



New Trends
in Psychology

The Importance of Forgiveness in Psychological Therapy and Personal Development

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Abstract: Forgiveness is an essential process of emotional release, in which a person lets go of resentment and anger to achieve a state of well-being and inner balance. In psychological therapy, forgiveness is used to improve mental health, reduce stress, and facilitate personal growth. This article explores the benefits of forgiveness, its stages and the therapeutic support needed, based on international and Romanian research. The importance of forgiveness for physical health, reducing anxiety and developing empathy is highlighted, thus contributing to healthy personal development and more harmonious relationships.

Keywords: forgiveness; psychological therapy; mental health; personal development; empathy

1. Introduction

Forgiveness is a fundamental process for mental health and personal development, involving releasing resentment and accepting the past to allow for emotional healing. Psychologists consider forgiveness not just an act of clemency, but a complex

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process through which a person reaches a state of emotional balance, giving up the desire for revenge or anger.

Studies in the field of mental health highlight the importance of forgiveness for reducing stress, improving well-being, and strengthening interpersonal relationships (Toussaint et al., 2015).

In Romania, researchers such as Irina Holdevici and Dan Cristea (2018) have explored the effects of forgiveness on mental and physical health, concluding that this practice reduces tension and depressive symptoms. In this article, the benefits of forgiveness, the stages of the process and the role of the therapist are analyzed, emphasizing the influence of this process on physical and mental health.

2. The Benefits of Forgiveness in Psychological Therapy: Statistical Evidence and Case Studies

Forgiveness has numerous scientifically proven benefits. A study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health in the US revealed that people who released their resentment experienced a 60% reduction in stress and anxiety levels in the first three months of therapy (Toussaint et al., 2015). Also, studies in Romania conducted by Holdevici and Cristea (2018) show that forgiveness therapy led to a 55% reduction in blood pressure and a decrease in depressive symptoms among patients.

From a physical health perspective, forgiveness is associated with an improvement in the functioning of the cardiovascular system. According to a study conducted by Bratu and Popa (2019), patients who followed a therapy program focused on forgiveness experienced a 20% decrease in blood pressure. The results of these studies indicate that forgiveness is not only an act of compassion, but also a valuable tool for maintaining overall health.

Stages of the Forgiveness Process

The forgiveness process involves several stages, each with a specific role in achieving a healthy and complete forgiveness. In therapy, each of these stages is discussed and practiced through concrete exercises to facilitate emotional release.

Wound Awareness

The first stage of forgiveness is to become aware of the painful emotions associated with an unjust experience. Holdevici and Cristea (2018) suggest the use of a

therapeutic exercise called “Awareness Letter”, through which the patient freely expresses his negative emotions.

Through this technique, the person is able to identify deep feelings of anger or sadness.

Expressing Feelings

In this phase, the patient freely expresses his feelings towards his emotional wounds, either in the presence of a therapist or through dialogue with a trusted friend.

Studies have shown that people who externalize their feelings in a safe setting experience a significant reduction in anxiety (Worthington & Wade, 2020).

Making the Decision to Forgive

This is a critical stage in which the person consciously decides to let go of resentment. Bratu and Popa (2019) argue that this decision can generate positive changes in mental health, by reducing anxiety and mental tension.

Maintaining Forgiveness

The final stage involves maintaining the state of forgiveness in the long term, even in the face of painful memories. Self-compassion practices, such as meditation and personal journaling, can be helpful in reinforcing this state of inner tranquility. According to Holdevici and Cristea (2018), patients who have adopted a self-compassion routine have a 30% reduction in the risk of relapse into resentment.

The Role of the Therapist in the Forgiveness Process

The therapist plays an essential role in supporting the forgiveness process, having the ability to provide support and guidance in a safe and empathetic setting. An empathetic therapist is able to provide patients with a space where they can express themselves without fear of being judged.

Qualities of a Therapist Specialized in Forgiveness

An effective therapist in dealing with forgiveness must possess qualities such as deep empathy, patience, and non-judgment. Holdevici (2020) points out that the therapist who has gone through the forgiveness process himself is more authentic and empathetic, being able to create a strong bond with his patients.

Guiding and Empowerment Skills

The therapist not only guides the patient through the stages of forgiveness, but helps them recognize their own worth and ability to overcome trauma. Through techniques such as “guided reflection” and “self-compassion journaling”, the therapist provides the patient with the necessary tools to take charge of their own healing process.

Forgiveness and Physical Health: Proven Connections

Numerous studies have shown that forgiveness contributes not only to mental health, but also to physical health. At the cardiovascular level, forgiveness reduces the risk of hypertension and heart disease. In Romania, a study conducted by Bratu and Popa (2019) demonstrated that patients who practice forgiveness have a reduction in blood pressure and cortisol levels, the stress hormone. These results support the idea that forgiveness can bring long-term benefits to a person’s physical and mental health.

3. Conclusions

Forgiveness is a profound process that involves accepting and releasing resentment, which has a positive impact on mental and physical health. Recent research, both in Romania and abroad, has shown that forgiveness reduces stress, improves self-esteem and contributes to a better functioning of the cardiovascular system. In the therapeutic context, forgiveness is considered an essential tool for personal development and healing.

The role of the therapist in guiding this process is crucial, because through empathy and guiding skills, he supports the patient in going through each stage. In addition, forgiveness is associated with an increase in empathy and self-compassion, which are essential for harmonious personal development and for maintaining a lasting state of well-being.

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