

The Forgiving Family: Effects of a Parent-led  
Forgiveness Program on Mental and Relational Health

By

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Abstract

This study appraises the effects of a parent-led forgiveness intervention on mental health and relationship variables for parents and their third grade children (ages 8-9) in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In this study, parents in the experimental group (n = 5) used a curriculum guide to teach forgiveness to their children, while the control parents (n = 5) participated in art activities with their children. Statistical analyses demonstrated a significant increase in interpersonal forgiveness of an offender for parents who taught forgiveness to their child. No significant between-group differences were revealed for other mental health and relationship variables, either for children or for parents. Implementation issues, findings, and future directions are discussed.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

One look at the “World” section of any local newspaper suggests that, in many war-torn areas around the globe, peace remains elusive. Many years of open conflict, such as that between Israel and its Arab neighbors, highlight the need for a new approach to end the conflict, violence, and terrorism that has plagued such regions. Until now, the focus has been on dialogue between opposing sides. Dialogue, however, can only go so far, especially when hurts are deep and cycles of injustice span decades or even centuries, such as the centuries-old racial and ethnic clashes in Northern Ireland. Of what might this new approach to peace consist? Perhaps forgiveness is the missing piece of the peace movement. When one forgives, one confronts injustice by giving up negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward an offender, and replacing them with positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). When the deep, underlying emotions of anger, resentment, or hatred are dealt with, then dialogue regarding differences can proceed more effectively.

Although peace endeavors rarely focus on children, recent research with elementary-age students in cities plagued by poverty, racism, and violence (i.e., Belfast, Northern Ireland and inner-city Milwaukee, Wisconsin) shows that forgiveness education aids in the reduction of anger for first, third, and fifth grade children and in the reduction of psychological depression for third grade children (Enright, Knutson-Enright, Holter, Baskin, & Knutson, 2007; Holter, Magnuson, Knutson-Enright, Enright, & Knutson,



2008). In these investigations, classroom teachers were trained to implement a 15-week forgiveness education curriculum in their classrooms.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) notes the existence of three main environmental systems that impact a child's development: school, home, and the external environment (e.g., parental employment environment). He insists that the different environmental systems impact one another, such that "events at home can affect the child's progress in school and vice versa" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 723). For this reason, when families and schools work together, significant gains seem to emerge.

An example of this phenomenon can be seen with depression prevention programs. In a recent meta-analysis, universal depression prevention programs (i.e., delivered to all children in a classroom, regardless of risk), on average, demonstrate almost negligible effects on children's depressive symptoms ( $d = 0.02$  at follow-up; Horowitz & Garber, 2006). The reasons for the apparent ineffectiveness of these programs are many, but one important possibility is that the programs neglect another very important source of influence: the children's parents. Parents are an important influence on their children (Laible & Thompson, 2007), and when the family environment remains unchanged, even the best school-based program will have a difficult time producing lasting psychological change for the children. In fact, the few depression prevention programs that involve both parents and children have shown more promise than universal school programs (Beadslee et al., 1997; Beardslee, Gladstone, Wright, & Cooper, 2003; Beardslee, Wright, Gladstone, & Forbes, 2007).

Since parents are major shapers of their children's values and healthy functioning in various life domains, including emotions and behaviors (Grusec & Davidov, 2007), and since parental dysfunction often leads to child dysfunction (e.g., Beardslee, Keller, Seifer, Lavori, Staley, et al., 1996; Fendrich, Warner, & Weissman, 1990; Ge, Conger, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994), a forgiveness education program delivered to children by their parents holds intriguing possibilities for lasting positive mental health and relationship change.

Forgiveness education has proven effective in reducing children's anger (and sometimes depression) when delivered by school teachers (Enright et al., 2007; Holter et al., 2008). Will children's reception of instruction from parents about forgiveness—above and beyond the classroom setting—lead to similar outcomes? How will teaching forgiveness impact the parent and the parent-child relationship? What is the effect of forgiveness education on the deliverer of the program? To date, these questions remain unanswered. This study seeks to appraise the effects of a parent-led forgiveness intervention on mental health and relationship variables for parents and their third grade children (ages 8-9) in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### *Parents' Role in Children's Moral Development*

Throughout the history of humanity, societies have been concerned about how people relate to others and how children learn this skill. In recent years, especially, the question of how children acquire morality has become an important topic in psychology. Is morality genetically endowed, or do children learn it from others? If children learn it from others, from whom do they learn it—parents or peers?

*Morality defined.* Most people would be able to recognize a moral person when they see one. When it comes to defining morality, however, various opinions arise—due in large part to the different presuppositions that are brought to bear on the issue. Morality is a multifaceted concept that includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Morality, then, consists of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward others that are “obligatory, universally applicable, impersonal, and normatively binding” (Smetana, 2006, p. 121). These norms are based on concepts such as fairness, rights, and general welfare (or harm) that should govern social relationships. Moral transgressions are wrong because of their negative effects on others’ intrinsic rights and basic welfare (Smetana, 2006). The relative emphasis that one places on the cognitive, affective, or behavioral components of morality depends on one’s theoretical orientation to human development. As a result, a brief examination of these perspectives is in order.

*Psychoanalytic perspective.* The psychoanalytic model of moral development centers on the internalization of societal behavioral norms. Hoffman (1970) asserts that

frustration with parental control leads to hostility toward the parent that is eventually repressed due to fear of parental punishment and abandonment. As a result, the child turns his or her hostility inward where it takes the form of guilt. Guilt, then, is what keeps the child from transgressions and encourages the child to act in accord with social conventions. According to this perspective, parents have a strong influence on children's moral development.

*Behaviorist perspective.* Behaviorists analyze the development of moral actions (overt behaviors like helping, sharing, cheating, etc.). The mechanisms of the development of morality are punishment and reinforcement. That is, children are likely to repeat behavior that is consistent with social convention because it is rewarded by parents. Similarly, children are unlikely to repeat behavior that is punished. As is the case with the psychoanalytic perspective, behaviorism accords parents a key role in a child's development of morality.

*Social-cognitive perspective.* A recent strain of social cognitive theory called social-cognitive domain theory (Turiel, 1983) situates moral development within the larger scope of developing social knowledge. This theory has been expanded in different directions by many theorists, but the basic idea is that social knowledge is divided into separate domains: moral issues, social-conventional issues, and personal issues. These different domains are differentiated early in life and follow distinct developmental trajectories (Smetana, 2006). The moral domain, which prescribes how people should behave towards each other, consists of universal, obligatory norms (e.g., welfare, justice, trust, and rights) that guide social relationships. Social conventions, on the other hand,

are unique to societal context. They are “shared uniformities and norms (like etiquette or manners) that coordinate individuals’ interactions in social systems” (Smetana, 2006, p. 121). These conventions are arbitrary and consensually determined. Last, the psychological domain explains self-understanding and identity, including personality and attributions of the behavior of self and others (Smetana, 1999). The two aspects of this domain are personal issues and prudential issues. Personal issues are “preferences and choices regarding issues such as control over one’s body, privacy, and choice of friends or activities” (Smetana, 2006, p. 121). Since these matters are private, they are outside the rule of conventional regulation or moral interest. Prudential issues, like safety, health, and comfort, pertain to “acts and consequences that have immediate and negative consequences to the self” (Smetana, 1999, p. 313). According to social-cognitive domain theory, families have greater influence on the moral and social conventional domains than on the personal domain. Thus, the field of social-cognitive development also attributes much influence to parents in the realm of moral development.

*Biological perspective.* Biologists tend to focus their attention on the functions of morality in evolutionary history and particular genetic selection for specific moral characteristics (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998). As such, the biological explanation for moral development grows out of evolutionary social constraints that led to a change from purely selfish actions to actions that work toward the good of the community as a whole. Furthermore, much like Chomsky’s genetically-shaped mechanism for learning language (the Language Acquisition Device), humans are theorized to possess a biologically-based mechanism for acquiring morality (Hauser, 2006). This theoretical perspective might help

explain the universal phenomenon of moral obligations in interaction with others.

According to this view, parents contribute to moral development through genes rather than through more explicit interaction with children.

*Attachment perspective.* Related to, and in some respect, emerging from the biological viewpoint is the attachment perspective. Attachment theorists emphasize the significance of the parent-child bond in the child's emerging sense of self and others (Laible & Thompson, 2000). Since infants are completely dependent on others for survival, they are biologically driven to exhibit attachment behaviors (e.g., crying) to elicit care from others. It is through the initial attachment relationship between the infant and care provider that the developing person constructs "internal working models" that are "dynamic representations of the self, caregivers, and relationships, and are used by children to predict and interpret the actions of partners in their social world ... including its moral and cultural conventions" (Laible & Thompson, 2000). It is through these early relationships that children develop a paradigm of how people should relate to one another. This perspective, therefore, places parents in a place of great importance.

*Cognitive perspective.* The cognitive explanation for moral development rests in the child's cognitive structures, which are ever-increasing in complexity. As a result of this development, children are able to reason about morality in more sophisticated ways as they grow. According to Piaget (1932), children begin with the belief, around four years of age, that rules and justice are properties of the world that are unchangeable. In the beginning, consequences, rather than motives, are primary. Around age seven, the

child begins to understand that rules and laws are social agreements created by people.

Intention, rather than consequences, takes center stage.

Kohlberg (1976) built on Piaget's ideas in construction of his developmental stage theory of moral development. According to Kohlberg, children move through three developmental stages where reasoning about moral issues becomes increasingly complex. Kohlberg believed that children move from moral thought that focuses on external rewards and punishments, to some level of internalization, and ultimately to total internalization. Both Piaget and Kohlberg maintained that moral development occurs primarily in peer relationships (where power is more equally distributed) rather than parent-child relationships (due to the inherent imbalance in power structure).

Still another look at moral development within the cognitive domain comes from the study of social cognition, particularly attribution theory. According to this theory, people search for explanations or reasons for their behavior. When external pressure (e.g., punishment) exists to behave in a certain way, people attribute their behavior to that pressure. In the absence of such pressure, however, they attribute their behavior to intrinsic motivation and their own beliefs (Grusec, 2006). According to this theory, then, socialization is best carried out with the least possible pressure (while still inducing compliance) from parents so that children will attribute their actions to internal motives.

*Socio-cultural perspective.* From the socio-cultural perspective, moral development comes from the cultural transmission of values, cognitive patterns, and moral character (personality traits) (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998). Vygotsky (1962), the chief proponent of this theory, held development to be a product of cultural and social

activities. He believed that one's knowledge is situated in one's cultural context and built through collaboration with other people, especially more skilled adults and peers. Dialogue, therefore, is very important to development, according to Vygotsky. From this perspective, moral development is a result of one's interaction with more experienced and knowledgeable members of one's society who help deepen one's understanding and application of moral principles. In this vein, parents are an essential feature of moral development.

*Brief historical overview.* Before 1991, little empirical research existed that examined the family as a context for the development of moral reasoning (Walker & Taylor, 1991). Walker & Taylor (1991) trace this dearth of research to the reaction of cognitive developmental theories against psychoanalytic theory and its associated preoccupation with the early parent-child relationship. Historically speaking, the psychoanalytic and behavioral theories dominated developmental research in the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Walker, 1999). As noted previously, these theories gave parents an almost exclusive role in moral socialization.

Possibly in reaction, then, the cognitive developmental approaches of Piaget and Kohlberg consign parents to nonspecific and minimal roles as potential agents in the moral development of their children (Walker & Taylor, 1991). If parents do happen to influence moral development, Piaget and Kohlberg suggest that parents can invoke deleterious constraints (Walker & Hennig, 1999). As mentioned previously, the cognitive theorists believed that moral development occurs in the context of peer relationships that provide children with opportunities to hash out moral dilemmas, rather than in the context



of parent-child relationships, where unequal authority structures impede the optimal interactions offered by peers.

Walker (1999) further notes how the “cognitive revolution” in psychology in general caused researchers to focus more on older children and adolescents, to the neglect of early child development, where parental influence is greatest. He also provides examples of other obstacles to research with families, chief of which is the complexity of family structures (which, then, requires more complex theories and designs).

Today, research on moral development is more broad and far-reaching. Early relationships with family have been acknowledged as important contributors to a child’s internalization of morality, since “it is in the context of these family relationships that children have their earliest experience with the behavioral and moral standards of the social world. [Children’s] daily interactions with caregivers ... provide children with a natural laboratory in which they learn about the social world” (Laible & Thompson, 2000, p. 1424). Children, who are perhaps born with an innate capacity for acquiring morality, depend on the routine experiences with the intimate social unit of the family to help promote moral development (Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2007). Morality, in fact, “is embedded in and is an outcome of everyday family practices ... with implicit and explicit messages about right and wrong, better and worse, rules, norms, obligations, duties, etiquette, moral reasoning, virtue, character, and other dimensions of how to lead a moral life” (Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2007, p. 5). Thus,

Parents are central figures in the moral world of the young child. They articulate and explain behavioral standards, provide salient attributions of causality and

responsibility for misbehavior, elicit moral emotions like empathy and guilt, disapprove and sanction misconduct, and provide some of the most important incentives to compliance (Thompson et al., 2006, p. 282).

