

Forgiveness as a Gift We Can Give to Adults and Children

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OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Unhealthy anger can compromise health and relationships**
- ✓ Forgiveness can cure unhealthy anger**
- ✓ What is forgiveness?**
- ✓ Scientific evidence that forgiveness is beneficial**
- ✓ How do we go about forgiving others**
- ✓ Preventive forgiveness education, toward the future, and your legacy**

Unhealthy Anger and the Emotions

Research shows that unhealthy anger (deep resentment that last for months or years) is related to:

- Anxiety that is above normal
- Psychological depression
- Addiction such as excessive alcohol use and other substance abuse

Enright, R.D. & Fitzgibbons, R. (2015). *Forgiveness therapy*. Washington, DC: APA Books.

Unhealthy Anger and Physical Problems

“Extremely low anger scores have been noted in numerous studies of patients with cancer. Such low scores suggest **suppression, repression, or restraint of anger**. There is evidence to show that suppressed anger can be a precursor to the development of cancer, and also a factor in its progression after diagnosis.”

Thomas, Groer, Davis, Droppleman, Mozingo, & Pierce (2000), Anger and cancer: an analysis of the linkages. *Cancer Nursing*, 23, 344-349. (Review of existing research literature)

As early as 1975, researchers were beginning to see a statistically-significant association between **“extreme suppression of anger”** and breast cancer.

Greer & Morris (1975). Psychological attributes of women who develop breast cancer: A controlled study. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 19, 147-153. (Samples size = 160)

“**Anger** also causes the release of the stress hormone, cortisol. Release of this hormone gives the body bursts of energy. However, too much of this hormone can cause a multitude of negative effects on the body. Too much cortisol in the body can cause an imbalance in blood sugar; It can suppress thyroid function, and decrease bone density. This hormonal imbalance also **impacts the body’s immune system**. Research shows that chronic-angry people suffer more frequent colds, flu’s infections, asthma, skin disease flare-ups and arthritis, as compared to non-chronic-angry people (Boerma, 2007).”

Hendricks, Bore, Aslinia, & Morriss (2013). The effects of anger on the brain and body.
National Forum Journal of Counseling and Addiction, 2, 1-12.

Is there a cure for *unhealthy anger or resentment*?



The practice of forgiveness, when a person is treated unfairly by others, can reduce or eliminate excessive anger and resentment.

Enright, R.D. & Fitzgibbons, R. (2015). *Forgiveness therapy*. Washington, DC: APA Books.



What do we mean by forgiveness?

➤ **FORGIVENESS IS A CHOICE**



➤ FORGIVENESS IS A MORAL VIRTUE



➤ **FORGIVENESS
CUTS ACROSS MANY DIFFERENT
PHILOSOPHIES AND RELIGIONS**



DEFINING FORGIVENESS

When we forgive there are three components to the definition:

- We have been treated unjustly by a person or persons.**
- We strive to get rid of the resentment (persistent ill-will).**
- We strive as best we can to offer goodness of some kind to the one(s) who have hurt us. This goodness can take the form of kindness, respect, generosity, or even love.**

FORGIVING IS NOT:

- **Condoning or excusing**
- **Forgetting the injustice**
- **Simply calming down or becoming indifferent**
- **Reconciliation**
- **Abandoning the quest for fairness**



**What is the evidence that forgiveness
reduces or eliminates
unhealthy anger?**

Examples of Experimental Studies (with Randomized Experimental and Control Groups) in which People Forgive or Learn about Forgiveness

