherapy. Clients transfer or project their feelings about someone else on to their therapist, and the reverse for the therapist, who transfers their feelings on to the client. Therapy may involve the interpretation of these perceived projections, helping to uncover emotions, and assisting a client to have increased self- awareness. For

insecurely attached clients, these insights may emerge more slowly and may involve a rupture and repair process for both client and therapist, and an experience of unforgiveness or forgiveness within therapy (Worthington & Sandage, 2015). This may lead to the emergence or awareness of similar relationship failures and repairs elsewhere in the client's life, and an awareness of the need for forgiveness in other relationships may emerge (Castonguary, 2013). Therapy processes can provide useful enactments of the forgiveness dynamics, and the experience of a rupture and repair in therapy provides an experience for the client of what is possible through forgiving, providing an experience of how relationships can be repaired in the client's life.

Typically, securely attached clients are capable of a greater level of openness to new interpersonal relationships (Lewis et al., 2000), and perhaps as a result, are able to perceive the possible benefits of forgiving. In contrast, the insecurely attached may not readily arrive at the insights and understanding of the benefits of forgiving. This may be evident in difficulties in therapy if rupture in therapy occurs, and repair proves to be difficult (Castonguary, 2013). This process may be complicated by the therapist's countertransference, thus inhibiting the forgiving of perceived injustices (Wallin, 2007).

Avoidant attachment

Those with an avoidant style of attachment, tend when stressed, to remain strongly independent, rather than connecting to others and risking vulnerability. This includes narcissistic and obsessive-compulsive personalities, who tend to adopt negative views of others, and hold strong positive views of self (Worthington et al., 2016). Both personality styles struggle to forgive, and minimise the awareness of the need to forgive (Worthington et al., 2016).

Narcissistic personality

Narcissistic personalities hold an excessively positive view of themselves, though this often masks a fear of invalidation and a deep seated vulnerability (Johnson, 1994). The narcissistic personality tends to make a person self-focused, often with symptoms of arrogance, entitlement, lack of empathy, and a high need for validation (Pincus et al.,

2009). An apparent corollary for narcissistic personality styles, though perhaps not proven, is a reluctance to find fault with themselves. Any possible imperfection is likely to be explained away, projected on to others, or minimised, although this maybe a cover for feelings of guilt or shame.

Narcissism sets people up to perceive transgressions as offences, and to feel they have been unjustly treated (Worthington, 2006), so they are less likely to forgive (Emmons, 2000). Other features of narcissism mitigate against forgiving, including fantasies of power and revenge (Raskin & Novacek, 1991).

The more vulnerable aspects of narcissism include feelings of negativity, and a sense of shame (Banai et al., 2005). These features are often associated with ambivalent attachment (Banai et al., 2005). Those with a narcissistic personality often have an avoidant style of attachment, and as a result, have learned to rely emotionally on themselves, because they perceive others to rebuff them (Bowlby, 1988). Narcissistic entitlement has been negatively associated with forgiveness in several studies (Eaton et al., 2006; Exline et al., 2004; Konrath & Cheung, 2013). These studies show that narcissists' difficulties with forgiving often involve anger or resentments when others are not perceived as validating or responding to their needs. Emotional distance, and sometimes shameful feelings of being dependent, lead to anger. Narcissistic rage is an anxiety-driven response to experiences of self-fragmentation, leading to a strong preference for a dominant position in relationships (Kohut, 1977). The result is a limited capacity to see the perspective of others. Apology is perceived as unwarranted, as offences are not perceived as being their fault. Empathy, humility, and perceiving oneself capable of similar offences, are key factors for having the capacity to forgive, and are typically absent for those with a narcissistic personality style (Worthington et al., 2016).

Narcissism has also been associated with religious motives, as narcissists are likely to use their religion as a means of accomplishing personal goals (Sandage & Moe, 2011; Welwood, 2000). Sandage and Moe (2011) and Welwood (2000) noted that a narcissistic defence may be used as a way of appearing to be spiritually attuned, but, avoiding underlying psychological insecurity and associated problems. Ironically in the

context of religion, in which forgiving would be expected to be embraced, religious notions may be used to avoid forgiving. High spiritual grandiosity has been negatively associated with interpersonal forgiving (Sandage & Crabtree, 2012).

Obsessive compulsive personality

An obsessive compulsive style typically has a cognitive and moral rigidity, seeking perfection and seeking to control relationships (Johnson, 1994). Obsessive compulsive personalities are likely to be self-condemning (Worthington, 2013). A strong desire for interpersonal control may reflect the desire to avoid feelings and intimacy, which may have origins in attachment issues with parents (Wallin, 2007). Rigid expectations, the blaming of others for issues that are difficult to accept, relationship distance, and anger, are mechanisms for handling the fear of coming under the control of others (Worthington et al., 2016). Those with strong obsessive compulsive personality traits, having fixed attitudes, can through mindfulness and forgiveness, adopt a more flexible way of thinking in their relationships (Lynch & Cheavens, 2007). Avoiding facing emotional conflicts in relationships means underlying bitterness is not faced.

