

#### What to expect

PART I	
What is forgiveness	
Benefits	
Facilitators	
PART II	
Self-forgiveness (the good, the bad, and the ugly) and addiction	
Caveats	
What can you do to be more forgiving and teach forgiveness?	

#### Hurt

Who was involved?

What are your emotions like now?



What happened?

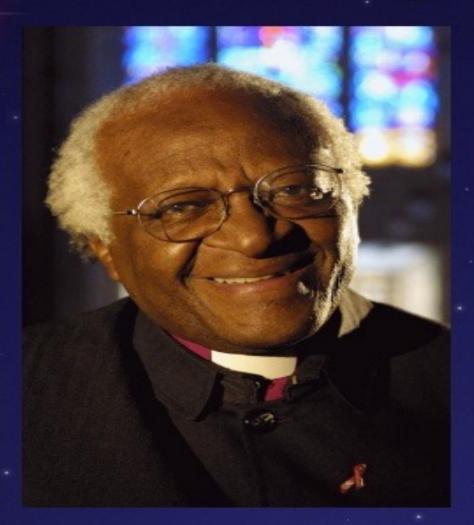
What were your emotions when it happened?

#### THIS SESSION'S CHALLENGE

- Was forgiveness used to sustain that relationships following the hurt?
  - If yes, how? If not, why not?
  - How is that going for you?
- Have you forgiven in the absence of an apology or expression of remorse?
  - Why or why not?
- What role can forgiveness play for behavior change and recover?
- Can it ever be wrong to offer forgiveness to the self or others?

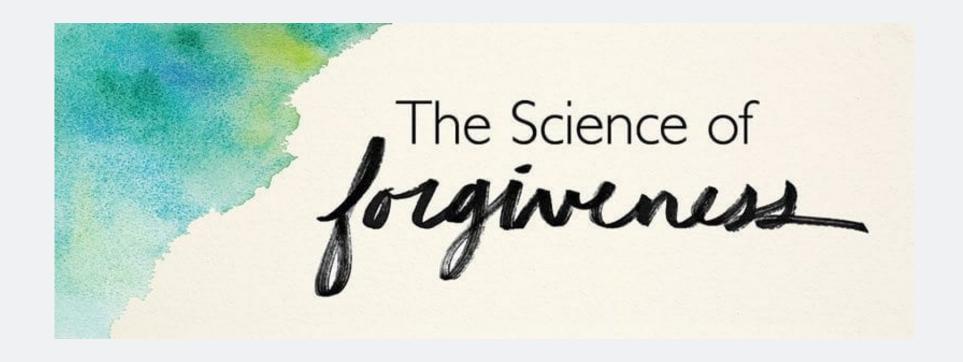


# No Future without Forgiveness!



"It isn't easy, as we all know, to ask for forgiveness and it's also not easy to forgive, but we are people who know that when someone cannot be forgiven there is no future."

Desmond Tutu



#### What is forgiveness?

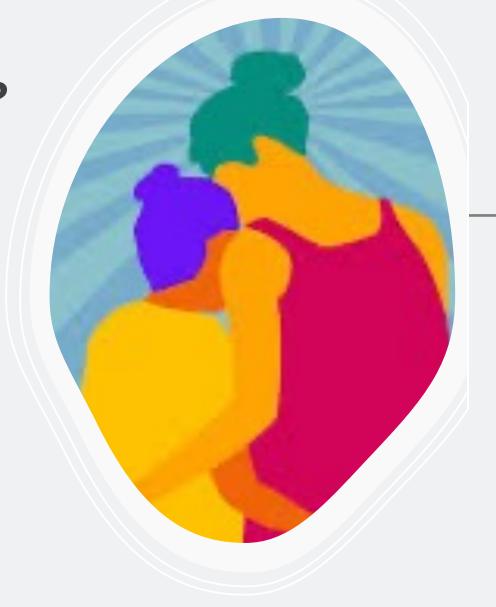
It is not pardoning

It is not condoning

It is not excusing

It is not forgetting

It is not denying



#### What is forgiveness?

- ↓ in resentment ↑ love (Enright, 1992)
- ↓ in avoidance and revenge ↑ benevolence (McCullough, 2000)

No longer holding negative thoughts or feelings toward another person for past wrongs (Wohl, DeShea, & Wahkinney, 2008)

#### Forgiveness in the Population

(Poloma & Gallup, 1991)