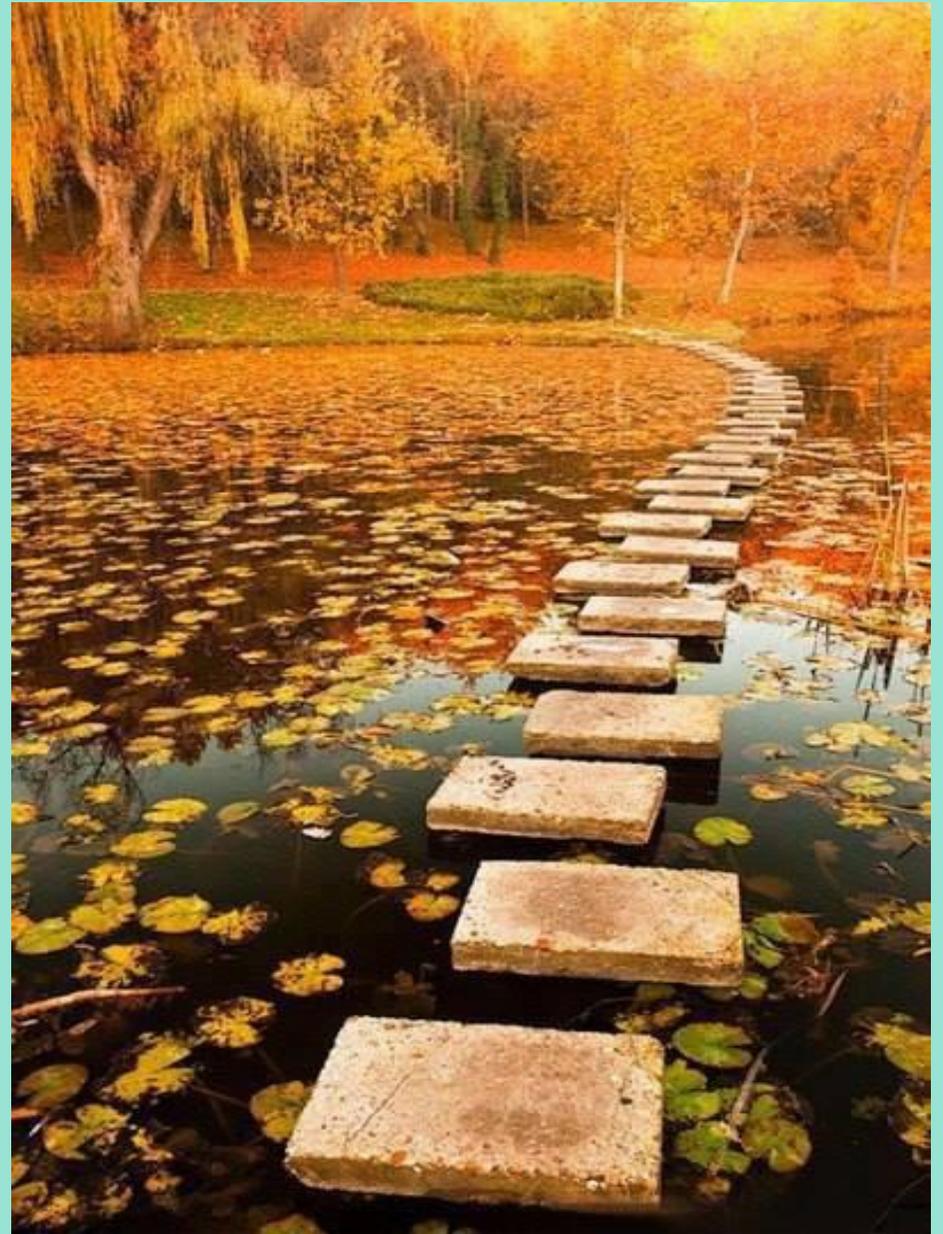
- **Incest survivors.** After 14 months, positive changes in forgiveness, depression, anxiety, hope, and self-esteem (Freedman & Enright, 1996).
- **Drug rehabilitation.** The forgiveness group became emotionally healthier than the control group, similar to the above study (Lin et al., 2004).
- **Cardiac patients.** Again, the experimental (forgiveness) group became emotionally healthier than the control group. At a 4-month follow-up, the experimental group had more efficiently functioning hearts than the control group (Waltman et al., 2009).

- **Emotionally-abused women.** Results are similar to the above studies in terms of forgiving and emotional health (decreased anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms, increased self-esteem) (Reed & Enright, 2006).
- **Terminally-ill, elderly cancer patients.** After a 4-week intervention, the forgiveness group showed greater improvement in psychological health (less anger, more hopefulness toward the future) than the control group. Physical indicators of both groups showed declines (Hansen et al., 2009).

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF FORGIVING BEYOND DECREASING UNHEALTHY ANGER?