### *Depression and Anger*

The prevalence of depression in children younger than 13 years has been estimated to be about 2.5% (Fleming & Offord, 1990; Birmaher et al., 1996). Alarming, there has been a recent trend wherein later birth cohorts experience an earlier age of onset and increased prevalence of depression (Birmaher et al., 1996). Childhood depression carries with it serious consequences for development in social, cognitive, and emotional domains. It has been linked with negative outcomes like suicide and subsequent depressive symptoms even into adulthood (Harrington, Fudge, Rutter, Pickles, & Hill, 1990; Harrington, Bredenkamp, Groothues, Rutter, Fudge, & Pickles, 1994), and over 60% of the perpetrators of school violence (e.g., Columbine) suffered from mood disorders like depression (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzelesky, 2002). Depressive symptoms have been shown to be comorbid with the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (Patton et al., 1996), antisocial behaviors (Miller-Johnson et al., 1998), anxiety (Brady & Kendall, 1992), and other mental health disorders (Lewinsohn et al., 1994), including conduct disorder (Lahey et al., 2002).

Unfortunately, most programs designed to prevent depression in children have demonstrated only small to moderate effects (Horowitz & Garber, 2006). One study of classroom forgiveness education with third grade students in Belfast yielded an effect size for depression of .38 (Enright et al., 2007). Based on previous research in depression

prevention programs, we have reason to believe that adding a parental component to the school-based component will yield stronger effects than a classroom segment alone. Gillham et al. (2006) added a parent component to the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP), a therapist-delivered program. Sixth and seventh grade students with high depression/anxiety scores participated in a modified PRP with 8 weekly 90-minute sessions, and their parents participated in 6 90-minute sessions, each divided into two parts: 1) teaching the parents how to use skills covered in the child portion; 2) teaching parents how to model the skills and help them support the child's use of them. Over the 12-month follow-up period, the program significantly reduced depressive and anxiety symptoms. Similarly, Beardslee et al. (2003) attempted to prevent depressive symptoms by increasing parental knowledge about causes and symptoms of adult and childhood depression. The program included separate meetings with children and parents, family meetings, and refresher meetings or telephone contacts every 6 to 9 months. The vital element of the program was "the direct linking of cognitive information to individual life and family experiences" (Beardslee et al., 2003, p. 123). Eighteen months after the intervention, compared with a lecture condition, children in the clinician-facilitated group reported greater understanding of the parental mood disorder and higher overall functioning, and parents in the group displayed superior change in factors that promote resilience in children (e.g., communication and improved child focus) (Beardslee et al., 1997).

Anger has recently been called "a major public health problem for school-age children and adolescents" (Blake & Hamrin, 2007, p. 209). Other problems related to

anger, such as physical and verbal aggression, oppositional behavior, and violence are common grounds for referral to mental health services (Abikoff & Klein, 1992; Armbuster, Sukholdosky, & Michalsen, 2001, as cited by Blake & Hamrin, 2007). Loeber (1990) initially suggested that aggression in early childhood can lead to a developmental trajectory that can include academic failure, delinquency, conduct problems, and antisocial behavior in adolescence. His claims were later supported by longitudinal research (Lochman & Wayland, 1994; Coie, Terry, Zakriski, & Lochman, 1995). Another adverse effect of aggression is poor interpersonal relationships with teachers, parents, and peers (Lochman et al., 2003). A recent meta-analysis of cognitive-behavior therapy interventions with children and adolescents revealed a mean effect size of  $d = .67$ , which lies in the medium range. These programs were therapeutic in nature and were delivered by trained professionals. Yet unknown is how a program delivered by trained parents will impact children's anger. What is known is that forgiveness education, delivered by a school teacher, is effective in reducing anger for elementary school children (Enright et al., 2007; Holter, 2007), with effect sizes of  $d = .41$ ,  $d = .70$ ,  $d = .46$  among three studies of first, third, and fifth grade students, respectively.

### *Interpersonal Forgiveness*

As has been mentioned already, forgiveness education is a promising intervention to help children reduce in anger. The concept of forgiveness has existed for millennia, first taking form in the ancient Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Biblical portraits such as Joseph forgiving his brothers (Gen 45-50) and the loving father forgiving his lost son (Luke 15), demonstrate that forgiveness is an interpersonal response to offense that

entails a cessation of resentment and, instead, offering a beneficent response to the offender. Enright and colleagues (1992) note that, although the most ancient and thorough treatments of forgiveness come from Judaism and Christianity, other ancient philosophical or religious systems such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Islam touch on forgiveness-related concepts as well.

Interestingly, forgiveness remained outside the interest of social scientists until only twenty years ago, when authors such as Smedes (1984), Enright, Santos, and Al-Mabuk (1989), and Worthington and DiBlasio (1990) unveiled their treatments of the subject. Since that time, research in the area has burgeoned, and more light has been shed on the components, processes, and outcomes of forgiveness. Several different definitions and models of forgiveness exist,<sup>1</sup> but most forgiveness researchers agree that forgiveness involves the offended person's abandonment of resentment and anger toward the offender. Some, like Enright (2001), insist that positive responses, such as benevolence and love, replace the negative emotions. Enright (2001) provides a comprehensive definition of forgiveness:

When unjustly hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead by trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence, and love; as we give these, we as forgivers realize that the offender does not necessarily have a right to such gifts (p. 25).

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<sup>1</sup> In the literature, two basic models exist: decision models and process models. Decision models typically stress a cognitive decision to abandon resentment, anger, or a need for vengeance (DiBlasio, 1998). In making this decision, the forgiver separates emotion from reason and, as an act of his or her will, makes a decision to forgive (DiBlasio, 2000; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Process models, on the other hand (Enright, 2001), describe forgiveness as a complex process that takes both time and hard work.

Thus, forgiveness includes three basic elements: 1) the determination that a wrong has been committed; 2) the replacement of negative thoughts, feelings, and actions toward the offender by positive thoughts, feelings, and actions; and 3) the acknowledgement of the forgiveness paradox: one experiences healing by giving up the pseudo-power of vengeance. Also important here is defining what forgiveness is not. Forgiveness is not excusing, condoning, justifying, forgetting, calming down, or reconciling (Enright, 2001).

Another key feature of forgiveness research was the development of road maps, or meticulous descriptions of how people actually forgive (for an example, see Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1991). Enright et al. (1991) developed a process model of forgiveness, a model that was empirically tested a few years later. According to the model, a forgiver proceeds through four phases of forgiveness: 1) Uncovering anger, when the forgiver sees how the injury/injustice has compromised his or her life; 2) Deciding to forgive, when the forgiver gains an understanding of what forgiveness is and is not and makes a decision to commit to the forgiveness process based on this understanding; 3) Working on forgiveness, when the forgiver starts to understand the offender and view him or her in a new light, resulting in more positive thoughts, feelings, and actions toward the offender; 4) Deepening in forgiveness, when the forgiver finds meaning in the suffering, new purpose in life, increased connection with others, and overall decreased negative affect (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

Hebl & Enright (1993) published the first empirically-based forgiveness intervention in the literature. In their groundbreaking study, they implemented an eight-

week forgiveness intervention with elderly women in which the experimental forgiveness group made significant gains in forgiveness profiles compared with the control group, and decreased significantly—along with the control group—in depression and trait anxiety.

Since that early study, many other experimental research projects demonstrating forgiveness' effectiveness have been published. Some studies will be reported here in chronological order. College students in McCollough & Worthington (1995), after a brief intervention, showed decreased feelings of revenge, increased positive feelings toward the offender, and more conciliatory behavior. Because of the students' schedules, however, the researchers did not randomize to group. Al-Mabuk, Enright, and Cardis (1995) conducted a study with parentally love-deprived adolescents. They found that the experimental forgiveness group was significantly higher in hope, self-esteem, forgiveness, and positive attitudes toward the parents, and significantly lower in anxiety. In Freedman & Enright's (1996) study with female incest survivors, the forgiveness intervention produced higher gains in hope, forgiveness, and self esteem and a significant decrease in depression and anxiety for the experimental group. In another study with college students, McCullough et al. (1997) demonstrated that clinical intervention can help facilitate forgiveness, especially when the victim develops affective empathy for the offender. Next, Coyle & Enright (1997) initiated a forgiveness intervention with men who were hurt by their partner's decision to have an abortion. Following the intervention, compared with the control group, the men showed significant reductions in anxiety, grief, and anger, and a significant gain in forgiveness. In work with residential drug

rehabilitation patients, Lin and colleagues (2004) demonstrated that forgiveness can be effective in reducing depression, anxiety, and anger. Rye et al. (2005) used forgiveness therapy to reduce depression in divorced individuals. Even more recently, a forgiveness intervention with emotionally-abused women showed an improvement in many areas, such as posttraumatic stress symptoms, trait anxiety, depression, environmental mastery, forgiveness, and finding meaning in the midst of suffering (Reed & Enright, 2006). When one considers these studies, which (except in the one instance noted above) employ the highly rigorous randomized, experimental and control group design with follow-up testing, one can see strong evidence for the mental health benefits of making the forgiveness journey.

The studies mentioned above consisted of therapeutic forgiveness interventions delivered by trained mental health professionals. The effects of these interventions are statistically moderate to strong (Lipsey, 1990), with effect sizes typically around .59 for emotional health variables between groups (Baskin & Enright, 2004). The forgiveness education programs for children, however, are led by regular classroom teachers and involve group instruction rather than individual or group therapy. Thus, instead of direct therapy, the children learn about forgiveness and how it applies to their lives. Effect sizes for these teacher-led interventions typically run between .28 and .73. Therefore, children's gains when classroom teachers simply teach about forgiveness are comparable to forgiveness therapy with motivated adults.

In addition to better mental health, forgiveness is associated with physical health as well. Huang & Enright (2000) uncovered a relationship between blood pressure levels



and reasoning about forgiveness. Lawler et al. (2003) established a link between trait forgiveness and lower blood pressure levels, and an association between state forgiveness and lower blood pressure levels, rate pressure product, and heart rate. In 2004, Worthington & Scherer published a literature review that detailed—through analysis of hormonal patterns, brain activity, facial muscle tension, sympathetic nervous system, and blood chemistry measures—the stressful nature of unforgiveness, and the manner in which forgiveness assuages stress. Furthermore, they provided initial results of studies that confirm the involvement of forgiveness in reducing hostility and affecting both the central nervous and immune systems.

#### *Forgiveness Education with Children and Adolescents*

To date, six empirical studies (using randomized controlled trials) have investigated the efficacy of forgiveness education to help ameliorate some of the negative mental health effects, like anger and depression, for at-risk children and adolescents (Enright et al., 2007; Holter et al., 2008; Gambaro, Enright, Baskin, & Klatt, 2008). These 15-week, school-based forgiveness education programs use stories, discussions, and classroom activities to teach children the concepts of inherent worth, moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity. Initially, these concepts are taught apart from forgiveness. Later, the children are taught these virtues in the context of forgiveness. First and third grade children in Belfast, Northern Ireland who received forgiveness education reported statistically significantly less anger after intervention than did the control children. Furthermore, the third grade children reduced significantly more in psychological depression and increased in forgiveness compared with controls (Enright et

al., 2007). Studies with first, third, and fifth grade children in Milwaukee, Wisconsin demonstrated that first and fifth grade children decreased significantly in anger compared with control children, whereas in third grade, both experimental and control groups reported less anger. Groups reported no differences in depression (Holter et al., 2008). A study with at-risk early adolescents aged 11-13 found that angry adolescents who received school-based forgiveness counseling reported less conduct problems, higher academic achievement, more positive attitudes, and increased forgiveness and self-reliance compared with controls who received alternative treatment (Gambaro et al., 2008). We expect that adding a parental component to the existing school-based portion will strengthen the results of these previous interventions.

### *The Case of Belfast*

The city of Belfast resides in a land plagued by centuries of cultural, religious, and political conflict beginning as early as the Norman invasion of Ireland in 1169. During the civil rights movement in the 1960s, sectarian violence erupted between paramilitary groups, resulting in kidnappings and bombings. Although “The Troubles” (the term coined to refer to the period of intense political unrest just described) are now over, a visible partition still exists today in the streets of Belfast, especially in “interface” areas, where Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods lie adjacent to each other (Cairns & Darby, 1998; Jarman, 2004; for a more thorough treatment of Belfast’s history, see Holter, Magnuson, & Enright, 2008).

How have “The Troubles” impacted children in Northern Ireland? Research from different time periods has provided contradictory results. Initially, in the 1970s research

showed negative consequences for children (Muldoon, Trew, & Kilpatrick, 2000).

These early studies showed that some children experienced behavior and psychosomatic disturbances (e.g., stuttering, asthma, and sleep problems) that possibly resulted from the anxiety accompanying community violence (Enright et al., 2003). In the 1980s, however, researchers called into question these results, possibly due to the subjective tendencies of researchers to normalize the lives of Northern Ireland's children. This research insisted that "young people in Northern Ireland were coping quite well, despite the violence, and there was little evidence of psychological consequences from the conflict" (Gallagher, 2004, p. 632). According to Gallagher (2004), however, this 1980s research "overstated the normality and ordinariness of everyday life" (p. 632) in Northern Ireland, which, in reality, "was all too obviously slipping into violent abnormality" (p. 636).

This abnormality is encapsulated in the conclusion that "children's prolonged exposure to conflict and reminders (via media and/or police presence) of violence exacerbated posttraumatic stress symptomatology, mood disorders, behavioral problems, and academic struggles" (Curran & Miller, 2001, cited in Enright et al., 2003, p. 52). In addition, Fletcher (1996) reported that children who were exposed to community violence (even those who just heard about it) experienced higher levels of depression, PTSD symptoms, anger, anxiety, and sleep problems (cited in Holter, Martin, & Enright, 2006). In another investigation, Rudenberg, Jansen, & Fridjhon (2001) compared the drawings of children aged 8-12 from South Africa and West Belfast, NI—two areas at that time experiencing ongoing community violence. Boys from Northern Ireland demonstrated the highest levels of anger, anxiety, and aggression, responses that, when endured over the

long term, can lead to deleterious outcomes. Other effects of community violence include memory and concentration problems, aggression, fears, and isolation and withdrawal (Rudenberg et al., 2001).

