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Turning Lament: Insight(s) from Engaging Lamentations 5

Dalinda Reese¹

Lamentations 5 is not light reading. It is not fun reading. Yet it can be compelling, especially to one who has the sense that life really is not fair, that bad things happen to good people, and that the only thing certain in life is death (and taxes). And in and of itself, even that may not be enough to cause one to engage in any further exploration of the Bible or this particular biblical text. Perhaps what can draw one in is the sense that lament is important in and to life, that life is bigger than the pain and physical reality, and that the Bible has been preserved and transmitted as it has been specifically because it speaks deeply to life. And even more, the opportunity to explore the Hebrew Bible with others, and to choose a text on which to focus, can almost make Lamentations 5 irresistible!

The historical-critical method, as described in Marc Zvi Brettler's book, *How to Read the Jewish Bible*,² can provide some useful context and historical background with which to engage the book of Lamentations. Lamentations is located in the third of three sections of the Hebrew Bible, the *Ketuvim* (writings),³ a category of miscellaneous writings and genres that was probably the last to become stable, or congeal, into what is now known as the Hebrew Bible.⁴ Further, it is known as one of the Five *Megillot* (Scrolls) that is a group of five shorter works likely copied together onto one scroll because they were/ are used liturgically in services with particular holidays.⁵ Lamentations was specifically paired with the Ninth of Av,⁶ the holiday that commemorates the destruction of the Temple(s).

Jeremiah and Lamentations are concerned with the same events: the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. Underlying these writings is a deep concern for the survival and continuity of the people of Judah, and hope for a remnant.⁷ Given this, it is not surprising that authorship was traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah. However, it most likely was written by different anonymous authors between 586 and early 500 BCE (after the destruction of the First Temple and before the rebuilding of the Second Temple).⁸

There are both similarities and differences when comparing Ancient Near Eastern writings and Ancient Biblical writings. While consideration of both similarities and differences can be helpful, specific distinctions should be noted in this current consideration. Among these distinctions is the "fundamental value ascribed to human life."⁹ Laws have a divine origin.¹⁰ And the Israelites have a covenanted relationship with this God and are accountable to this God.¹¹ Regardless of when which texts were written down, the fact that

¹ TH503A: Survey of Hebrew Scriptures, Winter 2016.

² Marc Zvi Brettler, *How to Read the Jewish Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁵ Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible, Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1557.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 901.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1581-1582.

⁹ Brettler, *How to Read the Jewish Bible*, 71.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47, and 153-157.

they were recorded and have been transmitted as they have been transmitted suggests that the Babylonian conquest with the exile and destruction of the Temple was a huge turning point for Judean self-understanding.

The sense of covenant this people had with God (whether conditional or unconditional protection¹²) may have been strained with the chaos of the divided kingdom and then even more so with the Assyrian conquest and assimilation of the Northern Kingdom in about 720 BCE. Those pesky prophets and their messages of covenant with its ethical and ritual obligations!¹³ But at least there was a sense that Jerusalem would not be destroyed and there would at least be a remnant of the people would remain.¹⁴ Certainly God would protect God's Temple. The conquest, exile, and destruction of the Temple can only have plunged the people into an existential crisis! Did it mean anything to be a people, let alone to be covenanted with God?

It is worth noting what Joanna Macy, an ecophilosopher and Buddhist scholar, has to say about times of dramatic transition. Her book, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy*,¹⁵ is specifically about the staggering eco-social crises of the twenty-first century and about a radical shift that is underway to a new way of being with and on the earth. She calls this shift, "The Great Turning," and discusses how one can consciously participate in this shift. In facing this crisis, there are two poles of fear: denial or despair.¹⁶ In denial, one does not recognize that there is a problem. And in despair, one is too overwhelmed and paralyzed to do anything. The ability to be present to the situation from a point of alert, open-hearted compassion can help keep one centered. "Honoring our pain... is a way of valuing our awareness, first, that we have noticed, and second that we care."¹⁷

Lamentations 5 is a prayer of lament, a way of honoring an existential pain that threatens to destroy everything the Ancient Israelites and Judeans have ever known. At stake is their continuity and very identity as a covenanted people. This prayer of lament is an expression of public mourning. It is a way to structure and hold the unfathomable and that which no longer makes any semblance of sense. It is a way to communally hold a grief that is too great to bear.¹⁸ It is an appeal to God to see just how wrong things are. There is an acknowledgement of sin, but the overall tone of the prayer is that punishment is excessive and out of proportion to any sins.¹⁹

