Unit 5 -

Making Amends
And
Forgiveness

“An eye for an eye only makes the whole world blind.”
-- Gandhi

“Forgetness is more manly than punishment”
-- Gandhi,
(Young India, August 11, 1920;
quoted in ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS, p. 94)

“Forgetness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere
necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning.”
Martin Luther King, Jr., STRENGTH TO LOVE

“Forgetness is not an occasional act;
it is a permanent attitude.”
Dr. King, THE STRENGTH TO LOVE, p. 26.
Rationale for the Components of This Unit

ACTIVITY #1: Being Forgiven and Making Amends – p. 109

Because it is easier to consider forgiving others when we first reflect on how we have been forgiven by others, this activity comes first in this unit. Besides the words and example of Gandhi, this activity offers two other models – Willie, one of the offenders in the Violent Offender Program, a case study closer to most students’ experience.

This activity stresses the need to make amends than just apologize for hurting others, so that we take full responsibility for our actions and make our apologies mean something real.

Gandhi’s commitment to make amends for the violence of others may be something your students aren’t ready for yet. If they aren’t ready, then the option of “Solidarity Days” will also be too much for your students. But you might consider using it later.

ACTIVITY #2: Responding to Gandhi & King on Forgiveness – p. 118

In addition to the examples of Gandhi and King, this activity describes two stories of Arun Gandhi’s own struggles to overcome a desire for vengeance and come to forgiveness. Students should be able to relate to the story from his youth, especially if you used Arun’s description of what his grandfather taught him about anger (Unit 3, pp. 75-77).

Depending on how much time you have for this unit, you might consider using the pages on “Further Exploration into Forgiveness” and the models of forgiveness identified in the “Resources” (pp. 301-302).

ACTIVITY #3: “Burying Our Grudges” – p. 128

This activity provides an experiential climax to this unit, linking with the “Letting Go of Grudges” Worksheet from the previous ACTIVITY. This burial ritual provides the personal application of the unit and is consistently effective.

Other Affective Options

You might consider some of the songs and videos listed in “Resources” (pp. 301-302)
ACTIVITY #1: Being Forgiven and Making Amends

STEP 1 - Thinking Through Being Forgiven

**Rationale:** Before asking students to face the challenges of making amends for the hurts they have caused and of forgiving others who have hurt them, it is helpful for students to realize how they have been forgiven. It makes them more willing to reach out to others.

Have students make a list of times they remember being forgiven by others. Have them choose one of these times and write an essay about that situation in which they answer these questions:
- what had you done to that person?
- when and how did they forgive you?
- how did it feel to be forgiven?
- did you do anything to make amends to that person? If so, what?
- how did it feel to make amends?

STEP 2 - Gandhi on Making Amends

- Have students read the two stories about Gandhi on "Making Amends for One's Own Misdeeds" and "For Killing a Family" (pp. 111-112) and write their answers to the discussion questions, perhaps sharing them in pairs, before discussing them as a whole class.
- For "For Killing a Family," you might also use the GANDHI Video, Part II, 1:01:00-1:06:00 for the dramatic portrayal of this episode.

STEP 3 - Essay on "To Forgive and to Seek Forgiveness"

- Have students read the essay (pp. 113-114) by a member of the Violent Offender Program and answer the questions. Some of these are quite personal, so students should not be compelled to share them in pairs or with the whole class, unless they are comfortable doing to.
- You can use the "Making Amends Worksheet" (p. 115) as a tool for one of the questions.

STEP 4 - "Making Amends Worksheet"

- Use the "Making Amends" Worksheet as a way of identifying the people you have hurt in some way, how you think they felt, and what you could do to make amends to them.
- As a way of deepening the experience of empathy, you might have students use the "SOS Process" (Unit 4, pp. 94-97) and have them write the hurtful situation from the perspective of the person they hurt.
STEP 5 - Case Studies on Apologizing and Making Amends

- Present the case studies (p. 116) and have students discuss to handle the situations.

- You might have students roleplay these situations, perhaps several times, each time inviting a different student to demonstrate how they would handle the situation.

- Invite students to identify situations from their own lives that they would like to roleplay as a way of getting greater insight on how to handle them.

STEP 6 - Making Amends for the Violence of Others

- Have students read the account of Gandhi’s fast (p. 117) and invite any clarification questions to make sure they understand.

- Use one of several segments from the GANDHI Video where Gandhi fasted to make amends for the violence of others:
  - After the murder of Indian police in Chauri Choura, Part I, 1:38:00 – 1:47:00
  - In the midst of Hindu-Muslim violence, Part II, 52:00 – 1:01:00

- Have them write their answers to the discussion questions, perhaps sharing them in pairs, before discussing them as a whole class.

