



Bringing Acceptance, Love, and Forgiveness into Psychotherapy

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Underlying Assumptions

- ❖ People can be understood in terms of their problems
- ❖ Problems can be solved

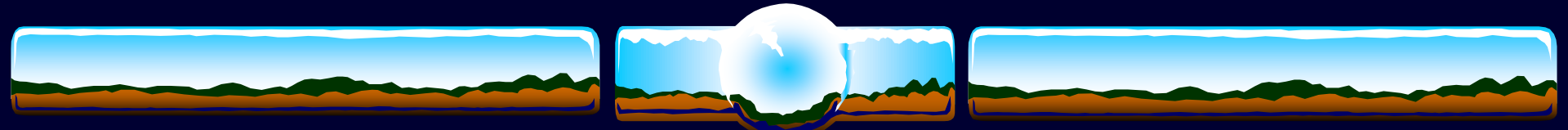




Another Assumption

- ❖ We are finite, limited beings



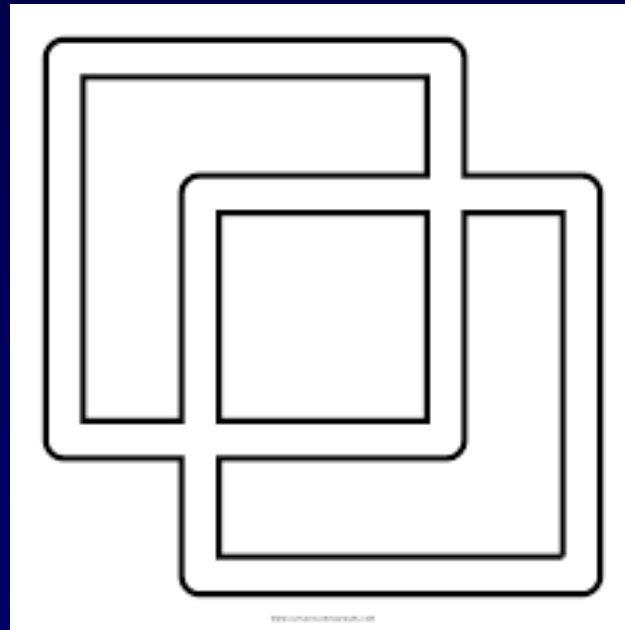


Languages of Psychology and Religion

- ❖ **Empiricism**
 - ❖ **Individualism**
 - ❖ **Skepticism**
 - ❖ **Autonomy**
 - ❖ **Pragmatism**
 - ❖ **Problems**
- Faith
 - Gratitude
 - Humility
 - Surrender
 - Transformation
 - Forbearance



“Talk some sense into her”



Three landscape panels with a globe in the center. Each panel shows a blue sky, green hills, and brown ground. The central panel has a white globe with blue oceans and green continents.

“I don’t want to feel pain.”






