

# Beliefs of Counselor Trainees about Forgiveness\*

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## Abstract

Counselors might be able to help clients to forgive after interpersonal hurts and one of the first tasks of working toward forgiveness with clients is helping them understand exactly what forgiveness means. However, a counselor who wants to use forgiveness in his/her work must first know what forgiveness is, what forgiveness is not, and which factors affect the forgiveness process. The purpose of the present study is to determine the beliefs of counselor trainees about forgiveness. The scope of this study includes how trainees define forgiveness, as well as their beliefs about their own forgivingness, the factors affecting forgiveness, and the importance of forgiveness in counseling. A qualitative study was conducted with 59 undergraduate students attending the Division of Psychological Counseling and Guidance in Dokuz Eylul University, Turkey, during the 2012-2013 academic year. The data from individual interviews were analyzed using content analysis techniques. The results indicated that the trainees considered forgiveness to be a conditional process in an interpersonal context and attributed some conditions about the offender and the offense to their forgivingness. In particular, apology and awareness of the offender about his/her fault affected their decisions to forgive. In the counseling process, forgiveness was considered an important issue and mostly regarded as a counselor characteristic.

**Keywords:** Forgiveness • Counseling • Counselor trainees • Counselor development • Therapeutic tools

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Forgiveness is a concept that has been studied in different cultures and religions for thousands of years (Denton & Martin, 1998) through religious and philosophical studies. Until the 1980's the concept was ignored in psychological studies, but it is currently seen as an important issue for psychological research (Bugay & Demir, 2011, 2012; Ergüner-Tekinalp & Terzi, 2012; Legaree, Turner, & Lollis, 2007; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Forgiveness is an important element for both spiritual development and psychological healing (Gartner, 1988). Forgiveness is considered as a tool to reach the therapeutic goals of counseling (Berecz, 2001; Hope, 1987; Murray, 2002; Wade, Bailey, & Shaffer, 2005) as well as a counseling technique (Fitzgibbons, 1986).

Actually, being an effective counselor warrants an integration of field knowledge with techniques and skills within the personality characteristics and self-awareness of counselors (İkiz & Karaca, 2011; Johns, 1996). In order to reach the intended outcomes involving client growth, the therapeutic relationship itself is the main determinant of the counseling process. The relationship is one of the most important factors in outcome variance (Tursi & Cochran, 2006). The construction of a therapeutic relationship impacts a counselor's growth to establish a meaning for life, to cope with his/her own stress and traumatic life events, and to develop his/her own spirituality and mental health (Jodry, 2003). Effects of forgiveness on counseling students' overall wellness were investigated, and forgiveness was found to contribute a significant proportion of variance in wellness for counselor trainees (Moorhead, Gill, Minton, & Myers, 2012). They emphasized that "counselor trainees who were more inclined toward forgiveness also reported meaning-making processes toward self and others" (Moorhead et al., 2012, p. 90). In the present study, we examine counselor trainees' thoughts and experiences about forgiveness, and the place of forgiveness in counseling applications according to their views, to draw attention to their personality development by considering interpersonal and intrapersonal processes. Moreover, a review of the concept of forgiveness and its treatment in counseling provided in the paper will help readers to establish a concrete perspective for the importance of forgiveness, both in counselor education and applications.

## Definitions of Forgiveness

There is no consensus in the field of psychology about the definition of forgiveness. The properties of the concept are handled differently by researchers. For the reader to be enlightened about the conceptual development of forgiveness in psychology-related disciplines throughout the last twenty years, it is best to consider the definitions of forgiveness chronologically: Gartner (1988) pointed out that forgiveness include a real and combined view of a whole person with both good and bad sides. Forgiveness does not need to replace negative feelings with feelings of love. Haber (1991) stated that forgiveness is a one-sided process from the forgiver to the forgiven. Enright, Gassin, and Wu (1992) defined forgiveness as "*the overcoming of negative affect and judgment toward the offender, not by denying ourselves the right to such affect and judgment, but by endeavoring to view the offender with compassion, benevolence, and love*" (p. 101). According to Roberts (1995), virtues are personal traits and forgiveness is a virtue. McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) defined forgiveness as "*the set of motivational changes whereby one becomes (a) decreasingly motivated to retaliate against an offending relationship partner; (b) decreasingly motivated to maintain estrangement from the offender; and (c) increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the offender, despite the offender's hurtful actions*" (pp. 321–322). According to Scobie and Scobie (1998) "*Forgiveness is a conscious decision to set aside one's legitimate claim for retaliation or restitution for a damaging act committed by a significant other*" (p. 382). McCullough et al. (2000) defined forgiveness as "*intraindividual prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor that is situated within a specific interpersonal context*" (p. 9). From an intrapsychic perspective, according to Hortwitz (2005), forgiveness involves a victim, a victimizer, and a perceived trauma, injury, or injustice. Forgiveness is an ability of the victim to deal with feelings of anger and resentment and to give up the desire for revenge, which consists of conscious and unconscious efforts. Intrapyschic forgiveness involves accepting the reality that nobody is perfect. Thompson et al. (2005) deemed forgiveness as a multidimensional construct and defined it as "*the framing of a perceived transgression such that one's responses to the transgressor, transgression, and sequelae of the transgression are transformed from negative to neutral or positive*" (p. 318). Moreover, depending upon the object of forgiveness, there are variations: forgiveness of others, forgiveness of

