The Adjustment of Boundaries and Forgiveness Through Divorce

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Abstract

Divorce can be a very traumatic event causing hate, sadness, resentment and other negative, intense feelings and actions. When couples seek to hurt and cause pain to the other person, they begin this destructive process of retaliation. “Forgiveness changes a person’s motivation from retaliation to reconciliation (McCullough, Fincham & Tsang, 2003; McCullough, Pargament & Thoresen, 2001; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997 as cited in Jordan, Flynn, & Cohen, 2015, p.442). The process of forgiveness and redefining boundaries can benefit couples going through the divorce process just as it can help during times in a marriage. Forgiveness of oneself and of others is a very powerful event to freeing oneself and gaining power that may have been lost. This literature review will examine the effect of forgiveness during marriage and how boundaries can be adjusted based on forgiveness. The adjustment of boundaries based on the result of the forgiveness process will be explored in the studies of divorced couples. Striving for superiority, an Adlerian concept, is a common concept in divorces. Striving for superiority will be explored within the topic of divorce by examining how couples can overcome constant striving by going through the process of forgiveness. By exploring forgiveness, boundaries, and relationships, the findings suggest that the power of forgiveness is not only a key to a successful divorce but also to a healthier divorce.
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The Adjustment of Boundaries and Forgiveness Through Divorce

Forgiveness is associated with marital satisfaction by creating a nurturing environment (Coleman, 1989). Divorce is known to be a severe stressor in life due to the dissolving of emotional attachments (Madden-Derdich & Arditti, 1999). Forgiveness after a divorce is strongly encouraged by professionals in the mental health field as it helps in the emotional healing process (Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004). By forgiving, individuals are releasing negative feelings and no longer want to return the hurt (Yánoz-Yaben, 2009). Forgiveness brings peace and the opportunity to move forward in life and divorce can provide the same opportunity. While going through the divorce process, ex-couples often retaliate against one another because it is easier to hurt someone rather than revealing one’s weaknesses and reaching out and asking for forgiveness or to forgive. Divorce does not have to leave ex-couples angry at the world for the rest of their lives. Divorce can be a life event that results with two people going their separate ways while not feeling emotionally damaged and resenting one another and causing long term damage. The process of forgiveness has the ability to empower individuals and help them strive for superiority when coming from a place of feeling inferior.

The roles of forgiveness and boundaries during the course of a marriage will be explored in this project to examine the relationship between forgiveness and boundaries after divorce. During a marriage, couples establish boundaries through discussion and trial and error. During a divorce, physical and emotional boundaries change but changing them presents its difficulties as communication lines are often hindered by overwhelming emotions. Throughout marriage or divorce, forgiveness can be difficult to practice but with the positive effects that forgiveness can have, forgiveness needs to have a place in marriage and divorce. Both marriage and divorce have their struggles but forgiveness should always be a part of both because as individuals forgive
they are placing themselves on an equal level with the other person (Coleman, 1989). This literature review will examine the possible relationship between couples who practice forgiveness during their marriage and whether they are more likely to forgive after divorce as well as how boundaries shift after divorce.