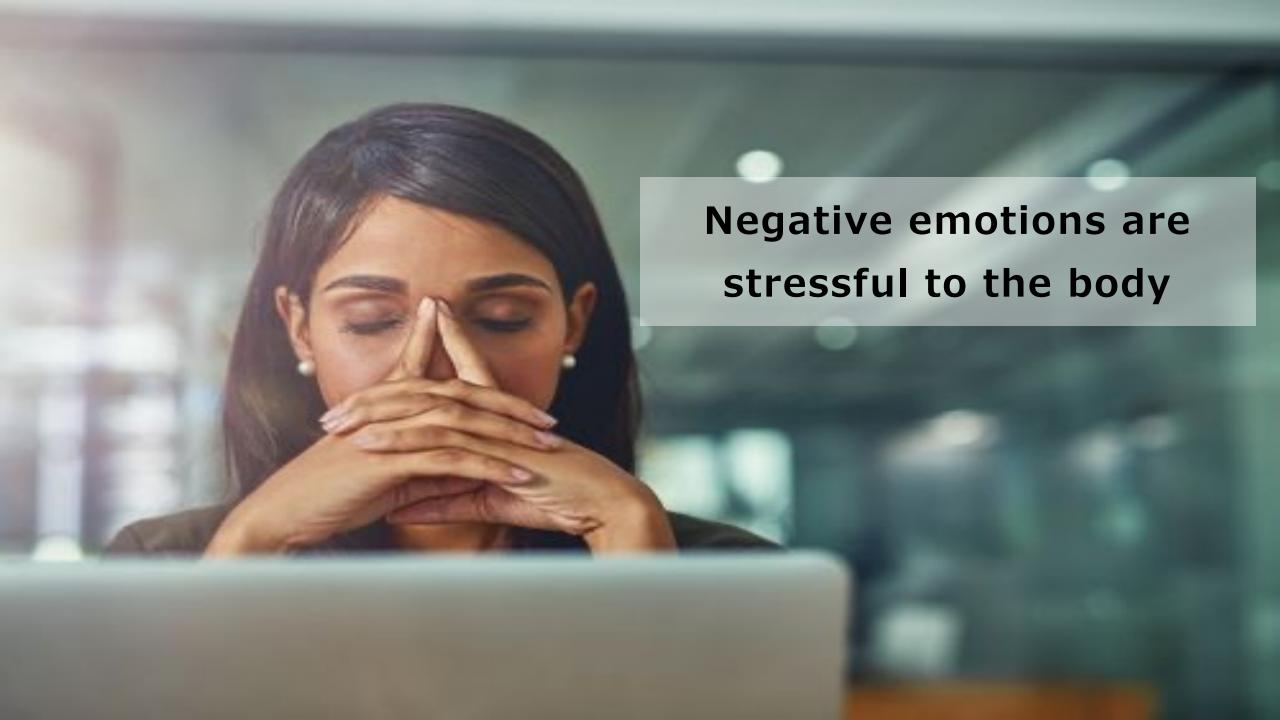
"What do you do when you feel that someone has deliberately done something wrong to you?"

Try to Forgive: 48%

Try to Overlook It: 45%

Hold Onto Resentment: 14%

Try to Get Even: 8%



#### Forgiveness and Addiction

"Under very trying conditions I have had, again and again, to forgive others – also myself
-Alcoholics Anonymous' Co-founder Bill Wilson

Among individuals entering treatment for alcohol use disorders, forgiveness of others were significantly and negatively associated with concurrent drinking (Webb et al., 2006)

Forgiveness can neutralize negative emotion (Marlatt, 1996; Marlatt & Gordon, 1980)

Forgiveness therapies: Enright model

Human Development Study Group (Enright, 1996)

**Phase I: Uncovering** 

**Phase II: Exploration of forgiveness** 

**Phase III: Deepening** 

Forgiveness therapies: REACH model

#### **REACH Model (Worthington, 2001)**

- Recall the hurt (R).
- Develop empathy (E).
- Forgiveness as an altruistic gift (A).
- Make a commitment to forgive (C).
- Hold onto forgiveness in times of difficulty (H)

Systematic review conducted by Akhttar and Barlow (2018)

Why does forgiveness matter for addiction recovery

Addiction recovery won't put an end to the pain and trauma that the addictive behavior created.