- 1. Emotional healing**
- 2. relational healing**
- 3. growth as a person**
- 4. aid the offending person**
- 5. promote more peaceful families, groups, communities**
- 6. promote a more peaceful world**
- 7. to more consistently live out one's philosophy/faith tradition**
- 8. to rationally exercise, thorough one's will, goodness as an end in and of itself**

HOW PEOPLE FORGIVE



THE PROCESS MODEL OF FORGIVING

PRELIMINARIES

- Who hurt you?
- How deeply were you hurt?
- On what specific incident will you focus?
- What were the circumstances at the time?
- Was it morning or afternoon? Cloudy or sunny?
- What was said?
- How did you respond?

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THE PROCESS MODEL OF FORGIVING

PHASE 1 — UNCOVERING YOUR ANGER

- How have you avoided dealing with anger?
- Have you faced your anger?
- Are you afraid to expose your shame or guilt?
- Has your anger affected your health?

CONTINUED

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THE PROCESS MODEL OF FORGIVING

PHASE 1 – UNCOVERING YOUR ANGER (CONTINUED)

- **Have you been obsessed about the injury or the offender?**
- **Do you compare your situation with that of the offender?**
- **Has the injury caused a permanent change in your life?**
- **Has the injury changed your worldview?**

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THE PROCESS MODEL OF FORGIVING

PHASE 2 – DECIDING TO FORGIVE

- **Decide that what you have been doing hasn't worked.**
- **Be willing to begin the forgiveness process.**
- **Decide to forgive. Start by committing to *do no harm* to the one who hurt you (refrain from the negative).**

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THE PROCESS MODEL OF FORGIVING

PHASE 3 – WORKING ON FORGIVENESS

- **Work toward understanding.**
(personal, global, and cosmic perspectives)
- **Work toward compassion.**
- **Accept the pain.**
- **Give the offender a gift. Why? This manifests forgiving as a moral virtue (offering the positives).**

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THE PROCESS MODEL OF FORGIVING

PHASE 4 – DISCOVERY AND RELEASE FROM EMOTIONAL PRISON

- **Discover the meaning of suffering.**
- **Discover your need for forgiveness.**
- **Discover that you are not alone.**
- **Discover the purpose of your life.**
- **Discover the freedom of forgiveness.**

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WHAT IS FORGIVENESS EDUCATION?

Forgiveness education....

.....helps students see how story characters solve problems.

.....helps students understand what kindness, respect, and love are when treated unjustly.

.....helps students in the safety of home or classroom to practice forgiveness before the big storm of life come in adulthood.

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Forgiveness education:

- introduces students, through stories, to the idea of forgiveness, with *no pressure to forgive*
 - reduces anger in students
 - increases cooperation in classrooms
 - can improve academic achievement
-
- 1 hour per week for about 12-17 weeks, delivered by teacher or mental health professional



Curriculum Guides



Healing Hearts, Building Peace

Course Four:

Giving Forgiveness Away to Others

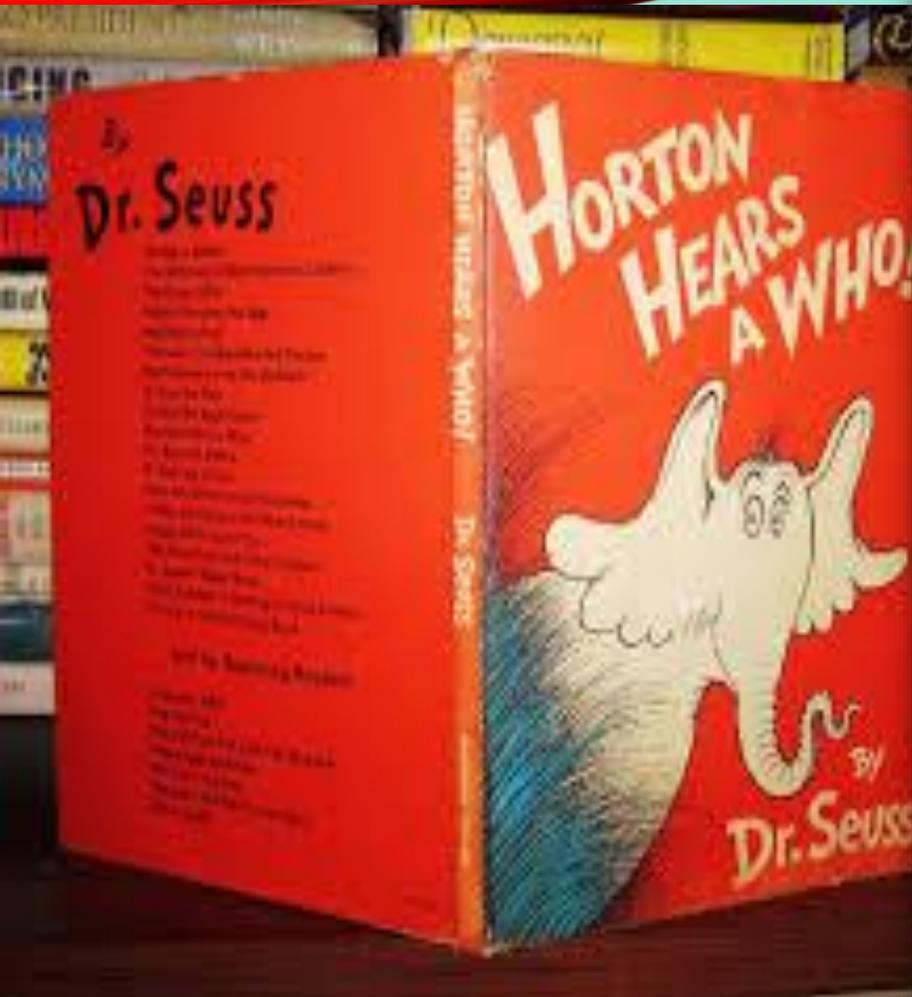
**A Guided Curriculum for Children Ages 17-18
(Grade 12 in the US, Year 14 in the UK)**

**Matthew Hirshberg and Robert Enright
University of Wisconsin-Madison**

January 2014

Comprehensive forgiveness education curriculum guides are available for grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade.

These teachers' guides employ the scientifically-supported forgiveness education principles and techniques we have developed over the past 30 years of research. The guides have been tested and refined in the U.S. and Northern Ireland for the past 15 years.



1st Grade Curriculum Guide Book Summary

Book title: *Horton Hears a Who*

Author: Dr. Seuss

Main characters: Horton the elephant, the Whos, Kangaroo and her baby, The Wickersham Brothers and the other jungle creatures.

Executive summary: When Horton hears tiny voices on a speck of dust, he fights to protect them because "a person is a person no matter how small." A person has inherent worth, not because of their appearance or where they live, but because they are a human being.

Detailed summary: As an elephant named Horton bathes in a cool pool of water in the jungle, he hears a voice. He doesn't see anyone else around. The only thing he sees is a small speck of dust. Perhaps it is because of his big ears that he can hear the small voice on that small speck of dust. Because Horton cares about all people no matter how small, he worries that the dust might fall into the pool, and the small people on the dust might be hurt. So he carefully places the speck of dust on top of a clover flower. When a kangaroo with its



baby in its pouch hops by Horton, they make fun of him for worrying about a speck of dust. They call him a fool. Then they intentionally make big splashes in the pool. Horton grabs the flower with the speck on it and runs through the jungle looking for a safe place to put it. News quickly spreads throughout the jungle that Horton is talking to a speck of dust. Others immediately label him as crazy. But Horton is determined to protect these tiny people. Even though others can't see or hear them, these people deserve to be treated humanely. Horton repeats that "a person is a person, no matter how small."

Continued on Back ➡

A tiny voice, whom Horton discovers is the Mayor, tells Horton of his community, called Whoville, with houses and churches and stores. Then two monkeys named "the Wickersham Brothers" snatch the clover with the speck on it and give it to an eagle. That eagle flies away with the flower in its beak. Horton follows the bird through day and night, desperate to protect the tiny Whos in Whoville. Then the eagle drops the clover in a field full of clover, each flower identical to the one holding the tiny Whos.

