



Cultivating Virtue in Leadership

FORGIVENESS

in Educational Leadership



JOHN TEMPLETON
FOUNDATION





Overview



- What is it?
- Why do you want it?
- How do I get it?
- How do I help others get it?
- Resources



Forgiveness: Definition



- Forgiveness involves the ability to forgive when confronted with offenses, arguments, and mistakes.
- Forgiveness enables people to repair damaged relationships and overcome negative thoughts and emotions following interpersonal injury (Aquino et al., 2003) without carrying a grudge (Verdoold & van Dierendonck, 2010).



Forgiveness in Leadership



- Leaders can support virtuous actions such as forgiveness, by initiating and supporting organizational structures, systems and resources such as restorative practices that are aligned with forgiveness (Madsen et al., 2009) and which **provide healing opportunities** to self and others, (Speer, 2011).
- When clustered together **humility, gratitude and forgiveness** represent an orientation to leadership that “includes effectively handling oneself in a nonegocentric, positive and offense-resistant manner” (Grahek et al., 2010, p. 272).





What is it?



Forgiveness involves the ability to forgive when confronted with offenses, arguments, and mistakes. For servant leaders it is important to create an atmosphere of trust where people feel accepted, are free to make mistakes and know that they will not be rejected (Ferch, 2005).

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What Forgiveness is Not



- 
- Not something you do for the other person
 - Not pardoning or excusing the behavior

Forgiveness does not mean:

- you have to tell the person that he or she is forgiven.
- you will not have any more feelings about what happened.
- you have to forget what happened, or
- there is nothing else to work on and everything is okay now.
- the person gets to remain in your life.





Am I a Forgiving Person?



Self Quiz

- <http://www.belmontwellness.com/wp-content/uploads/Forgiveness-Self-Test1.jpg>



The Role of Forgiveness in Servant Leadership



- Active Listening – Servant leaders actively listen to their followers. (Mirroring, reflective listening)
- Empathy – Servant leaders have the ability to empathize. Empathy is the ability to detect and understand emotions being felt by others.
- Commitment to Growth – Servant leaders are personally committed to the personal and professional growth of their followers.

Sources:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-servant-leadership-definition-characteristics-examples.html>





Servant Leaders Listen

- “Servant leaders approach people by listening. True listening builds strength while lack of listening weakens people.” - Spears and Lawrence, p. 232
- “The first service that one owes to others in community consists in listening to them.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*
- Listening skills can be taught and are essential to an effective feedback loop between leadership, staff and students.





Servant Leaders



For servant leaders it is important to create an **atmosphere of trust** where people:

- feel accepted,
- are free to make mistakes,
- know that they will not be rejected.

(Ferch, 2005)





Compassionate Love is Foundational to the Ability to Forgive

- Forgiveness is a choice that comes from an attitude of compassionate love.
- Forgiveness, the choice to look past the failure or mistake of another, and to reconcile a relationship despite a perceived wrong, is a noble leadership quality of a compassionate and effective leader.





Self Assessment Reflection*



1. Would your staff describe you as a good listener?
2. What do you do to deliberately improve human relations in your school?
3. What have you done to encourage an atmosphere where feedback is sought and valued in your school?
4. What is the level of relational trust in your school? Do people trust each other?
5. Can one person's accomplishment be celebrated without a resultant boomerang of criticism for them?
6. Do you intentionally try to share leadership whenever possible?