### *Rationale for Hypotheses*

As one can see from a review of the literature, forgiveness education delivered by school personnel has proven effective in reducing anger (and sometimes depression) for children, especially in contexts where children deal with issues like poverty, racism, and violence. Belfast, with its history of these social troubles, seems like a location that can benefit greatly from an intervention that can potentially heal old wounds and promote a peaceful future. Furthermore, since parents play such a central role in their children's moral development, a program delivered by parents to their children holds great potential for lasting change, for both children and parents. Since other programs aimed at facilitating children's mental health have successfully incorporated a parental component, we decided to add a parent-led forgiveness education component to the school-based program employed in previous research. With these issues in mind, we trained parents to deliver a manualized forgiveness education intervention to their third grade children and assessed its impact relative to an alternative treatment.

The alternative treatment condition (Family Art Program) consisted of a manualized intervention that brings parents and children together to participate in shared art activities. Parents and children participated in a 45-minute art project each week for 14 weeks.

### *Hypotheses*

This study examines the effectiveness of the parent-led *A Family Guide to Forgiveness Education* (FGFE) curriculum on mental health and relationship variables for parents and their third grade children (ages 8-9) in Belfast, Northern Ireland, compared to the *Family Art Program* (FAP). The primary focus of the study is on interpersonal forgiveness for children and parents. Supplementary analyses involve other mental health and relationship variables. Specifically, the following hypotheses are tested with statistical analyses:

1. Children who participate in the FGFE curriculum will show increased forgiveness compared with children who participate in the FAP.
2. Parents who lead the FGFE curriculum will show increased forgiveness compared with parents who lead the FAP.
3. Children who participate in the FGFE curriculum will show decreased anger compared with children who participate in the FAP.
4. Parents who lead the FGFE curriculum will show decreased anger compared with parents who lead the FAP.
5. Children who participate in the FGFE curriculum will show decreased depressive symptoms compared with children who participate in the FAP.
6. Parents who lead the FGFE curriculum will show decreased depressive symptoms compared with parents who lead the FAP.
7. Children who participate in the FGFE curriculum will show increased parent-child relational health compared with children who participate in the FAP.

8. Parents who lead the FGFE curriculum will show increased parent-child relational health compared with parents who lead the FAP.
9. Parents who lead the FGFE curriculum will show decreased anxiety compared with parents who lead the FAP.
10. Parents who lead the FGFE curriculum will show increased family strengths compared with parents who lead the FAP.

## Chapter Three

### Method

#### *Overview and Research Design*

For the past several years, Professor Robert Enright and his team of researchers at the University of Wisconsin – Madison have been equipping primary school teachers in Belfast with training and materials to implement forgiveness education programs in their classrooms. The current study is an offshoot of this program. Rather than examining the outcomes of teaching forgiveness in the classroom, however, this study seeks to explore quantitatively the effects of forgiveness education delivered in the home by parents, using an adaptation of the *Great Families* curriculum (Knutson-Enright & Enright, 2006a).

#### *Power Analysis*

A meta-analysis of forgiveness studies by Baskin & Enright (2004) showed that process-based (as opposed to decision-based) group interventions averaged an effect size ( $d$ ) of .82 for forgiveness scores and .59 for other mental health variables. Individual process-based interventions reported an effect size of 1.66 for forgiveness and 1.42 for other mental health variables. The current study is an individual intervention delivered in a one-on-one format by parents. A conservative *a priori* analysis in G\*Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) indicated that a sample size of 20 experimental and 20 control participants would suffice, at a power of .80 (alpha .05), to locate an effect size of .82 (the lower end of the forgiveness intervention range). Unfortunately, the difficulty in attracting participants resulted in a sample size of 8 and 8 at pretest and then 5 and 5 at delayed posttest. At this sample size, we can expect to detect an effect size of 1.72 with a

power of .80 (alpha .05)—a value outside the range of both forgiveness and other mental health scores analyzed by Baskin & Enright (2004).

### *Participants*

Participants included 16 parents (8 randomized to the experimental, and 8 randomized to the control group) and their children in Primary 5 (P5; the U.S. equivalent of third grade) in Belfast for the 2008-2009 school year. Five families dropped during the course of the study, and the data for one parent/child pair was eliminated from analysis because of the parent's pattern of perseveration on some of the scales at post-test (for example, giving a rating of "2" for every item on a scale), leaving 5 experimental and 5 control families for delayed post-testing. Families were recruited from schools that have been participating in ongoing research and service projects through the University of Wisconsin – Madison. According to research at Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, children begin showing prejudice against their Protestant or Catholic neighbors by age four (Connolly & Healy, 2004). At age four, however, children are not cognitively ready to begin learning about forgiveness. By age eight, however, children have moved solidly into Piaget's concrete operational stage and have developed the capacity to think consequentially and can appreciate the links among injustice, anger, and the deterioration of relationships. It was decided, then, that children should be educated about forgiveness early in their cognitive development, since further delay only serves to strengthen outgroup prejudice, reify harmful ways of dealing with injustice, and put children at risk for the negative outcomes associated with anger and depression. For these reasons, it was decided to begin this program with P5 children.



Certain child or school characteristics could impact the results of the program. As a result, participants were blocked on child gender (since boys and girls might respond differently) and school type (in case Protestant and Catholic schools would impact results differentially). In the initial assignment to group, the experimental group consisted of 2 boys and 6 girls (7 Catholic and 1 Protestant) and the control group was made up of 3 boys and 5 girls (7 Catholic and 1 Protestant). Children ranged in age from 8 to 9 years ( $M$  8.4 years,  $SD$  .51), and parents ranged from 26 to 40 years ( $M$  33.9 years,  $SD$  5.87). Of the 16 parents, 15 (93%) were mothers, and one (7%) was the father, 3 (19%) were married and 13 (81%) were single.

In the final sample, the experimental group consisted of 2 boys and 3 girls (all Catholic) and the control group was made up of 1 boy and 4 girls (4 Catholic and 1 Protestant). The children ranged in age from 8 to 9 years ( $M$  8.3 years,  $SD$  .48), and parents ranged from 26 to 40 years ( $M$  33.0 years,  $SD$  5.31). Of the 10 parents, 9 (90%) were mothers and one (10%) was the father, 2 (20%) were married and 8 (80%) were single. All parents received a positive teacher recommendation on parents' literacy level (since books are an important part of the program and illiterate parents would not be able to read to their children) and no children had special academic needs (since children in special education or special literacy programs might respond differently to the intervention). All children involved in this study were receiving forgiveness education in the classroom from their P5 teacher in addition to this intervention.

### *Forgiveness Program Description*

The *A Family Guide to Forgiveness Education* (FGFE) curriculum is a fourteen-lesson forgiveness education program designed for implementation at home by parents. The FGFE curriculum is based on the forgiveness education curricula designed for use in schools (Knutson-Enright & Enright, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006b, 2007, 2008; see Figure 5 for the introduction to the manual and a sample lesson). Each lesson is meant to last about 45 minutes, and forgiveness is taught through story, family discussion, and activities meant to deepen understanding. The FGFE employs such stories as *Stone Soup* (Frost, 1998), Dr. Seuss favorites like *The Cat in the Hat* (1957) and *Horton Hatches the Egg* (1940), *I'm Mad* (Crary, 1992) and *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (MacLachlan, 1985) to teach children about the forgiveness-related concepts of kindness, respect, generosity, inherent worth, and moral love, with the hope that forgiveness and its related concepts will become entrenched as part of the family culture. Parents are encouraged to teach one lesson each week so that the entire curriculum is completed in fourteen weeks.

### *Family Art Program Description*

The placebo control condition, called the *Family Art Program* (FAP), consists of shared art activities. The active control condition is meant to account for variables like parental attention, time spent with parents, shared activities, adult exposure, contact, teamwork, cooperation, parent preparation, parent effort, and parent training that could conceivably account for any positive impact from the forgiveness program. Parents spent 45 minutes each week for 14 weeks in a shared art activity with their child. A manual was

provided to each parent that outlines a list of supplies and directions for each project (see Figure 6 for the manual introduction and a sample lesson).

### *Parent Training*

Parents who participated in the study attended either a forgiveness education workshop or a family art workshop led by a doctoral student in educational psychology and a licensed marriage and family therapist (for workshop outlines, see Figure 7). The workshops, which lasted approximately two hours, were held at local schools, either during the day or after the school day had been completed. The forgiveness workshop emphasized the origins, philosophy, and psychology of forgiveness, as well as a detailed road map explaining how one can go about forgiving another and an exploration of the FGFE manual. The manual and all related materials (books, etc.) were distributed at the workshop as well, and the presenters were available to answer questions about the manual and materials. The family art workshop emphasized the importance of investing time with children in shared activities and an exploration of the FAP manual. Like the first workshop, the manual and all related art materials were distributed, and the presenters answered any questions about the manual and materials. The doctoral student researcher and a member of Peacelines (with two years of experience in Belfast working with school systems to set up and implement forgiveness education programs) were available throughout the delivery of the program to communicate with parents and answer their questions.

### *Instruments*

*Children's depression.* The Beck Depression Inventory for Youth (BDI-Y; Beck, Beck, Jolly, & Steer, 2005) is a well-known and often-used measure of depressive symptoms for children. It seeks to assess depressive symptoms according to the criteria outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000)*. The instrument consists of 20 items that are scored on a 4 point Likert scale (0 to 3), so that depression raw scores range from 0 (low) to 60 (high). Raw scores are then converted to T-scores with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10 (Beck et al., 2005). Test items tap such issues as negative thoughts about self, life, and future, physiological indicators of depression, and feelings of sadness. The BDI-Y seeks to discriminate depressive disorders from other disorders, especially anxiety—a feat that most other childhood depression scales have not accomplished (Beck et al., 2005). Internal consistency for this instrument is high (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86-.92$  for children aged 7-14). The BDI-Y has been used successfully with P5 children in previous studies (Enright et al., 2007).

*Children's anger.* The Beck Anger Inventory for Youth (BANI-Y), a popular measure in the field, is designed to measure negative thoughts about self and others, a child's perception of mistreatment, physiological arousal and feelings of anger. Most measures of childhood anger tap disruptive behavior more than anger itself (Beck et al., 2005). The BANI-Y is unique in that it differentiates anger from disruptive or aggressive behavior. It consists of 20 items, scored on a Likert scale from 0 to 3, resulting in a total anger raw score between 0 and 60. Raw scores are then converted to T-scores with a

mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10 (Beck et al., 2005). The BANI-Y has been used successfully in previous studies of forgiveness education with P5 children (Enright et al., 2007).

*Children's forgiveness.* The Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children (EFI-C) is based on the adult version of the EFI (Subkoviak, et al., 2005), which grows out of the Enright Process Model of Forgiveness and the definition of forgiveness described above. The measure begins by requesting children to report on a recent experience of deep hurt and then consider this experience for the remainder of the questionnaire. The EFI-C consists of 30 questions that measure three domains (affect, behavior, and cognition); each domain contains a balance of five negative and five positive questions. For example, participants would respond to questions like, "Do you feel happy about him/her?" "Would you help him/her?" and "Do you think the person who hurt you is mean?" These items assess both negative and positive thoughts, feelings, and actions toward an offender. Responses to these questions are scored on a 4-point Likert scale: (1) *Yes*, (2) *A little bit yes*, (3) *A little bit no*, and (4) *No*. Thus, total scores on the EFI-C range from 30 (low forgiveness) to 120 (high forgiveness), with each subscale (Affect, Behavior, Cognition) ranging from 10 (low) to 40 (high). The EFI-C also contains a 6-item set of questions that evaluates forgiveness-related issues on the same 4-point Likert scale. Although this measure is somewhat new to the field, it has been used with elementary school children in Northern Ireland with high reliability levels (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$  in Enright et al., 2007 and  $.95$  in Magnuson, 2007). The EFI-C has been used successfully with P5 children in previous forgiveness work (Enright et al., 2007).

*Parent-child relationship.* The Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire (PCRQ; Furman & Gibson, 1995), which consists of both a parent and a child component, measures several facets of the parent-child relationship, including positive disciplinary strategies and parents' feelings of warmth toward their children. The full scale contains 57 items, but, in order to keep fatigue low and measure the prosocial/warmth factors of the construct, this study made use of only 18 items. Examples include, "How much do you and this parent care about each other?" "How much does this parent tell you that you did a good job?" and "How much does this parent respect your opinion?" The parent version of the PCRQ has been used with parents of children ranging from preschool age to sixth grade, and the child version has been used with fourth through sixth grade children. Responses to items are measured with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *hardly at all* (0) to *extremely much* (4). Total scores, then, range from 0 to 120, with high scores representing better relationships. Children completed this instrument for both their mother and their father (or father figure if they had no contact with their biological father). Internal consistency for this scale has been reported to be adequate (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .81$ ; Furman & Gibson, 1995).