**Marriage and Divorce**

In marriage there are things that need to be established before a couple can practice forgiveness according to Coleman (1989). Coleman (1989) explains that relationships are needed, we have a need to lean on someone and have someone rely on us. There is a need for closeness and separateness in a marriage, this is to develop the faith in the other that they can respect the boundaries of understanding when the partner needs time alone and when the partner needs to be near the other. This can also include time during arguments and respecting when a person says they need space and time to think. There is also a need for understanding that people cannot change other people especially during a relationship. “When you say that your spouse has to change in order for you to be happy, then you’ve given up power of your own life” (Coleman, 1989, p. 161). So to get to forgiveness it is important in a marriage to establish groundwork to provide a strong foundation to overcome difficult times. Friendship, love, and similar interests are reported to be the most commonly stated reasons for staying married (Bachand & Caron, 2001). Love is also one of Alfred Adler’s three main life tasks along with occupation and other people and our relationships with them (Carlson, Watts, & Maniaci, 2006). A belief of Adler’s is that when it comes to the life tasks we work towards balancing them and when they are not in balance or are not being fulfilled, it creates a struggle. So if there is an issue in a marriage it must be solved otherwise it will effect overall functioning of an individual and spread into other areas of life.
When we look at couples that divorced, there are many that still say that they could have worked harder on the marriage (Scott, Rhoades, Stanley, Allen, & Markman, 2013). Working harder in a marriage could include forgiving the partner for mistakes or seeking out therapy when there were difficulties. Perhaps after hurtful events, the damage was done and even if forgiveness happened the marriage was still over, which some would expect in more severe events such as infidelity or abuse. However, couples report after divorcing because of such reasons as abuse or infidelity, it did not affect the desire for reconciliation due to the commitment that was present in the relationship (Hawkins, Willoughby, & Doherty, 2012).

When the wounds are too deep and the hurt is unforgiveable, couples report not wanting to make it work. When damage is deep it is difficult to re-live it over and over as couples work through their issues. Hanging on to resentments creates anger and pain, which affect one’s well-being and even physical health (Lowrance, 2010). Forgiveness creates freshness to a new life (Lowrance, 2010.) What is important to note is that educating individuals on the fact that hanging on to the pain is much more difficult than working through it. The long term effects and damage that is created by hanging on to regrets and resentments can lead to very long term and many painful moments but forgiving and moving on can lead to light at the end of a tunnel. Coping mechanisms such as drinking are often used only to find out that not only is the problem still there it feels worse and gets more painful. Anger builds and the longer it is held on to can lead to being an angry person and being angry is one thing but being an angry person has long term affects (Gustafson-Affinito, 2007).

**What is Forgiveness?**

Forgiveness is not about just saying “I forgive you”, forgiveness is about taking reflection on the situation and ourselves. Forgiveness can be described as making the “decision not to
punish the person(s) who have wronged you, taking action on that decision, and experiencing the emotional relief that follows” (Gustafson-Affinito, 2007, p. 4). Forgiveness is also a way to decrease the chances of depression and as stated by Coleman (1989), “forgiveness fills the hearts of the forgiver and the one forgiven” (p. 12). According to McNulty (2010), couples that divorce do not have to worry about their partner hurting them again and re-opening the wound. However, if they don’t go through the process of forgiveness then they are more likely to hold on to that grudge and let it continue to affect them. By forgiving, we are allowing ourselves to make movement and movement in a positive direction. What damage will be done by forgiving? The one who is forgiving may feel that if they forgive then they will be seen as weak or vulnerable or that if they forgive they are condoning the act that hurt them. Forgiveness should not be confused with reconciliation or forgetting or condoning (McNulty, 2010). While reconciliation could be negative and harmful in certain situations, the process of forgiveness is intended to be positive yet challenging. Forgiving another can be a long process as it involves reflection and time to process hurtful feelings. Rye, Pargament, Pan, Yingling, Shogren, and Ito (2005) found that many interventions for facilitating forgiveness for divorced individuals take longer than eight weeks because individuals held on to the feelings for such a long period of time. By processing through the emotions individuals are able to process through thoughts and have time to reflect. When feelings become uncomfortable or unknown, individuals can shut down, fight, or ignore. These actions may seem to help in the moment but after emotions have calmed, thoughts are clearer, and the actions do more harm and don’t help.