Lamentations in this form seems unique in Ancient Near Eastern writings. A form of Sumerian lament was used some 1500 years earlier, but its recitation was used on the occasion of rebuilding a city's temple. Lamentations memorializes the destruction of the Temple.²⁰

Particularly in Lamentations 5, it is important to note the proportions of this lament. The previous four chapters are each acrostic poems that look at this catastrophe each from

¹² *Ibid.*, 154.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 154, and 175.

¹⁵ Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy* (Novato, California: New World Library, 2012).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 65-71, quote p. 71.

¹⁸ Berlin and Brettler, eds., *Jewish Study Bible*, 1582.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1582-1582.

different and distressingly stark perspectives on the horrors heaped down upon Jerusalem.²¹ While it has twenty-two verses, Lamentations 5 does not have each verse starting with a different Hebrew letter nor are they in alphabetical order. And Lamentations 5 is not a poem. Rather it is a prayer, a cry of lament, addressed to God by one who has remained in Jerusalem. It is stark. It is raw. It is clear that what has befallen Jerusalem and God's people is out of proportion to anything remotely deserved. There is no happy ending. God is both silent and unmoved. And despite God's silence, a longing for connection and return is voiced in the penultimate verse.²²

It is fascinating to consider Lamentations 5 in light of current research and training in forgiveness work.²³ Forgiveness, in a sense, is making peace with life's hurts. It is a way of being able to move on fully in life without being held captive by past offences or circumstances. Forgiveness is not forgetting, excusing, denying, condoning, or pretending something did not happen. Dr. Fred Luskin's approach enumerates some important steps in forgiveness.²⁴ The very first step in forgiveness, or in being able to shift one's relationship to a grievance, is:

Know exactly how you feel about what happened, and be able to articulate what about the situation is not okay. Then tell a couple of trusted people about your experience.²⁵

There is no mincing of words in Lamentations 5 about how those remaining after the catastrophe feel. The devastation is not okay. They are able to express this together publically.

Another important step in forgiveness is to "Give up expecting things from other people, [or God,] or life...."²⁶ It is noteworthy, that God remains silent in Lamentations 5, and this is very much acknowledged by the lamenter. And yet, that does not deter the lamenter from recognizing and giving voice to his longing for return to a special relationship with God. This may be seen as connecting with one's "positive intention,"²⁷ that good and healthy desire or intention that can become conflated with the hurt. The conflation of positive intention with the hurtful situation can cause one to dismiss or avoid his/ her positive intention. In actuality, honoring and pursuing that positive intention may be the key to being freed from the offence – to no longer being held captive by the distressing circumstances.

It is worth pulling out several verses from Lamentations for emphasis and consideration:

5:7 Our fathers sinned and are no more; And we must bear their guilt

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1581-1583. Chapter 1 uses feminine imagery for the city abandoned and shamed. Chapter 2 describes the horrors of disease and starvation during the siege of the city. Chapter 3 is voiced by a lone man deported into exile. Chapter 4 is told by one who returns to gaze on the degradation evident just prior to the Jerusalem's complete destruction.

²² *Ibid.*, 1597.

²³ Please see Appendix A which is an outline, notes, and references on a "Forgiveness and Mind-Body Health" presentation given by myself at the Mind-Body Summer School 2012 in Essen, Germany, August 25, 2012.

²⁴ Fredrick Luskin, *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002).

²⁵ Fred Luskin, "9 Steps," *learningtoforgive.com*, last modified 2010. <http://www.learningtoforgive.com/9-steps/>

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Luskin, *Forgive for Good*, 137-153.