STEP 7 - OPTIONAL: “Solidarity Days”

- You might offer students the option of setting aside one day a week or month as a “Solidarity Day” during which they might make some kind of sacrifices as a way of making amends for some of the violence in our world.

- This might also include some form of “mindfulness” where participants would focus on the situation/people in meditative silence several times during the day.

- It would be good to invite participants to take some kind of action on behalf of those victims of violence in the situation on which they are focused – a letter to political leaders, perhaps also to their local newspaper or school paper, on behalf of these people; a letter to the people themselves, if appropriate; giving up some treats and sending the savings to the people or a group working on their behalf.

- The calendar in Appendix C offers many appropriate days which could be designated “Solidarity Days.” Fridays are one good option for focusing on violence in the Middle East or wider Arab world, because of its sacredness for Muslims and the Jewish Sabbath begins on Friday evening.
Gandhi on Making Amends

For One's Own Misdeeds

The Notebook. Arun Gandhi describes a deeply touching moment in Gandhi's life, a moment he regretted for the rest of his life. He and Kasturba were married for 61 years when they were both imprisoned at the same place. Each day Gandhi spent an hour helping her improve her education, including her writing skills. “To conserve paper Kasturba plodded with her writing skills on a slate. One day she learned that a prisoner could requisition notebooks from the prison authorities. ‘Can you get me a notebook,’ she asked Mohandas at an inopportune moment. Bapu was unhappy with the way things were shaping up. Indian politicians were ignoring his advice, which meant the future of the country was not going to be molded in the image he had in mind. To add to these tensions, Ba had not done her lessons correctly.

‘I'll get you a notebook when you learn to write properly. Until then you must use the slate,’ Mohandas said caustically. This remark cut Kasturba to the bone. She quietly placed her slate on Mohandas' table and said resolutely, 'I am done with my lessons for life, thank you.' She then walked out of the room. He tried to make amends but it was too late. A few days later, Pyarelal tried to soothe her ruffled feelings by giving her a notebook as a gift. Ba knew where it came from. She took the notebook and placed it on Bapu's desk, saying 'What does an illiterate like me need a notebook for?'

That was the end of the educational program. She never picked up her slate again, in spite of numerous apologies tendered by Mohandas. That notebook - a grim reminder of his indiscretion - remained in Grandfather's possession till the day he died.” Arun & Sunanda Gandhi, THE FORGOTTEN WOMAN, pp. 296-7.

Questions:

Why was Kasturba hurt so deeply by Gandhi's remark?

How can you make amends for such a hurt?

Why did Gandhi keep the notebook the rest of his life? What good do you think it did for him?

Use the “Making Amends” worksheet as a way of identifying the people you have hurt with thoughtless or hateful remarks, how you think they felt, and what you could do to make amends to them.
Making amends for killing a family - “Raise him as a Muslim”

“Souren Bannerji had always thought of himself as a peaceful man. But when his wife, son, and daughter were raped and murdered by a hate-filled crowd of Muslims in Calcutta in 1946, he was led to an unthinkable response. Souren found himself joining violent Hindu mobs, seeking revenge. Before he had time to realize what he was doing, he was involved in the massacre of a Muslim family. Having killed a child, Souren knew he’d be haunted forever... [when he learned of Gandhi’s fasting unto death for this violence, he went to him and pleaded for forgiveness] ‘I have committed a heinous crime. I murdered a Muslim family after my family was kidded. My life has become a living hell. I can’t accept the additional burden of your death on my conscience, Bapu. Please give up your fast.’ ... ‘If you want to atone for your sin, I have a suggestion... First, for yourself, go and find an orphan Muslim baby and nurture the baby as your own. You must allow the baby to grow up in its own faith.’ ...

Souren did not forget the words Gandhi had spoken to him. In his search for an orphaned Muslim child, he found a young Muslim mother with an infant baby who had miraculously escaped death. Her husband and family had been killed, she had been repeatedly raped, and now she was an outcast. One moment of madness had changed her life forever, just as it had changed Souren’s life. As they told each other of their suffering, Souren and Maryam found they had much in common. Slowly a relationship developed. One day Souren shared with Maryam the last words he had heard from Gandhi: ‘We are one human race. Don’t let religion divide us.’ Souren and Maryam were married. In the spirit of Gandhi, they decided they would study both of their religions and absorb the good each had to offer. I met Souren in Bombay several years later. He and Maryam had two children: Maryam’s son, whom Souren had adopted, and a daughter... They confided, ‘We understand what Gandhi meant when he said, ‘Change can come only one life at a time.’” Arun Gandhi, "Overcoming Hatred and Revenge through Love," FELLOWSHIP MAGAZINE, July/August 1998.