*Parents' depression.* The Beck Depression Inventory—Second Edition (BDI-II; Beck, A. T., Steer, R. A., & Brown, G. K., 1996), which is built on 35 years of clinical experience and psychometric data, measures the severity of depression in adults (persons over age 13). The instrument assesses symptoms that correspond to diagnostic criteria for depressive disorders outlined in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—Fourth Edition (DSM-IV; 1994)*. The BDI-II

consists of 21 self-report items that are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (0 to 3), and the total score, which is determined by summing the scores from each item, can range from 0 to 63. Internal consistency is high for this scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$ ; Beck et al., 1996).

*Parents' anger.* The State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI-2; Spielberger, 1999) measures one's experience of anger, as well as one's expression and control of anger. The STAXI-2 assesses both state (transient emotional condition) and trait (individual differences in personality dispositions) anger. The STAXI-2 appraises outward expression of anger, anger directed inward, one's control of outwardly expressed anger, and one's control of suppressed angry feelings (e.g., cooling off, calming down). Individuals rate themselves on 57 items regarding their angry feelings according to a 4-point Likert scale, *Not at all/Almost never* (1) to *Very much so/Almost always* (4). State anger scores range from 15-60, trait anger scores range from 8-32, and the anger expression index ranges from 0-96. Higher scores indicate higher levels of anger. All raw scores are converted to T-scores with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. Internal consistency of the scale has been high (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88-.97$ ; Spielberger, Jacobs, Russell, & Crane, 1983).

*Parents' anxiety.* The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1983), which has been used frequently in clinical practice and research (for which it has been translated into over 30 languages), is a 40-item self-report instrument that measures state ("right now") and trait ("generally") anxiety. Both the state and trait subscales consist of 20 items each, scored on Likert scales from 1 (*Not at all/Almost never*) to 4 (*Very much so/Almost always*), so that scores for each subscale range from 20-80, where higher

scores indicate greater anxiety. Internal consistency of the STAI is high (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$  and  $.90$  for the state and trait subscales, respectively; Spielberger, 1983).

*Parents' forgiveness.* The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI; Subkoviak, et al., 2005), which has been validated in six languages, is the most frequently used measure of forgiveness in published experimental research, with consistently high reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .98-.99$ ; Enright & Rique, 2000/2004). The EFI is made up of 60 items and contains three 20-item subscales assessing cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of forgiveness toward an offender. Each subscale contains 10 negative items and 10 positive items. The instrument begins with questions about an offense upon which the questions focus, and concludes with five construct validity questions regarding forgiveness. Each response is rated according to a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Total forgiveness scores range from 60-360, with higher scores denoting greater forgiveness. Each subscale ranges from 20 (low forgiveness) to 120 (high forgiveness).

*Family strengths.* The Family Strengths Scale (Olson, Larsen, & McCubbin, 1982) is a 12-item self report scale that measures two areas of family strengths: family pride (including trust, loyalty, and respect, and shared beliefs) and family accord (sense of family competence). Each response is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from *Strongly disagree* (1) to *Strongly agree* (5). Scores range from 12 to 60, with higher scores indicating higher levels of family strength. Internal consistency for this scale is adequate (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ ; Olson et al., 1982).



*Procedure*

A member of the research team visited primary schools in Belfast during the summer of 2008 to discuss the program with principals and identify which schools were interested in participating. A total of five schools were identified for participation. Letters were sent home from these schools to parents in September. Parents of the families who consented to participate in the study attended a two-hour workshop in mid-October to receive training in using the curriculum to which they were assigned (the FGFE or the FAP). The graduate student researcher and a licensed marriage and family therapist delivered this training. Materials (books, supplies) were distributed to the parents at this time as well. Much effort was made to make the workshops and intervention implementation consistent across both experimental and control conditions. In order to assess intervention integrity, a short 10-question concept test was administered after each workshop (see Figure 8 for the workshop evaluations). Results of these tests are reported in the Results section.

Active consent was obtained through parental consent and student assent forms delivered prior to data collection. The parent/child pairs were randomly assigned, using a table of random numbers, either to the experimental or the control group. Trained research assistants administered the instruments both before and after the program. Children completed five instruments: the EFI-C, the BANI-Y, the BDI-Y, and the PCRQ (for both mother and father). Parents completed six instruments: the EFI, the Family Strengths scale, the STAI, the STAXI-2, the BDI, and the PCRQ. Questionnaires were distributed to children and parents in random-ordered packets. That is, some participants

began with the EFI, others with the BDI, and so on. Parents were encouraged to contact the graduate student researcher with any questions during implementation of the curriculum. Those families assigned to the art curriculum were given the opportunity to use the forgiveness curriculum during the following academic year. Families were paid £100 (about \$200 USD) for completion of the program, including post-test instruments. Payments were disbursed throughout the program: £25 at the completion of the pretests by the parent and child, another £25 midway through the intervention, and the remaining £50 at the completion of the delayed post-tests. Pre-test and delayed post-test (approximately one month following completion of the program) data were collected. Intervention fidelity was checked through weekly parental evaluations throughout the course of the program for each condition (see Figure 5 and Figure 6 for examples of the fidelity checks). These evaluations covered the key learning and behavioral objectives of each lesson outlined in the lesson introduction. Results of the fidelity assessments are provided in the Results section.

## Chapter Four

### Results

Pre-test and delayed post-test data were coded and entered by a member of the research team. Spreadsheets were spot-checked to ensure accurate transfer of the data. All analyses were completed using the statistical software package SPSS Version 17.

#### *Reliability*

Cronbach's alphas were computed for all dependent measures, except for state and trait anger, where there was not enough variability in the scores to calculate the alpha. Most scales demonstrated adequate to high internal reliability: Beck Anger Inventory for Youth (BANI),  $\alpha = .86$ ; Beck Depression Inventory for Youth (BDI-Y),  $\alpha = .90$ ; Enright Forgiveness Inventory for Children (EFI-C),  $\alpha = .96$ ; Parent Child Relationship Questionnaire-Mothers (PCRQM),  $\alpha = .54$ ; Parent Child Relationship Questionnaire-Fathers (PCRQF),  $\alpha = .76$ ; State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI), Expression  $\alpha = .80$ ; Beck Depression Inventory (BDI),  $\alpha = .84$ ; Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI),  $\alpha = .99$ ; State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), State  $\alpha = .75$ ; Trait  $\alpha = .89$ ; Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire (PCRQ),  $\alpha = .76$ ; Family Strengths (FS),  $\alpha = .54$ .

#### *Analysis*

First, pretest means were calculated for the dependent variables in each condition for children and parents. See Tables 1 and 2 for means and standard deviations. A between-group analysis of the pretest means revealed no significant differences between parent groups at the outset of the study. For children, the experimental group ( $M = 82.6$ )

scored significantly higher on the PCRQF than did the control group ( $M = 71.6$ ),  $t(8) = 3.88$ ,  $p = .009$ . For all other measures, no significant differences were observed.

For children, the pretest experimental mean for anger (22.4) represents a mildly elevated level of anger, the mean for depression (14.8) represents an average level of depression, the mean for forgiveness (89.4) represents a moderate forgiveness score, and the means for child-mother relationship (76.6) and child-father relationship (82.6) represent high levels of warmth between child and parents. For the control group, the pretest mean for anger (18.2) represents an average level of anger, the mean for depression (22.2) represents a mildly elevated level of depression, the mean for forgiveness (89.6) represents a moderate forgiveness score, and the means for child-mother relationship (70.6) and child-father relationship (71.6) represent moderately high levels of warmth between child and parents.

For parents, the pretest experimental mean for both state (15.4) and trait (18.4) anger represent an average level of anger, the mean for anger expression (37.2) represents a mildly elevated level of anger, the mean for depression (12.8) represents minimal depression, the mean for forgiveness (282.2) represents an above-average forgiveness score, the mean for state anxiety (39.0) represents an average level of anxiety, the mean for trait anxiety (44.2) represents an elevated level of anxiety, the mean for parent-child relationship (78.0) represents a high level of warmth between parent and child, and the mean for family strengths (48.2) represents a high level of family strength. For the control group, the mean for state anger (15.8) represents an average level of anger, the means for trait anger (20.0) and anger expression (40.4) represent a mildly elevated level

of anger, the mean for depression (11.2) represents minimal depression, the mean for forgiveness (277) represents an above-average level of forgiveness, the mean for state anxiety (30.6) represents a low anxiety score, the mean for trait anxiety (39.0) represents an average level of anxiety, the mean for parent-child relationship (77.8) represents a high level of warmth between parent and child, and the mean for family strengths (49.6) represents a high level of family strengths.

Since we are interested in individual change on each dependent variable, individual gain scores were computed for all participants following the calculation of pretest and delayed posttest scores. As long as particular conditions exist (such as high pre-test reliability), Zimmerman & Williams (1998) insist that the use of gain scores is perfectly acceptable in social science. The directional hypotheses—that forgiveness participants would experience significant improvement in the dependent variables—call for a one-tailed analysis of each gain score. Thus, in order to examine group differences, we conducted a one-tailed t-test for each dependent variable. See Table 1 and Table 2 for gain scores, *t* statistics, and effect sizes for children and parents, respectively.

Table 1

*Mean, Standard Deviation, t Statistics, and Effect Size for Child Dependent Variables*

Measure	Pre-test		Delayed Post-test		Gain Score		<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
<i>Child Depression</i>								
Exp.	14.8	8.5	15.8	10.3	1.0	6.0	1.1	.71
Con.	22.2	13.6	15.4	8.9	-6.8	15.3		
<i>Child Anger</i>								
Exp.	22.4	11.4	16.8	2.3	-5.6	9.2	-.74	-.49
Con.	18.2	9.9	18.6	11.2	.40	15.6		
<i>Child Forgiveness</i>								
Exp.	89.4	33.9	100.0	10.7	10.6	37.4	.53	.35
Con.	89.6	19.9	90.2	18.6	.6	19.4		
<i>Child-Mother Relat</i>								
Exp.	76.6	6.8	75.2	9.5	-1.4	15.4	-.38	-.26
Con.	70.6	3.7	72.4	10.3	1.8	10.15		
<i>Child-Father Relat</i>								
Exp.	82.6	3.8	77.4	9.1	-5.2	7.5	-1.3	-.90
Con.	71.6	6.1	73.6	10.7	2.0	9.3		

Table 2 shows only one significant between-group difference in parents' forgiveness scores,  $t(8) = 1.9, p < .05$  (one-tailed), where parents who participated in the forgiveness condition experienced a significant improvement in their forgiveness level. The effect size for this difference ( $d = 1.25$ ) was large by Cohen's (1988) standards. Between-group differences for all other dependent variables were not significant.

Table 2

*Mean, Standard Deviation, t Statistics, and Effect Size for Parent Dependent Variables*

Measure	Pre-test		Delayed Post-test		Gain Score		<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
<i>Parent Depression</i>								
Exp.	12.8	8.0	6.6	5.2	-6.2	6.5	-1.1	-.87
Con.	11.2	7.0	8.8	7.0	-2.4	4.0		
<i>Parent State Anger</i>								
Exp.	15.4	.90	17.4	3.2	2.0	3.4	1.7	1.10
Con.	15.8	1.3	15.2	.45	-.60	.89		
<i>Parent Trait Anger</i>								
Exp.	18.4	2.4	20.6	5.4	2.2	3.8	1.3	.90
Con.	20.0	2.2	19.2	1.9	-.80	3.3		
<i>Parent Anger Express</i>								
Exp.	37.2	10.4	38.8	10.8	1.6	3.1	1.8	1.19
Con.	40.4	14.4	33.0	10.0	-7.4	10.8		
<i>Parent State Anxiety</i>								
Exp.	39.0	5.8	43.6	6.8	4.6	8.3	1.3	.84
Con.	30.6	6.4	29.4	7.1	-1.2	6.1		
<i>Parent Trait Anxiety</i>								
Exp.	44.2	9.7	45.6	11.6	1.4	14.5	.87	.58
Con.	39.0	11.2	34.2	12.9	-4.8	6.6		
<i>Parent Forgiveness</i>								
Exp.	282.2	60.6	307.2	76.1	25.0	37.4	1.9*	1.25
Con.	277.0	92.0	267.0	92.1	-10.0	18.2		
<i>Family Strengths</i>								
Exp.	48.2	6.0	48.4	5.0	.20	1.5	-.87	-.58
Con.	49.6	3.0	50.6	3.7	1.0	1.4		
<i>Parent-Child Relat</i>								
Exp.	78.0	5.6	76.0	9.3	-2.0	6.8	-.60	-.40
Con.	77.8	6.0	77.8	3.8	0.0	3.2		

\*  $p < .05$

### *Implementation variables*

In order to strengthen the validity of the results, we wanted to verify that parents were actually implementing the programs according to the manuals. Parents in both groups were trained in the concepts underlying the respective interventions and in their proper implementation. At the conclusion of the training workshops, parents completed a 10-question concept test that assessed key ideas and implementation points (see Figure 8)

to verify that parents received the necessary information. Parents in the Art program scored 94.3% on the concept test, while parents in the Forgiveness program scored 88.6%. Thus, parents seemed to assimilate the necessary information about the content and implementation of the interventions.

In order to assess the actual implementation of both programs, parents completed and returned weekly self-report lesson evaluations. At the completion of the programs, parents in the forgiveness condition had completed 99.4% of the checklist objectives at the end of each lesson, while parents in the art condition completed 100.0% of the objectives.

*Variable of Interest: Forgiveness*

Tables 1 and 2 note the large standard deviations in forgiveness scores for children and parents in the experimental group. These large numbers indicate that the program had a differential impact on participants. Thus, further exploration is warranted. Figures 1 and 2 show the change in forgiveness scores from pretest to delayed posttest for children and parents, respectively, in the experimental group. As one can see, some parents and children improved dramatically, while some stayed basically the same, and others declined.