To break the recovery and relapse cycle completely, you may need to let go of this emotional baggage.

### Other reasons to let go

Better blood pressure

Healthy muscle tension

Better immune function

Improved cardiovascular function

Improved muscular function

Improved nervous system function

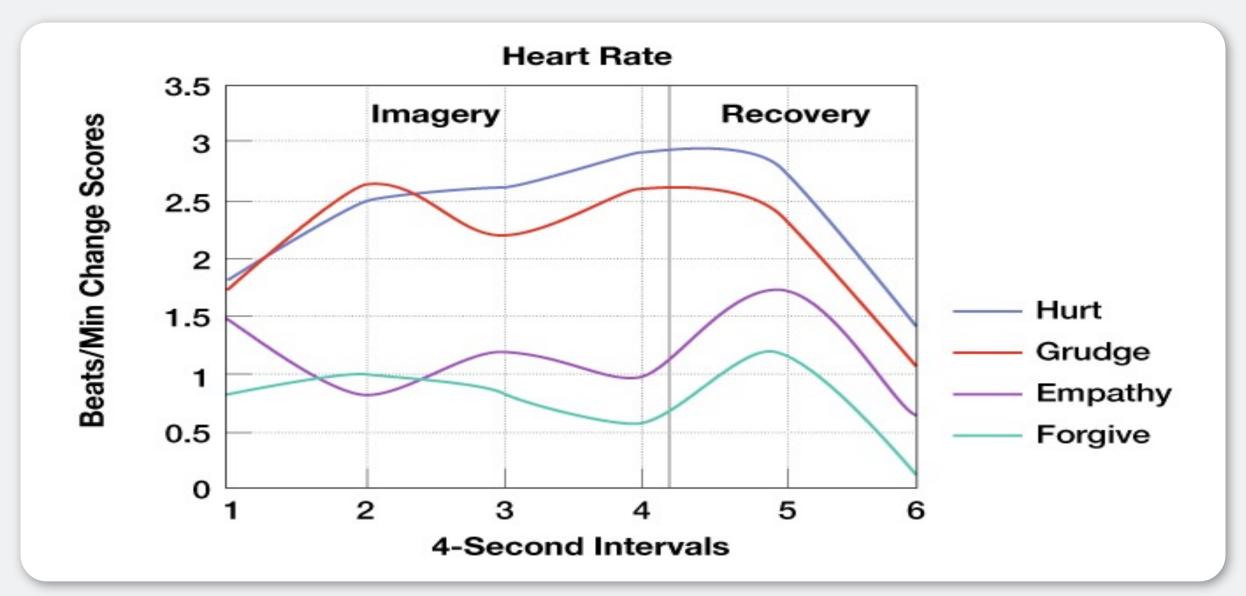
Less psychological pain

Reduced stress

Increases in self confidence, compassion, quality of life, and hope



#### **Heartfelt Forgiveness**



#### How do people come to forgiveness?



**Method**: We asked people to tell us about a time in which they forgave, why they forgave and the consequences



**Result**: Three unique routes with unique consequences.

#### PATHWAYS TO FORGIVENESS

Path 1

Path 2

Path 3

I had an open discussion about the issue

Expression of my moral fortitude

Forgiveness helped me move on

I let them know how I felt

I realized everyone is fallible

I decided to forgive and forget

#### Facilitating Forgiveness factors

#### Personality Factors (i.e., disposition)

- Trait Forgiveness a tendency to forgive
- Agreeableness a tendency to be optimistic view of human nature and get along well with others
- Neuroticism a tendency toward anxiety, depression, self-doubt, and other negative feelings

#### Social Factors (i.e., the situation)

• Time - does it heal all wounds?

Relationship value/commitment



"Somehow I'm full of forgiveness, I guess it's meant to be"