A Case of Intractable Depression



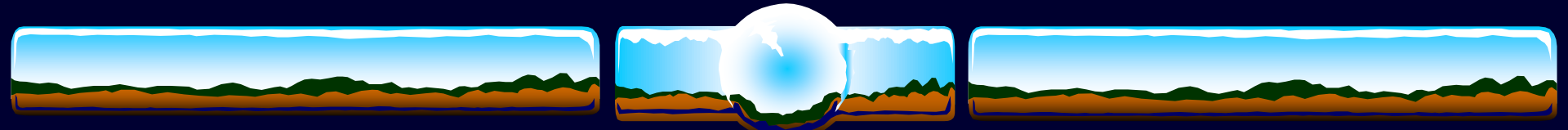


The Importance of Discernment

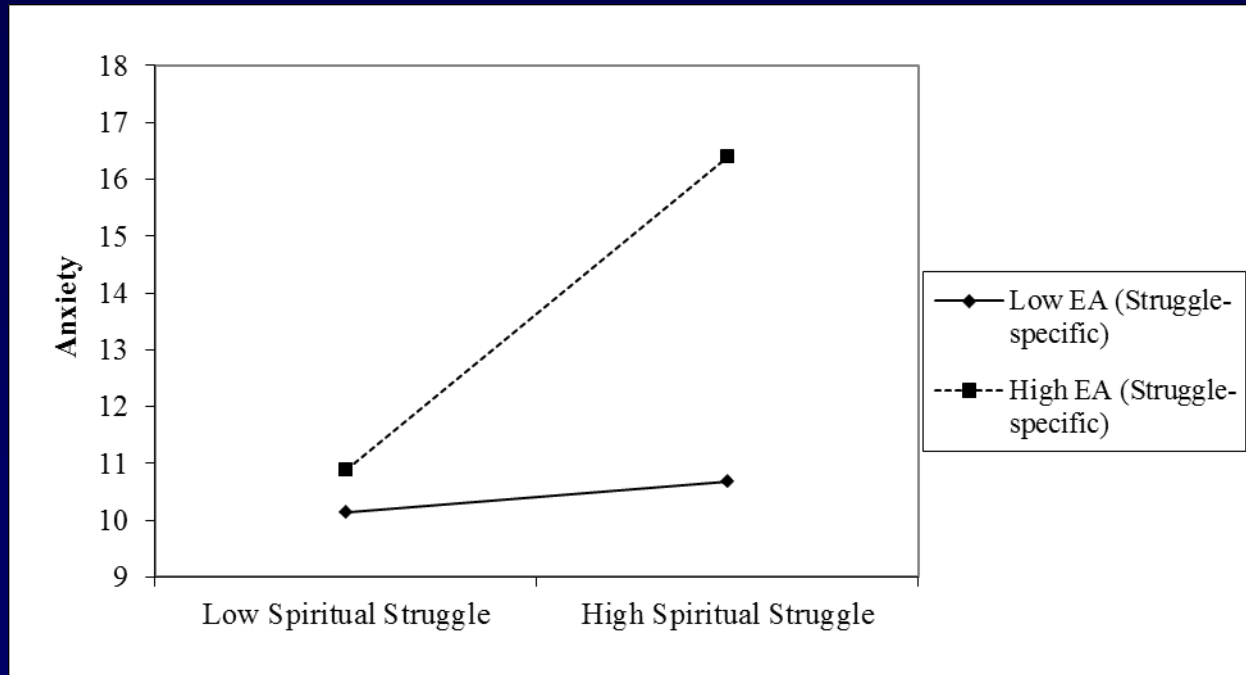


“God, grant me the *Serenity* to accept the things
I cannot change, *Courage* to change what I can,
and the *Wisdom* to know the difference.”

— Reinhold Niebuhr



Experiential Avoidance Magnifies the Effects of Spiritual Struggles (Oemig et al., 2016)



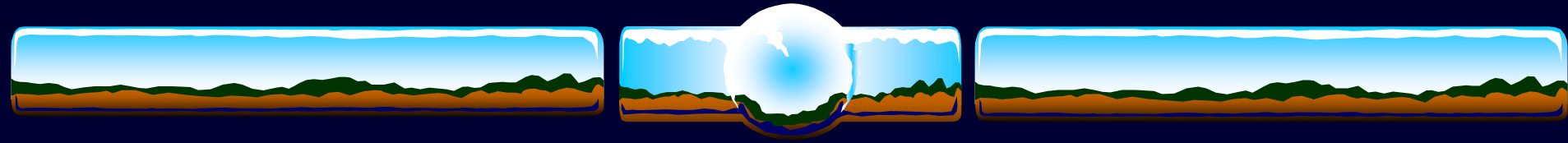


Grudge Collecting



The Therapist as Solomon







The Advantages of Anger

- ❖ Anger sends a strong message
- ❖ Anger can energize and mobilize
- ❖ Anger can be protective
- ❖ Anger and revenge can feel good



The Joys of Revenge

- ❖ “If I could bring the m*!#*r back to life, I’d kill him again” (gangster following murder of someone who had insulted him).