The motivations of obsessive compulsive people are often to be dutiful, perfectionistic, and very focused on how their behaviour appears to others, as ways to avoid underlying shame (Schoenleber & Berenbaum, 2010). Such people typically do not recognise that they have difficulty with forgiving, because they tend to supress anger and are concerned to appear virtuous (Worthington et al., 2016). Other manifestations are that those associated with them often feel unforgiven, as they are held to high standards. Obsessive compulsive persons are not motivated by being better (i.e., not narcissistic), but fear the feeling of being helpless, which they associate with imperfection (Worthington et al., 2016).

Ambivalent attachment

An ambivalent style of attachment is often evident in a longing for supportive relationships, while at the same time experiencing anxiety and agitation concerning the risk of disappointment or abandonment, and hence hesitating to disagree (Gore et al., 2012; Worthington et al., 2016). Such personalities often have some narcissistic

traits, and have difficulty detaching from sources of interpersonal pain, producing superficial and premature forgiveness (Akhtar, 2002) that often leads to deeper more strongly held unforgiveness and anger (Worthington, 2003). Premature forgiveness, or forgiveness- in-theory (Shaw, 2014) tends to avoid full awareness of injuries to self and the emotional impact of those injuries (Vitz & Mango, 1997).

Those with dependent personalities tend to lack an emotionally or spiritually secure base, which means they have difficulty coping with anxiety and interpersonal conflict. Boundary setting is difficult, and autonomous management is feared (Fabricatore et al., 2004). This powerlessness to cope means religious people of this disposition yield to God or other spiritual forces as a way of shifting personal responsibility. However, forgiveness tends to not be considered, because this implies personal responsibility for their conflicts (Fabricatore et al., 2004). Fabricatore et al. (2004) suggest that the use of religion as a justification for deferring responsibility leads to less life satisfaction, and this type of passive spirituality becomes unhelpful for resolving issues in relationships.

Those with covert narcissism may idealise a select few as a way of avoiding shame, emptiness, and depression (Banai et al., 2005; Meyer & Pilkonis, 2011). They like to be seen as being associated with idealised persons, making their connection with people of reputation known, in order to soothe their personal anxiety and the shame of their own sense of defectiveness (Masterton, 1993). Their attachment histories often involve mirroring of an idealised parent. They are often sensitive to invalidation, criticism, or perceived rejection, and so avoid confrontations with others in conflict situations (Worthington et al., 2016). Vulnerable or covert narcissism has been found to be positively associated with depression, envy, and resentment, and negatively associated with forgiveness (Nauta & Derckx, 2007). Grandiose narcissists find negative public events harder to forgive than private ones, possibly because of the possible loss of face; the opposite pattern seems to be evident for vulnerable narcissists (Besser & Zeigler-Hill, 2010); private conflicts are likely to involve closer relationships.

Unlike grandiose narcissists, vulnerable narcissists are not effective in lowering the sense of negative feedback to buffer their sense of shame. This typically increases their

disillusionment (Jones, 2002). Disappointment and emotional dysregulation increases, and lowers their preparedness to forgive (Jones, 2002; Sandage & Moe, 2011).

Disorganised attachment

Those with a disorganised or fearful style of attachment, struggle with others' negative views of them. They have often had traumatic experiences in their past, and are immersed in their own interpersonal experiences, with feelings that are overwhelming (Wallin, 2007). Their internal worlds are all consuming, so that their ability to reflect and have an informed awareness of external relationships is limited (Worthington et al., 2016). Relationships are fearful, and it is hard for them to form consistent attachments, possibly having a history of being a scapegoat in their family. Those with a disorganised attachment history often have difficulty trusting others, and are concerned about others' hidden motives (Sherry et al., 2007). They often test the loyalty of those around them, only thinly disguising their anxiety and tension (Benjamin, 1996).

Disorganised attachment can lead to paranoid personality disorder, a combination of emotional reactivity and low agreeableness (Brieger et al., 2000). Such personalities experience many in their environment as being dangerous, which is likely to contribute to the negative correlation between forgiveness and paranoia (Munoz Sastre et al., 2005). Disorganised attachment has been associated with vindictiveness and interpersonal coldness (Haggerty et al., 2009). Unforgiveness protects people from others that are perceived to be dangerous, and is maintained by the unconscious projection of anger on to others (Karen, 2001). Bad is projected on to others, and intense hatred is used as a defence mechanism, making self-awareness very difficult (Klein, 1975; Vitz & Mango, 1997).

Paranoid personalities with spiritual awareness often exhibit moral rigidity, viewing themselves as righteous, but often victimised or under personal attack (Terman, 2010). In contrast to narcissism, paranoid people often feel vulnerable, fearing humiliation and shame if they are perceived as weak; they therefore believe that injustices need spiritual rectification rather than rectification by forgiving (Strozier, 2010). There are

often negative psychological implications of holding a strong paranoid mind-set. Anger and mistrust may become ingrained, not allowing the possibility of forgiving when these emotions impact on interpersonal relationships (Worthington et al., 2016).