self, and forgiveness of a situation (such as illnesses, disasters). Eaton, Struthers, and Santelli (2006) pointed out that forgiveness is both an interpersonal and intrapersonal process that involves an offender and a victim, and includes giving up revenge and a decision to forgive the offender.

In addition to noting forgiveness in psychology, forgivingness, the definition of forgiveness, the factors affecting forgiveness, and the use of forgiveness during therapy and the counseling process have started to be topics of interest. McCullough and Witvilet (2002) grouped definitions of forgiveness in the literature into three categories: as a response, as a personality disposition, and as a characteristic of social units. As a response, forgiveness can be defined as a prosocial change in the offended's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors toward an offender. As a personality disposition, forgiveness can be understood as a tendency to forgive others across a wide variety of interpersonal circumstances. As a quality of social units, forgiveness can be explained as an attribute that is similar to intimacy, trust, or commitment.

Forgiveness differs from concepts like excusing, justifying (Murphy & Hampton, 1988), condoning (Enright et al., 1992; Scobie & Scobie, 1998), forgetting (Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2005), denial (Fincham & Kashdan, 2004), and reconciliation (Enright et al., 1992; Fincham et al., 2005). Forgiveness is thought of as an interpersonal or intrapersonal process (Eaton et al., 2006; Thompson et al., 2005), as a decision that results in a response (Enright et al., 1992; Haber, 1991; Scobie & Scobie, 1998), as an ability or a personality trait (Gartner, 1988; Hortwitz, 2005; McCullough et al., 2000; McCullough & Witvilet, 2002), or as a virtue (Roberts, 1995) in the literature. Furthermore, forgiveness has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct and there are different kinds of forgiveness (Thompson et al., 2005).

Currently, researchers have identified the importance of distinguishing real forgiveness from pseudo-forgiveness. Forgiveness is a difficult and distressing process. Real forgiveness includes the noticing of fault and acceptance of responsibility (Hall & Fincham, 2005). In pseudo-forgiveness, it seems as if there is forgiveness that leads to positive outcomes, but in reality, the offended condones the event and never forgets (Scobie & Scobie, 1998). According to Akhtar (2002), pseudo-forgiveness is a pathological situation and the offended asserts that he/she has overcome his/her negative feelings. Before debating these two phenomenon, Ferch

(1998) emphasized intentional forgiving, which is explained as working through debilitating emotions with the client and helping him or her to choose mutual respect within himself/herself and the offender. Moreover, Ferch asserted intentional forgiving as a directed, mediated counseling intervention. Therefore, intentional forgiving results in forgetting the need for revenge and retribution, and leads to real forgiveness.

### Forgivingness

The general tendency to forgive can be defined "forgivingness." Forgivingness differs from the action and process of forgiveness (Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Connor, & Wade, 2001; Emmons, 2000). Forgivingness is defined as "a tendency to forgive transgression that is stable over time and across situations" (Berry et al., 2001, p. 1278). According to Roberts (1995), forgivingness is a personality trait because it refers to a disposition to approach the person who is perceived as deficit with helpfulness, and to give up anger felt toward the person. Forgivingness facilitates interactions between groups, and creates enduring interpersonal relationships. For counselor trainees, forgivingness contributed significantly to the variance of wellness (Moorhead et al., 2012). Additionally, forgivingness facilitates intrapersonal relationships. If a person does not have the capacity for self-forgiveness, desperation and suicidal ideas can affect his/her mood (Akl & Mullet, 2010). A forgiving person has emotion management skills that facilitate control of his/her anger and feelings that inhibit forgiveness. The forgiving person has helpful and compatible relationships with others, can perceive the perspectives of suffering people, and can differentiate his/her personal experiences from these (Roberts, 1995).