Rye et al. (2005) concluded learning how forgiveness was different than forgetting, condoning or reconciliation enabled clients to move forward in the forgiveness process. When individuals do not understand, some may have difficulty moving past the point. Educating
individuals on the process and results of forgiveness lays the groundwork for forgiveness to be intentional and meaningful. According to Coleman (1989) there are five phases of forgiveness. The first step is “Identifying the hurt and feeling remorse” which involves discussing and acknowledging the feelings of anger and hurt. The second step is “confessing and confronting”, which means taking responsibility for actions and the confrontation piece provides a pathway for trust in communication and the desire for the relationship to grow. The third step is “the dialogue of understanding”. This is the phase of being able to communicate the reasons behind the hurtful actions and reaching a point of understanding. The reasons are not a means to justifying the hurtful actions but to create dialogue of the feelings and hurt. The fourth phase is “to forgive and make reparation”. This phase is a means of stating forgiveness and using an act of love to bring the bond closer together. The last step is letting go and forgetting. This is the step that results in being able to move forward and not looking back at the hurtful times but being able to grow from them. This also means not using the time to use during the future when an argument may arise.

Knowing the phases of forgiveness can then be seen as a checklist for individuals to understand the process. If someone in the relationship is unaware of how to forgive, then providing guidance and direction can help the individual bring it to concepts they may understand.

Denied forgiveness is also an important topic to discuss because forgiveness is not always given and when forgiveness is denied an individual’s self-esteem is damaged. The research by Jennings, Worthington Jr., Tongeren, Hook, Davis, Gartner, Greer, and Mosher (2016) showed that when forgiveness is denied, the result is negative feelings by the transgressor. This rejection then results in both parties in the forgiveness dyad with negative feelings. While sometimes an individual may need more time to think about the apology such as in romantic relationship when
rejection and devaluation are especially harmful, the transgressor remains striving for superiority and working toward positive feelings (Jennings et al, 2016).

**Forgiveness During Marriage**

“Transgressors were less likely to repeat an offense after receiving forgiveness than after being denied forgiveness” (Jennings et al, 2016, p. 17). This is another powerful motivator for forgiveness to be used during a relationship. In a marriage, couples are motivated to forgive and overcome. People can gain in a relationship when they forgive and the gain is the continuation of the relationship. People that are in close relationships are more inclined to satisfy the needs of the partner and use allocate more of their resources (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). When forgiveness is denied in a marriage, it could be a reflection of resentment, withdrawal, or a difference in the couple’s readiness to forgive (Jennings et al, 2016).

Alfred Adler’s three life task- love and sex, occupation and other relationships, Love and sex are the most difficult to fulfill (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacchi, 2006). If a person rates their marriage as having a low score, then this is an area to focus, whether resentments, guilt, or anger are felt, forgiveness may be a good area to start. When there is an event in the relationship where feelings are hurt, there comes a time when the partner decides if they can forgive and whether the choice is made intentionally or not, a decision is made. In marriage how do we get to a point of forgiveness- relationships are needed (Coleman, 1989). There is a need for closeness and separateness in a marriage- to develop the faith in the other that they can respect those boundaries. If someone says that a relationship doesn’t matter anymore, know that negativity will bleed into other relationships.
“When you say that your spouse has to change in order for you to be happy, you’ve given up power of your own life” (Coleman, 1989, p. 161). In a marriage it is important to establish this groundwork for the process of forgiveness.

Forgiveness in a marriage is something that can keep couples connected. Marriage has its ups and downs but having the coping mechanisms to get through the tough times will continue to solidify to individuals as a team and married couple.

**Boundaries**

Emery and Dillon (1994) explain relationship boundaries as explicit or implicit rules that give guidance to the family structure and are negotiated over time. Based on pre-existing expectations, discussions and actions, couples are able to clarify boundaries and establish and adjust them as needed. When the divorce or separation occurs new boundaries need to be established, however, there is typically so much tension and hurt feelings that discussions are difficult but discussions are needed. Physical boundaries in a marriage are much different than boundaries in a divorce but when it comes to the emotional boundaries, lines are often blurred and confused. As the marriage dissolves, individuals that may have spent years with their lives intertwined, need to figure out how to separate their dependencies and learn how to handle them independently. Physical things can be separated and distributed but emotions and feelings don’t just end. Divorce involves the littlest details sometimes and unraveling a marriage can last longer than the marriage lasted. When entering into a relationship people establish boundaries and as the relationship progresses, boundaries may become clearer with communication. When it comes to divorce, communication is often limited or often if there is communication the purpose is just to hurt the other person. Emery and Dillon (1994) explain that “boundaries are difficult to renegotiate following a marital separation, however, because of uncertain normative
expectations, intense and painful emotions, incompatible desires, limited contact, and communication, and loyalty dilemmas” (p. 374).

