# FORGIVENESS & RELATIONSHIP REPAIR

## *From Self-Forgiveness to Reconnection*



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# THEMATIC TIE

## *Forgiveness & Relationship Repair*

01

### within

How we process our own wrongdoing

02

### between

How we respond to another person's wrongdoing

03

### repair

Whether those processes allow movement toward psychological and relational restoration

*Across the research, forgiveness emerges as both an intrapersonal and interpersonal experience. How we respond to hurt (whether directed toward ourselves or others) can influence psychological well-being, communication, and the possibility of relationship repair.*

### SELF

Self-Forgiveness

### INTERNAL PROCESS

Guilt • Shame • Rumination • Benevolence

### INTERPERSONAL

Forgiveness • Unforgiveness

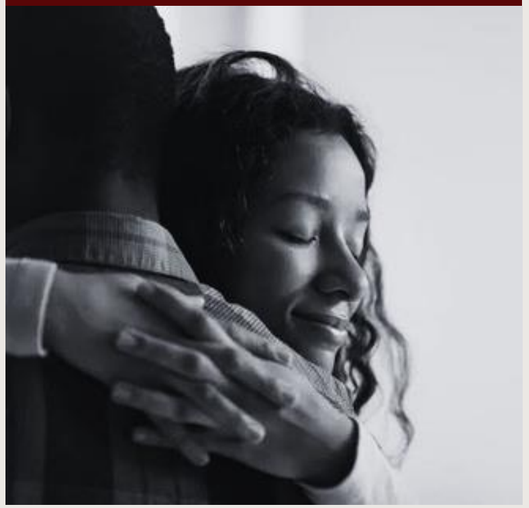
### RELATIONSHIP

Repair • Reconnection • Continued Rupture

*Understanding the language of Repair*

# DEFINED

## FORGIVENESS



A voluntary process of releasing negative thoughts and emotions toward an offender and moving toward empathy, compassion, or benevolence.

## SELF FORGIVENESS



An intrapersonal process involving responsibility-taking, regulation of guilt and shame, and moral self-repair after one's own perceived wrongdoing.

## UNFORGIVENESS




Negative motivations, such as revenge and avoidance, that can persist after a hurt or transgression. Forgiveness and unforgiveness are related, but they are not simply opposites.

## RELATIONSHIP REPAIR



The process of restoring and/or improving relational functioning after being hurt by making changes to motivation, communication, trust, and behavior.

*“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”*

- Lewis B. Smedes



# ARTICLE 1 WITHIN

## *Unveiling the Nature and Attributes of Self-Forgiveness in Young Indian Adults*. Mudgal & Tiwari (2026)

**Thematic Tie:** Forgiveness & Relationship Repair
**Lens:** Within

**Realization → Distress → Reparation → Reconciliation**

*Model Proposed by the Researchers*

*How we process our own wrongdoing may shape both personal healing and our capacity for relational repair.*

**Study Type:** Qualitative study using thematic analysis

**Hypothesis/Research Question**: The study explored how young adults understand the nature, attributes, and process of self-forgiveness.

**Method(s)**: Semi-structured interviews with 25 young adults, ages 18–25, enrolled in higher education in India. Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

**Process of Research:** Participants reflected on experiences of personal wrongdoing and self-forgiveness. Researchers analyzed their responses for recurring patterns and identified six themes involving realization of wrongdoing, distress, reparation, relationships with those harmed, reconciliation, and personal qualities that may facilitate self-forgiveness.

The study also explores self-forgiveness within an Indian cultural and spiritual context, including traditions that connect forgiveness with accountability, compassion, purification, and inner peace.

**Results:** Self-forgiveness emerged as a multifaceted process; it does not come from just letting oneself off the hook.

**Participants described**:

- Acknowledging wrongdoing and accepting responsibility
- Guilt, rumination, poor concentration, and physical/mental discomfort
- Learning and growth following mistakes
- Making reparative efforts toward those harmed
- Reconciliation and perceived forgiveness from the person harmed
- Empathy, humility, responsibility, and self-compassion as potential facilitators.




“Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.”
- Paul Boese

# ARTICLE 2 BETWEEN

## *Self-regulation facilitates forgiveness in close relationships.* Ho et al. (2024).

**Thematic Tie:** Forgiveness & Relationship Repair

**Lens:** Between

**Self-Control → Forgiveness → Relationship Outcomes**

*Self-regulatory pathway tested by the researchers*

*How we respond to a partner's wrongdoing may influence forgiveness and the quality of the relationship that follows.*

**Study Type:** Quantitative research using cross-sectional and longitudinal designs

**Hypothesis/Research Question:** The researchers hypothesized that greater self-control would predict greater forgiveness of a romantic partner, and that forgiveness would help explain the relationship between self-control and positive relationship outcomes.

**Method(s):** **Study 1:** Cross-sectional survey of 205 participants in romantic relationships.

**Study 2:** Four-week longitudinal study of 600 participants in romantic relationships.

Participants completed measures of self-control, partner forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, commitment, and closeness.

**Process of Research:** Researchers first examined whether people with greater self-control reported greater forgiveness and better relationship functioning at a single point in time.