Figure 1

*Change in Forgiveness for Children in Experimental Group*

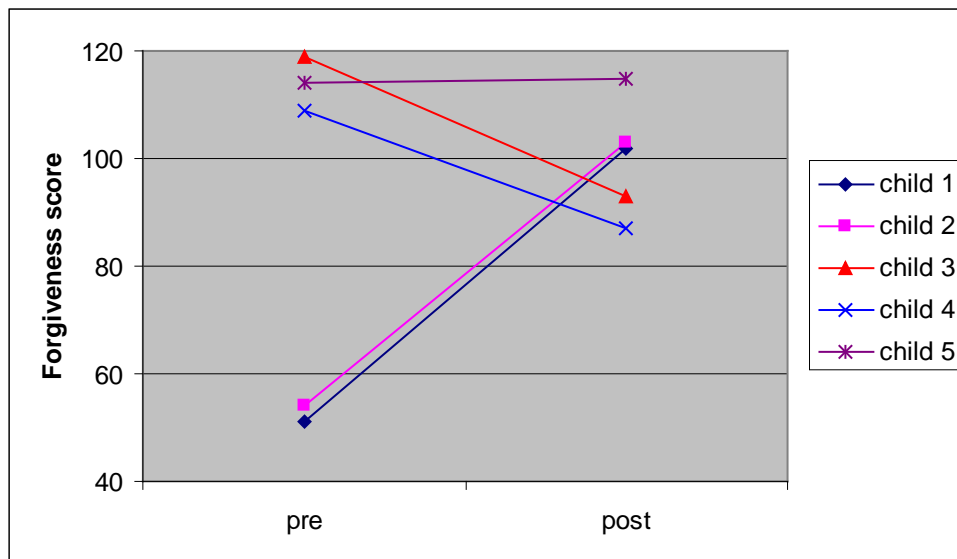
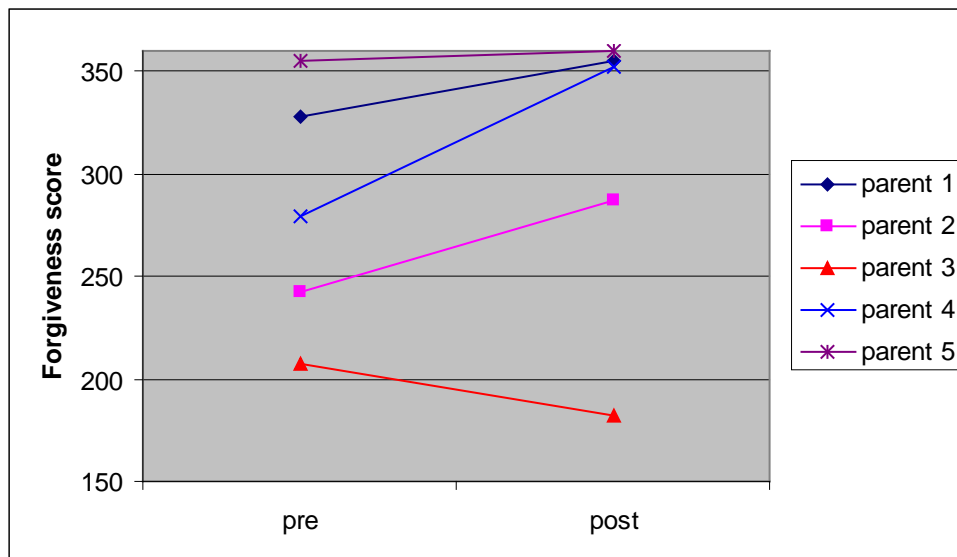


Figure 2

*Change in Forgiveness for Parents in Experimental Group*



*Case Study*

For illustrative purposes, we will highlight parent-child pair 2 from the experimental group. For graphical depictions of the change from pretest to delayed posttest, see Figures 3 and 4. Child 2's forgiveness score jumped an impressive 49 points from a low score of 54 to a moderate score of 103. Child 2 decreased in anger by 18 points—a considerable decline. Child 2 showed a negligible increase in depressive symptoms from 3 to 5—well within the normal range. The child-mother relationship gained by 20 points (from moderate to very high), and the child-father relationship (which was very high at the outset) increased by a modest 4 points.

Parent 2 showed a 45 point increase in forgiveness from a moderately low score to an above-average score. Although parent 2 increased a bit in trait anger (8 points) to a relatively high score, this parent decreased in depression by 7 points into the minimal category. Parent 2 showed a negligible 1 point increase in trait anxiety and a modest 5 point increase in parent-child relational warmth into a relatively high category.

This descriptive data show the possible impact of forgiveness education on parents and children. Even in the face of stressful external events, such as violence and economic uncertainty (see Discussion section), this program can help parents and children to maintain and even increase their mental health.

Figure 3

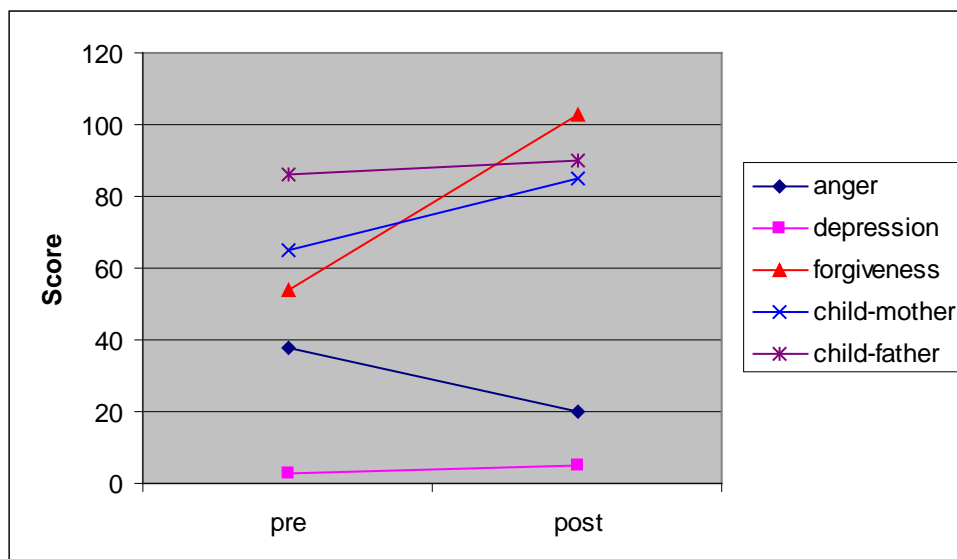
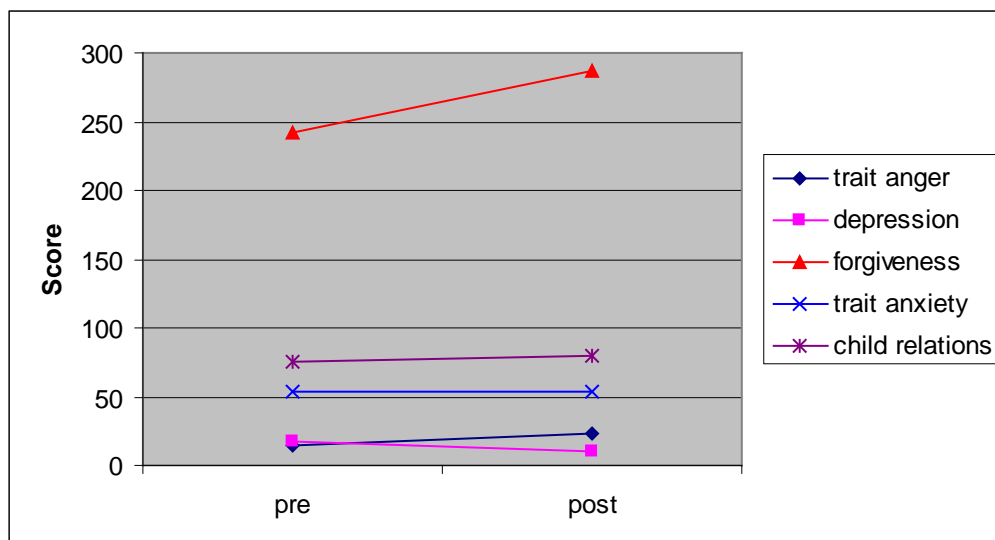
*Change in Dependent Measures for Child 2*

Figure 4

*Change in Dependent Measures for Parent 2*

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

#### *General Discussion*

This parent-led forgiveness education program was designed to complement the forgiveness education program already occurring in the classrooms in Belfast. In most of the dependent variables, there was no significant change. The lone exception was parents' forgiveness. The parents who taught the forgiveness curriculum to their children experienced a statistically significant gain in their interpersonal forgiveness scores compared to parents who taught the art curriculum.

#### *Parents' forgiveness*

Indeed, the most interesting finding of this study is the significant gain in forgiveness for the parents who taught the forgiveness program. During the implementation, the parents did not work on forgiving anyone. Thus, the statistically significant finding shows an interesting effect: as the parents taught their children about forgiveness, the parent improved in forgiveness. This finding is consistent with social learning theories that maintain that teaching a certain subject is actually one of the best ways to learn it. In this "doing" model of learning, when one enacts content—rather than passively receiving it—one is more apt to internalize the content. This is unlikely to be a spurious finding, given the hypotheses and the fact that forgiveness was the central variable.

The normative data on the EFI show that the overall mean is 256.55 (Subkoviak et al., 1995). The experimental parents in this study moved from a mean of 282.2 at

pretest to a mean of 307.2 at delayed posttest. Thus, these parents who were already more forgiving than average toward their offender moved to a very high level of forgiveness after teaching their children about forgiveness.

*Other variables—potential reasons for lack of significant findings*

One possible conclusion from this study is that parent-led forgiveness interventions are not an effective addition to the classroom instruction they already receive. Several studies have already shown that the classroom programs help children reduce their anger and sometimes depression (e.g., Holter et al., 2008; Enright et al., 2007). Studies with adults indicate that forgiveness leads to a confluence of positive psychological outcomes (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Perhaps adding another level to this intervention is simply overkill. Personal communication with teachers and school principals in inner-city areas like Milwaukee and Belfast, however, frequently indicate the need for some type of work with parents so that what kids learn in the classroom is reinforced at home.

*Classroom forgiveness education.* Perhaps the fact that both groups of children received forgiveness education in the classroom eliminated differences in forgiveness scores between the groups. In the Enright et al. (2007) study with P5 children in Belfast, the experimental group experienced a significant gain in mean forgiveness score, from 68.22 at pretest to 86.51 at delayed posttest. Since the pretest forgiveness mean in the current study was 89.5 for the overall sample (89.4 for experimental, 89.6 for control), it is likely that the children have already done their development on forgiveness in the school setting. Furthermore, some of these children might have received forgiveness

education in P3 and P4 (grades 1 and 2 in the U.S.), which would only serve to bolster their scores.

*Floor and ceiling effects.* For some variables, the participants did not have much room to show improvement. For example, the minimum possible score on the parents' state anger is 15. With pretest mean scores of 15.4 and 15.8, the experimental and control groups, respectively, had very little room for improvement. Similarly, the parent-child relationship scores of 78.0 and 77.8 left little room for improvement on a scale that ends at 90. Additionally, parents' depression means (12.8 and 11.2) were classified as "minimal" at the outset. For children, this effect can be seen with the child-mother scores ( $M = 76.6$ ) and child-father scores ( $M = 82.6$ ) for the experimental group. With more extreme scores such as these, perhaps simple regression to the mean could be responsible for gains or losses. Furthermore, as noted in the Results section, most of the pre-test scores resided in a normal—rather than an elevated or clinical—range.

*Implementation issues.* Perhaps differences were not apparent because the parents did not faithfully deliver the program. We attempted to insure fidelity to the intervention through a concept test after the workshop and through weekly self-report evaluations that parents completed and returned. Parents reported fidelity to the manualized curriculum. Perhaps the parents completed their checklists without actually implementing all parts of the lessons for social desirability reasons or to make sure they received their stipend. Alternately, perhaps a 2-hour workshop was not enough time to convey the necessary information and skills in order to help parents implement the program effectively. Yet, given that the parents scored well on the final knowledge quiz for their group and given

their report of fidelity to the program to which they were assigned, it is unlikely that the results occurred as they did because of parental inattention to the details of the curriculum. As a final point here, perhaps more time than 14 weeks is needed to explore forgiveness in a way that produces meaningful change.

*Sample size.* With a total sample size of 10, it was very difficult to detect differences between the groups. Perhaps this intervention would have yielded more significant differences if the sample size were larger (e.g., a total of 40 families). Conversely, a smaller sample size might still produce significant change if the work is done with a clinical—rather than a community—sample. Perhaps this work might fit in a response-to-intervention framework, where universal forgiveness education could be supplemented with a selective or indicated intervention for those who need more attention.

*Sample characteristics.* Another factor may be that this group of parents (and children) is already at such a high level of functioning that an intervention such as this will not detect psychological differences between groups. To date, all published forgiveness intervention studies, whether with children or adults, had participants in need of psychological amelioration. The parents in this study all volunteered for this study and probably did so because they had the interest, the energy, and the psychological coherence to begin and complete the intervention. As already stated, their scores for the most part across the dependent measures showed average or better patterns.