Boundaries shift during the process of a divorce which can create new conflicts. According to Ramisch, McVicker, and Sahin (2009) divorcing partners separate their marital and parental roles which have been bound together by their marriage. Now through the divorce, ex-couples are negotiating the various roles as well as custody of the children, and many other tasks.

**Divorce**

Kanewischer and Harris (2015) found that when couples divorce, it was not a discussion between them but rather an internal decision that was solidified after it had been discussed with friends. Many couples report considering divorce for over five years or even longer because of the complexities of divorce (Canham, Mahmood, Scott, Sixsmith, & O’Rourke, 2014). When reasons for divorce in Israeli couples were explored by Cohen and Finzi-Dottan (2012), they found that couples agreed divorce was for the following reasons: extramarital affairs and problems inherent in the relationship, and the other couples disagreed with the women stating a problematic relationship with the men stating an extramarital affair was the cause of the divorce. This study shows that even though couples agree with divorce, the reasons for divorce are not agreed upon. This can also add extra challenges to the process as they are not even fighting over the same thing and this also displays a lack of communication during the marriage. Whether couples agree or disagree on why they are getting a divorce, feelings of resentment, anger, and anxiety can still surface during the transition from marriage to divorce.

Hawkins, Willoughby, and Doherty (2012) found that in about 75% of divorced couples, at least one partner had regrets about the divorce because of wishing they would have tried harder to make the relationship work. The fact that couples may not have put enough time and
thought into the process prior to finalizing the divorce should encourage couples to look at other options during the process. Sometimes it is a matter of taking time to process the events and feelings that happened and deciding if divorce is the only solution. Sometimes divorce is the only solution for couples that were in unhealthy abusive relationships but other times, as the study showed maybe more time is needed to carefully consider all options. Hawkins et al. (2012) found the most commonly reported reason for divorce was growing apart followed by not being able to talk together, money problems, personal problems with their spouse, infidelity, and not getting enough attention. With these couples the study found that 26% of the couples had some agreement their marriage could be saved and 33% had some interest in reconciliation services if they were offered. Hawkins et al. (2012) also found the most cited reasons for divorce also involved the most willing couples to receive interventions of reconciliation services in their marriage. The fact that even some couples have thoughts of reconciliation services shows that forgiveness should play a part during the divorce process so couples have the chance to possibly reconcile. However, there are couples that divorce which experience negative feelings towards their ex-spouse even a decade later because it affects so many aspects of the individual’s life (Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004).

**Forgiveness After Divorce**

During the process of a divorce, the motivation of continuing the marriage is lost and instead, damaged feelings and painful experiences are shared. When couples divorce, they point responsibilities at one another- who is responsible for what and who caused the divorce- who is to blame (Lowrance, 2010). This is where forgiveness comes in- when it comes time for ex-couples to look inward and admit what their share was in the divorce and work to forgive themselves as well as their partner. No matter what the reason for divorce may be, post-divorce
couples still need to move forward in life. Some may choose to dwell on the negative aspects of divorce and others want to move towards a positive life and overcome the divorce.