Those with borderline personality characteristics often have negative views of self and others, and high levels of anxiety. Paranoid personalities often manage splitting by seeing threats as external, whereas those with borderline traits are more likely to turn their hostility against themselves (Worthington et al., 2016). Borderline personalities are often sensitive to perceived injustices involving interpersonal relationships. They may become angry and then fixated on holding their grievance, which makes it difficult to see others' perspectives, and therefore forgiving is hard to accommodate (Sansone et al., 2013). Clients with borderline personality disorder tend to be vengeful, and therefore have difficulty forgiving (Searles, 1986). Borderline anger may be focused on attempts to extract sympathy from a rescuer (Benjamin, 1996). Borderline personalities that do forgive are likely to experience shame and self-recrimination, unless they are able to actualise self-compassion or self-forgiveness (Worthington et al., 2016). Those with borderline personalities both fear and long for reconciliation in their relationships (Holm et al., 2009). There tends to be a negative correlation between borderline style personalities and forgiving others (Sandage & Crabtree, 2012; Sandage & Jankowski, 2010).

Propensity to forgive

Various factors may become evident in therapy that can increase or decrease propensity to forgive. Cognitive and affective characteristics including responses to shame, guilt, and attributes of empathy, seem to inform a person's propensity to forgive (McCullough et al., 1997). Guilt proneness in contrast to shame proneness, also seems to incline people to forgive (Konstam & Deveney, 2001). Guilt seems to stimulate desires to resolve conflicts, while shame seems to stimulate self-protection and responses such as anger (Worthington & Wade, 1999). Clients that report a disposition towards empathy are also more likely to forgive (McCullough et al., 1997). It appears there is little difference between genders regarding the propensity to

forgive (Enright & Zell, 1989), although some studies have suggested men are more likely to forgive (Hanson, 1996).

Some individuals are characterised by a readiness to forgive that seems premature or lacking a depth of understanding (Akhtar, 2002). These individuals may be characterised as obsessional neurotics who deny any feature of aggression, and who fear acknowledging hurt or anger (Akhtar, 2002). Those in this category often lack a healthy capacity for indignation, have a limited capacity for hate, are likely to have minimal self-respect, and may not recognise that they have been wronged, having a compelling desire to be accepted (Akhtar, 2002; Galdston, 1987).

Some masochists seem prone to forgive excessively, and repeatedly forgive traumas inflicted on them, seemingly lacking the ability to change their situation, almost addicted to relationships that are sadistic and manipulative (Berliner, 1958; Kernberg, 1992). This type of addiction, often occurring in relationships of co-dependency, seems to draw the person to self-destructive behaviours, perhaps hoping that these will solve intrapsychic problems (Akhtar, 2002). There appears to be a belief that nurturing a forgiving attitude, albeit superficial in nature, will solve their relationship problems. This illusion needs to be uncovered in therapy.

Others reconcile at a surface level with a type of pseudo forgiveness, but retain a deep seated ill-will towards the offender (Sohn, 1999). Some in this group are conflicted between letting go of hurts and injuries, and holding on to dreams of reversing the historical realities (Bion, 1957). These may hold on to the hope that the pre trauma period (i.e., the time before the offence) can in some way be restored (Akhtar, 2002). At the same time, they may carry out vengeful attacks on their offender (Akhtar, 2002). Others who are somewhat similar in character falsely claim they have forgiven, but are actually calculatingly seeking opportunity for getting even (Akhtar, 2002).

Some key aspects of attachment styles have been related to the propensity or otherwise to forgive. These have implications for practical psychotherapy as identified in these discussions. The next section reviews models of forgiveness.

Models of forgiveness

It is helpful to distinguish between models of forgiveness, thereby increasing awareness of what approaches to forgiveness are appropriate in clinical psychotherapy (Worthington, 2006). Different models inform different approaches taken in therapy. For example, forgiving strangers is different to forgiving those that we have a close or ongoing relationship with, in which trust has in some way been violated (Worthington, 2006). These two situations have different emotional impacts; the decision to forgive a stranger is likely to have a different emotional impact to that of forgiving a person with whom there is an existing relationship.

Implicit in the definition discussed earlier is that forgiveness is experienced within the psyche of an individual. The events giving rise to forgiveness or unforgiveness, occur in an interpersonal context between two people or groups. The characteristics of the relationship impacting the interpersonal relationship include the closeness and length of the relationship, the history of offending in the relationship, and the qualities of trust that are characteristic of the relationship (Worthington, 2020). Other features impacting this view of forgiveness include whether there has been apology, the perceived sincerity of the apology, whether there are third parties involved, and whether there has been any reparation (Worthington, 2020). In this conceptualisation, the forgiveness process necessarily includes both the internal experience of the person offended against, and the relationship repair between the two people (Worthington, 2020).

Interpersonal models of forgiveness

There are four interpersonal possibilities relating to forgiveness. One possibility is that there is no forgiving, and another is that forgiveness is felt but not expressed to the other person, which is termed "silent forgiving." An advantage of silent forgiving is that the victim can feel at peace while still holding the perpetrator accountable. A third option, hollow forgiveness, occurs when the transgressor may feel excused and the victim experiences only minimal relief such as the reduction of social or conscience pressure, to forgive. The fourth option, full forgiveness, occurs when both the

perpetrator and victim benefit, there is internal peace for the victim, and the perpetrator knows they are forgiven (Worthington, 2006).