*Economic conditions.* Perhaps the sagging world economy has had an impact on the results of this study. The beginning of this intervention coincided with the beginning

of the worldwide recession in October of 2008. As of May, 2009, over 46,000 residents of Northern Ireland claimed job seeker's allowance, and the unemployment rate has jumped to 6.1%, including significant losses in the manufacturing sector (BBC, 2009b). Perhaps the struggling economy has impacted mental health variables like anxiety, anger, or depression. Conceivably, spending time with children each week in activities, whether forgiveness or art, could serve as a protective factor against sharp increases in depression, anger, or anxiety. Maybe spending time with their children helps them to focus on the more important things in life. Of course, we do not know, since we did not include a no-contact control group.

*Escalation of paramilitary activity.* Another outside factor that potentially could have impacted the results is the recent rise of paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland. In March of 2009, in a matter of 48 hours, nationalist paramilitary groups shot and killed two British soldiers and one police officer (BBC, 2009a). In fact, the last year has seen a sharp rise in paramilitary attacks from 7 in 2007-2008 to 20 in 2008-2009 (BBC, 2009c). This recent spike in violence could negatively impact the mental health of residents of Northern Ireland, especially children (for a brief review of the negative impact of violence on children, see Holter, Magnuson, & Enright, 2008). Again, perhaps spending time together as a family might help to combat these effects, leading families to focus on positive qualities of the family. Without a no-contact control, however, this is simply conjecture.

*Complexity of the concepts.* Perhaps some concepts are a bit too difficult for children at this age in Belfast. One parent commented, "It was too hard to keep my



daughter's attention . . . it is a little too advanced for her age." Another parent suggested, "I would try to use more simple wording to make the child understand. I had to explain a lot of the meaning and wording." Yet another commented, "I would word the summary section a little more simply, making it easier to understand."

### *Limitations*

Some limitations of this study have already been mentioned. First, the sample size was very small, and we did not have the statistical power to detect differences that might exist between the groups. The small sample also limits the generalizability of the findings. Letters were sent home to all parents of P5 children in five schools. Only 16 of those parents chose to participate in the study, and only 11 of them finished (with one showing a pattern of response perseveration necessitating our eliminating her data from consideration). In conversation with some teachers and principals in Belfast, it was suggested that the letters sent home to parents were too "wordy." These school personnel suggested a simple flyer rather than a one-page letter.

Second, the presence of the classroom forgiveness education might have obscured some between-group differences. Yet, this component was an important part of the study. One main question was this: Will the addition of a parental component make a significant contribution over and above the classroom instruction?

Third, perhaps the parents needed more supervision in the implementation of the curriculum. The parents involved in this study come from an impoverished, inner-city area. Many are single mothers who either stay home with the support of a boyfriend or

attend university in hopes of improving their situation. One key task is providing enough support to these parents so that they can faithfully implement the program.

Another limitation is the high functioning of the families. As stated above, most of the scores on pretest measures resided at or near “average.” Although forgiveness education can help those with normal mental health scores, it is especially appropriate for those with high levels of anger, depression, and anxiety, among others. This sample was a community, rather than a clinical, sample. At the workshops, more than one parent commented that the families and kids who really need something like this are the last ones to participate. Unfortunately, this is a problem encountered by any type of program aimed at helping disadvantaged families.

Yet another limitation is the subjective literacy screen that was employed in the current study. Perhaps an informal subjective teacher report of parent literacy is not a good enough predictor of actual parent literacy. Perhaps a more stringent test (like having parents read a selection and answer questions) would help screen for parental literacy.

A final limitation is the brevity of the data collection period. Some sleeper effects could emerge at later time periods, but only a longitudinal design could capture such effects. Although time and money are often prohibitive factors in such research, the field would benefit from longitudinal looks at forgiveness interventions.

### *Suggestions for Further Research*

The finding that teaching forgiveness to one’s children can have a positive impact on one’s own forgiveness of others seems to indicate that this type of work merits further

attention. In designing a similar study, the following recommendations could prove helpful.

First, participant recruitment should be done by a short flier rather than a one-page letter. Perhaps the program should include a wider spectrum of ages—maybe P5 through P7 (since some parents seemed to think that a few of the concepts were a bit too difficult to grasp for P5 children). Also, recruiting should be done by same-ethnic recruiters, rather than researchers from the United States. For example, a parish priest could help recruit families from Catholic schools.

Second, the inclusion of four different groups would provide more options for analysis: one group that has forgiveness at school and at home (like the experimental group in this study), a second group that has forgiveness at school and another program at home (like the control group in this study), a third group that just has forgiveness at school, and a fourth group that is a no-contact control. A design such as this would help shed light on what conditions best facilitate change for children and families. Regarding the active control group, the selection of another intervention aimed at depression or anger remediation would serve as a stronger comparison group to the forgiveness families. Regarding the parent group, perhaps holding a parallel parent group (rather than a program where parents teach children) would be more beneficial than the current program where children receive forgiveness education in two contexts.

Third, an analysis of the therapeutic mechanisms of change would be appropriate. It is clear from the amassing forgiveness research that interventions to promote forgiveness are effective. A key question still remains: Why? Researchers in this field

would do well to begin to pick apart the change process to identify the mechanisms behind the gains in mental health. Perhaps the key mechanisms lie in two main areas: 1) the cognitive shift in the reframing process where the individual sees the offender in a new light; and 2) the accompanying reduction in resentment that, in turn, leads to improved mental health. Knowledge of these processes would allow interventions to be more concentrated and targeted toward key areas. Similarly, an investigation of the proper dosage level for the intervention would help refine the program and make it more effective.

Fourth, perhaps teaching skills via video vignettes would provide positive social models for parents that would be a more direct means of instruction than story books. For example, a vignette could show someone going through the difficult work of reframing the one who hurt him or her. These videos would be a more overt way of teaching the concepts associated with forgiveness. The skills learned in this way could be passed on to the children. Relatedly, perhaps hosting weekly “parent evenings” at the school would be an effective way to maintain intervention fidelity, enhance parent participation, and deter dropout. Such meetings might build social networks among families. The meetings could include meals and community-building activities as well. These intensified dosages of the intervention would serve to decrease the length of the commitment made by families and possibly enhance participation.

Fifth, this research could possibly benefit from other research designs. One option is a single-case design, grouping participants by parent-child cohort. Rather than looking at large-scale group outcomes, this design tracks an individual unit and notes changes

over time (see Long & Hollon, 1995 for more details). Another option is a regression-discontinuity design, where all subjects complete pretests and those who score lowest on the target measures receive the intervention. The other half of the participants serve as the comparison group. Thus, this design, although quasi-experimental in nature, ensures that the intervention is delivered to those who need it most.

### *General Conclusion*

This is the first known study to explore the effects of teaching forgiveness on the one who delivers the curriculum. We found that parents—although they simply taught forgiveness and related concepts to their children—increased significantly in their forgiveness scores. This finding has potential implications for therapy, specifically with families who might not visit a therapist’s office. If one can improve in forgiveness (and potentially other forgiveness-related areas like depression, anger, or anxiety) by teaching a short forgiveness program to one’s child(ren), this type of intervention could benefit parents who do not have the time, money, or interest in receiving professional help for past hurtful events. Certainly, this finding needs corroboration in future research. Nevertheless, it is a promising new avenue of mental health promotion.

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## Appendix

Figure 5

*A Family Guide to Forgiveness Education – Introduction, Sample Lesson, and Fidelity*

*Check*

**A Family Guide to Forgiveness Education: A Guided Curriculum for Parents  
Introduction**

Dear Parents,

We are thrilled to offer you the opportunity to give your child(ren) the “gift of forgiveness” through the lessons of this curriculum. In our approximately thirty-two years of forgiveness research experience between the two of us, we have seen many positive changes in the emotional health and well being of children, adolescents, and adults (young, middle-aged, and elderly) who were unfairly hurt. Residents of a drug and alcohol treatment center, incest survivors, terminally ill patients, parentally love-deprived adolescents, and emotionally abused women, to name just a few of the groups, who learned to forgive through our interventions typically experienced a decrease in anger, depression, and anxiety and an increase in hopefulness, forgiveness, and self-esteem. Forgiveness has a way of cutting through anger and hurt and setting one free from a prison of resentment. As you offer forgiveness to those who have been unfair, you are giving them an opportunity to reconcile with you and to be restored to greater wholeness. Those who forgive are less likely to carry their anger into other relationships.

In the following paragraphs, we will share what we’ve learned concerning the meaning of forgiveness and will provide an overview of the lessons found in this curriculum guide.

Through an extensive search in ancient religious and philosophical documents, we’ve learned that forgiveness has been held in high esteem for centuries. The oldest preserved record of forgiveness teachings can be found in the Hebrew book of Genesis where a young man named Joseph forgives his brother and half-brothers for selling him into slavery in Egypt. Some of the important themes in that story are as follows:

- ❖ Joseph forgave unconditionally. He did not wait for his brothers to apologize before offering forgiveness.
- ❖ Joseph’s forgiveness was not easy. He struggled to give up his anger and offer forgiveness. Forgiveness is a process that takes time.
- ❖ Joseph’s forgiveness was loving. He did not merely accept the unfairness, pretend that he wasn’t hurt, or become indifferent toward his brothers. He lavished love on his brothers as he forgave.
- ❖ Joseph’s forgiveness was life-giving for both himself and the ones forgiven.

In our search to understand forgiveness, we have never examined any ancient text with a moral basis that did not value forgiveness. Christianity (*aphiemi*), Islam (*afo*),

Confucianism (*shu*), and Buddhism all make room for forgiveness and see it as a morally worthwhile activity.

Forgiveness can be defined this way: when you are unjustly hurt by another person, you forgive when you struggle to give up the resentment (to which you are actually entitled because you were unfairly treated) and you strive to offer the offending one compassion, benevolence, and love (knowing that yours is an act of mercy and therefore, not necessarily deserved by the person).<sup>2</sup>

When we forgive, we do not condone or excuse the unfairness. Instead, we label the other person's actions as wrong—we do not say they were all right nor do we excuse them. When we forgive, we do not forget the unfairness. We remember the unfairness in a new way, with a softened heart.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same. When a person forgives, he or she unilaterally offers an end to resentment and institutes compassion and love. The other person might spurn this gift, but the gift-giver is the one who decides whether or not to give the gift. When two or more people reconcile, they come together again in mutual trust. To reconcile is to trust the other person again. To forgive is to offer love, but not necessarily to trust the other person unless 1) he or she resolves not to offend in the same way again (within reason); 2) repents; and 3) offers recompense. One can forgive and then not reconcile if the other remains in his or her hurtful ways.

We can forgive and ask for justice. When we forgive, we do not have to become a doormat for others to trample.

Forgiveness will help your child learn that all people have deep worth. Your child will be given a tool to help him or her heal from life's injustices, let go of anger and sadness when it comes, and offer love. You and your child, by learning to forgive, may live better.

As you teach forgiveness, we would like you to consider the following three ideas to protect your child(ren)'s rights and safety:

1. Forgiveness is a choice. Forgiveness is a choice of the forgiver. Teachers, parents, or anyone else should not demand that a child forgive someone.

This is what we mean when we say that forgiveness is a choice:

- ❖ All people are free to choose or to reject forgiveness. Society, groups or individuals must not force a person to engage in forgiveness. The person must willingly and freely choose the good of forgiveness. We realize that at times such a choice is painfully difficult and that the person needs some time to more clearly make such a choice.
- ❖ When a person chooses forgiveness, that choice has to be a gift given freely from the heart. It should not be given because of external rewards, expectations, or pressure from others.

This is what we do **not** mean when we say that forgiveness is a choice:

- ❖ We do not mean by "choice" that this is some kind of superficial decision such as "Should I have peas or carrots tonight?" This decision is superficial primarily because in the big picture, it almost doesn't matter which vegetable

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<sup>2</sup> Enright, R.D. (2001) *Forgiveness Is a Choice: A Step-By-Step Process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope*. American Psychological Association (APA).

you choose. Because forgiveness is a moral virtue, it matters greatly whether we choose it.

- ❖ When we use the word “choice,” we do not mean that we will leave the moral virtue of forgiveness entirely behind if today we are so angry that we refuse to forgive our neighbor for an injustice against us. In other words, it is not that we are choosing to leave forgiveness behind with our neighbor for all time with regard to this particular injustice. We may choose to come back to this issue when we are not so angry.
  - ❖ When we use the word “choice,” we do not mean that the one who is considering forgiveness is exclusively deciding between two or more virtues. For example, we do not mean that if a person decides to seek justice against one’s neighbor for this offense, then forgiveness can be put on the shelf. Forgiveness is not a dichotomous virtue in that the person is choosing one and only one virtue and if forgiveness is not the choice, then forgiveness is put far away in the closet.
  - ❖ When we use the word “choice,” we are not suggesting that a choice against forgiveness is the only moral good and that forgiveness itself, once rejected, has somehow mysteriously lost its moral quality. Let us explain: some people do not realize that forgiveness is a moral virtue, but instead consider it to be some kind of morally-neutral behavior, which it is not. Every choice that involves a rejection of a moral virtue must be pondered carefully because all moral virtues are concerned with the good in this life. Whenever a moral virtue is rejected in a particular situation, such as rejecting patience, rejecting fairness, or rejecting forgiveness, our choice involves rejecting something that is morally good. Let us clarify further: if the person rejects forgiveness, but then has a different response of moral goodness, this in no way makes the person’s behavior immoral. At the same time, it may be a challenge for the person to realize that he or she, in rejecting an appropriate moral response, such as forgiveness, might not be living according to his or her best self.
  - ❖ Finally, we come to a big picture issue. If a person chooses to reject forgiveness toward one’s neighbor for any and all injustices by that neighbor and continues to choose against forgiveness for any injustice from any person, this itself could present a considerable moral dilemma for the person. To reject any moral virtue under all circumstances is to reject goodness.
2. Forgiveness does not ask the child(ren), or any other person, to enter into a relationship with a person who continues in unfairness. Please remember that forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing.
  3. Your child(ren) may benefit from learning about forgiveness even if they are not ready or willing to forgive. Understanding forgiveness is not the same as practicing it. We believe that when the topic is handled sensitively, you can have your child(ren) listen and learn without pressuring them to perform acts of forgiveness.