The construct of forgivingness consists of three empirically separable aspects (Akl & Mullet, 2010): lasting resentment, sensitivity to the circumstances of the offense, and unconditional forgiveness. The "lasting resentment" aspect emphasizes the tendency to hold negative emotions and cognitions, and showing avoidance behavior toward the offender (e.g., as I far as I am concerned, I stay angry even if the offender desires to be forgiven). It is parallel with the concept of unforgiveness. The "sensitivity to the circumstances" aspect emphasizes the offense, expresses the capacity to analyze the pros and cons of unkind situations, and considers the many circumstances of these situations in deciding whether to forgive or not to forgive (e.g., as far as

I am concerned, I forgive a member of my family more easily than anyone else). The “unconditional forgiveness” aspect emphasizes the tendency to harbor positive attitudes toward the offender even in the absence of positive circumstances (e.g., as far as I am concerned, I can easily forgive even if the offender has not begged for forgiveness).

### Factors Effecting Forgiveness

Researchers mention numerous factors that affect forgiveness. These factors can be grouped as individual, relational, and relating to the offense (Hoyt & McCullough, 2005). As an individual factor, to empathize with the offender (Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005; Konstam, Chernoff, & Deveney, 2001; Konstam, Holmes, & Levine, 2003; McCullough, 2001; Toussaint & Webb, 2005; Worthington, 1998) plays a facilitator role in the forgiveness process, although rumination about the transgression makes forgiveness difficult (Barber, Maltby, & Macaskill, 2005; Berry et al., 2005; McCullough, 2000; McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 2001). Additionally, personality traits influence the process of forgiveness (Berry et al., 2001, 2005; Brose, Rye, Lutz-Zois, & Ross, 2005; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). In regards to relating to the offense, the severity of the transgression (Bugay & Demir, 2011; McCullough et al., 1998; Scobie & Scobie, 1998), repetition of the transgression (Bugay & Demir, 2011), time passing after the transgression (Scobie & Scobie, 1998), and the intention of the transgression (Bugay & Demir, 2011; Scobie & Scobie, 1998) influence the process of forgiveness.

As a relational factor, the process of forgiveness may be influenced by the quality of relationship between the two sides (Bugay & Demir, 2011, 2012; McCullough et al., 1998), who the offender is (Bugay & Demir, 2012; Hoyt & McCullough, 2005), and the willingness of the offender to apologize to the offended (Bugay & Demir, 2011; Eaton, Struthers, Shomrony, & Santelli, 2007; McCullough et al., 1998). The decision to forgive depends on numerous factors: (a) situational factors (intention of harm, repetition of offense, severity of the consequences, cancellation or not of the consequences, presence of apologies, and/or compensation from the offender; e.g., Mullet & Girard, 2000); (b) relational factors (offender's identity and his/her proximity with the victim, his/her hierarchical status, his/her attitude after the offense, and environmental pressures; e.g., Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001), and (c) personality factors (McCullough & Worthington, 1999).

In the counseling process, it is possible that a counselor can encounter a client who is angry because of divorce, betrayal, abuse, deceit, racism, unreliability, neglect, criticism, disability, death of a loved one, illness, or disasters (Murray, 2002), and helping clients to let go of past resentments, grudges, and bitterness is an important therapeutic goal (Berecz, 2001; Wade et al., 2005). Therefore, treatments promoting forgiveness in counseling should be reviewed.

### Forgiveness in Counseling

According to Fitzgibbons (1986), cognitive and emotive uses of forgiveness are regarded as a counseling technique. This technique encourages clients to release their anger without inflicting harm on another. Forgiveness is an endeavor that frees people's guilt, which can be the result of unconscious anger. Hope (1987) encouraged counselors to consider forgiveness as a useful and effective therapeutic tool. In addition, he pointed out that clients need to choose to forgive. In family therapy, before family problems are resolved, parents or children may need to release their anger. Similarly, people who suffer from past injuries and unfinished business may find healthy relationships with present families by seeking forgiveness. It is obvious that the use of forgiveness in the therapeutic process is an important issue. For many clients, forgiveness is integral to the counseling process (Murray, 2002).

In concern with usage of forgiveness in counseling Enright and The Human Study Group (1991) suggested a model including cognitive, affective and behavioral strategies. In this model forgiveness is thought as a process and the model consists of 20 units within four phases: uncovering, decision, work and outcome. In the eight units of the uncovering phase (unit 1-8), the person explores the experiences of injustice and injury, evaluate the amount of anger and understand the ways in which harboring that anger may be psychologically danger. The decision phase (unit 9-11) includes efforts about regulation of emotions and problem solving. The work phase (unit 12-15) contains regulation of negative action and changing of perception about negative action. In work phase the humanistic side of offender is recognized and empathy and compassion for offenders are focused. In the outcome phase (unit 16-20), the new meanings about negative experiences and process of forgiveness are explored, the person gets better psychologically. In literature there are some

evidences which showed effectiveness of process model of forgiveness in counseling (for example, Al-Mabuk, Enright, & Cardis, 1995; Coyle & Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Hebl & Enright, 1993) and this model is seen as a guide for counseling practices (Baskin & Enright, 2004).