An interpersonal model of forgiveness proposed by de Waal and Pokorney (2005) draws on evolutionary theory in an effort to understand forgiveness and reconciliation (de Waal & Pokorney, 2005; Sapolsky & Share, 2004). This model grew out of understanding how primates living in groups resolve dysfunction in their group. Reconciliation rituals seem to lower emotional animosity and lead to closer relationships. The co-operation required to protect the group from external threats appears to take precedence over internal dysfunctions and a decreased emotional intensity appears to facilitate this cooperative approach. The lowered emotional intensity between the animals seems to be a precursor to restoration of effective relationships and intragroup cooperation (Worthington, 2006).

A two systems interpersonal model by McCullough (2001) extended the evolutionary model described in the previous paragraph, to a two system opponent-process model (McCullough, 2001). The idea of this model is that an attachment-empathy system competes with a rumination system to oversee social processes. At times, a capacity to forgive arising from attachment-empathy may prevail, and at other times, rumination, justice and revenge may dominate. This model is focused on interpersonal forgiveness and is an extension of the reconciliation concept outlined earlier.

An interpersonal model of forgiveness proposed by Hargrave and Sells (1997) identified both exoneration and entitlement as the driving forces of forgiveness (Hargrave & Sells, 1997). Four stations of forgiveness were identified in this theory; each station may be the starting point, as it is not a sequential process (Hargrave, 2001). The first two stations are insight, recognising the dynamics of the offence, and understanding, which is grasping why the offence occurred. Together, these are termed "exoneration" (Hargrave & Sells, 1997). The model reflects the notion that when there is insight and understanding, the offended may decide that the offender is exonerated. The third and fourth stations focus on compensation and explicit forgiving. Compensation provides the possibility of payment of some type by the offender as recompense to resolve the offence. Forgiveness explicitly expressed,

combined with compensation from the offender, can lead to resolution in some cases (Hargrave, 2001).

These models are typically relevant when forgiveness (or lack of it) occurs between people where there is significant investment in the relationship, such as in families, intimate relationships, or in work or social contexts where the relationships are a significant part of ongoing life. This is distinct from situations such as robbery or sexual assault by a stranger, road rage, or similar situations in which there was no history of a relationship. These models suggest that the therapist needs a clear understanding of the details of the client's situation before being able to identify the therapy process that is relevant.

Intrapersonal models of forgiveness

Some models of forgiveness focus on the intrapersonal aspects of forgiveness. An example is the emotional conditioning model of forgiveness proposed by Worthington (1998), that likens a transgression to a stimulus that triggers pain, and as a result, fear and anger (Worthington, 1998). An aggrieved person may freeze, withdraw, avoid, or fight; such responses may be connected with anger or fear (Worthington, 1998). Using the classic conditioning model, extinction may be likened to forgiving. If a similar offence were to occur again, forgiving may be temporary. This suggests that the conditioning model may have limited value in this context, not adequately considering the exercise of willpower, or the subtle variances in complex cognitive responses.

A weakness in the conditioning model could be addressed by specifically focusing on the will in decision making, as in the model proposed by Diblasio (Diblasio, 1998). This model focuses on decision-based forgiveness, defined as the cognitive act of the will to let go resentment and bitterness and the desire for vengeance (Diblasio, 1998). The difficulty is that a cognitive process may not end emotional hurt. In this model, forgiveness is represented as an act of the will, but feelings are not always mastered by cognitive processes. This model is founded on cognitive resolve, but seems distinct from cognitive therapy, which gives a fuller recognition of the structures and processes

that underpin cognitive processes. Emotional forgiveness is not emphasised in this model, so it is likely to be unhelpful in psychotherapy practice.

Some models reflect that cognitive therapy principles provide insight into forgiveness. In the example by Gordon et al. (2005), forgiveness becomes necessary when the offended person has their cognitive structures damaged or violated (Gordon et al., 2005). These violations may include an attack on standards, beliefs, or perceptions. In this approach, cognitive therapy is used as an intervention to change thinking patterns to achieve forgiveness. This cognitive model defines forgiveness as the framing of a perceived offence in such a way that the object of forgiveness may be someone else, or self, or a situation that was beyond anyone's obvious control (Thompson et al., 2005). In this approach, a new narrative is constructed to help the offended understand the offence from another perspective, and thereby facilitate forgiveness. This involves seeing the offender or situation in another way that diminishes the offensiveness of what occurred. At the core of the process, is leading clients to intentionally change their thoughts. This does not fit comfortably with psychodynamic psychotherapy, and perhaps more significantly, it is important to note that not all emotions (perhaps very few) are caused by conscious cognition (Worthington, 2006).

Process models

A process model of forgiveness developed by Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) brought affective, cognitive, and behavioural aspects together (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). The model postulates that all three areas (affective, cognitive, behavioural) need to change, for forgiveness to occur, and that this will only happen when there is an emotional readiness for forgiving (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). The model is weak in terms of articulating a theory that leads to practical change (Worthington, 2006).

