

Preface

This book explores forgiveness, reconciliation, and related topics at multiple levels, from individual and group, to intergroup relations. We hope that this book fosters peace and encourages those who are tired of war, hatred, and similar dilemmas that continue to plague all peoples.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are difficult. However, they may be the keys to peace and our survival. Forgiveness can also help people move beyond the burden of pain, anger, hatred, grudges, and misunderstanding that often result from trauma, whether it is the result of human activity or natural causes. Although there are books that counsel people to forgive and reconcile, most speak to the individual and focus on prayer, meditation, or other spiritual exercises as methods of forgiving. Some are based on a specific religious tradition while others emphasize only one discipline. However, the traumas of today's world affect all individuals, families, clans, communities, cultures, societies, generations, and even nations. Therefore, books that focus on reconciliation at only one level are incomplete due to the multilayered nature of trauma. This book is comprehensive in scope and addresses forgiveness at all levels, including interpersonal, communal, and societal.

This book focuses on people while emphasizing larger units of analysis. Special attention is paid to the cognitions and behaviors of people in their unique social, historical, and cultural contexts. This approach facilitates our understanding of the structural properties that promote systemic violence and the potential reforms that can promote systemic peacebuilding. Forgiveness and reconciliation are both important aspects of this effort. This book helps to demystify the idea of forgiveness and presents concrete examples of how individuals can reframe their perspective of reality so that it is both realistic and, at the same time, peace-promoting. Part of the peace building process requires mutual trust, and the processes that nurture such trust include those that nurture forgiveness and reconciliation.

This book offers an inclusive approach. It is multidisciplinary, multiethnic, multi-generational, and international. The authors address forgiveness in the contexts of (a) current and past events in trauma-laden areas such as Rwanda, Darfur, India-Pakistan, Africa, as well as in the Western world, (b) the phenomena of unresolved and denied mass trauma such as in the case of the Ottoman Turkish Genocide of the Armenians, and trans-generational transmission of trauma and displacement, and (c) racial, ethical, religious, and developmental issues that can foster either division or harmony. Each chapter includes well-documented research combined with rich case material and offers lessons that can be applied in practical ways.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation
Psychological Pathways to Conflict Transformation and
Peace Building

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