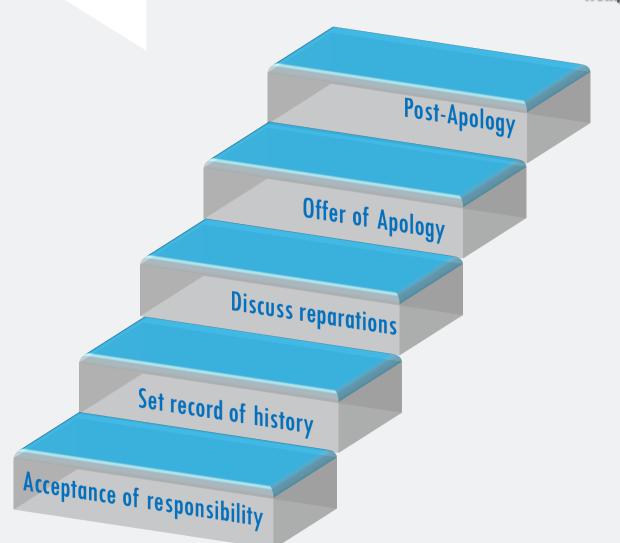


#### Facilitating Forgiveness via Apology

Serve to transform the victim's malign impression of the offender into a more benevolent one (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Wohl et al., 2018) – the perpetrator acknowledges he/she committed a harm

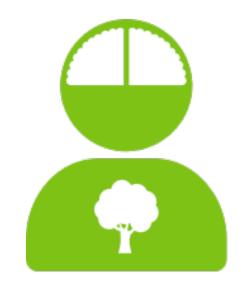
#### A Staircase Model of Apologies and Reconciliation