They then followed a larger sample across four weeks to examine whether self-control predicted later forgiveness and whether forgiveness was associated with subsequent relationship outcomes.

**Results:** Greater self-control was associated with greater forgiveness of a partner.

In turn, greater forgiveness was associated with:

- greater relationship satisfaction
- stronger commitment
- greater closeness

The pattern was supported across both studies, providing evidence that forgiveness may be one pathway through which self-regulation supports healthier close relationships.





*“A healed memory is not a deleted memory.”*

*- Lewis B. Smedes*



# ARTICLE 3 REPAIR

***Beyond apologies: A systematic review of forgiveness in different relationship contexts. Lahiri & Padmakumari (2025).***

**Thematic Tie:** Forgiveness & Relationship Repair

**Lens:** Repair

**Forgiveness → Relational Processes → Repair/Continued Rupture**

*Relational outcomes identified across the reviewed studies*

*Forgiveness may create conditions for repair, but relationship context and what happens after the transgression matter.*

**Study Type:** Systematic literature review using PRISMA methodology.

**Hypothesis/Research Question:** Rather than testing a single hypothesis, the researchers examined how forgiveness operates across interpersonal relationships and its relationship-to-relationship satisfaction, stability, and well-being.

**Method(s):** Researchers searched 10 databases and initially identified 650 studies. After screening and applying inclusion criteria, 37 studies were included in the final review. The studies represented marriage, dating, family, peer, and workplace relationships.

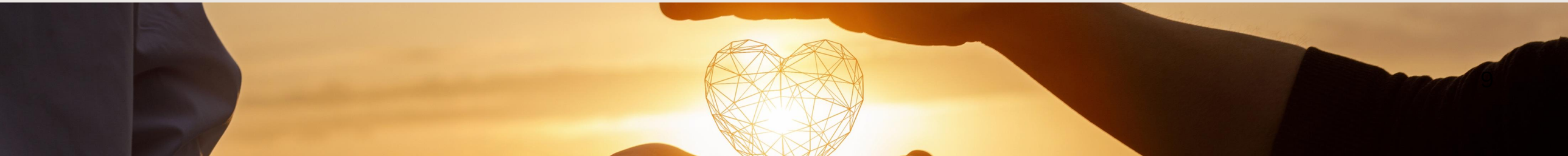
**Process of Research:** The researchers systematically reviewed studies using quantitative, qualitative, longitudinal, and mixed-method designs and compared factors associated with forgiveness across different relationship contexts.

**Results:** Across the reviewed research, forgiveness was associated with:

- Less conflict
- Greater trust
- Greater relationship satisfaction
- Greater commitment and stability
- More positive communication

### Forgiveness ≠ Automatic Repair

An important distinction here is that repair was context-dependent. Relationship history, communication, power dynamics, repeated transgressions, and the offender's behavior could influence whether forgiveness contributed to healthier relationship functioning.



*What the research taught me about forgiveness & relationship repair*

# THE BIG 3

01

## within

**Self-forgiveness requires accountability.**

Forgiving ourselves involves acknowledging wrongdoing, working through distress, and moving toward self-compassion, reparation, and growth.

02

## between

**Forgiveness can strengthen close relationships.**

Forgiveness may help transform relational hurt into greater satisfaction, commitment, and closeness.

03

## repair

**Forgiveness does not guarantee relationship repair.**

Forgiveness is associated with less conflict and greater communication, trust, satisfaction, and stability, but repair also depends on the relationship, communication, power dynamics, repeated transgressions, and the behavior that follows.

# FINDING FREEDOM

*A Personal Reflection*



**RELEASE**

Letting go of what no longer serves me.

**SELF-BELIEF**

Trusting myself and my capabilities again.

**FREEDOM**

Moving beyond fear and the weight of the past.

**Sometimes forgiveness isn't about freeing the person who hurt us. It's about freeing ourselves from the burden of carrying what was done.**

# FROM SELF-FORGIVENESS TO RECONNECTION

## THE EXPERIENCE

(Reverend T.D. Jakes, 2012)



### SELF-LIBERATION

Forgiveness can release the injured person from the continuing emotional burden of the offense; it does not erase or justify the offense.



### RELEASING WITHOUT DENYING

Anger may signal that a boundary has been violated. Forgiveness does not require pretending the anger or injury never existed; it involves changing what we continue to carry.



### AUTONOMY

Forgiveness does not have to wait for an apology, repayment, or change from the offender. It can represent reclaiming authority over one's own response.



### FUTURE ORIENTATION

Persistent resentment can keep attention organized around the past. Forgiveness can create psychological space to reinvest energy in the present and future.

## THE PROCESS

(Jacinto & Edwards, 2011)



### RECOGNIZE

Identify the situation requiring self-forgiveness and recognize the rumination, guilt, shame, resentment, or self-blame connected to it.



### TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Clarify what was within your control, accept responsibility for your part, and recognize human imperfection without remaining trapped in self-blame.



### EXPRESS

Acknowledge and work through the feelings connected to the experience through reflection, dialogue, or another form of expression.



### RE-CREATE

Integrate the past into a renewed sense of self and begin directing attention toward how you want to live and move forward.

# THANK YOU

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