Questions:

What can you learn about atonement and making amends from this story?

This story clearly had a happy ending. This doesn’t always happen. Have you ever reached out to someone you hurt and tried to apologize but they wouldn’t listen to you or accept your apology? How did that feel?

Did you try again? If so, what happened? If not, would it good for you to try again? You can’t control how a person will respond, but you can be true to your best self.
“To Forgive and Seek Forgiveness”

Note: This essay was written by a prison inmate in the Violent Offender Program that began at Missouri Eastern Correctional Center.

“To forgive and seek forgiveness is a path I have just begun to walk. I was taught that to forgive was a sign of weakness, and I bought into it. I thought to show weakness was deadly in the environment I grew up in. It was a dog-eat-dog kind of thing, where I was either a victim or a victimizer, so I chose victimizer. I showed no remorse towards anyone, not even my family. I had pain inside of me, and I wanted everyone I came in touch with to feel it.

After 3 years in prison, I knew I had to deal with the pain, the pain I had inside, plus the pain I put my family and friends and their families through. I started with myself; I had to admit I was a criminal (robber, thief, rapist, and violent). Only after I could see myself as I really am, could I begin to forgive myself—for stealing from my friends, family, and neighbors, for taking away people’s security, taking their dignity plus their humanity. After I forgave myself, I could start myself on the way to seek forgiveness. I started with my own family; I wrote each of them an apology letter. In this letter, I had to apologize for the specific things I did to each of them. I had to do the same with my friends; I had to be specific about what I did to each of them.

I also had many unknown victims, and I had to try to think of how to apologize to them and get them to forgive me, and for me, this is the most difficult part of seeking forgiveness. I would have to prove I was worth forgiving, so I worked each day making myself a better person.

I spend a lot of time helping other offenders work on their problems, and each offender also helps me work on my problems. I can continue to put my best effort into making amends for what I have done, plus forgiving myself. I know this will be hard to do, so I may have to start off with the little or small things first.

One thing I had to do was cut my friendship off from people who did not like my choice to change. I had to hang with people who were doing the same positive things that I’m now trying to do. I have to keep check on my thoughts, and be considerate of other people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as well as my own.” --Willie, Jr.

Questions:

Can you identify in any way with Willie’s experience that got him to prison or his sense that forgiveness is a sign of weakness? How so?
Have you said or done anything in your life that was extremely hurtful to others, especially those you care for, that you haven’t forgiven yourself for? Are you carrying around a lot of guilt about this? If so, try to write about it here. Also, consider sharing this with a trusted adult and ask him to help you forgive yourself.

As Willie did, make a list of all those whom you have hurt in some way. Then try to identify how each of them felt about what you did or said and what you could do to reach out to them, apologize, and make amends. You might use the “Making Amends Worksheet” for doing this.

Willie realized that he would have to prove he was worth forgiving, so he worked each day to make himself a better person. What are some of the things you could begin to do to follow his example?

He also realized that he had to associate with positive people who would encourage him to be his best self, instead of hanging with people who encourage the opposite. Make a list of the people you hang out with and identify which of them encourage your best self and which of them do the opposite. Do you need to make some changes in your associations? Decide what you need to do and write down your first step(s).
Making Amends Worksheet

Write the names of all the people you can remember having hurt in some way (in the 1st column), how you think they felt (2nd column), and how you could make amends (3rd column)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>How They Felt</th>
<th>How I Could Make Amends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Choose one of these persons to address. Now close your eyes and imagine the offended person in front of you. Then write a letter telling that person how you hurt them and how you think they felt. Then add your apology.

Then add to your letter what you are going to do to make amends to that person for what you have done to them. Whether or not you mail it, the letter is important way for you to identify and take responsibility for your actions.

When and how do you think it would be good to convey your apology and what you plan to do to make amends?

As a final step in this process, you might imagine that person saying to you - “Be at peace because I forgive you.” Then you might describe how it feels to be forgiven.
Case Studies on Apologizing and Making Amends

There are lots of ways to say “I’m sorry”. Speaking the words face to face, with sorrow in our eyes and hands as well as in our hearts, is the most direct. Sometimes apologizing in writing is a way of getting out a fuller statement than a verbal exchange might permit. And for persons who find it hard to verbalize their feelings, writing them out first helps to free them for verbal comment or interpretation. Some are good at giving gifts and know how best to do this in situations calling for an apology.