16b Woe to us that we have sinned

20 why have you forgotten us so utterly, Forsaken us for all time

21 Take us back, O Lord, to Yourself, And let us come back; Restore our days as of old!

22 For truly, You have rejected us, Bitterly raged against us!²⁸

In the verses not included above, the lamenter is very clear about his feelings and is also very articulate about what is not okay. Verses 5:7 and 5:16b are included to show that, while sin is acknowledged, sin is not the focus. Sin is what it is. The lamenter is not assigning blame or taking on blame. What has befallen Judah seems utterly beyond any sin – punishment equation. In these last verses, punctuated by God’s silence, the lamenter has given up any expectations of God or of how things ought to be. Verse 22 is an eloquent expression of positive intention. Any time that Lamentations is read publically, verse 22 is repeated, in keeping with the Jewish custom to not end readings on a negative note.²⁹ Lamentations 5 is about grief; it is about forgiveness; it is about holding intention and an openness to possibility. It is about a great turning – a shift in consciousness and way of being. That Jews have survived at all and still with an identity (self-recognized or imposed) as a covenanted people is testament to this shift. Jeremiah, the prophet and the writings that have survived by that name, preached about the destruction, but was also central to instilling hope and reframing understandings of what it means to be a people of God.³⁰ Lamentations, in keeping with the tome of Jeremiah, can be said to evidence a deepening and broadening understanding of what it means to be in covenanted relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (and of Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachael).

The cry to be restored to the days of old echoes Deuteronomy 30:1-11³¹ when the people return to God, and God takes them back in love and opens their hearts to love God. If one considers the *JPS Tanakh* 1917 translation of Lamentations 5:21³² as “return us” rather than “restore us,” the lament can perhaps be seen as plea for God to move the heart to want to return. Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 32:39, Isaiah 11:19 and 36:26, all speak of a new heart, open heart, or heart of flesh. Nuances and new notions must have been seeping into the Judeans’ consciousness. Perhaps longing for the days of old is deeper and more complex than cognitive concepts can put in to words.

Perhaps living in the land of Canaan and having a Temple for God was/is more about living in harmony with the land and living in such a way that God would want to dwell among them. Perhaps “days of old” is reasserting or reaffirming that life is of fundamental value. Perhaps it is remembering that humankind in general, and Jews in particular, are ultimately accountable to God for how they/ we interact with God’s creation and with each other. Evident after the destruction of the Temple (and yet a second time in 70 CE!) is that God may now be portable, but is not disposable. Somehow the people are not able to shake themselves from God. Even in God’s silence, the covenant remains and the lamenter pleads for return.

²⁸ Berlin and Brettler, eds., *Jewish Study Bible*, 1596-1597.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1597.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 901.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1597.

³² *JPS Tanakh 1917: The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*, <http://www.biblehub.com/lamentations/5-21/htm>

Indeed return is, or has become, an integral part of Jewish consciousness. *Hashiveinu*, Lamentations 5:21, is chanted in Hebrew every time the Torah is returned to the ark during services. The Hebrew word commonly translated as “repentance” is actually the word “return.” This can be seen as a turning toward God. The Days of Awe are also known as Days of *Teshuvah*, or Days of Return. Every year religious Jews examine their lives and turn towards and realign themselves with God. Space and time here would not do justice to the notion of *Teshuvah* and how deeply it is imbedded in the Jewish soul.

Lamentations 5:21 (*JPS Tanakh*, 1917) “Turn Thou us unto Thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; Renew our days as of old.” Or in easier paraphrase: “Cause us to turn to You, Adonai, and we will be turned....” Perhaps Lamentations 5:21 is the verse on which Jewish life turns.

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Appendix A

Forgiveness and Mind-Body Health Outline, Notes, and References
 Mind-Body Summer School 2012, 25 August 2012
 Dalinda B. Reese, MD, MTS, ABIHM

Goals:

- To understand what forgiveness is and is not
- To understand when and how lack of forgiveness might impact health
- To understand factors involved in moving from offense to forgiveness
- To experience some of the tools that can help facilitate forgiveness

Forgiveness research:³³

- For ages, forgiveness has belonged to religion. For this reason, the word “forgiveness” can personally carry much strength and/ or a lot of baggage. (Different religions have different understandings of forgiveness: e.g. Buddhism – focus on compassion and lovingkindness overcomes resentment or the desire for revenge; Christianity – focus on

³³ Michael McCullough, Kenneth Pargament, Carl Thoresen, eds., *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2000).

release from a debt or offense and restoring human-human and human-Divine relationships.)