Forgiveness may be particularly well-suited to the challenges faced by divorced individuals because it addresses the powerful negative thoughts and emotions experienced by many former spouses and can be pursued irrespective of whether there is ongoing conflict with an ex-spouse. (Rye, et al, 2005, p. 880)

Forgiveness has been shown to be effective with those that “have experienced deep, personal, and unfair hurts” (Freedman, 2011, p.334). There may be unfairness seen in the partner that initiates divorce as they often have an easier time adjusting to the divorce compared to the partner who did not initiate the divorce (Cohen & Finzi- Dottan, 2012). The partner that initiates divorce has signaled that they are ready for divorce compared to the other partner receiving a physical sign that the marriage is soon to be over. This may cause even more feelings of resentment and anger. Rohde-Brown and Rudestam (2011) found that sooner divorced individuals begin the work of forgiveness, the less likely they were to hold on to anger. Yárnoz -Yaben (2015) found forgiveness is a necessary step in post-divorce relationships in that those that are more willing to forgive are more likely to have positive relationships with others and have better social support. By doing so the divorced couple is able to have civilized interactions and move forward in life rather than dwelling on the past and harboring negative feelings. While forgiveness promotes positive relationships and cooperation, forgiveness too soon or avoidance of forgiveness can lead to deeper damage if there is abuse or other severe causes of hurt feelings where boundaries are crossed.
The Adjustment of Boundaries After Divorce

During a marriage couples may discuss boundaries such as expectations for fidelity and management of relationship with coworkers and friends (Scott et al., 2013). As situations arise, couples may readdress their boundaries and adjust them as needed and sometimes the act of forgiveness may take place. For example, a couple may have an argument that one of them did not take out the garbage. That boundary may have already been set, apologies are expressed, the other forgives and they move on. When it comes to more serious offenses such as crossing the boundary of infidelity, forgiveness may not be given so quickly. Forgiveness is a reflection of boundaries in a relationship. Someone may be more able to forgive when strong boundaries are not present but if the boundary is firm then they are not able to forgive as easily. During the process of divorce, belongings are sorted out and financials are sorted out. The impact varies as a result of this. Boundaries may also just naturally fall into place when it comes to taking care of the household, paying bills and caring for the children. Boss (1999) discusses family members having different thoughts on family boundaries on the ex-spouse. While the boundary may have been clearly adjusted for the ex-spouse, the other family members may still feel the ex-spouse is still family. Communication is so critical even after divorce, so when couples cut off communication during or after divorce, it can create even more confusion rather than having a civilized discussion to understand one another.

Couples that are divorcing are clarifying “new boundaries by shifting role definitions and expectations from what it means to be a married couple to what it means to be a formerly married couple (Cole & Cole, 1999, as cited in Ramisch, McVicker, & Sahin, 2009, p. 483). During a marriage, couples have agreed to share the responsibilities and care for one another. They now have identities of husband, wife or partner, and maybe mom, dad, or step-parent.
Through the process of divorce, couples are no longer willingly sharing responsibilities or caring for one another. Their identities change to divorced and maybe they no longer see the children that once called them mom or dad. Courts, lawyers and judges begin to make determinations and couples and individuals lose the power they once had to make decisions and now others are making decisions for their lives. Boundaries that were once established are now being challenged and changed, and new boundaries are needing to be put in place. The roles that ex-couples once had are now changed. The process of divorce undoubtedly changes boundaries, but learning forgiveness and going through the process of forgiveness will provide a positive adjustment in boundaries.

**The Effect of Forgiveness on Boundaries**

Coleman (1989) states “you always run the risk of resenting those people who expose your weaknesses” (p. 160). Boundaries are often crossed during divorce as weaknesses are exposed and it is difficult to forgive after some boundaries are crossed. Resentments hinder the process of forgiveness and while there is encouragement towards forgiveness in many situations, as said previously, there can be the case of too much forgiveness or avoidance of forgiveness. Holding on to negative feelings can help protect individuals from going back to unhealthy relationships but if boundaries have not adjusted, then they run the risk of being hurt again.

