

# Forgiveness

Presented by: Elaine Rotenberg, Ph.D.

Clinical Director

Alpert JFS

[www.alpertjfs.org](http://www.alpertjfs.org)

# What Forgiveness is NOT

- ▶ It is not just letting go and moving on
- ▶ It is not “letting someone off the hook”
- ▶ It does not require reconciliation
- ▶ It is not the same as Justice
- ▶ It is not a sign of weakness

# True Forgiveness

....true forgiveness involves offering something positive toward the person who hurt you

- Empathy
- Compassion
- Understanding

“Forgiveness is something that happens in our own skin”

# Forgiveness and Mental Health

- ▶ Forgiveness is correlated with decrease in anxiety
- ▶ Forgiveness is correlated with decrease in depression
- ▶ Forgiveness allows us to release chronic interpersonal stressors..
- ▶ Current research has demonstrated that people with high levels of accumulated stress have worsening of all mental health conditions

\*\*\* Most current research consistently shows that people that have high levels of accumulated stress, BUT have high scores on forgiveness do not show these negative mental health symptoms

Sooo... **Forgiveness BEATS Stress**

# Good News:

Forgiveness is a skill that can be taught; most models require looking backwards at the hurt ...not just present focused therapy....

- Practice empathy
- Prayer can boost forgiveness

Types of Training:

***Forgiveness Therapy*** - a 20 step system with 4 phases....

- I. Uncovering negative feelings
- II. Deciding to forgive
- III. Working toward understanding the offending person
- IV. Discovering empathy

***Reach Therapy***

# Religion and Forgiveness

People with an involvement in a religious faith appear to have an upper hand when it comes to forgiveness.

Every major religion values Forgiveness.

# Judaism

- ▶ Leviticus 19:18: Love your neighbor as yourself....
- ▶ Do we have to forgive yourself first before forgiving others
- ▶ Do we have to earn forgiveness? Is it a right? An obligation?

## **A PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS**

A prayer for forgiveness if I have harmed anyone in anyway either knowingly or unknowingly through my own confusion I ask for their forgiveness.

If anyone has harmed me in anyway either knowingly or unknowingly through their own confusion I forgive them.

And if there is a situation I am not yet ready to forgive I forgive myself for that.

For all the ways that I harm myself, negate, doubt, belittle myself, judge or be unkind to myself through my own confusion I forgive myself.