- 1930s -- 1980, work in forgiveness was primarily theoretical and philosophical by psychologists, pastors, and philosophers.
- Since 1980 there is a great deal of scientific research in forgiveness. Not all researchers agree on the same definitions or the same metrics. Measures for forgiveness, for anger, for stress perception, depression, and quality of life have been developed and validated. What is forgiveness? Is forgiveness a trait or a state? Which metrics are most appropriate? Physical (brain activity vs. heart rate variability)? Intrapersonal (decisional vs. emotional)? Interpersonal (with or without apology)? Social/ Cultural (norms, identity, etc., etc.)?

Forgiveness and Health:

- In general, forgiveness research suggests a positive correlation with health and well-being.³⁴
- An adaptive coping style – being able to cope in a positive way with life -- is one of the top predictors of being healthy and well at age 80.³⁵
- “[M]eaning in life correlates with forgiveness on all its dimensions” according to a study of 225 older adults in Israel.³⁶
- Qualities of forgiveness, overcoming, and peace activism were found to be common themes among Hiroshima survivors who were thriving.³⁷
- Forgiveness seems to improve quality of life and decrease depression at end of life in palliative care (several small studies included in references)

Forgiveness interventions:

- Many approaches: psycho-educational, group process, journaling, steps, insight, etc.
- *Forgive for Good*, Fredric Luskin, PhD → Nine Steps to Forgiveness, using both a heart-centered and cognitive approach to forgiveness. Because of my training in his work, Dr. Luskin’s work is emphasized in this presentation.
- *Forgiveness is a Choice*, Robert D. Enright, PhD. → Have a companion for support and work through phases of forgiveness by journaling. Phases include: 1) Recognizing and owning your anger, 2) Making the Decision to forgive, 3) working toward understanding and compassion, 4) Releasing oneself from emotional prison.
- *Forgiveness and Reconciling*, Everett Worthington, Jr., PhD. → Use the acronym R.E.A.C.H. to walk through the steps to forgiveness. **R**ecall the Hurt, **E**mpathize, **A**ltruistic Gift of Forgiveness, **C**ommit Publicly to Forgive, **H**old On to Forgiveness. Then use discernment in Reconciliation.

³⁴ Fredric Luskin, Ph.D., *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness*, (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, Inc., 2002).

³⁵ George E. Vaillant, M.D., *Aging Well*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 2002), p.206.

³⁶ S. Hantman and O. Cohen, “Forgiveness in late life,” *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, October 2010, 53(7):613-30, online abstract from PubMed accessed 8 Feb 2011.

³⁷ A. Knowles, “Resilience among Japanese atomic bomb survivors,” *International Nursing Review*, March 2011, 58(1):54-60., Epub 2011 Jan 11, abstract from PubMed accessed 8 Feb 2011.

- *The Forgiveness Project*, Michael Barry, DMin → A pastoral counseling approach to help one gain insight that leads to forgiveness and peace.
- *The Tao of Forgiveness*, William Martin → Stories that support the practice of releasing those things that stand in the way of open-hearted compassion.
- And many others....

Anatomy of **Forgiveness**:

Hurt or loss →

feeling the anger, pain, fear →

(role of apology – validation)

grieving the loss →

(life falls apart, then comes together)

transforming the story

(rumination < 6 weeks may help)

Forgiveness: making peace with Life's hurts

Releasing the hold the offense and the associated story have on you

Unforgiveness (holding on to a Grievance Story):

A Grievance Story is a story (way you make sense of what happened to you) about an offense that keeps you trapped *now* in a *past hurt*.

Offence →

pain, anger, fright, hurt →

taking offence **personally** →

blaming events, others, or self →

keeping those things alive by

Telling and re-telling the story of pain and loss in which we are powerless – we continue to be hurt and powerless every time we retell the story, even if we only retell it to ourselves.

Necessary prerequisites to forgiveness

- Need to know exactly how you feel about the offense and be able to articulate why it was not okay. (It is helpful to tell a couple of trusted friends and be open to hearing what they have to say – sometimes just having someone listen is enough, sometimes it helps to have your experience validated, and sometimes a trusted friend can see other aspects that you haven't seen.)
- Need to have some “distance” from the acute pain and grieving. Time will decrease the hurt, but forgiveness is needed to improve psychological and emotional wellbeing.³⁸

Heart and Mind in the Forgiveness process:

1) Heart centered process – nurture and listen to the wise heart

³⁸ Fredric Luskin, Ph.D., *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness*, (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, Inc., 2002).