The Costs of Bitterness

- ❖ Poorer physical health
- ❖ Resentment becomes a habit
- ❖ Life out of control
- ❖ Scapegoating
- ❖ Violence
- ❖ Alcohol and drug abuse
- ❖ Interferes with establishing new relationships



The Benefits of Forgiveness

- ❖ More positive mood
- ❖ Less depression
- ❖ Less anxiety
- ❖ Fewer symptoms of PTSD
- ❖ Greater self-esteem
- ❖ Greater life satisfaction
- ❖ Better health self-care
- ❖ Less drug abuse or dependence



Prelude to Forgiveness

- ❖ Look for contraindications for forgiveness
 - ❖ When wounds are too fresh or severe
 - ❖ When insult and injury continues
 - ❖ When offender fails to take responsibility?



When Forgiveness is Appropriate

- ❖ Chronic anger and resentment
- ❖ Focus on the past
- ❖ Rifts and cutoffs in relationships
- ❖ Family conflicts
- ❖ Post-divorce and parenting conflicts
- ❖ Addictive disorders
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Eating disorders
- ❖ Psychosomatic disorders



Prelude to Forgiveness

- ❖ Look for contraindications for forgiveness
- ❖ Distinguish what forgiveness is and is not
 - ❖ Forgiveness is not forgetting
 - ❖ Forgiveness is not condoning
 - ❖ Forgiveness is not legal pardon
 - ❖ Forgiveness is not reconciliation



A Minimal Definition of Forgiveness

“Forgiveness is a process in which a person overcomes negative affect (hostility), negative cognitions (thoughts of revenge), and negative behaviors (aggression) in response to an offender’s considerable injustice.”



An Ambitious Definition of Forgiveness

“Forgiveness is the emotional juxtaposition of positive emotions (such as empathy, sympathy, compassion, love) against (1) the hot emotions of anger or fear that follow a perceived hurt or offense or (2) the unforgiveness that follows ruminating about the transgression”
(Worthington, 2003).



Prelude to Forgiveness

- ❖ Look for contraindications for forgiveness
- ❖ Distinguish what forgiveness is and is not
- ❖ **Determine whether individual is ready to forgive**
 - ❖ Address feelings of guilt and shame
 - ❖ Discuss advantages and disadvantages of forgiveness and unforgiveness
 - ❖ Forgiveness is a personal choice



Steps in the Process of Forgiveness: REACH

- ❖ R - Recall the hurt
 - ❖ Relax
 - ❖ Picture what happened
 - ❖ Experience the feelings in a controlled way



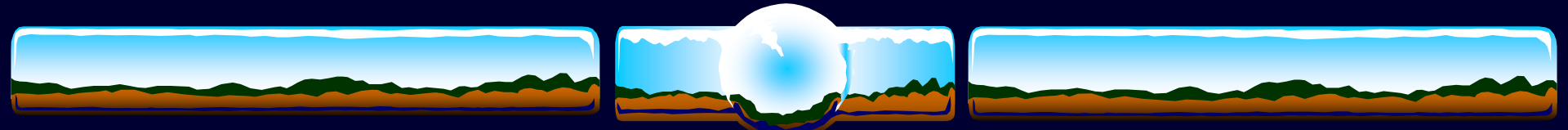
Steps in the Process of Forgiveness: REACH

- ❖ R - Recall the hurt
- ❖ E – Empathize with the offender



Levels of Empathy

- ❖ Understanding the offender's point of view
- ❖ Identifying emotionally with the offender
- ❖ Feeling compassion for the offender



Empathy-Boosters

- ❖ Consider non-blaming explanations
- ❖ Write a letter of apology in the role of the offender
- ❖ Listen to the stories of transgressors



Steps in the Process of Forgiveness: REACH

- ❖ R - Recall the hurt
- ❖ E – Empathize with the offender
- ❖ A – Altruistic gift of forgiveness



Two Keys to Giving the Altruistic Gift

- ❖ Humility
- ❖ Gratitude



Steps in the Process of Forgiveness: REACH

- ❖ R - Recall the hurt
- ❖ E – Empathize with the offender
- ❖ A – Altruistic gift of forgiveness
- ❖ C – Commit publicly to forgive

Declaration of Amnesty

Auschwitz 50 Years Later

I, Eva Mozes Kor, a twin who as a child survived Josef Mengele's experiments at Auschwitz fifty years ago, hereby give amnesty to all Nazis who participated directly or indirectly in the murder of my family and millions of others.