McCullough et al.'s (2003) model of forgiveness focuses on a process of forgiveness that takes time to develop, evolving and maturing progressively (McCullough et al., 2003). The variables focused on are how the desire for revenge and benevolent motivations towards the offender change. The construct of forbearance is intended to capture the shift of motives towards the offender, to identify a trend towards or away

from forgiveness. This is conceptualised as a sloping line that may be steep or shallow, capturing the speed of change in the person as well as the direction either towards or away from forgiveness. The model also postulates that the line slope is likely to change over time, having the concept of trend and a changing trend that may be impacted by several factors (McCullough et al., 2003). The factors affecting the slope include mood, life events, and shifts in judgements or assessments of perception of the pain associated with the offence. The notion of forbearance (described earlier) differs from others' conceptions of forbearance, which may be thought of as an attempt to actively control negative motivations (Worthington, 2006). This model includes the possibility of temporary forgiveness, which is forgiveness that appears to be genuinely adopted but then over time is rescinded, a common experience for some (Worthington, 2006). A variety of factors may lead to rescinding forgiveness, such as subsequent interactions with the offender, rumination, or the influence of others.

Emotion centred models

An emotion centred model by Malcolm and Greenberg (2003) identified five components necessary for forgiveness (Malcolm & Greenberg, 2003). The five components are: bringing into awareness strong emotions such as anger and sadness associated with unforgiveness, letting go of previous unmet interpersonal needs, a shift in the forgiving person's view of the offender, development of empathy for the offender, and the construction of a new narrative of self and other (Malcolm & Greenberg, 2003). Embedded in the model is the idea that cognitive changes will occur through changes in emotions. The model was developed from earlier work on unfinished business, reflecting the idea that outstanding issues of grievance could be resolved by self-validation, self-assertion, and holding a significant other person accountable (Greenberg et al., 1993). An aspect of unfinished business in this model is unforgiveness. The key to the model is that change is achieved through gaining emotional rather than cognitive insight. Psychotherapy processes may support development of empathy for the other person, which may aid a journey towards forgiveness. Events may stimulate emotional change and behaviour, but these may not always be an impetus for change. Some people may be reluctant to express

themselves emotionally, making this model's approach of limited value for such people (Worthington, 2006).

An empathy centred model by McCullough et al. (1997) suggests forgiveness is facilitated by empathy; the growth of empathy acts as a catalyst for forgiving (McCullough et al., 1997). This model, though not claiming empathy is sufficient for forgiving, asserts it is necessary for forgiveness. It has been argued that other emotions may replace empathy as a catalyst for forgiveness (Worthington, 2006) suggesting this model may present just one of several emotional possibilities as drivers of forgiveness. Subsequently, McCullough modified the model to acknowledge that an emphasis on emotional transformation may be more explanatory than motivational, and emotional forces may not be significant drivers of forgiveness (Worthington, 2006).

A biopsychosocial stress and coping theory

Several elements of the biopsychosocial stress and coping theory are outlined in this section. Transgressions are viewed as interpersonal stressors which need to be coped with (Lazarus, 1999). Transgressions not only cause stress to those who are transgressed against, but also often produce a sense of injustice, which leads to rumination, fuelling unforgiveness emotions and potentially, revenge desires (Worthington, 2006). Alternatively, individuals may respond by regulating their emotions, and try to find meaning, which can trigger desires for justice, conciliatory desires, or motivate altruistic desires of care or mercy (Worthington, 2006). Put more simply, the coping mechanisms will be either problem focused, emotion focused or meaning focused. These different mechanisms may lead to forgiveness and may be publicly or privately held positions. In addition, offences or transgressions may be cumulative for the offended, and the nature of the responses may change over time, sometimes being more problem based, and other times more emotional or meaning focused. The biopsychosocial stress and coping theory endeavours to present a coherent understanding, as explained.

Transgressions may be thought of in two categories: offences (violations of moral boundaries) and hurts (violations of physical or psychological boundaries) (Worthington, 2006). Sociometer theory may be used to identify people's attachments and needs to belong in a relationship (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). The idea of the sociometer is that people have an internal barometer that detects hurt or offence, stimulates fear or anger, and triggers a sense of righteous indignation (Worthington, 2006). According to this theory, victims draw conclusions about the motivations of their offenders, and decide whether the offences were deliberate or accidental. This may lead to distrust. Offenders and victim have different perceptions of each other, each having their own injustice gap (Exline et al., 2003), which is the difference between their ideal outcome and the outcome they realistically expect. The perpetrators' and victims' subjective perceptions of the injustice gap influence their responses to the offence. An injustice gap is a person's overall response in a relationship that has experienced a transgression (Worthington, 2006). The major contributing factors include stress level, a hostile offender, and a low ratio of positive to negative interactions. When the gap is large, the internal sociometer leads to strong negative emotions, which are further aggravated if there are subsequent transgressions. A client's perception of a significant injustice gap is likely to be a hindrance to forgiveness, and should be explored in therapy.

A process model of forgiveness therapy

The process model of forgiveness therapy was developed theoretically, and refined in practice, by Enright and Fitzgibbon (2015), and is discussed in their book, *Forgiveness therapy* (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Their approach has been used with hundreds of clients (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015), and the model draws on many of the concepts already discussed. Some aspects of the model may appear to have implicit value judgements that psychotherapists would typically eschew. Several aspects of the model, however, may have application within the normal non-judgemental frameworks that are a cornerstone of psychotherapy. An aspect of concern embedded in the fundamentals of the approach is the notion of process. Typically, psychotherapy has tended to be very cautious of a therapy framework that has the notion of process that implies a logical step by step approach. The model outlined may have some

applicability within a wider framework of client engagement, as the concepts do not require application in a mechanistic way. Balancing some process direction with the need to be sensitive to a client's needs in the moment would be needed.