Anxious to find his friends, Horton picks the flowers, one by one. Finally after picking millions of flowers, he finds the one that holds the speck of dust with the Whos. The Whoville mayor tells Horton of the troubles they've endured. He begs Horton to continue to protect them. Then Kangaroo and her little kangaroo, along with others from the jungle again accuse Horton of being crazy, talking to people who aren't there. Again they snatch the clover and threaten to boil it in oil. Horton begs them not to hurt the Whos, and he encourages the Whoville Mayor to get all the Whos to make noise, so the others can hear them too. But the other jungle animals still cannot hear the Whos.



They tie Horton up and beat him. Horton doesn't think of himself, he thinks of the Whos, and pleads with the Whoville Mayor to make sure everyone is making as much noise as possible. The Whos play instruments and bang on cans and kettles. Horton can hear them, but the kangaroos and the Wickersham Brothers cannot. So the Mayor runs through the town to make sure every one of

the Whos is making some kind of noise. He finally finds one small Who not making a sound. The Mayor grabs the small Who and climbs up to the top of a tower. He holds him in the air, and the small Who yells, "Yopp!"

This time the kangaroo hears it. The little kangaroo hears it too. Everyone hears it! They realize that Horton was telling the truth. There were small beings living on the dust speck on that flower. And the kangaroos and the other jungle creatures all vow that they too will protect the Whos. Because the Whos are people too, no matter how small. ❤️

Lesson One:

A Person Is a Person, Part One

Main Ideas

This is the first of three lessons in part one that will teach about the concept of inherent worth. As the students learn about inherent worth, they will be provided with an important foundation that will help them as they learn to forgive in later lessons.

What does it mean to say that all people have inherent worth? It means that *all people* are of great value (deep worth). They are ends in-and-of themselves. The deep worth of all people is not based on appearance, possessions, behavior, position in life, place of residence, or other such external differences. These differences certainly contribute to our unique personalities and lifestyles, but they do not determine value. A focus on differences may cause us to miss the fact that all people have deep worth.

How do we get inherent worth (deep worth)? It cannot be earned nor can it be taken away. All people have inherent worth (deep personal value) simply because they are people.

People are not on this earth to be used, manipulated, or disrespected. We are to treat each person as he or she is—a person of deep worth.

Lessons one through seven will provide a solid “forgiveness foundation” that will help the students as they learn to forgive in the later lessons.

General Objectives

The students will:

- ✚ Learn that *all people* have deep worth. A person is a person.
- ✚ Learn that *all people* are ends in-and-of themselves.
- ✚ 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 simply because they are people.
- ✚ Learn that we are to treat all people as they are—people of great worth.

Behavioral Objectives

The students will:

- ✚ Listen to a story written by Dr. Seuss entitled *Horton Hears a Who*.
- ✚ Participate in a class discussion.
- ✚ Participate in the “A Person is a Person” activity.

Materials

Horton Hears a Who, written by Dr. Seuss

Chalk board and chalk

Procedures

The following procedures are to serve as guidelines for the teacher. Please feel free to make adjustments and/or improvements to the procedures, discussion questions, or activities if it will help you more effectively meet the needs of your students. To maintain the integrity of the curriculum, please make certain that the objectives of the lesson are met.

1. Introduce the forgiveness education curriculum. Tell the students, “Today you are being

Discussion Questions

1. What happened in today's story?
2. Throughout the story, Horton kept saying, "A person is a person, no matter how small." What do you think he meant? *A person is a person, no matter what he or she looks like, what he or she does in life, and so forth. People have deep worth because they are people.*
3. Did Horton seem to know the "Whos" before he heard them shouting out? Why do you think this?
4. Did Horton treat the "Whos" as people of deep worth? In what ways?
5. How could Horton have known that they were people of deep worth if he didn't know them? *He understood that all people have deep worth regardless of what they look like, where they live, what they can do, and so forth.*
6. Did it seem to matter to Horton that the "Whos" were very small? How do you know?
7. If size does not matter, what else does not matter when deciding whether a person has deep worth?

Activity

The teacher may decide whether or not to include an activity in the lesson.

A Person is a Person No Matter...

Objective

The students will list some of the factors that make "a person a person." They will learn that all people have deep worth. They will learn that this deep worth is not based on physical appearance, possessions, career, or other external features. They will learn that people are ends in-and-of themselves and should be treated as people of deep worth.