But there are times when words and gestures of apology are not enough. The words sound hollow if there is no effort to change one’s behavior and/or make amends. There’s no real reconciliation without some sort of restitution or making amends.

Consider these situations:

1. You’ve been having a conversation with your girl friend and she tells you she’s going out Friday night with an old friend from out of town. You respond by saying “what’s wrong with going out with me? I had plans for us for Friday night.” She gets upset and criticizes you for always calling her to find out where she is and who she’s with and what she’s wearing. You lose your cool and hit her in the face. She falls down; then leaves in tears cursing you. Is there any possible way you can make amends with her? If so, how? If not, why not?

2. You find out that someone you considered a good friend has been telling lies about you behind your back to some of the most popular kids at school? You confront her and tell her how much this has hurt you. How can she make amends to you?

3. Your coach, who is also your history teacher, has gone out of his way to encourage you and works with you one-on-one to improve your skills after practice one day a week. He finds out you’ve been cheating in his history class to pass the course and stay eligible for sports. He is deeply hurt. What can you do to make amends?

4. Your parents put you in charge of your 5-year-old sister while they go to an early show. They asked you to cook dinner. While you were boiling some water, a good friend called. Instead of calling him back later, you go into the other room to talk. Five minutes later you hear your sister scream. You run into the kitchen to see the pot of water on the floor and your sister scalded. What can you do to make amends to your parents and your sister?

5. Your parents leave town for the weekend and make you promise not to invite your friends over. Your friends convince you to throw a party anyway. 20 kids come, some glasses and pottery get broken. What can you do to make amends to your parents?
Making amends for the violence of others: Gandhi fasts in Calcutta 1946

“Gandhi had reached a moment of profound personal discouragement in 1946. When the British left and the country was divided – India for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims – hundreds of thousands were uprooted from the homes they had occupied for generations. Murder, mayhem, and rape were widespread. Gandhi’s efforts to teach people to live as one family, to put religious and personal prejudices behind them, were forgotten. ‘If inhumanity is what my countrymen want, I have no desire to live,’ the anguished leader said. He embarked on a fast. ‘It is better that I die than live to see this carnage.’

Although he was a Hindu, the Mahatma chose to fast in a little hut in the poorest Muslim ghetto of Calcutta. If the people did not stop fighting, Gandhi would most certainly die. At 78, he no longer had the strength nor the stamina to sustain complete starvation for a prolonged period of time. Hindus and Muslims alike also realized that if Gandhi should die, they would carry a burden of guilt. The paternal relationship that Gandhi had cultivated through the years made each Hindu and Muslim feel as though their own father were about to die... Word of Gandhi’s fast and his appeal for unity and harmony were broadcast widely and repeatedly. Whether the people stopped fighting because they understood his message or Oneness or simply because they wished to save his life, it is difficult to say. In any case, peace came quickly.” Arun Gandhi, “Overcoming Hatred and Revenge through Love,” FELLOWSHIP MAGAZINE, July/August 1998.

What good did Gandhi’s fast do? Why was it effective at the time? Did it last?

While none of us has the effect on others that Gandhi developed by the end of his life, are there situations in your life where someone you care about is hurting themselves, hurting you, or hurting someone else? Have you asked them to stop? Have they stopped? What might happen if you decided that you were going to fast or make some other kind of sacrifice as a way of inviting them to see the harm they are doing and decide to stop?

What kinds of sacrifices could you make? (e.g., go without TV, sweets or something more serious like speaking, as Chuck did in the movie AMAZING GRACE AND CHUCK)

What would be some good ways to let them know about what you are doing and why?

Does the idea of making amends for the evils in the wider world make any sense to you? The phrase - “in the face of escalating, violence love” - challenges us to become more loving as we become more aware of the hate and violence around us. What kinds of loving sacrifices could you make? (e.g., affirm or hang out with those who are usually picked on, volunteer at a nursing home or shelter, be kinder or more helpful at home)
ACTIVITY #2: Responding to Gandhi & King on Forgiveness

STEP 1 - Gandhi on Forgiveness
Have students read the quotations from Gandhi (p. 119) and write their answers to the questions, perhaps sharing them in pairs, before discussing them as a whole class.

STEP 2 - King on Forgiveness
Have students read the quotations from King (p. 121) and write their answers to the questions, perhaps sharing them in pairs, before discussing them as a whole class.