I extend this amnesty to all governments who protected Nazi criminals for fifty years, then covered up their acts, and covered up their cover up.

Fifty years after liberation from Auschwitz, I Eva Mozes Kor, in my name only, give this amnesty because it is time to go on; it is time to heal our souls; it is time to forgive, but never forget; it is time to open up all the classified and personal files not only for the sake of history, but to alleviate human suffering. I, as a *Citizen of the Free World*, declare here in Auschwitz, that I have the human right to locate my Auschwitz files so I know what germs and chemicals were injected into my body fifty years ago. I expect the leaders of the world to put politics aside and, for the sake of all humanity, assist us in getting our files. Help us make it possible for every Mengele Guinea Pig, for every survivor to find their files, their stories, their past.

I, the only living member of a very large family, in their name and mine appeal to the U.S. Congress, to the Israeli Knesset, the German legislators, and others who have the power, to pass laws dismantling all Nazi-related investigative units, such as the U.S. Justice Department Office of Special Investigations, and open up all Nazi files to survivors and the public.

Look up to the skies, here in Auschwitz. The souls of millions of victims are with us-- and I am saying, with them as witnesses: "Enough is Enough. Fifty Years is More Than Enough." I am healed inside, therefore it gives me no joy to see any Nazi criminal in jail, nor do I want to see any harm come to Josef Mengele, the Mengele Family or their business corporations. I urge all former Nazis to come forward and testify to the crimes they have committed without any fear of further persecution.

Here in Auschwitz, I hope in some small way to send the world, a message of forgiveness, a message of peace, a message of hope, a message of healing.

*NO MORE WARS, NO MORE EXPERIMENTS WITHOUT INFORMED CONSENT,
NO MORE GAS CHAMBERS, NO MORE BOMBS, NO MORE HATRED, NO MORE KILLING,
NO MORE AUSCHWITZES.*

Eva Mozes Kor

Eva Mozes Kor
January 27, 1995, Auschwitz

Rud. Radzicki
Witness

Alex Kor
Witness

Dina Kor
Witness

Luis Malenhorst
Witness

Gigo Nils
Witness

Mary Wright
Witness



Steps in the Process of Forgiveness: REACH

- ❖ R - Recall the hurt
- ❖ E – Empathize with the offender
- ❖ A – Altruistic gift of forgiveness
- ❖ C – Commit publicly to forgive
- ❖ H – Hold on to forgiveness



How to Hold on to Forgiveness

- ❖ Remind self of forgiveness
- ❖ Seek reassurance from a partner or friend
- ❖ Repeat the steps of forgiveness



IT'S YOUR CHOICE.



Hitting Below the Belt





A Key Question

“Why are you still together?”





Love Intervention

- ❖ Define Love

- ❖ Love is not primarily a feeling

- ❖ Love is an action

- ❖ Love is about giving your partner what he/she wants and needs rather than what you want to give them.





Love Intervention

- ❖ Define Love
- ❖ Homework: Make a “Most Wanted” List
 - ❖ Wants must be concrete
 - ❖ Wants must be stated positively
 - ❖ Do not share “most wanted list” with partner





Love Intervention

- ❖ Define Love
- ❖ Homework: Make a “Most Wanted” List
- ❖ Share Wants with Each Other in Therapy
 - ❖ Share one want at a time
 - ❖ One person speaks and one person listens
 - ❖ Speaker shares one want, listener listens and reflects
 - ❖ No fighting allowed!





Love Intervention

- ❖ Define Love
- ❖ Homework: Make a “Most Wanted” List
- ❖ Share Wants with Each Other in Therapy
- ❖ Acts of Love
 - ❖ Choosing to give what partner wants and needs, even if it’s hard to do





Conclusions

- ❖ We are psychological, social, physical, and spiritual beings
- ❖ We are both strong and masterful and frail, finite, and limited
- ❖ Treatments that neglect our multi-dimensionality are incomplete
- ❖ Acceptance, forgiveness, and love have a vital place in treatment
- ❖ Spiritually integrated therapy can help ameliorate suffering and foster wholeness