Yárnoz -Yaben (2015) explains it very well that too much forgiveness can be damaging in that the one forgiving loses self- respect and self-concept clarity. In cases where abuse causes divorce it would be important for the abused partner to know that forgiveness is about keeping their self-respect in order to not go back to the relationship. When boundaries are a reflection of true wants and needs, they help maintain self- respect and self-clarity as well as knowing when boundaries need to be readjusted or when to stand firm.
Boundaries will change after divorce and they should as things are different. However, changing for the positive or negative is up to the individuals involved. Changing boundaries because of holding on to hate and resentments versus changing boundaries due to regaining power and taking accountability are going to result in much different outcomes. If boundaries have been clearly redefined than couples no longer seek one another out for guidance on personal issues but if boundaries are blurry and not defined, former spouses still seek one another out for advice on personal advice and still have hopes of getting back together (Peterson & Christensen, 2002). Couples that divorce because of growing apart may have a very difficult time discussing new boundaries. At one point in their relationship, they were able to come together and make decisions and now they are divorcing and the focus becomes their inability to make decisions together. Failing to make decisions then result in attacks against one another and striving to overcome.

**Striving for Superiority in the Process of a Divorce**

Everyone strives to overcome. Ways of overcoming are developed early in life as result of moments of frustration, feeling inferior, compensating followed with additional striving (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999). Striving results in a feeling of inferiority due to the struggle one may go through during moments of difficulty.

Difficult questions in life, dangers, emergencies, disappointments, worries and losses, especially those of loved persons, social pressures of all kinds, may always be seen as included within the framework of the inferiority feeling, mostly in the form of the universally recognizable emotions and states of mind which we know as anxiety, sorrow, despair, shame, shyness, embarrassment, and disgust. (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956/1964, p. 117)
In a marriage, couples may feel a stronger desire to communicate and work through the forgiveness process but once they start the divorce process, couples are distant and often times constantly in the mode of striving for superiority. Striving for superiority is a concept by Alfred Adler suggesting one is going from a perceived minus situation to a perceived plus (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999). A divorce is often seen as negative situation where couples are trying to find their perceived plus. Couples are striving to overcome this difficult situation that creates “increased social isolation, lower standard of living for women, increased difficulty raising children, increased risk of health problems, and psychological distress divorced individuals” (Rye et al., 2004, p. 32). There are perceived minuses that individuals face during a divorce and it is often seen that those going through a divorce choose the route of damaging others in order to achieve their plus. Forgiveness can help individuals focus on social interest to be compassionate, caring and contribute to the overall situation rather than hurting others at the expense of gaining (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999).

**Giving permission**

When we give ourselves permission, it is a relief of pressure and results in a very emotional response. Giving permission to forgive ourselves may need to come before forgiving a significant other. Brene Brown (2010) writes, “owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it” (p. 6). Divorce is not the ideal result for many people as many people believe strongly about the commitment in and to marriage. If an individual that has a strong belief in marriage and ends up divorced, facing their story could be difficult. At some point giving themselves permission to be divorced should be addressed. It may seem like a simple task for an individual to say “I give myself permission to be divorced” but forgiving ourselves may need to come during that process as well. Baum (2007) explored the
feeling of guilt from those that initiated divorce and found that those that initiate divorce do indeed feel guilty about the perception of the act of divorce and not being seen as a good wife or husband. After the divorce has been finalized in court and the couple has physically separated, emotionally speaking may be a very different story. Divorce can take years to emotionally process so while the divorce is physically done on paper, the emotions are not finalized so concretely. Some research has shown that divorced individuals when compared to married couples, experience higher levels of psychological distress, substance abuse, and depression as well as overall lower levels of general health (Scott et al., 2013). The emotional ties remain so giving permission to work through the new feelings that result can empower individuals to not only be divorced but to give permission to forgive themselves and their ex-partner.