- Emotions have physiological effects and can activate the Sympathetic Nervous System (fight or flight) and Parasympathetic Nervous System (rest and repair)
- Heart and Brain have bi-directional communication (neurological, biochemical, biophysical, and energetic)
- Heart Rate Variability (HRV) refers to the beat to beat variation in time between heart beats. It is a marker to how responsive the heart is to the PNS and SNS. A normal heart will have good heart rate variability – each heart beat responds to the many signals it is taking in.
- Poor HRV correlates with an increase in morbidity and mortality.
- The HRV trace looks at patterns of HRV → in a healthy state the HRV trace is smooth and harmonious or “Coherent.” In a state of anxiety or anger, the HRV trace is jagged and chaotic or “Incoherent.” (See Institute of HeartMath’s Science of the Heart at <http://www.heartmath.org/research/science-of-the-heart/introduction.html>)
- Through attention to Breath and cultivating heart feelings of Love, Gratitude, and Appreciation, it is possible to learn to spend more time in a Coherent, healthy state.
- P.E.R.T. (Positive Emotional Refocusing Technique) is one way of doing this

P.E.R.T.:

1. Focus on your breath
2. Take 2 or 3 long, slow deep breaths
3. Consciously relax your belly so that it is soft
4. Think of an image that brings you total love and joy
5. Let it settle in the area of your heart
6. Breathe through this area of your heart
7. Enjoy the image and relax
8. Feel the softening of your body and slowing of your thoughts.
9. Feel the peace

2) Cognitively initiated process – understand, examine and dispute underlying beliefs, thought patterns, and “rules”

- What were your expectations?
- Do you have an “unenforceable rule” or demand? Where there is a strong negative emotion, there is likely an “unenforceable rule” → life should be different and we can’t enforce it.
- Why might other people have other rules?
- Dispute your “unenforceable rules”
- Substitute wishes for needs, hopes for demands, dreams for entitlement.
- How can you take things less personally, blame less, and be more understanding?
- Reconnect with your Big Dream or Positive Intention. What was the good, noble, positive reason behind the behavior that got us hurt?

***** Please note: We all desire (and deserve) Love, Prosperity, and Safety, but we can’t guarantee any of these*****

To demand these leaves us passive and a victim.

3) **Heart and Mind together** – allow your wise heart to inform your thoughts

- Develop a regular gratitude practice, or practice of listening to the heart, or make a habit of using PERT.
- Be clear about how you feel and what was not okay
- Recognize unhealthy beliefs or patterns that keep you stuck
- Dispute “unenforceable rules”
- Connect with your Positive Intention

PERT to Listen to your Wise Heart

1. Think of the hurt or loss. Let your mind wander and notice as much as you can about the situation. Notice how this impacts your body and your thoughts.
2. Practice PERT
 - Focus on your breath
 - Take 2 or 3 long, slow deep breaths
 - Consciously relax your belly so that it is soft
 - Think of an image that brings you total love and joy
 - Let it settle in the area of your heart
 - Breathe through this area of your heart
 - Enjoy the image and relax
 - Feel the softening of your body and slowing of your thoughts.
 - Feel the peace
3. Ask your heart for a more skillful way to manage the hurt. Continue to feel the peace. Hold yourself in deep love and calm. From the most compassionate place you can imagine, tell yourself that you are okay. Continue the soft belly breathing. Ask you heart what insight you can learn from this experience. Connect to that which is good and noble in you. Notice how that can transform your relationship to the story.
4. Return focus to your breathing for three more deep breaths. Slowly open your eyes when ready.

Forgiveness is a personal change from a negative attitude or behavior to a neutral or positive attitude or behavior.