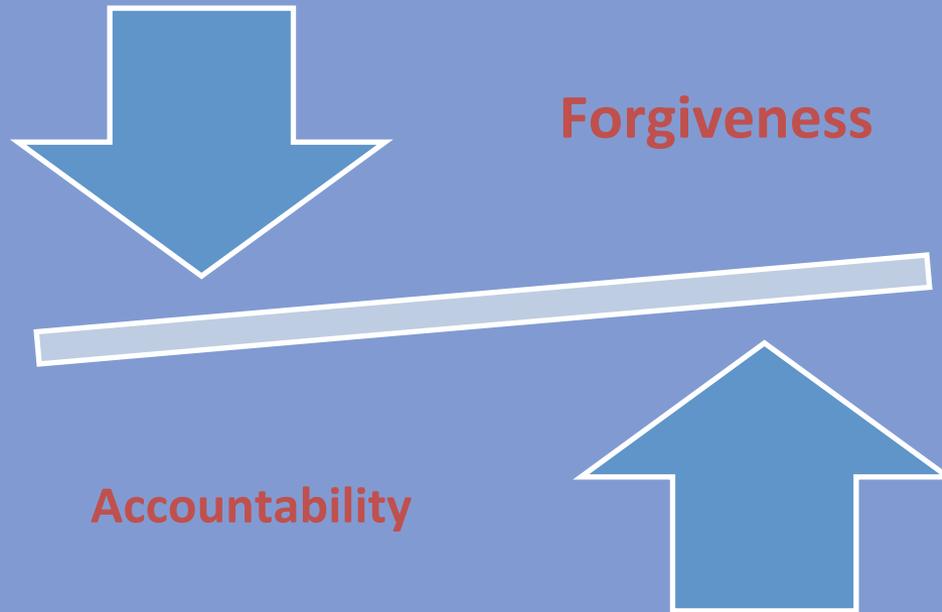
*based on Culver, 2008





Leadership

Requires a BALANCE



Can Forgiveness Benefit the Forgiver?



What might be the benefits to you when you forgive someone who hurt or harmed you?

What might be the benefits to you when you admit a mistake and ask for forgiveness?



So, How Do You Forgive?



- Think about what happened: Accept that it happened and how it made you feel and react.
- Consider if you learned something about yourself because of what happened
- Think about the person who harmed you. They are human and fallible, just like you and was operating from their own perception. What need were they trying to meet?





A Complete Apology



THE ART OF APOLOGY

1. Admit your error
2. Acknowledge the harm
3. Express your sorrow
4. Request forgiveness
5. Commit to change





Ntozange Shange in the Play “For Colored Girls Who have considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is enuf.”

one thing i don't need
is any more apologies
i got sorry greetin me at my front door
you can keep yrs

i cant use another sorry
next time you should admit
you're mean/ low-down/ triflin/ & no count straight out
steada bein sorry alla the time
enjoy bein yrself





Students (Those Served)



- Forgiveness as a Classroom Management Model
- Restorative Practices





Admitting Our Own Mistakes



- Leaders who admit mistakes publicly model the virtue of admitting mistakes for the whole organization.
- Covering up mistakes takes more time and energy than admitting them.