Wohl, Hornsey & Philpot, 2011, SIPR



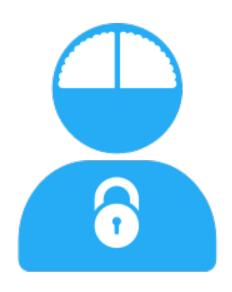


### Forgiveness and a Mindset for and Change: Implicit Theories of Behavior



**Incremental Theorist** 

Behavior is malleable



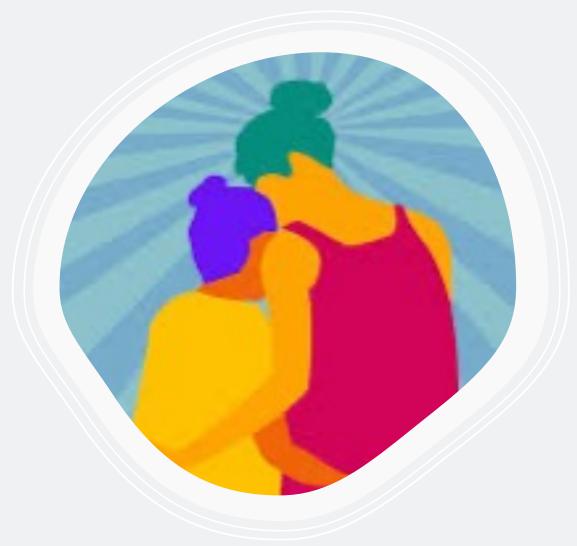
**Entity Theorist** 

Behavior is fixed

### Selfforgiveness

Part II





#### What is forgiveness?

It is not pardoning

It is not condoning

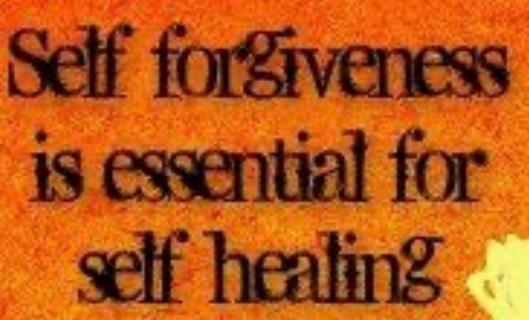
It is not excusing

It is not forgetting

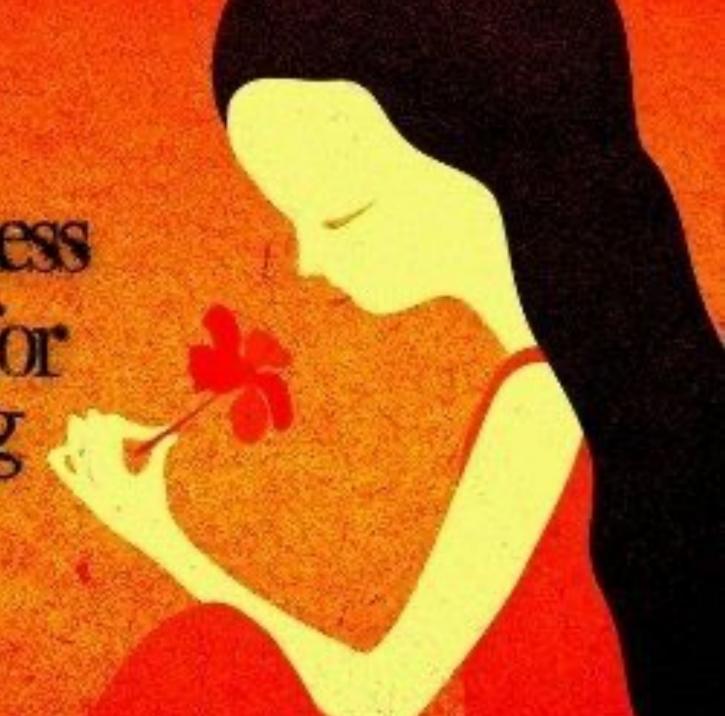
It is not denying

#### What is forgiveness?

No longer holding negative thoughts or feelings toward another person for past wrongs (Wohl, DeShea, & Wahkinney, 2008)



Spice of Life





We can never make peace in the outer world until we make peace with ourselves

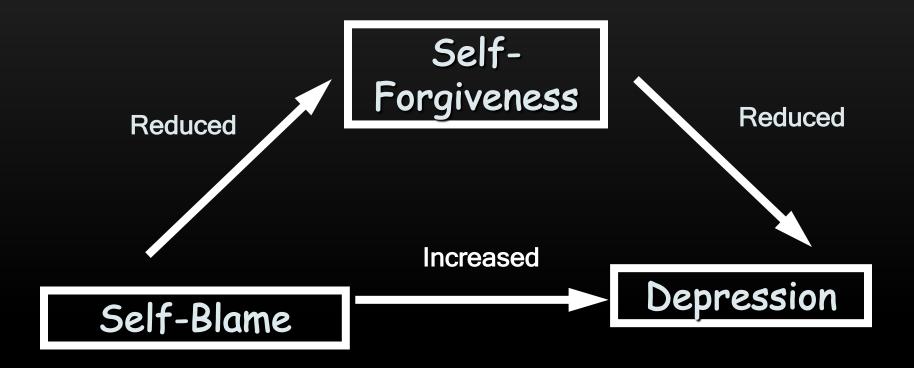
Dalai Lama XIV

### The unwanted end to a romantic relationship

What is the role of forgiveness in the self-blame/depression vicious circle?



### Self-Forgiveness as Mediator





#### Procrastination, self-forgiveness and success

▶ Procrastination: Voluntary, needless delay of an intended course of action past the time most likely to produce the desired performance

Self-forgiveness: Helps replace an avoidance motivation with an approach motivation (Hall & Fincham, 2005)



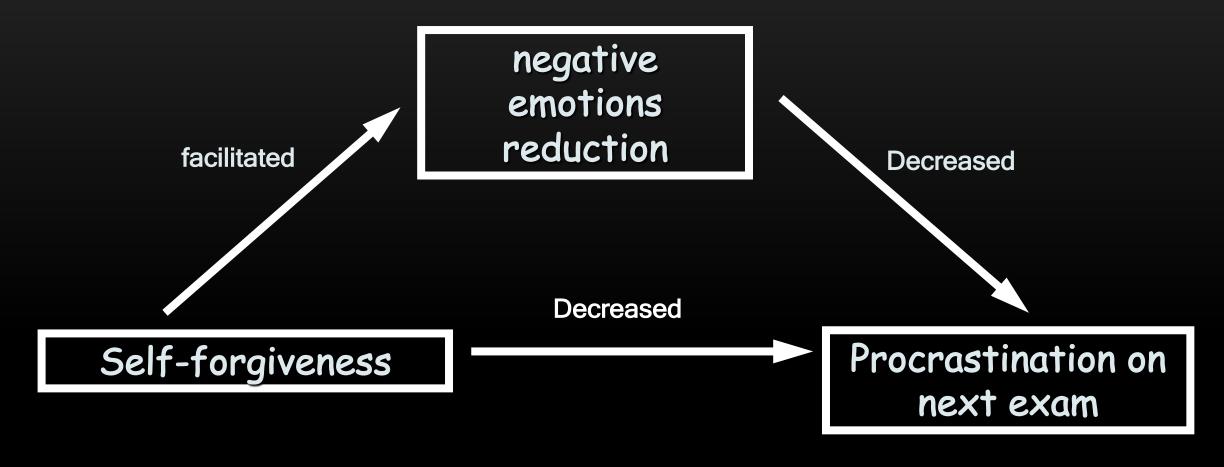
#### I forgive myself, now I can study?