Instructions

The teacher will write "A person is a person no matter..." on the board. As a class, the students will make a list of the things that do not matter when thinking about a person's deep worth. The teacher may want to classify the various answers. For example, some children may focus on a person's **possessions** (*money, house, and toys*); some children may focus on **physical features** (*height, weight, appearance*); some children may focus on **physical strength** (*health, athletic ability*); and some children may focus on one's **role in society** (*fireman, business person, janitor*). If the students miss some of the categories, you may want to ask specific questions to help them gain a full understanding of the main ideas of the lesson. For example, if a person is very good looking, does he or she have deeper worth than someone who is not good looking? Why? Why not? If a person is a very healthy person, does he or she have deeper worth than someone who is sick or in a wheelchair? Why? Why not? If a person has lots of money, does he or she have deeper worth than someone who is very poor? Why? Why not? If someone is a mayor of a city, does he or she have deeper worth than a person who cleans things? Why? Why not? If someone is a star football player, does he or she have deeper worth than someone who cannot play the game? Why? Why not?

Evaluation of the Students

- Did the students listen to a story written by Dr. Seuss entitled *Horton Hears a Who?*
- Did the students participate in a class discussion?
- Did the students participate in the "A Person is a Person" activity?
- Did the students learn that *all people* have deep worth?
- Did the students learn that *all people* are ends in-and-of themselves?
- Did the students learn that inherent worth is not based on personal differences like appearance, possessions, behavior, position in life, place of residence, and so forth?
- Did the student learn that inherent worth cannot be earned nor can it be taken away?
- Did the students learn that all people have inherent worth (deep personal value) simply because they are people?
- Did the students learn that we are to treat all people as people of great worth?



Forgiveness Education as Prevention of Unhealthy Anger
in Children and Adolescents:

Details at the International Forgiveness Institute, Inc. website
www.internationalforgiveness.com

WHAT ARE SOME OUTCOMES OF FORGIVENESS EDUCATION?

- **First Grade** and **Fifth Grade** children in Milwaukee's central city. Those in the experimental group were **less angry** than those in the control group (Holter et al., 2008).
- **First Grade** (Primary 3) children in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Those in the experimental group were **less angry** than those in the control group. Randomization is by group; analyses are on each student (Enright et al., 2007).
- **Third Grade** (Primary 5) children in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Those in the experimental group were **less angry and depressed and more forgiving** than those in the control group (Enright et al., 2007).

MORE OUTCOMES OF FORGIVENESS EDUCATION:

- **At-risk middle school students** in Wisconsin (USA). Those in the experimental group not only **improved more in emotional health** than those in the control group, but also they **improved more in academic achievement** than the control counterparts (Gambaro et al., 2008).
- A study in South Korea with at-risk **adolescents** showed **similar results** to the study above (Park et al, 2013).

FORGIVENESS EDUCATION PROGRAMS:

Asia:

China, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea

Africa:

Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda

Europe:

Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Northern Ireland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden

Middle East:

Iran, Israel, Turkey

North America:

Canada, Mexico, 18 U.S. States

South America:

Brazil, Colombia



**8 REASONS WHY WE NEED
FORGIVENESS EDUCATION:**

- 
-to help students (and teachers) to be emotionally healthier. Forgiveness reduces and eliminates unhealthy anger.

- 
-to help students (and teachers) repair relationships. Forgiveness might be a bridge in seeing the worth in others.

-to help students (and teachers) grow in character because forgiveness makes one a better person.

-to help students (and teachers) be of assistance, within reason, toward the one who acted unjustly. Forgiveness extends the hand of friendship even though the other may reject this.

-to help students, when they are adults, (and teachers) to help their children see that forgiveness can be a path to peace. In other words, forgiveness for peace is passed down through the generations.

- 
-to help students (and teachers), even in a little way, to create a better world as anger does not dominate.

- 
-to help students (and teachers) honor their own religious or philosophical tradition if that tradition values forgiving.

- ...to help students (and teachers) exercise goodness as an end in and of itself. To forgive is to exercise goodness even toward those who are not good to the forgiver. Forgiveness is perhaps the most heroic of all of the moral virtues (such as justice, patience, and kindness, for example).

YOUR FORGIVENESS LEGACY



What will you leave behind on this earth when you die?
Will you leave more anger or more love?