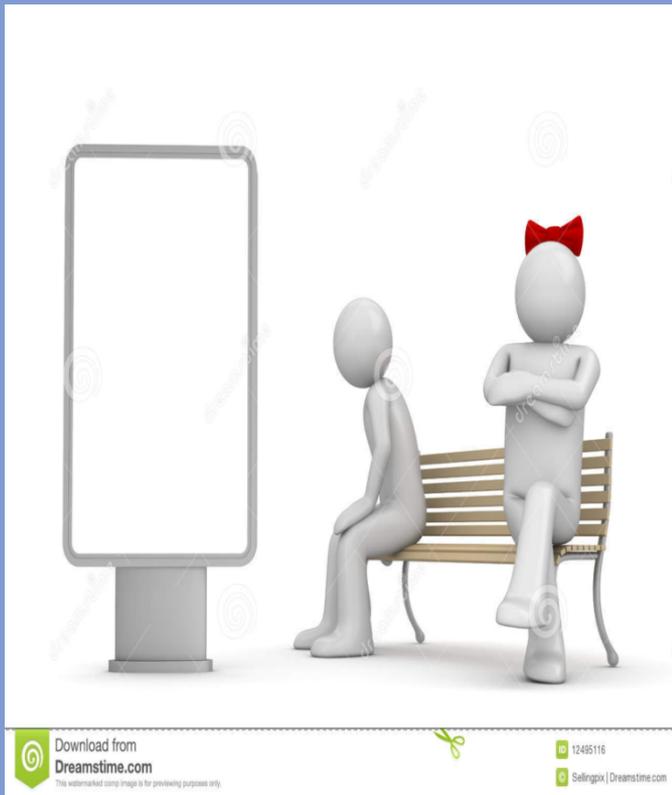




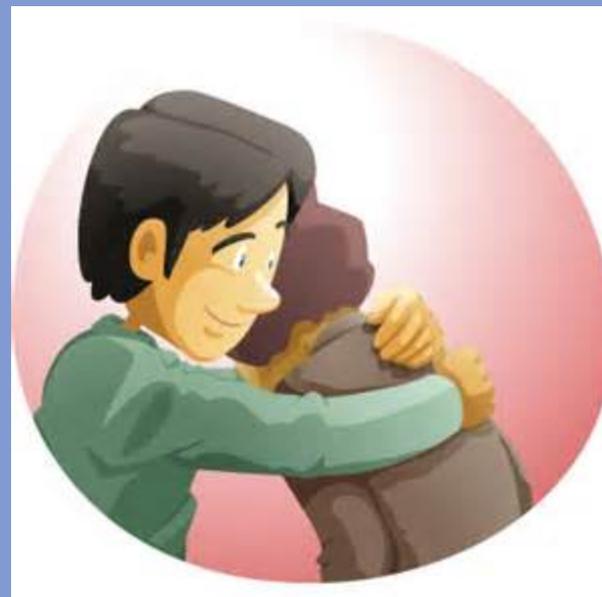
Forgiveness and Reconciliation Classroom Activities for Young Learners



First, Forgiveness



Second, Reconciliation





Who Says We Are Not Human? The Art and Science of Forgiveness in Educational Leadership



“It is **in forgiving that two parties reconcile** and freely choose to forgive and be forgiven in order to experience a cleansing spirit of embittered rigidity becoming transformative openness.

An effective leader is able to establish **relational trust** to forgive among individuals and the process becomes embedded in their life within an organization. Ferch and Mitchell (2001) call this ***intentional forgiveness***, which means a technique that gives specific guidelines of interpersonal reconciliation.

By granting forgiveness to a faculty, an academic administrator is actually creating an **environment of thriving**, allowing individuals to grow, while learning and contributing in a safe place where they feel they belong.”

- Undung, Y and de Guzman, A. October 2014 The 14th Annual SEAIR Conference





Example of Using Forgiveness to Defuse Conflict



[http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/
2013/04/02/us/20130403 RESTORATIVE.html](http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2013/04/02/us/20130403_RESTORATIVE.html)

See how this worked in New York schools.





Leaders Who Forgave



- “Forgiveness is the name of love practiced among people who love poorly. The hard truth is that all people love poorly. We need to forgive and be forgiven every day, every hour increasingly. That is the great work of love among the fellowship of the weak that is the human family.”
— [Henri J.M. Nouwen](#)
- “The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”
— [Mahatma Gandhi, All Men are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections](#)
- “To err is human, to forgive, divine.”
— [Alexander Pope, An Essay on Criticism](#)
- “Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.”
— [Corrie ten Boom](#)
- “Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude.”
— [Martin Luther King Jr.](#)





Choosing to Forgive



- “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”
— [Nelson Mandela](#)
- “Grudges are for those who insist that they are owed something; forgiveness, however, is for those who are substantial enough to move on.”
— [Criss Jami](#), [Salomé: In Every Inch In Every Mile](#)
- “To be wronged is nothing, unless you continue to remember it.”
— [Confucius](#)
- “As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.”
— [Nelson Mandela](#)
- “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our happiness”
— [Viktor Frankl](#)



Exemplars



- Martin Luther King, stated that the oppressor will never willingly give up power and advocated non-violence, but not silence. King proposed that we should love the oppressor with the goal of not only our own salvation, but the salvation of the one who harms us.
- Nelson Mandela, the first democratically elected president of South Africa, was an extraordinary servant-leader. He spend more than twenty-seven years as a political prisoner, yet refused to be vengeful either personally or politically. After his release, he refused to gain power by suppressing dissent. Ultimately, his refusal to deny the humanity of those who committed atrocities drew the people of his country toward the monumental task of forgiving even the worst brutalities.
- Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, and other democratically elected leaders designed the Truth in Reconciliation Commission in response to the atrocities committed during the apartheid years. The country implemented a plan of forgiveness and reconciliation, of restorative justice unlike any the global political community had ever known.





Video



Scene from "The Interpreter"
with Sean Penn and Nicole Kidman

[http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/the-interpreter/
choosing-forgiveness](http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/the-interpreter/choosing-forgiveness)





Closing Activity

“Triangle-Square-Circle”



Reflection

1. Draw a **triangle** and next to it write down **three important points** from the module.
2. Draw a **square** and next to it write down anything that “**squares**” **with your thinking**.
3. Draw a **circle** and next to it write down anything that is still “**circling**” **in your head or questions** that you have.

Partially quoted from:

<http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/triangle-square-circle>





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