- ► Introductory Psychology Students
  - Assessed procrastination and self-forgiveness for that procrastination just prior to Midterm I
  - Assessed procrastination just prior to Mid-term II





## Self-Forgiveness reduces procrastination



Forgiveness of self vs. forgiveness of others during addiction treatment

(Kretzmann et al., 2018)

The self-forgiveness and other-forgiveness course appears to differ in their relation to cessation.

- At onset of treatment forgiveness of others tends to be higher than forgiveness of the self
- Forgiveness of the self increase at a higher rate during treatment than forgiveness of others
- Forgiveness of self tends to influence forgiveness of others and vise versa

Forgiveness
Strategies in
Addiction
Treatment

- Be deliberate about forgiving yourself and others.
- Stop empowering others by remaining a victim.
- Recognize forgiveness matters for addiction recovery and utilize it.
- Don't bottle up your feelings.
- Don't take out your hurt on innocent people.

#### What about perceived forgiveness from others? Social Support

Friends can help:
People who have
networks of close
connections live
longer than those
who do not.

Partner support:
Touching can
elevate levels of
oxytocin, the
hormone that
induces relaxation.

Social support:

Getting support from others can be a valuable source of comfort.

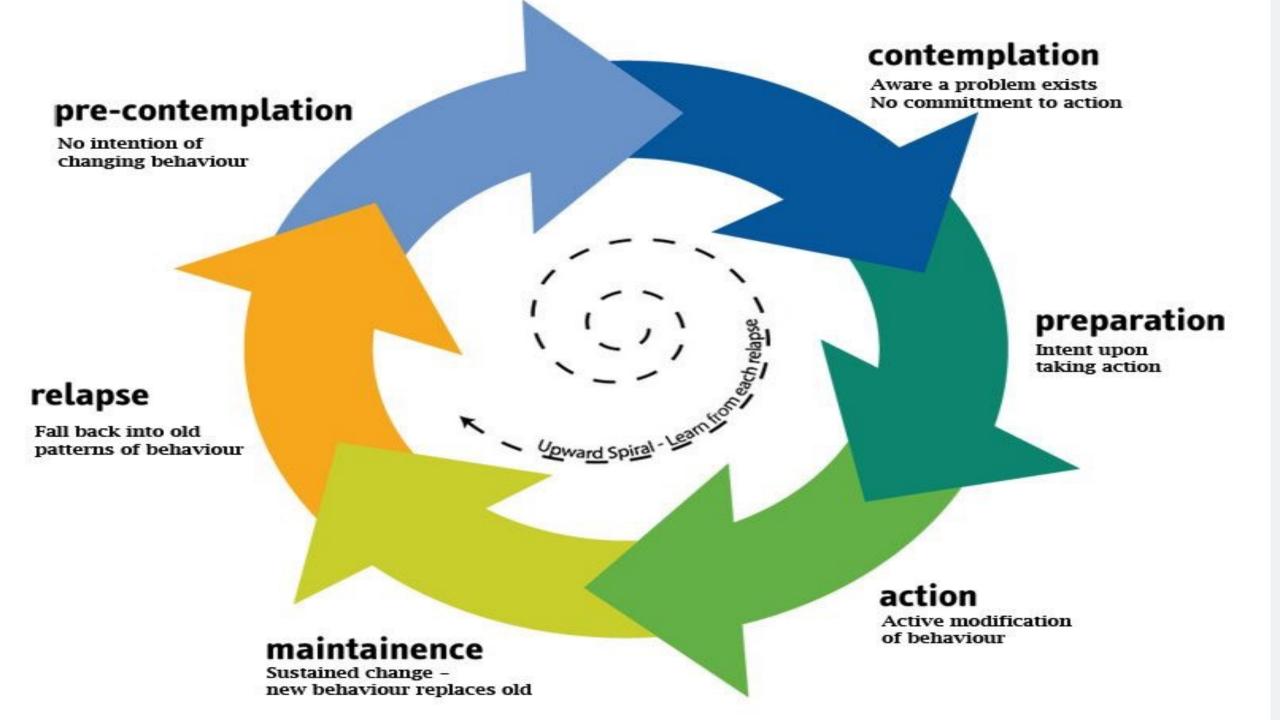






- Those who readily forgive experience reoffense, relationship dissatisfaction (McNulty, 2011
- Moral licensing (Wohl, Mccaffery, & Adams, 2021)
- Self-forgiveness is potentially maladaptive for chronic unhealthy behaviours (Wohl & McLaughlin, 2014)







