

Mara Briere, MA
Certified Family Life Educator
Founder & President



Acknowledgements

Contents of this presentation were developed with support and funding from CHNA 15 DoN, Lahey Hospital and Medical Center and Winchester Hospital. The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policies or views of CHNA, Lahey Hospital and Winchester.



Loss and Forgiveness

Mara Briere, MA
Certified Family Life Educator
President and Founder



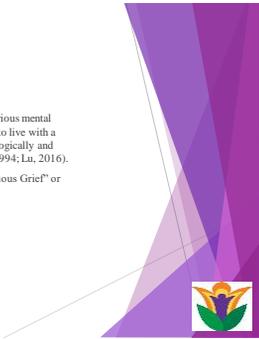
This Webinar

- Loss
- Forgiveness
- Strategies



Loss

- ▶ When our loved ones are diagnosed with a serious mental illness, we are left to cope with learning how to live with a person who is physically present, and psychologically and emotionally different (Boss, 2006; Johnson, 1994; Lu, 2016).
- ▶ This is called "Ambiguous Loss," or "Ambiguous Grief" or "Disenfranchised Grief."



Disenfranchised Grief

Refers to loss that is not publicly acknowledged and sanctioned.

Occurs in a variety of situations of loss that are not talked about like:

- * mental illness
- * substance use
- * criminal behavior
- * dementia



Ambiguous Loss



Is significant loss that is lacking in clarity, finality, & has no sense of closure.

- ▶ "Leaving without saying goodbye," i.e. psychologically present, physically absent.
- ▶ "Goodbye without leaving," i.e. physically present, psychologically absent.
- ▶ When loved ones have mental illnesses, there are times when they cannot fulfill their roles in relationships and we miss them.



Change

Some things in life cannot be fixed, they can only be carried (Lawrence, 2015).



Acceptance comes from Forgiveness

- ▶ Forgiving our loved ones for being chronically ill;
- ▶ Forgiving ourselves for our many feelings around this
- ▶ Forgiving those who don't understand.



Forgiveness gives us the Present

- ▶ Keeping an open mind,
- ▶ Being true to our experience without retiniquishing ourselves to negativity,
- ▶ Developing a different relationship with our loved ones.





What does it mean, "To forgive?"

- ▶ 1: to cease to feel resentment against (an offender) : [PARDON](#) *forgive* one's enemies
- ▶ 2a: to give up resentment of or claim to requital (see [REQUITAL SENSE 1](#)) for *forgive* an insult
- ▶ b: to grant relief from payment of *forgive* a debt

Forgive. (n.d.). Retrieved September 28, 2018, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/forgive>



How to forgive a loved one for their mental illness?

- ▶ First, we have to accept that our loved one has a mental illness which is beyond our control.
- ▶ Second, we have to learn to forgive them for how they might behave and how that behavior might affect us.
- ▶ Forgiveness does not mean forgetting.
- ▶ Acceptance does not mean condoning.
- ▶ Learning to set healthy boundaries, create healthy responses, and communicate in healthy ways are part of the process.
- ▶ Forgiveness sometimes means giving up all hope of a better past.

Blog post (June 14, 2017) from Avakon Malibu. *How do I forgive a loved one for their mental illness?* Retrieved on September 28, 2018 from <https://www.avakomalibu.com/blog/how-do-i-forgive-a-loved-one-for-their-mental-illness/>



Forgive and forget?

How does "NO!" sound to you?

	FORGETS	DOES NOT FORGET
FORGIVES	NAIVE	WISE
DOES NOT FORGIVE	THAT GUY IN "MEMENTO"	STUPID



Strategies



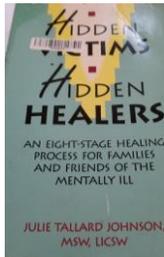
Consider....

- ▶ Even though I had done these things while biochemically removed from reality, I still had done them.
- ▶ If someone burns your house down by mistake, it is an accident, but that accident can destroy your entire life.



Eric, Anna, (October 18, 2013). *The agony of forgiveness: Making sense of your mental illness. Retrieved on 10/2/18 from <https://www.growstrongfamily.com/blog/eric-anna-10-18-2013>*





Stage Six: Forgiveness

"I forgive myself for any mistakes I have made. I forgive and release those who have harmed me."



Stage Six: Forgiveness

Release emotional pain.

Acknowledge the behavior (how you have been disappointed, lied to, frightened, harmed in some way).

Feel your feelings (anger, hurt, fear).

Move through it and release it so it does not fester in you as resentment or negativity.