The framework is outlined in this section, and potential limitations discussed. The framework was developed with the intention of applicability to a wide variety of circumstances. As discussed earlier, the idea of forgiveness therapy should not be pursued independently of other aspects of therapy that may be applicable to a client. Forgiveness therapy may not always be appropriate for a client or may not be appropriate at a particular time. However, the process should not be rejected because it is not universally applicable, and nor should it be understood as a model that constrains therapy to a disciplined one size fits all structure. Rather, the model is an outline of key elements usually needed when supporting a client on a path to forgiveness, as with all therapy, an overarching sensitivity to client needs is important.

The forgiveness process model has been influenced by a variety of researchers of forgiveness, including Smedes (Smedes, 1984), Linn and Linn (Linn & Linn, 1978), Hunter (Hunter, 1978), Kaufman (Kaufman, 1984), Close (Close, 1970), Fitzgibbons (Fitzgibbons, 1986) and Hope (Hope, 1987). The model proposed was developed from research on 82 people who reported they had forgiven someone for a serious offence (Knutson et al., 2008). A statistically significant correlation was found between the proposed model and how the 82 participants reported their description of the forgiving process they had experienced (Knutson et al., 2008).

This model of forgiveness therapy has been broken into four phases: uncovering, decision, work, and deepening (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015), and offers specific guidance for practical therapy. Uncovering is intended to gain insight into whether, or how, any injustice and resulting injury has compromised a client's life. In the decision phase, the client is guided to understand the nature of forgiveness and decides whether to proceed in the exploration of forgiveness. In the third phase, work, the client gains a cognitive understanding of the offender and may begin to perceive the offender differently, and not just as a bad person. This is designed to positively change feelings towards the offender, self, and the relationship. The fourth phase, deepening,

supports the client to discover a greater connectedness to the offender and a renewed purpose in life (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

The phases are discussed here in more detail. The uncovering phase is likely to entail several aspects. Issues involved in psychological defences are examined (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). The model recommends confrontation of anger with the intent of releasing rather than harbouring the anger, and admission of shame when relevant (Patton, 1985). This supports the client to recognise depletion of emotional energy, to become aware of cognitive ruminations connected to the offence, and to realise that the injury may have enduring impact (Close, 1970).

The decision phase involves the realisation that past resolution strategies are not working (North, 1987), being prepared to consider forgiveness (Enright et al., 1998a) and then committing to forgiveness. The work phase includes reframing the offender in the mind of the offended and developing empathy and compassion towards the offender (Cunningham, 1985). It also involves the capacity to cope with the pain that has been inflicted (Bergin, 1988). The final phase in this model is the deepening phase, which includes finding meaning for self and others in the suffering that has been experienced (Frankl, 1959). The importance of realising that the forgiveness of others is needed for oneself is an important insight (Cunningham, 1985). This final phase also encourages decreased negative effects and increased positive effects on the offender (Smedes, 1984).

There are some reservations with this model, which does not explicitly consider cultural sensitivities; it may therefore be argued that the model is too generic, as there may need to be a recognition of cultural perspectives in some situations (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). The model also emphasises emotional relief for the offended, and does not adequately consider the harm done. It is however suggested that this model neither explicitly or implicitly encourages or endorses the ignoring of harm, but rather requires the harm to be felt fully, so that the fullness of forgiveness can be understood (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). A third concern with the model is that it appears to place an onerous burden on the offended without a focus on the perpetrator, who should take responsibility. In response to this criticism, it is important to understand that as

discussed earlier, forgiveness addresses the consequences of injustice in the offended, and not the issue of just recompense for the offence. Forgiveness does not imply that because there is potential for the offended to become healthier through forgiving, that the perpetrator is exonerated (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

This chapter of findings has presented psychological perspectives related to forgiveness that are relevant to psychotherapy. The discussions initially focused on the propensity or the importance of hope and mentalisation. Insights from Klein (1946), whose understanding of the depressive position enhanced understanding of a prerequisite for forgiveness were discussed. Bowlby (1982) and Ainsworth's (1977) understandings of attachment informed a discussion of why some seem to possess a propensity to forgive, while others are reluctant to forgive. In the final part of this chapter, some models of forgiveness that draw on the concepts discussed in Chapter two were discussed, followed by a process model of forgiveness therapy.

Chapter 5.   Discussion

This final chapter, the concluding discussion, summarise the findings, discusses the implications and limitations of the research, and outlines possible opportunities for research on forgiveness.

Summary of findings

The concept of forgiveness is embedded in multiple disciplines, such as religion, philosophy, and social sciences. Forgiveness has received scant attention as a concept relevant to therapy for those who have a Freudian tradition informing their therapeutic approach. This has been accentuated, as forgiveness is often perceived to be a religious concept rather than a scientific concept with relevance to psychotherapy.