Forgiveness is:

- Forgiveness is a choice
- Forgiveness is about you
- Forgiveness is about healing
- Forgiveness is about ***NOW***
- Forgiveness is transforming your relationship to the hurt
- Forgiveness is reconnecting with your goodness
- Forgiveness can be learned

Forgiveness is not:

- Denying

- Forgetting
- Excusing
- Condoning
- Justice (although it does not preclude justice)
- Giving up feelings
- Reconciliation (some say it includes “prudent reconciliation”)
- Putting yourself in harm’s way
- Pretending something did not happen

When forgiveness is hard: **H.E.A.L. (Hope, Educate, Affirm, Long-term commitment)**³⁹

- **Hope** – Find a personal, specific positive statement about what you wish would have happened in the situation.
- **Educate** – Recognize the uncertainties of life. There are many possible outcomes to a situation. Demanding that things work out the way you want is limiting.
- **Affirm** – Connect with your Positive Intention. Make your positive intention the driving force behind your positive long-term goal for this grievance.
- **Long-Term Commitment** – Commit to your healing. Practice connecting to and following your Positive Intention.

Nine Steps to Forgiveness

(From Dr. Fred Luskin, available online at <http://www.learningtoforgive.com/9-steps>)

1. Know exactly how you feel about what happened, and be able to articulate what about the situation is not okay. Then tell a couple of trusted people about your experience.
2. Make a commitment to yourself to do what you have to do to feel better. Forgiveness is for you and not for anyone else. No one else even has to know about your decision.
3. Understand your goal. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciling with the person who upset you or condoning their action. What you are after is peace. Forgiveness can be defined as the peace and understanding that come from blaming less that which has hurt you, taking the experience less personally, and changing your grievance story.
4. Get the right perspective on what is happening. Recognize that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts, and physical upset you are suffering now, not what offended you or hurt you two minutes or even ten years ago.
5. At the moment you feel upset, practice the Positive Emotion Refocusing Technique (PERT) to soothe your body’s flight or fight response.
6. Give up expecting things from other people, or life, that they do not choose to give you. Recognize the unenforceable rules you have for your health or how you or

³⁹ Fred Luskin, *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription For Health and Happiness* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), pp. 154 – 177.

other people must behave. Remind yourself that you can hope for health, love, friendship, and prosperity and work hard to get them. However, you will suffer if you demand that these things occur when you do not have the power to make them happen.

7. Put your energy into looking for another way to get your positive goals met than through the experience that has hurt you. In other words, find your positive intention. Instead of mentally replaying your hurt, seek out new ways to get what you want.
8. Remember that a life well lived is your best revenge. Instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving the person who hurt you power over you, learn to look for the love, beauty, and kindness around you.
9. Amend your grievance story to remind yourself of the heroic choice to forgive.

Six Steps to Challenge your Unenforceable Rules/ From Dr. Fred Luskin's *Forgive for Love: The Missing Ingredient for a Healthy and Lasting Relationship* (HarperOne, 2007)

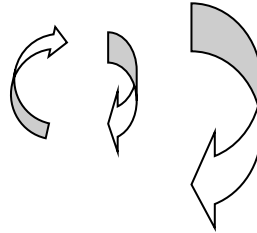
1. Recognize that you feel hurt, angry, alienated, depressed or hopeless. Acknowledge that your feelings may be from memories of the past, but that you are experiencing them in the present.
2. Remind yourself that you feel bad because you are currently trying to enforce an unenforceable rule.
3. Assert your willingness to challenge your unenforceable rule right now.
4. Find your unenforceable rule by asking yourself, "What aspects of my relationship [to this offense] am I insisting must change from how they actually are [or were]?"
5. Change the way you think about these issues from demanding that you get what you want to hoping that you get what you want.
6. Notice that when you wish or hope that things will be a certain way, you think more clearly and are more peaceful than when you demand that they be a certain way.

Examples of Unenforceable Rules: (from *Forgive for Good*, pp. 134-136)

- My partner must be faithful
- Life should be fair
- People must not lie to me
- Life should be easy
- I need to be cared for and loved in the way that I want
- My mother or father should have treated me differently
- My past should have been different

EVENT! # →→
#

GRIEVING→→Health



Grievance
Story

Anatomy of Forgiveness: We need to feel the pain and grieve the loss when we have suffered an offense. A 1) **heart-centered** approach (nurturing and listening to the wise heart) along with 2) a **cognitively initiated** process (examining and disputing underlying beliefs and thought patterns, and connecting with our positive intention) can restore us to a place of **health**. It can keep us from getting trapped in a Grievance Story.

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