Summary

A successful marriage is about individuals feeling equal to one another and operating under terms of cooperation (Carlson & Slavik, 1997). A goal of marriage and divorce is to be happy and healthy. If couples are not happy in their marriage then they often will seek out divorce, which is what they believe will bring them happiness. As discussed, divorce does not bring in and of itself bring happiness, but it brings other difficult emotions that are often unexpected. Whether a couple remains married or gets a divorce, it is important to look at what encourages marriages to work as it can also be used to help divorced couples to help them be successful. When looking at what encourages couples to remain married, Previti and Amato (2003) found that couples often reported that it came down to “love, respect, friendship, and good communication” (p. 570). When it came to communication, a couple gave the example of “we talk to each other before anything becomes a problem” (p. 566). If problems don’t get resolved they just become larger, so by couples communicating and forgiving before they end up
in divorce court, couples can avoid hurting one another even more and stop the cycle of hurt and anger. Even though some couples problems lead them to divorces, they can still have respect, friendship, and good communication and some level of love through forgiveness.

Forgiveness involves communication, so referencing the research by Previ and Amato in 2003, forgiveness is seen in happy marriages, while the lack there of may result in divorce or an unhappy marriage. Even after a couple divorces, forgiveness should still be a part of their process to encourage communication. The reasons most cited for getting through the tough times and not getting a divorce involved improved communication, relying on one another and working together and seeking professional help (Kanewischer & Harris, 2015). Partners acknowledge that the “capacity to seek and grant forgiveness is one of the most important factors contributing to marital longevity and satisfaction” (Fenell, 1993 as cited in Fincham, Paleari & Regalia, 2002, p. 27).

Though couples still continue to proceed with the divorce, there will come a time when they reflect on the relationship and who they are now. Through self-reflection and life adjustments, individuals can achieve forgiveness, reaching the point when they no longer hurt and move on from the pain, guilt, anger and resentments that often result from a divorce. The outcome will result in the ability to move forward in life by forgiving one’s own faults and others. Forgiveness during a marriage and divorce should be motivated by personal growth or growth in the relationship and result in adjustment in boundaries. “When people forgive they are becoming motivated to pursue relationship- constructive, rather than relationship-destructive, actions toward an offending relationship partner” (McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal, 1997, p. 333).
Presentation Reflection

The presentation of my project went overall very well. Leading up to the presentation, I reserved a room at the Inver Glen Library in Inver Grove Heights and sent out invites to professionals in the field. I received eight responses from people that would attend and had 4 actually attend my presentation. The feedback that I received from the attendees was really supportive and gave me ways to improve along with areas I did well. An area of improvement included not saying “um” and “so” as much as I did. I practiced so many times prior to the presentation and that was one of the areas I worked on improving but I had a bit of stage fright I guess. In regards to areas that were strong, the feedback stated the material was good, well organized and well presented. After the presentation, the attendees shared that they learned about the emotional toll divorce takes on an individual and the amount of time it can take to get over a divorce. They also shared that forgiveness is not something that is easy and it was a good topic to combine with divorce. There were also questions about whether men or women are more inclined to forgive and some thought men were more likely to forgive than women and others thought women were more likely to forgive based on women tending to be more empathetic. The presentation really brought up good discussion points in regards to forgiveness and divorce.

If I were to give the presentation again, I would make notecards to reference so I would not need to stand behind the podium and practice the presentation in the room. Having notecards would have helped me be able to move and make better eye contact with the audience. If I would have taken the time to practice in the room, I could have gotten more comfortable in the space which would have reduced some anxiety and been able see if there were any obstacles. Another thing that I would add next time is making sure each slide had notes to go along with it. I thought
I would be able to speak off the cuff based on some of the content in the slides but I found that it wasn’t as easy to do once I was in front of the audience.

Even though I took the time to practice and had back up plans, my nerves still got the best of me at certain moments. I’ve given many professional presentations but this one is very important to me as I have worked for almost 7 years towards this paper and presentation. My family, teachers, friends, and coworkers have supported me through it all and I am so grateful, for I would not have made it without all of them.
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