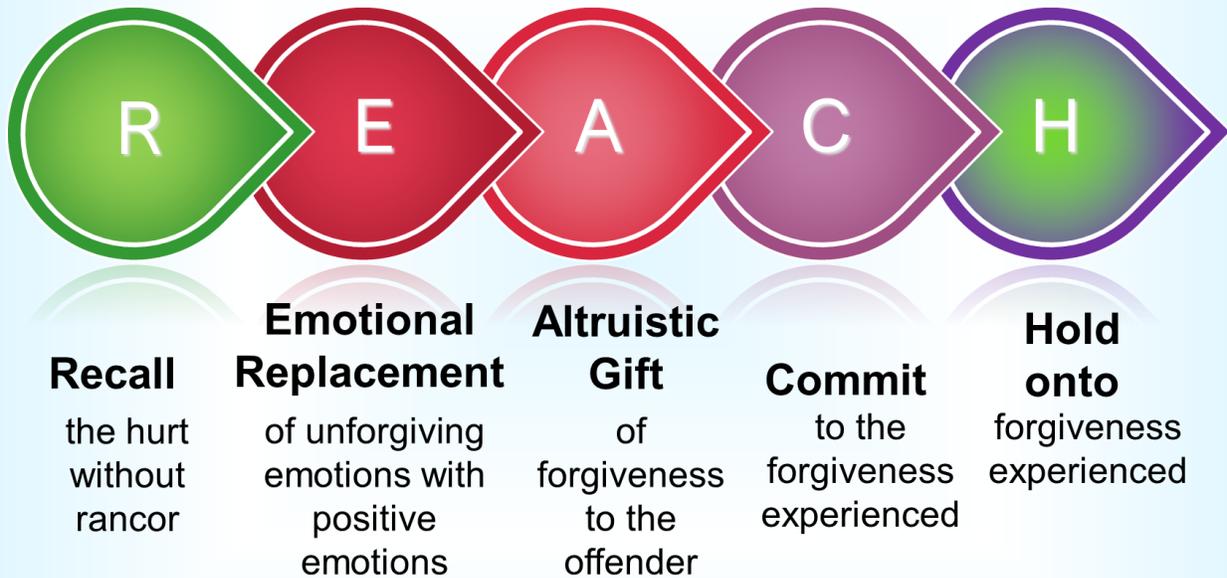




# REACH



## REACH Model of Forgiveness

**R** stands for recall the hurt, in as objective a way as you can. Do not think of the other person as evil. Do not wallow in self-pity. Take deep, slow, and calming breaths as you visualize the event. Write it down if necessary.

**E** stands for empathize with the person who hurt you, or emotional replacement of unforgiving emotions with more positive ones. Try to understand from the perpetrator's point of view why this person hurt you. This is not easy, but make up a plausible story that the transgressor might tell if challenged to explain. To help you do this, remember the following: When others feel their survival is threatened, they will hurt innocents. People who attack others are themselves usually in a state of fear, worry, and hurt. The situation a person finds himself in, and not his underlying personality, can lead to hurting. People often don't think when they hurt others; they just lash out. The purpose is not to find out the exact reason why it happened, but to create a reason that you can live with that is more life affirming.



**A** stands for giving the altruistic gift of forgiveness to the offender, another difficult step. First, recall a time you transgressed, felt guilty, and were forgiven. This was a gift you were given by another person because you needed it, and you were grateful for this gift. Giving this gift usually makes us feel better. As the saying goes: If you want to be happy... ...for an hour, take a nap. ...for a day, go fishing. ...for a month, get married. ...for a year, get an inheritance. ...for a lifetime, help someone. But we do not give this gift out of self-interest. Rather, we give it because it is for the trespasser's own good. Tell yourself you can rise above hurt and vengeance. If you give the gift grudgingly, however, it will not set you free.

**C** stands for commit yourself to forgive experiences; do it publicly. Write a letter/certificate of forgiveness to the offender, write it in their diary, write a poem or song, or tell a trusted friend what they have done. Yes, do it publicly. These are all contracts of forgiveness that lead to the final step.

**H** stands for hold on to the forgiveness experienced. This is another difficult step, because memories of the event will surely recur. Forgiveness is not erasure; rather, it is a change in the tag lines that a memory carries. It is important to realize that the memories do not mean unforgiveness. Don't dwell vengefully on the memories, and don't wallow in them.

This all may sound mushy and preachy to you. What transforms it to science is that there are at least eight controlled-outcome studies measuring the consequences of procedures like REACH. The components of the intervention were carefully scripted and paralleled those above, with emphasis on taking less offense and revising the story of the grievance toward an objective perspective. Less anger, less stress, more optimism, better reported health, and more forgiveness ensued, and the effects were sizable.

Forgiveness happens the moment you say no to carrying this pain, this weight, this hurt, and let go of it all. Say aloud or to yourself, "Forgive me, I have used your words and actions against myself, and I will no longer use them to hurt myself again."