#### **Decisional Balance**

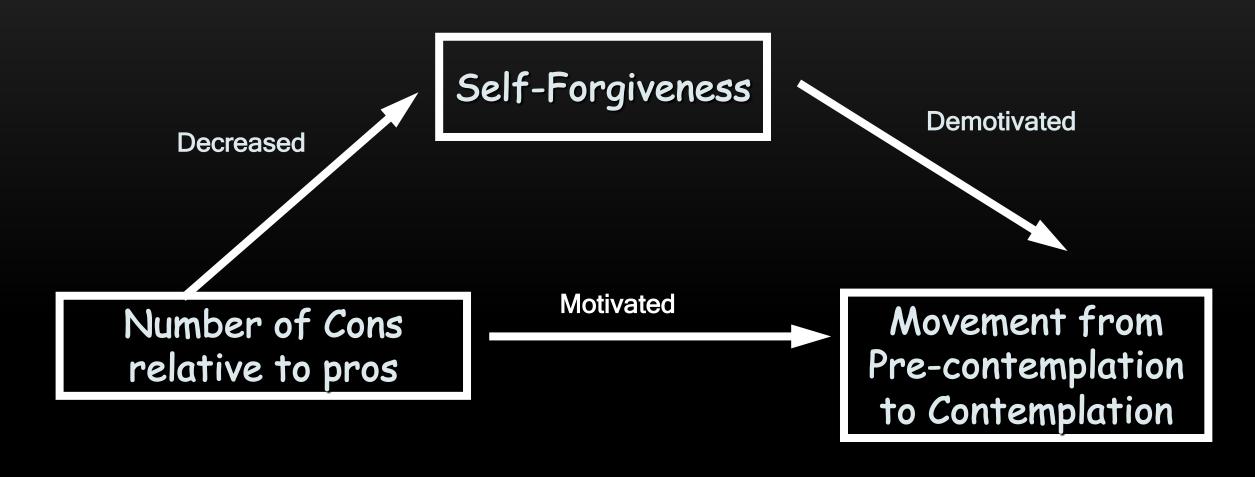
Thoughts about behaviour change reflect appraisals of the pros and cons

#### Forgiving the self for smoking

(Wohl & Thompson, 2012)

- ▶ One-hundred eighty-one smokers (63 males, 118 females)
- Measured Variables
  - ▶ Smoking pros and cons (Velicer et al., 1985)
  - Self-forgiveness for smoking
  - ▶ Stage of change (DiClemente et al., 1991)

## Self-Forgiveness undermined behaviour change



#### You've gotta Know when to hold'em

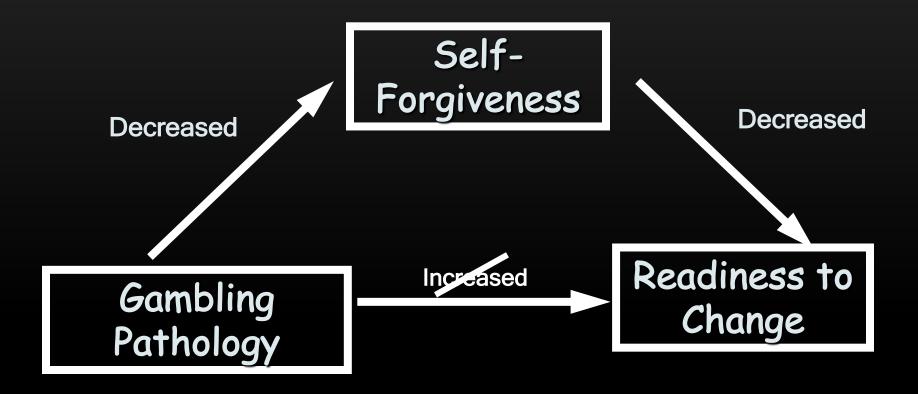
Squires, Sztainert, Gillen, Caouette, & Wohl (2012)

Three-hundred and Five (186 = male, 118 = female, 1 = unidentified) gamblers

#### Measured variables:

- Disordered gambling (Canadian Problem Gambling Index; Ferris & Wynne, 2001)
- Self-forgiveness
- Readiness to change (DiClemente & Hughes, 1990)