STEP 3 - Arun Gandhi on His Own Desire for Revenge and Forgiveness
- Have students read the two stories by Arun Gandhi (pp. 122-123) and invite any clarification questions to make sure they understand.
- Have them write their answers to the discussion questions, perhaps sharing them in pairs, before discussing them as a whole class.
- Encourage them to act on the last question and provide a time in class for students to share their progress in putting their decision into practice.

STEP 4 - OPTIONAL: Further Exploration into Forgiveness
- Have students read the definitions of forgiveness and “What Forgiveness is NOT” (p. 124), invite clarification questions, and then have each student choose which definition they like best; or write their own if they don’t like any of the seven.
- Have them read the seven benefits of forgiveness (p. 125), raise questions about any of them and then identify any others they have experienced.
- Most importantly, have them read the five steps to forgiveness, raise questions, then and invite them to apply these to a specific situation they are dealing with.
- For additional models of forgiveness – Ruby Bridges, Bud Welch, the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program and others – see “Resources” (p. 301)

STEP 5 - Showing Forgiveness with “Cold Water Deeds”
Have students read each story (p. 126) and answer the question, perhaps sharing these in pairs, before discussing each story as a whole class.

STEP 6 - “Letting Go of Grudges” Worksheet
- Using the “Letting Go of Grudges” Worksheet (p. 127), have students answer questions #1 and #2, perhaps sharing their answers in pairs before discussing them as a class.
- Have students identify the grudges they have been carrying by naming the persons who hurt or offended them in some way (in the 1st column), how long they’ve been carrying the grudge and whether it’s time to let go (2nd column), and what they might say or do to show forgiveness in each case (3rd column).
Gandhi On Forgiveness

“Nonviolence presupposes ability to strike. It is a conscious, deliberate restraint put on one’s desire for vengeance. But vengeance is any day superior to passive and helpless submission. Forgiveness is higher still. Vengeance too is weakness. The desire for vengeance comes out of fear of harm, imaginary or real...” Young India, August 12, 1926; quoted in ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS, p. 92

It is no nonviolence if we merely love those that love us. It is nonviolence only when we love those that hate us... Love of the hater is the most difficult of all...” Letter of December 31, 1934; quoted in ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS, p. 78.

Why do you think Gandhi believed that forgiveness is stronger than vengeance? Do you agree? Why or why not?

How do you learn how to love those who hate you? Are there any people in your that you could say hate or seriously dislike you? If so, why do you think they feel this way? Is there anything you could do about it?

After being beaten in Durban harbor, 1897, Gandhi refused to press charges

“He said he did not want revenge. The police chief seemed even more surprised than the accused. He said to Grandfather, ‘I will have to release them if you do not file a complaint.’ Grandfather replied, ‘That is fine. It’s time we break this cycle of crime and punishment. They acted out of anger and ignorance, and if I do not forgive them, I will be as guilty of perpetuating hatred as they are.’ Grandfather understood that his decision to forgive these men would liberate him from the burden of revenge and compel his opponents to evaluate their actions. He succeeded in planting a seed of doubt in their minds. Perhaps they had been wrong to attack this civil and compassionate gentleman. Having them repent was more important to G than having them imprisoned. He knew that placing them in prison would not teach them anything. Incarceration would only make them more bitter, and their prejudice would take deeper roots.” THE LEGACY OF LOVE, p. 21; see also THE FORGOTTEN WOMAN, p. 81.

How would Gandhi’s “forgiving these men liberate him from the burden of revenge”? How is revenge a “burden”?

How would Gandhi’s forgiveness “compel his opponents to evaluate their actions”?
Forgiving his Indian attackers in Johannesburg

“In Johannesburg, Grandfather, as a representative of the Indian community, eventually signed an agreement with the government of South Africa to discontinue the mass protest campaign of Indian residents. Some Indians felt the agreement he had negotiated gained less from the government than they deserved. Doubters suspected that Grandfather had sold the interests of the Indian community for a price. Instead of questioning Grandfather and seeking clarification, three strapping, young Indian men waited for Grandfather to emerge from his law office, and then attacked him mercilessly. Thankfully, Grandfather was again saved by passersby, who took him to the hospital for treatment. Once more, when requested to file a complaint, Grandfather refused. The effects of unconditional forgiveness transformed his assailants. They realized their folly and all three showed their repentance by appointing themselves as Grandfather's bodyguards (even though Grandfather said he did not need any protection). They also became lifelong friends and followers.” THE LEGACY OF LOVE, pp. 22.