### The Forgiveness Curriculum

The content in this curriculum guide is based on already-existing forgiveness education curricula (Knutson and Enright, 2002, 2003, 2005, and 2006).<sup>3</sup> Similar forgiveness lessons have been successfully taught to children in Belfast, Northern Ireland and Milwaukee and Madison, Wisconsin by their classroom teachers at the schools they are attending. The first group of teachers were trained in the art of forgiveness and introduced to the forgiveness curricula in the fall of 2001. A research team at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has investigated the effectiveness of the forgiveness lessons through a randomized experimental and control group design. The findings showed that the experimental group (receiving forgiveness education) decreased statistically significantly more than the control group (no forgiveness education) in anger (first and fifth grade in Milwaukee, first and third grade in Belfast) and psychological depression (third grade in Belfast). The third grade experimental group in Belfast had a statistically significant increase in forgiveness relative to the control group. Anger in schools is considered to be a major problem in many areas of the world. Forgiveness education has a way of reducing anger to a considerable degree in young children.

Through story, discussion, and activities, your child(ren) will learn: 1) what forgiveness is and is not; 2) the meanings of inherent worth, moral love, and goodness and the ways to practice them apart from forgiveness; 3) the importance of finding balance as we acknowledge the worth of both the self and others and offer moral love and goodness to both the self and others; 4) the ways to practice seeing others' inherent worth and offering moral love and goodness as part of the forgiveness process; 5) how to forgive a person who was unfair; and 6) the importance of seeking and receiving forgiveness.

Following is a brief summary of the definitions of inherent worth, moral love, and goodness.

- ◆ Inherent worth is the idea that all people have deep worth because they are people—members of the human family. This worth is not earned and it cannot be taken away. Within the context of forgiveness, it is akin to the idea that we are to love the offender, but dislike the offense. This deep worth does not come from one's appearance, personal possessions, residence type or location, abilities, group membership, or other such personal characteristics. It does not come from the similarities they share with other people (2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 arms, a mouth, a brain, heart, stomach, and other organs, the ability to think, feel, and act with a free will). This concept provides an important foundation for forgiving by helping the children to see beyond what people do to who they are.
- ◆ Moral love requires an unconditional love for people. This means that we love them despite faults. We love them with their best interest at heart. Moral love is not selfish or self-centered. We can ask fairness of a person as we practice moral love. Moral love underlies true forgiveness.

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<sup>3</sup> Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2002) *The Adventure of Forgiveness*; Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2003) *Discovering Forgiveness*; Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2005) *The Joy of Forgiveness*; Knutson, J.A. & Enright, R.D. (2006) *The Journey Toward Forgiveness*.

- ✦ Goodness involves seeing the deep worth of all people and behaving in a right way toward them. This may involve the following: treating people as we would like to be treated, a genuine concern and high regard for others, a willingness to give of self (time, energy, and possessions), a readiness to help in time of need and to offer such virtues as respect, kindness, generosity, and so forth, and a warm-heartedness in our interactions. Some people talk about the “change of heart” that occurs in forgiveness. The stony heart becomes the softened heart. We offer goodness not because of what people do, but because of who they are. As the children practice goodness, they will better understand forgiveness and what it means to offer goodness to a person who was unfair.

Forgiveness encompasses more than the practice of inherent worth and the exercise of the virtues of moral love and goodness. In this curriculum guide, which is based on the principles of developmental psychology, we have attempted to keep the idea of forgiveness simple. We have started with some of the basics while reserving the subtleties and deeper teachings for later years.

We believe that if the children can begin to understand and practice inherent worth, moral love, and goodness apart from forgiveness and if they can understand and practice these as part of forgiveness, then they will be on their way to a good life. This is a very important gift to give your child(ren).

### Implementing the Curriculum Guide

#### **From the Authors**

You will find that each lesson begins with a letter from the authors, Jeanette Knutson Enright and Robert Enright, to you, the parents or guardians. Each letter is written to provide you with an overview of the main ideas of the lesson, a deeper understanding of the concepts to be taught, insight into how these ideas may benefit your child(ren), and the specific details of *how* you will help your child(ren) learn the main ideas. For example, you will be given the name of the book or DVD to be used, questions for the discussion (Family Talk) and instructions for an activity to supplement the lesson (Forgiveness Building).

#### **The Children’s Books and DVD**

A primary goal in developing this forgiveness curriculum guide was to make the exploration of forgiveness not only beneficial and meaningful, but also interesting and fun. One of the ways we’ve sought to accomplish this goal is through the use of “story.” We’ve carefully selected a number of books to be used in the forgiveness lessons. Each of the stories incorporates one or more of the important themes of inherent worth, moral love, goodness, and giving, seeking, and receiving forgiveness in an entertaining and engaging way. We’ve made a special effort to include stories with a family theme so that your discussions on the various topics will flow quite naturally into your everyday family lives and elsewhere. We’ve also tried, when possible, to select stories reflecting a diverse population. The curriculum includes classics written by Dr. Seuss and other authors such as Patricia MacLachlan that have appealed to children of all ages and in many walks of



life for years, even decades. This story provides wonderful examples for seeing the deep worth of those who are unfair and offering moral love and goodness when forgiving, as well as an overview of what it is like to forgive. We hope that you and your child(ren) will enjoy many hours of reading these delightful stories together.

### **Family Talk**

This section includes questions to be discussed with your child(ren) after you've read the story. These questions will help your child(ren) understand and learn the main ideas of the lesson. We encourage you to look for opportunities to discuss the themes of inherent worth, moral love, goodness, forgiveness, and so forth outside the formal lesson, in the events of your family life and elsewhere. Please feel free to add to or subtract from the list of questions if it will help you more effectively teach your child(ren) about forgiveness.

#### ***Forgiveness Building***

In this section, we provide you with an activity intended to deepen your child(ren)'s understanding of the concept being taught. Unless otherwise stated, the activities are optional. Please feel free to alter the activities, whenever necessary, to more effectively meet the needs of your child(ren).

#### ***We'd Like More Stories on the Topic, Please!***

In this section, we provide a list of additional books and DVDs that you can read and watch with your children as you continue to deepen your understanding and appreciation of forgiveness, as well as related topics (inherent worth, love, and goodness). You may find it especially beneficial to your children (and to your entire family) to adapt questions found in the "Family Talk" sections to these stories.

#### ***Forgiveness as Part of the Family Culture***

We encourage you to make "learning about forgiveness" a natural part of your family routines. Experiment to find the best time of day for you and the child(ren) to complete the lessons. Is it more effective for you to teach the lesson to one child at a time or to come together as a group? Allow yourselves to have fun with the lessons and to be creative as you give your child(ren) the gift of forgiveness. We ask that you maintain the integrity of the main ideas themselves as you modify the lessons to more effectively meet the needs of your children. Please make it your goal to soften the hearts of your children (or to keep them soft). Get to the "heart of the matter" with love, goodness, and forgiveness. Don't worry about how well you teach each lesson (teaching skills or techniques). Practice love, goodness, and forgiveness over and over again and you will become a family of forgivers. You will most certainly reap the fruit of your efforts. Enjoy!

Jeanette A. Knutson Enright and Robert D. Enright

## Lesson One:

### All People Have Deep Worth



#### From the Authors

Dear Parents,

Congratulations! You are about to begin teaching your child(ren), in a formal way, about forgiveness. As previously mentioned, this forgiveness curriculum consists of lessons that will help you teach your child(ren): 1) what forgiveness is and is not; 2) the meanings of and ways to practice seeing the deep inherent worth of all people and offering moral love and goodness apart from forgiveness; 3) the ways in which these concepts and virtues generally help a person to forgive; 4) how to begin practicing seeing the worth in all people, even those who have been unfair and offering moral love and goodness to them; and 5) the importance of seeking and receiving forgiveness.

In this first lesson, you will teach your child(ren) about inherent worth. This will provide your child(ren) with an important foundation for learning forgiveness in later lessons. All people have deep worth. What does this mean? It means that all people have deep value and that this deep value is an essential part of their nature. It cannot be earned and it cannot be taken away.

Inherent worth does not stem from personal differences like behavior, appearance, health, abilities, degree of wealth, group membership, or positions in life. It does not come from those things that people have in common: the same basic needs; bodies with 2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 legs, 2 arms, a heart, stomach, brain, and so forth; emotions (love, anger, sadness, and so forth); the ability to think, choose, and reason; or from similar experiences.

When we understand that all people have deep, inherent worth, we will treat them as people with deep, inherent worth. Please feel free to email with questions about this lesson: jaknutson03@yahoo.com; rd.enright@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,  
Jeanette and Bob

#### Objectives

*In this lesson, you will:*

- ✦ Introduce and read chapters 1-3 of Patricia MacLachlan's book *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.
- ✦ Discuss with your child(ren) the questions in the Family Talk section.

- ✦ With your child(ren), do the “Remembering My Worth” activity. See the Forgiveness Building section.

***In this lesson, your child(ren) will:***

- ✦ Learn that *all people* are of deep worth.
- ✦ Learn that inherent worth is not based on personal differences like appearance, possessions, behavior, position in life, place of residence, and so forth.
- ✦ Learn that inherent worth cannot be earned nor can it be taken away.
- ✦ Learn that all people have inherent worth (deep personal value) simply because they are people.
- ✦ Learn that people are not on this earth to be used, manipulated, or disrespected. We are to try treating each person as he or she is—a person of great worth.



### **Family Talk**

Today we are going to talk about the idea that all people have deep worth.

1. What do you think this means? *All people have deep value. All people are worthy of love.*
2. What gives people deep worth? *All people have worth simply because they are people—members of the human family. This worth cannot be earned and it cannot be taken away.*
3. What does not give people deep worth? *Deep worth does not come from what we do (though some behaviors are better than others), where we live, what we look like, how much money we have, what groups we belong to, or even how others treat us. This deep worth doesn't come from the fact that, as people, we share many things in common. For example, people have 2 eyes, 2 ears, a nose, a mouth, 2 legs, 2 arms, a heart, stomach, brain, and so forth. We can think, feel, and share many similar experiences.*
4. How can we show that people have deep worth? *By loving them (treating them with kindness, respect, generosity, mercy, and so forth)*

5. We have now completed the first three chapters of our story, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.  
What are your favorite parts of the story? Why? Who did we meet today? Describe the different people we met (where do they live, what are their lives like).
6. Papa, Anna, and Caleb wrote letters to a lady named Sarah. Why did they write to Sarah? What did we learn about Sarah through her letters? Where does she live? Does she have family? What does she like?
7. Caleb loved to read Sarah's letters. He wondered if she would really come to visit them—and whether she would stay. He wondered if she would like them. He asked, "What if she thinks we are loud and pesky? What if she comes and doesn't like our house?" Caleb seemed to think that their behavior, where they lived, and the size of their house gave them deep worth. Is he right? Why or why not?
8. Sarah did visit Papa, Anna, and Caleb. How did she treat Papa, Anna, and Caleb? Did she treat them as people of deep worth? Why or why not?
9. Would Papa, Anna, and Caleb have somehow lost their deep worth if Sarah failed to see their worth and treat them as such? Why or why not?
10. Sarah told them in her letter that she was plain and tall. Did Sarah's worth depend on her appearance? Why or why not?
11. Did Papa, Anna, and Caleb treat Sarah as a person of deep worth? Why or why not?
12. Would Sarah have lost her deep worth if Papa, Anna, and Caleb failed to treat her as a person of deep worth? Why or why not?
13. Do you think that all people have worth? Why? Why not?
14. Do you have deep worth? Why?



## **Forgiveness Building**

### **Remembering My Worth**

Please give your child(ren) a stuffed toy (a dog, horse, cat, or any animal of choice), when available. Please feel free to use any new stuffed toy or select one from home that is already of importance. Tell them their little friend can be a constant reminder that all people have deep worth. Ask your child(ren) the following questions:

1. You are now holding a toy friend of your very own to love and cuddle. Do you now have greater worth because you have a toy friend to love and cuddle than before you had the toy friend? Why? Why not? *No. Our worth does not come from what we have or possess.*
  2. Your new friend is really cute (perhaps it is made of expensive or fine fabric). Does it have great worth because it is cute or costly? *No. Worth does not come from appearance. Worth does not come from monetary value.*
  3. We are now talking and having a good time together as a family. Do you and each of us have greater worth in this moment than during those times when we are fighting or struggling to get along? *No. Our worth does not depend on our behavior. Our worth does not depend on how others treat us.*
  4. Let's pretend now that your toy friend is a real person. Your toy friend has a nose, eyes, and feet. What else does it have that others like it have? Does it have worth because it has a nose, eyes, or feet? Why or why not?
  5. What else can your toy friend do? Does your toy friend have worth because of what it can do? Why or why not?
  6. What gives people deep worth?
  7. Together, make a little house for your friend by decorating a shoebox or some other container.<sup>4</sup> Does your friend have greater worth now than before it had a home? Why? Why not? *No. Worth does not come from where we live.*
  8. If these things do not matter, what else does not matter in determining deep worth? *Position in life. Group membership. Abilities. Health.*
  9. What gives you worth? *You have worth because you are a person.*
- To conclude the activity, with your child(ren) make a list of all the reasons why you and they have deep worth.