Harris, Thoresen, and Lopez (2007) indicated that forgiveness is a learnable skill. They believe that the use of brief forgiveness-related interventions is beneficial for counselors in their practices. In many situations, forgiveness interventions may directly address the goals of counseling (e.g., chronic anger, social isolation) more effectively than do other approaches (e.g., pure anger management). For the effective use of forgiveness, counselors must be capable of identifying unforgiveness and encourage clients to discuss the costs and benefits of forgiveness and unforgiveness. Counselors must be aware of obstacles and risks that could affect the healing process. To benefit from forgiveness in the healing process, it is important that both counselor and client truly understand forgiveness (Murray, 2002).

According to Murray (2002), forgiveness may not always be appropriate for every client. Therefore, an evaluation of the potential of a client's readiness for seeking forgiveness, granting forgiveness, repentance, and atonement is crucial before the use of forgiveness in therapy. Similarly, Rotter (2001) pointed out that before the work of forgiveness, a counselor must give sufficient opportunity for the client to determine whether forgiveness is the right choice. First, the counselor helps the client to understand the forgiveness process. If the client consents to work on forgiveness, then the counselor must provide the required information about forgiveness. The counselor's tasks include defining forgiveness, discussing the paradoxes in the definition, and explaining what forgiveness is not.

McCullough and Worthington (1994) suggested six important factors to encouraging clients to consider forgiveness: (a) having unconditional positive regard, (b) guiding the client to refocus his or her attention away from those emotions associated with the offense, (c) encouraging the client to have empathy for the offender, (d) employing a personal or religious forgiveness ritual, (e) helping the client forgive himself or herself, and (f) encouraging reconciliation if appropriate.

Many studies show that forgiveness has positive effects on psychological health. For example, according to Karremans, Van Lange, and Holland (2005), people who do not have the capacity for

forgiveness lack feelings of relationship with others, thus, they may experience feelings of loneliness or even depression. Lack of forgivingness has a negative relationship with relatedness and positive interaction. A study by Lawler-Row and Piferi (2006) showed that the people who forgive more experience low rates of depression and stress, as well as greater subjective and psychological well-being. There are also some similar studies indicating that being unsuccessful in forgiving others or oneself is related to depression and anxiety (Avery, 2008; Maltby, Macaskill, & Day, 2001; Ross, Kendall, Matters, Rye, & Wrobel, 2004; Tse & Cheng, 2006).

A counselor who is not psychologically healthy may harm his/her clients. According to Moorhead and his colleagues (2012), counselors must be aware of their own pain and healing process to accurately understand clients. The increasing psychological and emotional demands of clients, as well as the counselors' feelings of not meeting them effectively may lead to burnout in counselors (Drake & Hebert, 2002; İkiz, 2010) and this leads to the necessity for enhancing their capabilities in counseling skills (İkiz & Karaca, 2011). Counselors need to use a variety of skills and strategies to assist clients in chancing. Therefore, we believe that if a counselor is forgiving, it is more likely he/she is psychologically healthy, and thus, he/she can be more helpful to his/her clients. Additionally, a forgiving counselor can be a good model for clients, and we think that a forgiving counselor has more knowledge about the process and consequences of forgiveness; therefore, he/she can encourage clients to forgive more.

A counselor who wants to use forgiveness in his/her work must first know what forgiveness is and what it is not, and which factors affect the forgiveness process. As a counselor becomes knowledgeable about forgiveness and blends his/her own awareness and spirituality with fundamental therapeutic knowledge and skills, he/she is more able to harmonize his/her own style, and thus, he/she is more likely to deal with the inner thoughts and feelings of clients. For example, many clients may think that forgiveness is synonymous with forgetting or reconciliation. Therefore, they may not want to consider forgiveness. In such situations, the counselors can educate their clients and can contribute to change their clients' willingness regarding forgiveness.

The use of forgiveness is a difficult issue in the therapeutic process. It will be better for counselors to be skillful about this issue and know how they benefit from forgiveness in the counseling process.

In fact, the concept of forgiveness needs to be explored in Turkey, and counselors there should be knowledgeable about the concept and process of forgiveness (Ergüner-Tekinalp & Terzi, 2012). If they are not sufficiently informed about this issue, they may not be effective in dealing with revenge, rumination, and freeing the self from debilitating thoughts and feelings. To provide effective counseling services, counselors need to be aware of their capacities. Counselors are humans and cultural beings. Counselor self-awareness of their capacities to forgive, their forgivingness and the factors that may affect their forgivingness, and of their knowledge and skill integration will make a large contribution to establish a multilateral and multidimensional framework for school-wide policies and an effective therapeutic process. Therefore, it is valuable to identify what counselor trainees know about forgiveness and forgivingness, as well as the views of counselor trainees about the use of forgiveness in therapeutic settings. To fulfill this purpose, we investigated how trainees define forgiveness, their personal beliefs about their own forgivingness, how they view the factors affecting forgiveness, and the importance of forgiveness in counseling. The results obtained from the present study will give us an idea about what counselor trainees need to learn about forgiveness as a personally developmental issue for their mental health, and as a therapeutic tool to process more effectively.