Forgiveness is the ultimate act of love; the ultimate act of acceptance. It allows movement and growth, even in accepting the way things are rather as we might wish them to be.



Consider....

What forgiveness is?



Nancy Collier, LCSW, (Posted Mar 15, 2018) *What Forgiveness Is Psychology Today.*
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/inviting-monkey-tee/201803/what-is-forgiveness-really?_r=



Forgiveness is...

Willingness to drop the narrative on a particular injustice, to stop telling ourselves over and over again the story of what happened, what this other person did, how we were injured, and all the rest of the upsetting things we remind ourselves in relation to this unforgivable-ness.



Forgiveness is...

It's a decision to let the past be what it was, to leave it as is, imperfect and not what we wish it had been.



Forgiveness is...

Forgiveness means that we stop the *shoulda, coulda, woulda been-s* and relinquish the idea that we can create a different (better) past.



MOVING ON
doesn't mean you forget about things. It just means you have to accept what happened and continue living.

WWW.LIVELEFFHAPPY.COM



7 Rules of Forgiveness

- 1. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you have to forget, too.
- 2. Forgiveness doesn't mean you're minimizing your victimization experience.
- 3. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you're a chump. Forgiveness is *not* a sign of weakness, naivete, or foolishness.



7 Rules of Forgiveness

- 4. Forgiveness doesn't depend upon the other person apologizing and accepting your offer of forgiveness.

Sadly, you cannot expect that the person who wronged you can fully understand or appreciate that what he or she did was wrong.

They may never admit that they did anything problematic at all.

That's okay, because you can engage in forgiveness for your own benefit, not theirs. You don't need anything from them to forgive them.



7 Rules of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a process. Forgiveness isn't an all-or-none, black-or-white kind of thing. It is a process.

6. Forgiveness is for your health and well being. Since research shows that holding onto anger is toxic for your health and well being, and since no one wants to be around those who are chronically angry, bitter, resentful, and unforgiving, then forgiveness is something that you do for *your* self. It is in your best interest to forgive others for their transgressions, not necessarily theirs. You are not engaging in forgiveness to do them a favor, but to do one for yourself.

7. The secret sauce in forgiveness is letting go of anger.



Guidelines for Moving Forward

You have the opportunity to create a different story of your life moving forward; new relationships with your loved ones.
Describe in detail what that looks like for you.
You can do this through words, art, photography, music, dance - whatever form is meaningful for you.



Remember

- ▶ There are no shortcuts
- ▶ *You cannot forgive someone until you have fully felt the pain he or she has caused you.*
- ▶ Unhook yourself by unhooking the offender first.



This Webinar

Loss
Forgiveness
Strategies



When best laid plans fail!

- ▶ Sick to your "normal" routines as much as you can
- ▶ Eat and drink in moderation
- ▶ Plan on exercise; build in "nature" time.
- ▶ Make sure you have a Plan B and a Plan C in place for the unexpected
- ▶ Keep music that you love on hand and listen to it when needing to
- ▶ Prioritize your time, activities, and commitments (do what you want to and can)
- ▶ Take good, loving care of yourself!



Resources

- ▶ McGregor, S. (2016). "Done with the crying: Help and healing for mothers of estranged adult children." © Sowing Creek Press, San Marcos CA
- ▶ Blog post (June 14, 2017) from Avalon Mallibu, *How do I forgive a loved one for their mental illness*. Retrieved on September 28, 2018 from <https://www.avalonmallibu.com/blog/how-do-i-forgive-a-loved-one-for-their-mental-illness/>
- ▶ Thomas G. Plante, PhD ABPP. (March 5, 2014). *7 Rules of forgiveness*. Retrieved on 9/28/18 from <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/do-the-right-thing/201403/7-rules-for-giveness>
- ▶ <http://www.forgivenessweb.com/default.htm>
- ▶ Heather P. Wilson, Ph.D. Copyright © 2001 Weatherbee Resources, Inc. All rights reserved. January 01, 2013 .
- ▶ We have a closed discussion group on Facebook in which we share our journeys with one another. Here is the link: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1085961301459239/1087382077983828/?notif_ctlike¬if_id=1473346202060389



Looking For More Information on Grow A Strong Family?

- ▶ Visit GASF online:
 - <http://growastrongfamily.org/>
- ▶ Email: GASFinc@outlook.com
- ▶ Phone: 781-405-8376



Disclaimer

Take what you like and leave the rest.

We are not responsible for how the content or the presentation is used. Viewers agree to hold harmless Grow A Strong Family, Inc., its staff and board of directors from any liability, loss, claim, cost or damage of any nature whatsoever which may arise from viewing or listening to the presentation.