#### Self-Forgiveness as Mediator





#### Implications

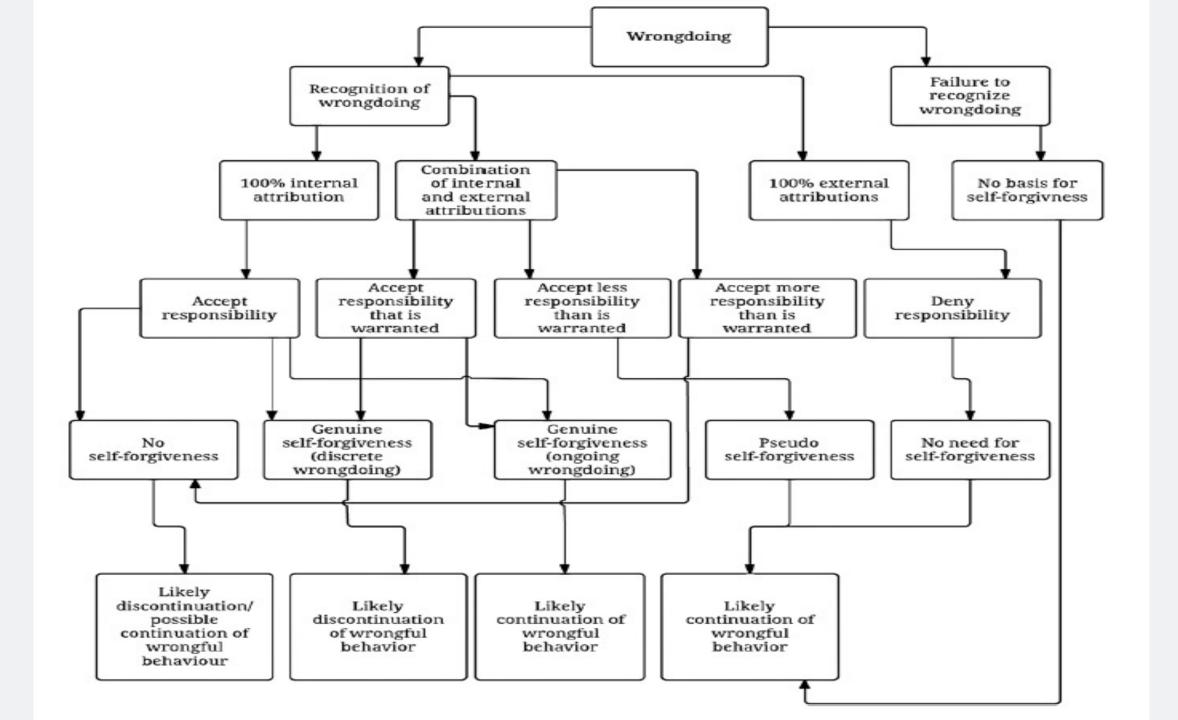
Readiness to change decreases when people living with addiction self-forgive

Implications for both treatment seeking as well as natural recovery

▶ Those that achieve natural recovery may have a disposition to be relatively unwilling to self-forgiving

(what are the implications for relapse?)





# HOT OFF THE PRESSES: IDENTIFICATION AS A GAMBLER UNDERMINES BEHAVIOR CHANGE

- Part of our sense of self is derived from our membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)
- People can and do identify with unhealthy groups

#### Types of identification:

- 1. Identity centrality the group is important to self-definition
- 2. Ingroup ties the extent to which you feel bonded to others in your group
  - 3. Ingroup affect "feeling" connected to the group

## Forgiveness





# Are there some harms that are simply unforgiveable?



On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness

You are a prisoner in a concentration camp.

A dying Nazi soldier asks for your forgiveness.

What would you do?

#### MON WIESENTHAL

onses by Robert Coles, The Dalai Lama, Harold S. Kushner, Dennis Prager, Wu, and thirty-nine others

### How can I work toward forgiveness and help others do the same?



- 1. Model forgiveness
- 2. Understand the health and social benefits of forgiveness
- 3. Emotion-regulation
  - cognitive re-framing
  - Actor/observer bias
  - birds eye-view perspective taking
  - temporal distancing
- 4. Be truthful that there are limits (e.g., repeated offences)

