

Reconciliation in clinical work

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Reconciliation

- may be defined as the restoration of trust in an interpersonal relationship

Trust

- Entails two components:
 - A belief that the other has good intentions
 - A belief that the other has sufficient competence

Reconciliation

- Is a major interpersonal achievement
- Presupposes a prior rupture or break in a relationship
- The break is usually due to harmful actions
- One or both parties felt hurt, diminished or wronged by the other

Vindication

- A process of restoring a sense of one's own worth after being hurt
- Two contrasting methods
 - By diminishing the worth of the other e.g. retaliation, revenge
 - By enhancing the worth of the self e.g. competence, forgiveness

Revenge

- The seeking of satisfaction by attempting to harm the other (or associated others) as a retaliatory measure for a perceived injury
- Actions taken in revenge tend to lead to further retaliation resulting in cycles of violence

Forgiveness

- A process that enables us to manage resentment and anger in the wake of being wronged
- Improves the likelihood of reconciliation
- May be unilateral or interactional
- May be implicit or explicit

Multiple victims

Primary victims

- The persons directly violated or offended

Secondary victims

- Family members and friends deeply hurt by the harm directed toward the primary victims

Tertiary victims

- Members of the same community or ethnic group as the primary victims

Multiple perpetrators

Primary perpetrators

- The persons who engage in practices of violence, exploitation, intimidation, or other injustices

Secondary perpetrators

- Persons who are complicit

Tertiary perpetrators

- Persons who collude

Magnitude gap

- An episode of interpersonal conflict usually entails destructive and hurtful behaviours perpetrated by both parties
- Thus, each party may be both victim and perpetrator
- However, the nature and degree of damage inflicted on each party differs

Credibility gap

- Following an interpersonal transgression, there is often a `credibility gap´ regarding the `offenses´ that were committed
- This gap is created by self-serving perceptual distortions on the part of both victims and perpetrators
- The gap is maintained or exacerbated by interpersonal patterns of maximizing and minimizing

Facilitating Reconciliation

- Prepare parties (separately if indicated)
- Create conditions for a safe meeting
- Enable communication and understanding
- Open space for apology and forgiveness
- Identify impasses and propose alternatives

Steps to reconcile

- Express a desire for a positive outcome
- Appreciate the other's participation
- Admit feelings of vulnerability (if safe)
- Acknowledge that real differences exist
- Apologize for overstatements or mistakes
- Acknowledge own anger and defensiveness
- Acknowledge underlying fear or hurt

Steps to reconcile (continued)

- Conduct a negative enquiry
 - Ask about the other's experience of one's own mistakes
 - Listen actively
 - Try to empathize
 - Acknowledge and accept the other's feelings
 - Apologize for the unintended effects of one's own behaviour

Steps to reconcile (continued)

- Try to enter into the experience of the other
- Clarify the different positions and their underlying assumptions and values
- Relinquish unimportant and/or untenable positions
- Ask for and/or accept forgiveness
- Search for new frames of reference that can encompass remaining differences

Forgiveness

- A willingness to abandon resentment and retribution while fostering compassion, empathy, generosity, and love
- A readiness to offer the offender a fresh start
- Must be offered freely
- External pressure to forgive can perpetrate further trauma

Forgiveness (social exchange theory view)

- When one person harms or transgresses another, whether intentionally or not, the event effectively creates an interpersonal `debt`
- Forgiveness essentially involves cancelling this `debt` by the person who has been wronged

Steps to granting forgiveness

- Recognize and acknowledge that one has been hurt
- Identify one's strong feelings about being wronged
- Let go of desires and/or needs that may never be fulfilled as a result of the offense
- Entertain a shift in one's perspective on the offender

(continued...)

Steps to forgiveness (continued)

- Separate the offender from the offense
- Develop some empathy and compassion for the offender without condoning the offense
- Construct a new understanding of the situation, of oneself, and of the offender
- (optional) Express forgiveness explicitly

Barriers to Forgiveness

- Victim-based
- Perpetrator-based

Barriers to Forgiveness (*victim-based*)

- Overwhelming negative emotions
- Fear that the transgression will be repeated
- Assumption that one needs to forget
- Fear of appearing weak
- Belief that justice will not be served by forgiving
- Lack of awareness of benefits to self

(cont..)

Barriers to Forgiveness (*victim-based cont...*)

- Belief that one deserved to be abused
- Danger of betraying third parties
- Loss of benefits of victim status
 - Right to criticize
 - Right to retaliate
 - Right to seek compensation
 - Right to hold a moral advantage

Barriers to Forgiveness (perpetrator-based)

- Continuing abuse/injustice
- Lack of regret or remorse in the perpetrator
- Absence of acknowledgement of the harm done
- Lack of explicit or genuine apology
- Lack of restitution or restorative action

Barriers to Apology

- Perpetrator-based
- Victim-based

Barriers to Apology (*perpetrator-based*)

- Lack of awareness of the harm done
- Inability to separate good intentions from bad effects
- Disagreement with the charges
- Fear of punishment and/or humiliation
- Fear of costs for restitution
- Propensity to project blame on others

Barriers to Apology *(victim-based)*

- Lack of awareness of harm to self
- Lack of contact with perpetrator due to safety needs of victim
- Lack of feedback to the perpetrator
- Desire to protect the perpetrator and/or the relationship
- Propensity to blame the self

Tangles of Shame and Guilt

- Two major sources:
 - External (mostly shame)
 - Specific shaming actions by others
 - Judgmental cultural beliefs/values
 - Internal (mostly guilt)
 - Own `wrong´ or harmful acts
 - Own acts of omission

Deconstructing Shame

- Acknowledge the injustices perpetrated against the self
- Identify one's own acts of resistance
- Honour the self for resisting
- Identify the self as a survivor

(continued...)

Deconstructing Shame

(continued)

- Mobilize feelings of outrage
- Openly disclose the injustices
- Hold perpetrators accountable
- Seek restorative action
- Open space for dialogue and possible apology
- Consider forgiveness

Deconstructing Guilt

- Identify and acknowledge having made mistakes
- Express regret and remorse
- Offer genuine apologies
- Take restorative action
- Seek forgiveness and reconciliation
- Share one's learning with others

Deconstructing Tertiary Guilt

- Identify one's connection with the primary perpetrators
- Acknowledge the mistakes that were made and/or are being made
- Adopt a stance of active protest against the injustice
- Express regret and remorse for mistakes
- Take some restorative action