This study identified that although a precise definition of forgiveness is not agreed on, many of its key concepts are generally accepted. These include rational assessment, choosing to change, change of response by the offended, beneficence (although this aspect is not universally accepted), and compassion. These aspects together need to be understood to have a clear understanding of what is involved in forgiving. Unforgiveness is characterised by resentment, bitterness, hatred, anger, and fear (Berry & Worthington, 2001). Popularised concepts of what forgiveness is, can be misleading to both therapists and clients and can lead to unhelpful therapy practice. These include pardoning, absolving of failures, condoning what is wrong, excusing, apology, and forgetting the offence. Clarity of understanding of the concept of forgiveness is an important starting point for forgiveness to be understood in therapy.

A key finding of this study is that forgiving may be therapeutically helpful in some situations. A collaborative conversation in therapy will uncover whether forgiveness is appropriate to explore as a therapeutic option. Forgiveness is unhelpful when it leads to vulnerability in abusive relationships, but can be an effective way of resolving feelings of remorse, anger, fear, anxiety, and guilt (Cerney, 1988). It is helpful for therapists to be aware of when clients are inclined towards forgiving, supporting them as appropriate, to build the capacity to forgive, recognising the limitations of forgiving,

and supporting them in a process that leads to forgiveness. This study identified that forgiving can be an important part of psychotherapy when integrated with other aspects of the practice of psychotherapy, and may lead to improved wellbeing for some clients. The healing of inner emotional wounds and the restoring of relationships has been connected to the ability to forgive (Diblasio & Proctor, 1993).

A view of forgiving suggests that revenge is sometimes on the path towards forgiveness (Akhtar, 2002). This suggests that the more simplistic model, which sees revenge as an illness and forgiveness as a cure, may not be a useful model on which to base therapeutic support (McCullough, 2008). Forgiveness is not generally binary. As a person progressively forgives, so the anger and hurt within the offended dissipates (Enright & Rique, 2004). Shifts in emotions, thoughts, and behaviour may be so gradual that they are barely perceptible by either the offended or offender, but should be noticed and nurtured by a therapist.

Reconciliation and forgiveness are sometimes thought of as synonymous (Hargrave, 1994; Lauritzen, 1987). Both forgiving and reconciliation require a change of relationship between the offender and the offended, but they are not the same. Forgiveness is a resolve to abandon resentment, whereas reconciliation is a strategy agreed between two people (one or both may be a group) to work together to establish mutual trust (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Forgiving is an act of compassion independent of whether the offender is repentant or remorseful (Enright et al., 1998b), while reconciliation requires a behaviour change in the offender, and sometimes in the offended (Hargrave & Sells, 1997).

A discussion of Klein's (1946) work identified the depressive position as being a key starting point for forgiveness. A role of therapy can be to support the difficult shift of clients to the depressive position.

Various factors may become evident in therapy that may either increase or decrease a person's propensity to forgive. Cognitive and affective characteristics including responses to shame, guilt, and attributes of empathy, seem to inform a person's propensity to forgive (McCullough et al., 1997). If forgiveness is appropriate, the

factors that would move a client towards forgiveness need to be considered. Factors such as revenge and reparation may lead to the mourning of trauma or hurt, and facilitate the acknowledgement of intra-psychic self-destructive features that build capability so that forgiveness can emerge (Akhtar, 2002). The presence of hope influences the capacity to forgive. There is a correlation between hope and forgiveness, particularly where forgiving is encouraged (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Worthington et al., 2016).

Insights gained from the discussion of attachment theory informed the understanding of clients' predispositions to forgive or otherwise. When there is insecure attachment, there is a tendency to ongoing volatile patterns in relationships that may be connected to a lack of forgiveness for hurts that have been inflicted (Worthington et al., 2016; Worthington & Sandage, 2015). Those with an avoidant style of attachment such as those with narcissistic and obsessive-compulsive personality styles, tend to adopt negative views of others and hold strong positive views of self (Worthington et al., 2016), struggle to forgive, and have minimal awareness of the need to forgive (Worthington et al., 2016). Obsessive compulsive people are often perfectionists, and very focused on how their behaviour appears to others (Schoenleber & Berenbaum, 2010). Such personalities do not always recognise that they have difficulty with forgiving, because they tend to supress anger and are concerned to appear virtuous (Worthington et al., 2016). Those with an ambivalent style of attachment often have some narcissistic traits, resulting in surface level premature forgiveness (Akhtar, 2002). Disorganised attachment can lead to paranoid personality disorder. These personalities perceive many in their environment as being unsafe, and are not likely to be disposed towards forgiveness (Munoz Sastre et al., 2005).

A variety of models of forgiveness were identified, and various types of forgiveness reflect different types of relationships. For example, forgiving strangers is different to forgiving those with whom we have a close or ongoing relationship, in which trust has in some way been violated (Worthington, 2006). These two situations have different emotional impacts, as a decision to forgive a stranger has much less emotional impact and generally fewer consequences than does a decision to forgive a significant other. Two groups of models of forgiveness were identified: intrapersonal, relating to internal

forgiveness, and interpersonal models, involving expressions of forgiveness to offenders. Either or both models may be relevant in therapy. Process models usefully inform therapy practice. The process model of forgiveness developed by Enright (2000) brought together affective, cognitive, and behavioural aspects (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). The model proposes that all three areas (affective, cognitive, and behavioural) need to change for forgiveness to occur, and that this will only happen when there is emotional readiness for forgiving (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

A process model of forgiveness therapy developed theoretically and refined in practice by Enright and Fitzgibbons (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015) was discussed. This model identified some important aspects for inclusion with a client where forgiving is relevant. Caution was also discussed, recognising that a process model needs professional care in implementation to avoid the loss of key aspects of psychotherapy, such as the empathetic dynamic adaption to client needs.

