

Relationships Course Summary

The course consists of eight forty-five-minute sessions, given by two facilitators to twelve participants. It also includes four sessions of one-on-one coaching per participant. The coaching consists of one fifteen-minute session at the beginning of the course, two in the middle, and one of thirty minutes at the end. Further coaching is available on request. Each objective is met by the course content, and subsequently consolidated through coaching.

Session	Summary	Facilitator Objective(s)	Benefit(s)
1. Introduction	Not making someone pay when we are wronged cancels the debt they owe us to right the wrong.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To introduce the facilitators and the course content To show how the course meets needs within the group To show the difference between being “self-centred” and “other-centred” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops a sense of safety within the group
2. Cancelling Debt	Cancelling debt does not deny the past Cancelling debt does not deny feelings Cancelling debt does not deny time Cancelling debt does not deny justice Cancelling debt does not deny boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To clarify what cancelling debt is and what cancelling debt is not To distinguish between three senses of justice: restitution, retribution, and transformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The more cancelling debt is discussed, the more likely it is to take effect in people’s lives¹
3. Self-Awareness	Self-awareness involves coming to terms with emotions; knowing when they colour perspective; and what they reveal about our attitude.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To begin to explore our feelings about an instance of being wronged To challenge the participants to cancel a debt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to Vella’s criteria this learning is practical; affective; immediate; and engaged.²
4. Listening	Good communication begins with giving someone space. When listening, it is important to attend, follow, and reflect what is said	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To begin to see things from the offender’s point of view (in the instance of being wronged) To introduce attending, following, and reflecting skills while listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those who have more empathy are more likely to cancel debt.³
5. Asserting	The three-fold assertion message and our imagination can both help us to assert our boundaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To introduce the three-fold assertion message and the role of imagination in assertion To show that “turning the other cheek” is not about being a doormat 	

¹ E. Worthington, ‘Keynote Speech’ (Network of Christians in Psychology, Annual Conference, April 4-6 2003)

² J. Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 2002²)

³ M.E. McCullough, K.I Pargament, and C.E Thoreson, *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice* (New York: The Guilford Press 2000) p.241; M.E. McCullough, S.J. Sandage, and E.L. Worthington, *To Forgive is Human: How to Put Your Past in the Past* (Downers Grove: IVP 1997) p.141; F.L. Shults, and S.J. Sandage, *The Faces of Forgiveness: Searching for Wholeness and Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker 2003) p.95

6. Humility	Receiving forgiveness can help us to forgive ourselves, and forgiving ourselves can help us to forgive others. Receiving forgiveness also helps our self-esteem and our self-image. It helps our self-esteem because being offered forgiveness means that we are loved. And it helps our self-image because accepting forgiveness requires having a realistic view of ourselves, which we might call humility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce the importance of receiving forgiveness for our forgiveness of others, our self-image, and our self-esteem • To introduce the concepts of projection and the ideal self 	
7. Wising Up	Reconciliation requires that both parties cancel debt, but cancelling debt is not itself reconciliation. Reconciliation also requires that both parties are willing to resolve conflict, but a resolution does not have to be fully reached.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce the difference between reconciliation and conflict resolution, and the importance of setting boundaries in both • To introduce practical ways of resolving conflict 	
8. Our Stories	It is important to be aware of how our past and our wider beliefs might affect our ability to forgive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate how our past and our wider beliefs might affect our ability to forgive. 	
Whole Course	The course encourages people to see that forgiving someone is better than either repressing anger or risking a retributive cycle of violence. It places Emotional Intelligence (EQ) in the context of forgiveness, and forgiveness in the context of our wider stories. As emotional management, EQ can be used to benefit others or manipulate them; so to ensure relationships and therefore business benefit, ⁴ the course places EQ in the context of forgiveness; for example: when we forgive someone EQ is used to express our feelings appropriately. Forgiveness, in turn, is placed in the context of our wider stories because our wider stories affect our ability to forgive; for example: if everyone is a victim, no one can be forgiven because no one is responsible for anything. ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate the virtues of forgiveness • To introduce the skills that forgiveness requires • To lead participants through their own journey of forgiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is hoped that the course will improve the quality of workplace relationships thereby: • Reducing office politics • Reducing turnover⁶ • Saving money

⁴ J. E. Sheridan, 'Organization Culture and Employee Retention' *Academy of Management Journal* (35/5) 1992; N. Stein, 'Global Most Admired,' *Fortune*, October 2nd 2000; D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (London: Bloomsbury 1995) p.148f.

⁵ See C. Colson, *Justice That Restores* (Leicester: IVP 2000) p.61f. cf. P. Vitz, *Psychology As Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1994²) pp.85-87

⁶ J. E. Sheridan, *op. cit.*; N. Stein, *op. cit.*; D. Goleman, *op. cit.*