## Method

### The Research Model

A qualitative research model was utilized in this study, based on a decision to elicit in-depth and detailed verbal data related to the personal experiences and beliefs of Turkish counselor trainees. This model endeavored to determine the participants' phenomenological views on the given questions. There were no right or wrong answers; each answer was considered valuable. Each view and/or answer was coded and categorized. Therefore, the number of perspectives presented in the tables may be greater than the number of participants.

### Participants

The participants in this study were selected using a convenience sampling technique. This technique enables researchers to deeply examine situations with rich information (Patton, 1987). Counselor trainees who were seniors in the division of Psychological

Counseling and Guidance in a university from western Turkey during the 2012-2013 academic year were invited to participate in the study. This study included 16 males and 43 females, for a total of 59 counselor trainee participants.

### Data Collection

The participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Our basis for conducting interviews was to attempt to enter the inner world of each participant and try to understand the constructs and ethical dilemmas from his/her point of view (Patton, 1987). In this way, the personal experiences and beliefs of each person can be better understood and identified by their use of language, interpretations, and explanations. Thus, the most private, hidden information can be revealed using the interview technique (Kvale, 1996). Hence, if we are interested in the knowledge, constructs, views, experiences, interactions, interpretations and feelings related to the social realities of other people, perhaps interviews are the only way to reach them (Mason, 1996).

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured form consisting of five open-ended questions. The form was developed by the researchers based on a literature review and was assessed by three counselor educators, apart from the researchers, for consistency, fluency and comprehensibility. These open-ended questions gave participants a chance to express their phenomenological views independently (Babbie, 1990; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Oppenheim, 1996). This form was created to gather information about how trainees define forgiveness; their personal beliefs regarding forgiving themselves and others; how they view experiences about forgiveness; how they define the factors affecting forgiveness; and what they consider important about forgiveness in counseling.

The form comprised the following questions:

1. According to you, what does "forgiveness" mean?
2. What do you think about the level of your forgivingness?
3. Is there a case where you had an experience about forgiveness?
4. What are the factors that influence forgiveness?
5. What do you think about the importance of forgiveness in counseling?



## Process

Before the interviews, the researchers informed the counselor trainees about the study. All participants attended voluntarily. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes per counselor trainee. Interviews were conducted in the researchers' university offices from January to March 2013.

## Data Analysis

A qualitative research technique was used in this study. Therefore, the data established as textual information obtained from each open-ended question were analyzed using content analysis (Bilgin, 1999, 2000; Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1998; Silverman, 1993). First, all responses to the questions on the semi-structured interview form were read to gain an orientation to their contents. Second, the responses provided by the 59 counselor trainees were coded. These codes for the five open-ended questions were established either as expressions or as a definite construct. Third, once the categories were determined, the rater reread each of the responses and classified them into the appropriate categories. Trainees' responses were coded into predetermined categories by one of the researchers. After data for each code were categorized, frequency and percentage figures were computed. Excerpts from student statements for each category were also selected. Before the final coding, intra-rater reliability was examined (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Responses were coded by the same researcher twice, one week apart. The results of both codings indicated 94.23% reliability.

## Findings

The results of the study were presented in five tables, corresponding to the five research questions, and supported by direct quotations expressing the views of the counselor trainees.

### Meaning of Forgiveness

The views of counselor trainees about the meaning of forgiveness are presented in Table 1. Their views were grouped into four themes (in order): decision or response, virtue, interpersonal process, and interpersonal process (see Table 1). When the themes were examined, the most dominant thoughts about the meaning of forgiveness were found to be related to "decision or response" and "virtue."

Under the theme of decision or response, an "acceptance of mistakes" code was situated at first. An example of this code follows:

"... It mustn't be forgotten that it is normal that people make mistakes and one day we can make a mistake..." (2, F)

The codes, "giving a chance" and "condoning" were situated next. The following statements provide examples for these codes:

"... Forgiveness is to give a new chance to a person..." (59, F)

"... According to me, forgiveness is to forget or to condone a wrong behavior of someone who did it against me..." (6, F)

The "making concessions" code was the last one. A trainee mentioned:

"... Forgiveness is to make concessions for me. It is to make concessions from your rules..." (3, F)

Under the theme of virtue, the codes which were situated in the first three lines were "greatness," "virtue," and "tolerance." A trainee disclosed his view in the following statement:

"... Forgiveness means greatness, being soft to faults and mistakes for me. It reminds me nobody is faultless..." (57, M)