Arun elaborates on the impact of Gandhi's forgiveness as he describes a demonstration where Indians were burning their registration cards (August 16, 1908) -

“One of the last men to come forward from the audience was Mir Alam, the Pathan who had attacked Mohandas. Convicted on the testimony of other witnesses, despite Mohandas' refusal to press charges against him, Mir Alam had recently been released from prison after serving a three-month sentence for the assault. He now mounted the platform, announced who he was, loudly proclaimed he had been wrong to doubt Mr. Gandhi's integrity, and handed over his own certificate to be burned. The applause was tumultuous. And when Mohandas stepped forward to shake Mir Alam's hand and assure him he had never harbored any resentment against him, the crowd's jubilation know no bounds. For a Satyagraha celebration, this was indeed a crowning moment.” THE FORGOTTEN WOMAN, p. 160.

Questions:

What was it about Gandhi's forgiveness that had the power to “transformed his assailants”?

Have you ever experienced this power in your own life? What happened?

What could you do to begin to experiment with this power in your own life?
Dr. King on Forgiveness

“It is impossible even to begin the act of loving one’s enemies without the prior acceptance of the necessity, over and over again, of forgiving those who inflict evil and injury upon us… Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning… The evil deed is no longer a mental block impeding a new relationship…”  STRENGTH TO LOVE, pp. 42-43.

Questions:

Have you ever experienced forgiveness as the “catalyst leading to a fresh start” in your relationships with others?

Are there situations in your own life where you could take this step?

What’s holding you back?

“There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. When we look beneath the surface, beneath the impulsive evil deed, we see within our enemy-neighbor a measure of goodness and know that the viciousness and evilness of the acts are not quite representative of all that the person is… Then we love our enemies by realizing that they are not totally bad and that they are not beyond the reach of… Love.”  STRENGTH TO LOVE, p. 43.

Do you agree? Why or why not?

Focus on one person who has hurt you and apply this thought to yourself and to this person; that is, try to see the good and the evil in each of you and get beyond the single deed done to you. Does it help at all?
Arun Gandhi’s Own Desire for Vengeance and Forgiveness

As a youth in S. Africa

“For many years after my S. Africa odyssey, I nursed scars of humiliation, and it has been difficult to come to terms with them. I seem to be more sensitive to the effects of these early experiences with racial bias than others. People like me often suffer from paranoia, seeing hate and prejudice in even the most innocent actions of others...I still suffer the aftereffects.

As a youth I naturally succumbed to the temptation to seek ‘eye-for-an-eye’ justice... I simply buried the anger and humiliation deep inside of me and secretly vowed to someday get revenge. I joined a program of bodybuilding and weightlifting to prepare for the day when I would finally get my pound of flesh.

But the path I had chosen to seek justice was suicidal. While I was gaining physical strength, I was losing my values and moral rectitude. I was becoming what I hated most. Anger was taking control of my being, and hate and violence were taking root. My increasing interest in vengeance eventually led my parents, who were naturally troubled, to make a decision that would change the course of my life. They knew it was time for me to spend time with GF and learn the wisdom of his peaceful ways.” Arun Gandhi, THE LEGACY OF LOVE, pp. 61-62.

Questions:

In what situations can you remember being tempted to seek “eye-for-an-eye” justice? In which ones did you succumb? In which ones did you resist?

Can you identify with Arun’s burying his anger and vowing someday to get revenge? How have you dealt with those feelings? Are some of them still buried, waiting to explode?

As an adult in India

In 1968, a S. African friend wrote to ask me to meet and host him during his first visit to India. I said yes. When Sunanda and I went to the ship in the Bombay harbor late at night, instead of my friend we found a strange white man who greeted us profusely and introduced himself as Mr. Jackie Bassun, a Member of the S. African Parliament. I recognized the name, for he was a member of the Nationalist Party, an outspoken proponent of Apartheid and a confirmed racist. I held him responsible for the law that prevented me from returning to S. Africa to see my mother and sisters because I had married an Indian woman.
My knee-jerk reaction was to insult him and make him feel small like I did as a boy in S. Africa. But then I stopped myself because I knew that my grandparents and parents would never have forgiven me. So I shook his hand. I told him that I was a victim of Apartheid but that I wouldn’t hold it against him. “You’re here now as a guest and I’m going to make your stay as pleasant as possible.” We entertained him and his wife day and night for four days, doing all the tourist things. We also discussed Apartheid and he would continue to justify it. When the discussion would get too heated, we’d change the subject. I never dreamed that this kind of friendly relationship between us would profoundly change his attitude.