### **We'd Like More Stories on the Topic, Please!**

Following is a list of additional resources used in our primary school forgiveness curricula on the topic of inherent worth:

*I Love You , Stinky Face* by Lisa McCourt

*Horton Hears a Who* by Dr. Seuss

*The Sneetches and other Stories* by Dr. Seuss

*The Butter Battle Book* by Dr. Seuss

*The Fox and the Hound* by Disney

*Dumbo* by Disney

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<sup>4</sup> The idea of "creating a home for the stuffed animal" was taken from the following Northern Ireland teachers: Patricia Campbell, Grace Davin, Lynne Gilles, Barbara Johnston, Roisin McGrann, Jane Robinson, and Esme Spence.

**Evaluation of Lesson One** (Please fill out this sheet and return it to school)

(Please put a tick in the box next to each objective you completed)

- Did you read chapters 1-3 of Patricia MacLachlan's book *Sarah, Plain and Tall*?
- Did you discuss with your child(ren) the questions in the Family Talk section?
- Did you complete the "Remembering My Worth" activity with your child(ren)?
- Did your child(ren) learn that *all people* are of great value (deep worth)?
- Did your child(ren) learn that inherent worth is not based personal differences like appearance, possessions, behavior, position in life, place of residence, and so forth?
- Did your child(ren) learn that inherent worth cannot be earned nor can it be taken away?
- Did your child(ren) learn that all people have inherent worth (deep personal value) simply because they are people?
- Did your child(ren) learn that we are to treat each person as a person of great worth?

**The following discussion questions and/or activities were especially meaningful because:**

**I would change the following activities and/or discussion questions because:**

**My child(ren) responded well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

**My child(ren) did not respond well to the following ideas, discussion questions, and activities:**

**General Comments:**

**Please indicate the date that this lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

Figure 6

*Family Art Programme – Introduction, Sample Lesson, and Fidelity Check***Family Art Programme for Families with Primary 5 Children**

In the last several years, some child development experts have expressed concern about the lack of play time that children enjoy. Play (especially unstructured, imaginative play) is an important part of a child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. Unfortunately, in recent years the busy schedules of parents and families and an increased focus on academics have begun to crowd out children's play time, especially play time with parents.

The Family Art Programme is meant to help parents and children participate in shared art activities. This curriculum guide consists of 14 lessons that are designed to allow parents and children to express themselves creatively in easy-to-do art projects. Each lesson will take less than 45 minutes and is intended to minimize excessive preparation. The materials are often common household items, so that families need not purchase extra supplies. Spending time with your child in creative activities can help them develop in healthy ways. The Family Art Programme is designed to help you in that endeavor.

The Family Art Programme is structured in an easy-to-follow format. Each lesson has three parts: objective, materials, and instructions. The objective explains the end product of the lesson. The materials section contains a list of materials that you will need to complete each lesson. The instructions section consists of step-by-step directions that will help you to complete the project. In some lessons, pictures are provided to give you a visual representation of the written instructions. In other lessons, the simple written instructions are sufficient. At the end of each lesson, you will find an evaluation for you to complete. In the first section, simply put a tick in the boxes next to each objective you completed. Next, there are some open-ended questions for you to consider. Don't spend too much time on this. If you have comments, just make them in a sentence or two. Please print your name, sign the sheet, and write the date on which you completed the lesson.

If you have any questions about any of the lessons contained in this guide, please contact me at the email address below. I wish you the best as you invest this time with your child.

Sincerely,

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## **Lesson One:**

### **Doodle Around**

#### **Objective**

The objective of this lesson is to create a masterpiece out of simple doodling. You and your child will use your creativity to turn a little doodling into pictures filled with meaning. Please gather the materials and read through the instructions before you begin the project.

#### **Materials**

Paper (4 sheets)  
Pencil, markers, or crayons

#### **Instructions**

1. You and your child should each select a sheet of paper and a pencil, marker, or crayon (Note: there will be two drawings).
2. Using your pencil, marker, or crayon, begin to doodle on the paper. This doodle can include jagged lines, curves, or shapes of any size—big or small. The idea here is simply to draw creatively without any end goal in mind.
3. After you are finished doodling, switch drawings.
4. Take several minutes to study each other's doodle, looking at it from different distances and angles until you "see" a picture in it (Note: You study your child's doodle while he or she studies your doodle).
5. After you see this picture, take a new sheet of paper and draw the picture that you saw in the doodle (again, you draw the picture that you identified in your child's doodle, while he or she draws the picture identified in your doodle). Be creative!
6. When both of you are finished drawing your pictures, compare them with the original doodles. Take a few minutes to explain to each other where you saw the picture in the original doodle and how you arrived at your completed masterpiece.



**Evaluation of Lesson One** (Please fill out this sheet and return it to school)

(Please put a tick in the box next to each objective you completed)

- Did you gather the materials and read through the instructions before you began the project?
- Did both you and your child complete the entire activity?
- Did you and your child talk about the drawings you created?

**The following parts of this activity were especially meaningful because:**

**I would change the following parts of this activity because:**

**General Comments (if any):**

**Please indicate the date that this lesson was taught: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

## Figure 7

*Workshop Outlines*

## Family Guide to Forgiveness Education Workshop

- I. Introduction
  - A. Overview (short-term benefits and long-range goals)
  - B. Forgiveness is a choice
  
- II. What is person-to-person forgiveness?
  - A. The oldest preserved accounts are within the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament (salah): Joseph and his brother and half-brothers, Genesis 37-45
  - B. Christian (aphiemi), Muslim (afo), Confucian (shu), and Buddhist perspectives all make room for forgiveness and see it as a morally worthwhile activity. In fact, we have never examined an ancient text with a moral basis to it that did not value forgiveness. Forgiveness cuts across many different philosophies and religions.
  
- III. More on what is forgiveness and what is it not. Chapter 2, *Forgiveness Is a Choice* (2001, APA Books)
  
- IV. We find, from scientific analyses, considerable emotional, relational, and even physical health benefits from forgiving (see page 3).
  
- V. The family as transmitter of forgiveness
  - A. The parent should consider *first forgiving, then teaching* about forgiveness. As children advance in grade level, they too will learn about forgiveness in greater depth.
  - B. Forgiveness is developmental.
    1. Children are able to see that people possess inherent worth. They are able to give and receive love, especially if they are loved. They are able to forgive.
    2. Eventually, children realize that they can generalize their forgiving—if a child forgives her brother, she understands that she can try to forgive her aunt, cousin, or friend.
    3. Still later, older children and adolescents begin to see, as they practice forgiveness, that it is important to them in their personal lives. They *consciously* embrace it as a meaningful and even essential activity.
    4. In later adolescence and adulthood, some people realize that forgiveness is far more than an activity, it is far more than something *out there*. Now, the developing person realizes that forgiveness is “*part of my very identity, part of who I am.*” It is here that forgiveness is embraced and expressed in many and varied situations, for to do otherwise is to *contradict the self*.

- C. We have forgiveness curricula developed for grades one through six. Based on our approach to teaching forgiveness, YWAM already has developed and tried out curricular materials for early secondary students in Northern Ireland. We are currently writing an expanded version of an early secondary school curriculum for teachers and counselors.
  - D. After trying this forgiveness curriculum for awhile, you might wish to extend forgiveness to handle discipline problems, as they spontaneously arise, with the addition of forgiveness. We know that some of you routinely do this now. You, those who courageously raise your children every day, are the important ones to deliver the curriculum and to use your wisdom regarding discipline.
  - E. The-Family-as-Forgiving Community will be alive and well as parents deliver forgiveness curricula at home and deliberately make forgiveness a part of the discipline process to help those who are hurt and who hurt others.
  - F. The Forgiving Community (across school, home, and so forth) ought to be alive and well as principals, teachers, and parents in the family unite for the sake of the children. What better legacy can we leave our children than to equip them to be forgivers as adults, in their own marriages, with their own children, in their places of worship and employment, and wherever there is injustice and hurt?
- VI. First forgive, then teach about forgiveness. Road map for forgiving, Chapter 4, p. 78 in particular.
- VII. The family forgiveness curricula
- A. Inherent worth, moral love, and goodness.
  - B. Example lesson
  - C. One 45-minute lesson each week (with about 15-minute preparation) for 14 weeks (except for Christmas holiday).
  - D. Set aside the same day/time each week.
  - E. Weekly evaluations: complete and return at midpoint and end of programme
  - F. Calendar for program (see handout)
  - G. Hand out materials

## Family Art Programme Workshop

## I. Introduction

A. Play is often viewed as simple, trivial, purposeless. Education is what gets people ahead.

B. Instead, play is serious; it has important influences on learning and development. UN High Commission for Human Rights: play is a right of every child.

## II. Benefits of play

## A. Brain development.

1. Active brains make permanent neurological connections that are important to further learning later in life. That is, play influences the pattern of the connections made between the nerve cells in the brain.
2. These connections then influence the development of fine and gross motor skills, language, creativity, problem solving and learning ability.

## B. Physical development.

1. Refine gross and fine motor skills (dexterity)
2. Body awareness
3. Confidence, competence, and self-assurance.
4. Builds active, healthy bodies.

## C. Cognitive development.

1. Attention
2. Planning
3. Creativity, imagination, divergent thinking
4. Perspective-taking
5. Problem-solving strategies
6. Memory
7. Language development
8. Mastery (practice actions that will help one to master a certain skill)
9. Curiosity, flexible thinking, reasoning about hypothetical situations.
10. Build knowledge from experience (e.g., how one object can be attached to another).

## D. Exploratory, active, fun

1. Play is a process (facilitates understanding)
2. Play is a product (provides means to demonstrate that understanding).

## E. Helps one discover areas of interest.

## III. Obstacles to play

## A. Hurried lifestyle

## B. Academic focus.

## C. Family issues

1. Single parents
2. 2 parents working

D. Passive entertainment (videos, video/computer games)

#### IV. The Family Art Programme

A. This guide focuses on constructive play (making a 3-dimensional object).

B. What this guide hopes to do:

1. Foster creativity (design the work)
2. Foster problem-solving skills (move abstract idea to solid form, judgment, reasoning, imagination)
3. Foster physical skills (physically put it together).
4. Aid learning through trial and error, instruction, experience, watching someone else do it.
5. Foster the ability to pretend (i.e., invent new uses for common items).

C. One 45-minute lesson each week for 14 weeks (except for Christmas break)

D. Set aside the same time each week.

E. Weekly evaluations: complete and return to classroom teacher.

F. Calendar for program (see handout)

G. Hand out materials

Figure 8

*Parent Workshop Evaluations*

## Forgiveness Workshop Evaluation

Instructions: Please read each question and circle YES or NO for each.

1. Does the following capture the definition of forgiveness?  
 When you are unjustly hurt by another person, you forgive when you struggle to give up the resentment (to which you are actually entitled because you were unfairly treated) and you strive to offer the offending one compassion, benevolence, and love (knowing that yours is an act of mercy and therefore, not necessarily deserved by the person).  
 YES or NO
2. To truly help my child understand forgiveness, I will have to invest one hour each week.  
 YES or NO
3. Does the following capture the definition of inherent worth?  
 All people have deep worth because they are people—members of the human family. This worth is not earned and it cannot be taken away.  
 YES or NO
4. Does the following capture the definition of goodness?  
 Goodness is seeing the deep worth of all people and behaving in a right way toward them. This may involve treating people as we would like to be treated, a genuine concern and high regard for others, a willingness to give of self (time, energy, and possessions), a readiness to help in time of need and to offer such virtues as respect, kindness, generosity, and so forth, and a warm-heartedness in our interactions.  
 YES or NO
5. Are forgiveness and reconciling the same?  
 YES or NO
6. When someone forgives, is he or she excusing the unfair behavior?  
 YES or NO
7. Are forgiving and forgetting the same?  
 YES or NO
8. Is it possible to teach forgiveness to a child to help make the family a forgiving community?  
 YES or NO
9. Is it best to set aside a particular day and time each week for teaching the lessons?  
 YES or NO
10. Are you motivated to work with your child for the whole programme?  
 YES or NO

## Art Programme Workshop Evaluation

Instructions: Please read each question and circle YES or NO for each.

1. Play is not trivial; instead, play has important influences on learning and development.  
YES or NO
2. Play impacts the developing brain in ways that help later learning.  
YES or NO
3. Working with the art programme will help my child develop fine motor skills and dexterity.  
YES or NO
4. Working with the art programme will help my child's creativity and imagination.  
YES or NO
5. Working with the art programme will help my child's attention span and the ability to plan.  
YES or NO
6. Obstacles to play include hurried lifestyles, an exclusive focus on academics, passive entertainment (like video games) and things that keep parents from spending the time they want with their children.  
YES or NO
7. In order to help my child attain the benefits of this curriculum, I will have to invest 45 minutes each week.  
YES or NO
8. The evaluations at the end of each lesson are optional; I don't have to turn them in.  
YES or NO
9. Is it best to set aside a particular day and time each week for teaching the lessons?  
YES or NO
10. Are you motivated to work with your child for the whole programme?  
YES or NO