This study found that in some contexts, forgiveness, in conjunction with other aspects of psychotherapy, can be advantageous for clients to facilitate resolution of debilitating inner issues such as anger, and to begin healing that can lead to repair of some dysfunctional relationships. An appropriate focus on forgiveness can lead to healing and be a useful part of therapy.

Many aspects of forgiveness in this research were illustrated with stories that describe forgiveness, or lack of it, from ancient biblical times though to recent events in Aotearoa New Zealand. The elements of forgiveness are evident in the stories, and the characteristics of forgiveness have been personally experienced by the writer and described by the writer's clients in clinical sessions. There is a multitude of experiences of forgiveness, from a variety of religions, cultures, and historical contexts, some of which were recounted in this study. This significant and diverse range of forgiveness accounts is too large and diverse to be dismissed as irrelevant. Many have experienced personal benefit in their wellbeing after forgiving. These experiences of forgiveness seem important and relevant, and able to inform clinical practice of psychotherapy. This study was informed by past research and supported by personal accounts.

Implications for psychotherapy

This study suggests some possible implications for psychotherapy training and practice.

The training of psychotherapists should include building an understanding of forgiveness both conceptually and practically, in terms of how this can be appropriately transferred into therapy. It is not appropriate to confine forgiveness to the preserve of pastors or religiously focused therapists. Forgiveness is a valid complementary element to other approaches in psychotherapy and can be usefully blended into psychotherapy.

Psychotherapists (and their clients) could benefit from embracing the concepts of forgiveness into their clinical practice as appropriate. This would require reframing the relevance of forgiveness as a creditable and relevant part of psychotherapy. The perception that forgiving is too integrated with religion to be of practical value in psychotherapy needs to be challenged. Forgiving is not a shallow or superficial process, but rather, addresses deep hurt.

It would be advantageous for clients to be more aware of the significance of forgiveness as a possible part of their healing from past hurts. This could be facilitated by therapists.

Strengths and limitations

The strengths of this study include the utilisation of the hermeneutic approach that supported the researcher to dwell iteratively on a variety of concepts related to forgiveness. The study brought attention to concepts and practices that may have been neglected by some in clinical psychotherapy, as noted in the previous section. Its major strength was in identifying that forgiveness is relevant in therapy contexts.

There are limitations to the study, which was primarily based on Western literature, and a significant proportion of the research that informed this work was from is America. This literature was not particularly cognisant of the unique circumstance of indigenous groups in North American society or of other minority groups in other

contexts. More research from this perspective is needed. Aotearoa New Zealand is founded on biculturalism (Māori and European) and has in recent years evolved, particularly in some large urban areas, into a multi-cultural society, presenting special challenges and opportunities. This study was not explicitly cognisant of this environment. Limited research was discovered that specifically alerted the writer to the possibility that practice related to forgiving could not be generalised to other cultural contexts such as that of Aotearoa New Zealand. This would require further research to validate. Some literature did reference other religious traditions, suggesting that most religions emphasise forgiveness as a way of both maintaining relationships and supporting personal wellbeing.

Possible future research

The following questions were identified as potential topics for further research on forgiveness in the context of psychotherapy. These questions reflect some of the gaps in the literature that were discovered during research for this dissertation.

Research in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand

- How do different cultural, religious, and ethnic groups understand the concept of forgiveness, and what are the practical consequences of these differences in therapy situations?
- What impact does forgiveness have on perpetrators of hurt? How does forgiveness impact future behaviours?
- How do various motivations for forgiveness relate to the wellbeing of the forgiver after forgiving?
- What approach(es) to forgiveness in therapy are most beneficial for clients?
- What factors in a person's experience influence the experience of, and disposition towards forgiving?
- How does the experience of past forgiving impact on the nature of subsequent relationships?
  In what circumstances could the encouragement or support of forgiving in therapy not be beneficial?

These questions identify some of the issues and questions that arose from this study and that require further research.

Conclusion

The research focus for this study, was "meanings of forgiveness in psychotherapy".

The results suggest that in some contexts, forgiveness, in conjunction with other aspects of psychotherapy, can be advantageous for clients. Forgiveness may serve to facilitate resolution of inner debilitating issues such as anger, and begin healing that can lead to repairing dysfunctional relationships when this is desirable. As appropriate, forgiveness may also provide healing needed to improve wellbeing. Care is needed to avoid both the therapist and the client from misunderstanding forgiveness; a variety of mimics in popular psychology exist that can readily distract from genuine forgiving.

These quotes capture some key concepts of this study.

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.
(Lewis B. Smedes)

I think the first step is to understand that forgiveness does not exonerate the perpetrator. Forgiveness liberates the victim. It's a gift you give yourself.
(T. D. Jakes)

Forgiveness is not always easy. At times, it feels more painful than the wound we suffered, to forgive the one that inflicted it. And yet, there is no peace without forgiveness.
(Marianne Williamson)

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