But when we took them to the ship and said goodbye, they embraced us and wept tears of remorse and apologized for Apartheid. We were shocked and I told Sunanda not to get too happy about this, to wait and see if he really meant it after he returned to S. Africa. We followed his career over the next four or five years and realized that he had changed so much that he lost his election and was thrown out of the Party. But he didn’t stop fighting Apartheid. Sunanda and I have often wondered what his reaction would have been if I had insulted him as I originally wanted to do… (LESSONS I LEARNED FROM GRANDFATHER Video, available from the Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence)

Questions:

Do you find this story hard to believe? Why or why not?

Identify some situations where you remember deciding to be your best self (be positive to someone even when you didn’t feel like it) and not your worst self (making others “pay” for something they said or did to you). How did those situations turn out?

Identify a situation you are currently dealing with where you could follow Arun’s example and try to be positive toward the person(s). At the beginning of each day, identify a specific action you could do that day to be positive toward that person(s). Write about what happens and your feelings about it at the end of each day.
Further Exploration into Forgiveness

Definitions & Descriptions of Forgiveness

1. "Opening your heart back up to someone who has hurt you." (Joslyn Sandford, Cardinal Ritter Prep, St. Louis)

2. "Looking past our pain and seeing theirs." (David Meece in TODAY'S FATHER, issue 4.1)

3. "Becoming the advocate of those who have wounded me or people I love." (Gordon Cosby, in the Journey into Freedom newsletter, January 1998).


5. "A choice to leave behind our resentment and desire for retribution; ... excusing persons from the punitive consequences they deserve to suffer for their behavior." (Marjorie Thompson, "Moving Toward Forgiveness").

6. "Giving up the resentment to which you are entitled and offering the persons who hurt you friendlier attitudes to which they are not entitled." (Robert Enright, International Forgiveness Institute, Univ. of Wisconsin)

7. "A conscious decision to cease to harbor resentment... Forgiveness shows itself by giving compassionate aid to the offending person.... When one forgives, one does not give up one's protection of self but one's coldness, one's desire to exclude the offender." (Clarissa Pinkola Estes, WOMEN WHO RUN WITH THE WOLVES, 1992).

What Forgiveness is NOT

1. Condoning, excusing, or minimizing the deed

2. Forgetting the deed; denying our pain; pretending it didn't happen

3. A weak refusal to confront the deed

4. Surrendering or remaining in the hurtful situation ("resigned martyrdom")

5. Reconciling or becoming friends again (forgiveness can lead to this, but it does not require this)

6. Putting the other on probation (forgiveness is not conditional)
What Forgiveness Gives and Does

1. Freedom -- Forgiveness changes us from prisoners of the past to liberated people at peace with our memories.

2. Fuller relationships, ones that are more and more authentic and free.

3. Forgiveness breaks the destructive cycle of injury and revenge; it transforms the world.

4. Forgiveness reveals the compassionate face of God, the Buddha, Allah, the Great Spirit.

5. Continuing good will and cooperation

6. A sense of peace and well-being -- Forgiveness lifts anxiety and depression. (#1 - #6 are all from Elizabeth Dreyer, "The Importance of Being Sorry").

7. “Forgiveness restores self-worth to the offender; cancels debts; confers freedom. It is love beyond imaging.” (Doris Donnelly, LEARNING TO FORGIVE, Abingdon Press; quoted in the Journey into Freedom newsletter, January 1998)

How to Get to Forgiveness

1. Forego forgiveness for a while. Get away and do positive things to distance yourself from the hurt.

2. Acknowledge that we have hurt others and have needed to be forgiven; recall the times we were forgiven.

3. Forbear; i.e., be patient, abstain from punishing the person(s), and refuse to dwell on the hurt obsessively. Refuse to let anger dominate our other feelings.

4. Ask for help. Whatever sources of strength and inspiration are part of your life, go to them and ask for the courage and compassion to be able to rise to this level of love.

5. Develop empathy for the one(s) who hurt you. “Look past your pain and see theirs.”
Showing Forgiveness with “Cold Water Deeds”  
By James McGinnis

Just as there are “cold water words” that help to put out a verbal “fire” before it turns into a violent inferno, there are “cold water deeds” -- tiny tokens of reconciliation -- that can help break the cycle of violence and put a relationship back in the right path.

1. A Father and His Teenage Children

“I had hidden a stick of my favorite salami in the refrigerator to enjoy the following weekend. But when I discovered it had been eaten, I was furious. I stormed around the house threatening dire consequences if the culprit didn’t come forth, but to no avail. None of my three teenage children would "fess up." Maybe, I thought, I should try a different approach. So I went out and bought another salami myself and declared a "happy hour" the next evening, so the whole family could enjoy the salami. I’m not sure of the impact of that token of reconciliation on our three teens, but it did transform my heart a little.”

Question: If you were the father, what would you have done in the situation and why?

2. A Friend's Example & Suggestion

“For several years on August 6, the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, I have made an origami paper crane for someone I needed to be reconciled with. These paper cranes became a symbol of peacemaking when eleven year-old Sadako Sasaki tried to make 1000 of them as she was dying of leukemia contracted from the radiation from the atomic bomb. She made 644 before she died. On the wings of her last paper crane she wrote the word “peace” and told the crane to fly all over the world. Within a few years, children everywhere were making cranes as symbols of peace. I learned to make them from my daughter and use them now as symbols of love.”

You might write the name of a person on one wing and "peace" on the other and send it with a letter to someone you want to be reconciled with. Whether or not the recipient responds in kind, we at least have faced up to our own hurtful behavior, offered our apology, and reached out to the other. We are not in the same place we were before. There is no guarantee we will change others’ hearts, but at the least it will make them think. Maybe they will respond in kind, or maybe not. Or if not this time, maybe at a future time, and our actions will have contributed to the final outcome. These first steps toward reconciliation help heal our broken world, for even when they don’t convert the others, they do convert the doer. Having made one such creative response to some hurt, we are more likely to do it again, perhaps with more creativity and/or forgiveness.

Question: What about making a crane for someone? Or, if not a crane, what symbol would work better for you?
Letting Go of Grudges Worksheet

1. Why should I let go of grudges and forgive?

2. Why is it so hard sometimes to forgive?

3. Letting Go of Grudges
Make a list of all the grudges you have been carrying, with the name of the person(s) who hurt or offended you in some way, how long you have been holding on to that grudge, whether it’s time to let go, and what you might say or do to that person or person to show forgiveness.

|-------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------------|

4. What else can I do to become a more forgiving person?
ACTIVITY #3: "Bury Our Grudges"

STEP 1 - Personal Reflections

- Share a personal example of how hard it is at times to forgive those who have hurt you and how it may take a long time to be able to forgive some hurts.
- Ask students to recall a time when they were forgiven and how it felt to be forgiven (see "Thinking Through Being Forgiven" (p. 109)

STEP 2 - Setting the Stage

Perhaps with some appropriate music in the background, give each student a boulder - a symbol of the hardness and heaviness of grudges.

STEP 3 - Choosing a Grudge and Writing It on a Boulder

Have students look over their list of grudges on their "Letting Go of Grudges" Worksheet and choose a grudge that they feel ready to let go of at this moment or would be like to be to let go of in the near future and write that grudge on the boulder, using the name of the person(s) who hurt them.

STEP 4 - Burial Ceremony (sample "eulogy" on the next page)

- Have students form a funeral procession, following the leader to the "mortuary" where each student files past an open box ("casket"). Those who are ready to let go of their grudge drop their boulders in the box. The others keep their boulders.
- From the "mortuary," the funeral procession, with 4 students ("pallbearers") carrying the "casket," goes to the "cemetery," where the "casket" is laid down. If possible, find a place where students could dig a hole for an actual burial.
- Read the "Eulogy," after which each student files past the casket, takes a handful or cupful of dirt from another box, and places it over grudge boulders (or shovels some of the dirt into an actual hole).

STEP 5 - Reflection

- After students return to their seats, have them reflect quietly on the experience, perhaps writing their thoughts and feelings on paper or in a journal.
- They might also be asked to share some of these in pairs, small groups, or as a whole group.
Sample “Eulogy” for Burying Our Grudges

“Dearly Beloved”---

We are gathered here today to lay to rest our grudges. On this solemn occasion, we find hope and courage in this place, this moment; because we trust in the goodness in our hearts and the goodness of Creation to help us live without our grudges. These grudges we lay to rest today have a history in our lives.

They did not just appear out of thin air. No, they came from times --when people hurt us, misjudged us; --when people said they would do something for us and blew us off; --when a friend stopped treating us as a friend.

These grudges, like a wound when left unattended, begin to fester and get worse. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr, “we become the hatred, the grudges we hold inside.” So we need to lay these grudges to rest, so that we will be freed from the power they have in our lives. So we gather here today to let these grudges go, to say “farewell.” May they rest in peace, so that we can live in peace.”