Another trainee emphasized the relevance of forgiveness with greatness in this sentence:

"... Forgiveness involves real greatness. Whatever happens, it is to think of the other person by forgetting yourself..." (56, F)

An example of the virtue code was found in the following statement:

"... Forgiveness is a virtue. It is an honorable behavior which provides relief..." (58, M)

Under the theme of interpersonal process, "offender" and "repentance of offender" were situated in the first two lines. Examples of expressions, pointed out the importance of who the offender is, in the following:

"... People generally forgive the behavior of a person who loves..." (12, M)

"... Forgiveness is a concept which changes according to a person, time, and forgiven people..." (14, F)

The following sentence was an example of the repentance of offender code:

"... Persons who are aware of their faults, and so, are upset and regretful, can be forgiven..." (32, M)

Under the theme of interpersonal process, in the third line there was the "continuity of relationship" code. A statement exemplifying this code was

“... Sometimes people can be more forgiving for a person that he/she doesn't want to lose...” (16, F)

“... As a person forgives someone he/she must forgive the other for his/her own peace and happiness...” (33, F)

Table 1  
*Counselor Trainees' Views on the Meaning of Forgiveness*

Themes	Codes	n	Total
Decision or response	Acceptance of mistake	7	32
	Giving a chance	5	
	Condoning	5	
	Making concessions	4	
	Abandoning anger	3	
	Forgetting	2	
	Acceptance of offender	2	
	Abandoning grudge	1	
	Empathizing	1	
	Playing role	1	
Thanks to offender	1		
Virtue	Greatness	11	31
	Virtue	9	
	Tolerance	8	
	Respect	2	
	Compassion	1	
Interpersonal process	Offender	8	26
	Repentance of offender	7	
	Continuity of relationship	4	
	Quality of offense	3	
	Intent of offender	2	
Intrapersonal process	Inner peace	4	18
	Removing of sorrow	4	
	Relaxation	3	
	Happiness	3	
	Positive psychological health	2	
	Being free	1	
Self-confidence	1		

Under the theme of intrapersonal process, “inner peace” and “removing of sorrow” were situated in the first two lines. Examples for these codes are following:

“... Forgiveness is a supreme behavior which enables people to reach inner peace” (M, 58); “Forgiveness is to remove anger and sorrow. It is to delete negative feelings and thoughts which are directed towards events, situations, and persons...” (43, F)

“... Forgiveness means removing of gall and sulking, continuing happily and peacefully with your life...” (35, F)

The codes, “relaxation” and “happiness” were situated in the next two lines under the theme of intrapersonal process. Examples for these codes are following:

“... Forgiveness is like getting rid of a burden. Unforgiveness is to get under a burden that gradually becomes heavier...” (44, F)

“... I believe that forgiveness is rather difficult, but it has relaxing effects...” (10, F)

**Level of Forgivingness**

The views of counselor trainees about their level of forgivingness were grouped into four themes (in order): sensitivity to the circumstances of the offense, unconditional forgiveness, lasting resentment, and interaction facilitator (see Table 2). An examination of the themes indicated that the most dominant themes were “sensitivity to the circumstances of the offense” and “unconditional forgiveness.”

Under the theme of sensitivity to the circumstances of the offense, “the person,” “the event” and “the behavior of offender” codes were found in the first three lines. The following examples were related to the person and behavior of offender codes:

“... My level of forgivingness changes according to the person and his/her behavior” (51, M); and “I forgive according to the behavior of a person. If the person is aware of his/her fault and regrets what he/she did, I forgive; but if he/she doesn't regret it, I don't forgive...” (59, F)

A trainee pointed out the importance of the event and the person with the following statement:

“... It changes according to situations and people. If the situation repeats quite a lot, I am not highly forgiving. I can forgive people who injure me one or two times, but if they injure me more times, I don't forgive and I don't mind them...” (18, F)

Table 2  
*Counselor Trainees Views' on their Level of Forgivingness*

Themes	Codes	n	Total
Sensitivity to the circumstances of the offense	The person	12	40
	The event	11	
	The behavior of offender	10	
	The event's effects	3	
	The event's time	2	
	The time after the event	2	
Unconditional forgiveness	Highly forgiving	20	38
	Generally forgiving	9	
	Moderately forgiving	7	
	Not forgetting the event but forgiving	2	
Lasting resentment	Not forgiving	6	10
	Pseudo-forgiveness	4	
Interaction facilitator	Not forgiving but continuing the relationship	1	4
	Forgiving for interpersonal relationship	1	
	Forgiving for long-term friendship	1	
	Breaking up the relationship	1	



Under the theme of unconditional forgiveness, “highly forgiving” was situated in the first line. Examples of expressions are following:

“... I am very forgiving. I love people and if it is not unethical, I can forgive every behavior...” (27, M)

“... I think that I am efficient about this issue. There were times when I forgave, even very big faults...” (4, F)

A trainee mentioned that she was overly forgiving and not satisfied with this trait in the following sentence:

“... I think that I am too forgiving. I forgive people easily. In fact, I am angry with myself about this issue. I accept the faults of people by doing this. This doesn't make me happy...” (3, F)

The theme of lasting resentment consisted of the “not forgiving” and “pseudo-forgiveness” codes. The following statements were examples of pseudo-forgiveness:

“... I am not very forgiving. I hold a grudge...” (42, F)

“... I see myself in the middle. When a person makes a mistake, to forgive is difficult for me...” (7, F)

“... It changes according to the situation and events. In a very difficult situation, even if I forgive, some things can remain in my inner world...” (29, F)

“... Sometimes when I forgave, I notice that I still didn't forgive...” (55, F)

“... Although, there are many things in my inner world, I don't easily say these. To forgive in my inner world is difficult...” (56, F)

The theme of interaction facilitator included some codes about the continuity of relationship with the offender. Some examples of this theme are following:

“... I am generally forgiving but I end my relationship with the person that I forgave.” (48, F); “My longtime friendships derive from my forgiveness...” (41, F)

“... For the reason that I attach importance to interpersonal relationships, I prefer to forgive rather than experience a bad relationship...” (26, M)

### Experiences of Forgiveness

The counselor trainees' experiences of forgiveness are presented in Table 3. The answers given to the

third research question were grouped into three themes: have an experience, don't remember, and don't have an experience.

Table 3  
*Counselor Trainees' Experiences of Forgiveness*

Themes	n	Codes	N
Have an experience	37	The apology of the offender	7
		The awareness of the offender	5
		Pseudo-forgiveness	3
		Time	2
		Not forgetting the case	1
		Forgiving to continue the relationship	1
Don't remember	10	Forgiving to put the offender to shame	1
		Ending the relationship	1
Don't have an experience	6		

The majority of counselor trainees mentioned that they had an experience of forgiveness in their life. The “have an experience” theme consisted of several codes that included information about the forgiveness process of trainees. These codes revealed how the trainees decided to forgive. For example, a trainee highlighted the “apology” code with the following statement:

“... A friend of mine came to Izmir for some time and I couldn't call him because another friend of mine had an accident and I was shocked by the event, he didn't come to my mind. He ranted, and uttered insult-like sentences without asking what happened. When I explained the situation, he apologized again and again. I didn't exaggerate. Now we are good...” (38, F)

Another examples of expressions emphasized the importance of the offender's awareness of his/her unfairness in the following:

“... I experienced forgiveness in my friendships. Usually there were not important issues. When an offender accepted his/her mistake, I forgave...” (41, F)

“... When I was a child, a friend of mine took my toy. I cried for hours without knowing who took it. He/she saw how upset I was and consoled me. After a very long time he/she confessed and said that he/she was regretful. I forgave but I didn't forget. It didn't negatively influence our friendship...” (10, F)

Lastly, a trainee conveyed her forgiveness experience with the following statement:

“... I experienced. I understood that my friend told me a lie. It was a big event that could affect my life, but I forgave to put him/her to shame. Nevertheless, I kept him/her at a distance...” (39, F)

**Factors That Affect Forgiveness**

The views of counselor trainees about the factors that influence forgiveness are presented in Table 4. The answers given in response to the fourth research question were grouped into five themes: relating to the offender, relational, relating to offense, individual, and situational factors.

Table 4  
Counselor Trainees Views on the Factors That Influence Forgiveness

Themes	Codes	n	Total
<b>Factors relating to the offender</b>	Repentance	10	50
	Accepting of fault	9	
	Insisting on fault	8	
	Intention	8	
	Apology	6	
	Properties of offender	4	
	Changing of offender's behavior	3	
Upset	2		
<b>Relational factors</b>	Love and worth	21	28
	Closeness with offender	7	
<b>Factors related to the offense</b>	Extent of damage	11	21
	The type of offense	9	
	Repetition of offense	1	
<b>Individual factors</b>	Life philosophy	11	18
	Mood	3	
	Desire about relaxation	2	
	Religious belief	2	
<b>Situational factors</b>	Environment	3	5
	Changing of setting	1	
	Time	1	

Under the factors relating to the offender theme, the codes, “repentance,” “acceptance of fault,” “insisting on fault,” “intention,” and “apology” were situated initially. A trainee shared her views about the importance of repentance and apology in the following statement:

“... For me the factors that facilitate the forgiveness of others are that the person is important to me, the person apologizes to me, and I feel that the person is regretful...” (44, F)

Another examples pointed out the offender’s intention and insistence about the fault in the following account:

“... The things that facilitate forgiving others for me are that the fault is not very damaging and is purely a mistake, and the sincere worry of the people offended by the fault. The obstructive aspects are to advocate for the committed mistake, to commit it knowingly, hurting not only me, but also hurting others who are around me...” (31, M)

“... If someone is aware of his/her faults which he/she made against me and he/she apologizes, it is easier for me to forgive him/her...” (23, F)

The relational factors theme comprised the codes, “love and worth” and “closeness with offender.” Examples of love and worth were given in the following statement:

“... My feelings of forgiveness change according to the worth of people who oppose me. If he/she is deserving, I forgive very easily, because I want to continue experiencing togetherness with him/her. But if he/she is a person that I don't think is deserving, I don't think to forgive...” (35, F)

“... The thing that facilitates forgiving for me is the worth I ascribe to the people...” (40 F)

The codes for the factors relating to the offense theme consisted of “extent of damage,” “the type of offense,” and “repetition of offense.” An example for extent of damage is following:

“... The obstructive factors are that she/he led heavily to moral damage to me. A person whom I loved and trusted took actions that led to my disappointment...” (44, F)

An example of the type of offense code is presented in the following statement: “... To forgive gets difficult in some events, such as two facedness, lying, and infidelity...” (48, F)

Under the theme of individual factors, the “life philosophy” code was situated in the first line. This indicates that participants have natural characteristics or a view of life about not keeping heartbreak, sorrow, or revenge ongoing. Examples of expressions are following:

“... I think that the things that facilitate forgiving for me are my natural characteristics, because I can't sulk with someone for a long time. It troubles me. It eats away at me...” (8, F)

“... The facilitating factors are love of humans, virtue, respect, and our softheartedness...” (57, M)

Under the theme of situational factors, the “environment” code was situated first. This code concerns the circumstances surrounding the act and whether there were witnesses in the adjacent area or not. An example of expression is following:

“... The behavior, the views of others about the offense, and repentance facilitate or obstruct...” (53, F)

**Importance of Forgiveness in Counseling**

The views of counselor trainees about the importance of forgiveness in the counseling process are presented in Table 5. These views were grouped into three themes (in order): in terms of the counselor, in terms of the client, and in terms of the relationship between the counselor and client. Additionally the codes under these themes were separated into two groups: “important” and “not important.”

In considering the counselor, generally the trainees indicated that forgiveness was “important.” The “unconditional acceptance” and “forgiving counselor” codes were situated in the first two lines under this theme. A trainee pointed out that forgiveness was related to unconditional acceptance

and a counselor must forgive, as indicated in the following statement: “...*In my opinion, being forgiving is important in counseling. It may overlap with the principle of unconditional acceptance. Moreover, the other principles of counseling are related to forgiveness, too...*” (53, F). Another trainee indicated that forgiveness was related to some counseling principles that involve forgiving, like unconditional acceptance, in the following statements:

“... There are some principles in counseling like respect, acceptance of variety, and unconditional acceptance. I think these principles require a counselor to be forgiving...” (57, M)

“... When we reflect on an individual basis, if there are areas or issues in which a counselor feels himself/herself guilty, he/she needs to forgive them to develop his/her own self; when we reflect in terms of the client, a counselor must be more forgiving and tolerant...” (34, F)

An example of the “not important” category is following:

“... Psychological counseling and guidance involve unconditional acceptance, but I think that it doesn’t involve being forgiving. For example, it can’t be expected that we are forgiving to a person who committed sexual harassment...” (8, F)

In terms of clients, the trainees said that forgiveness was “important.” The first code under this theme was “calming”. The trainees pointed out that the consequences of forgiveness for the client will be relaxing, calming. For example, a trainee said,

“... I think the cases in which the clients didn’t forgive impress their psychological health as unfinished business. The forgiver is free. Forgiveness provides emotional peace...” (10, F)

Other codes from this theme were “unfinished business,” “psychological health,” and “self-forgiveness”: The following statement was an example of the unfinished business code:

“... According to me, forgiveness is important in terms of unfinished business. Unfinished business causes repentance and not to take responsibility for the future. This can be difficult...” (25, F)

An example of the psychological health code was:

“... Forgiveness is essential in counseling, so a client can improve. If clients resist forgiving themselves or resist forgiving others in their lives through the counseling process, they can’t improve...” (56, F)

Table 5  
Counselor Trainees Views’ on the Importance of Forgiveness in Counseling

Themes	Codes		Total	
	Important	Not important		
In terms of counselor traits	Unconditional acceptance	12	43	
	Forgiving counselor	10		
	Tolerance	5		
	Respect	5		
	Empathy	3		
	Being humanistic	2		
	Self-forgiving counselor	2		
	Transparency	1		
	Effective communication	1		
	Objectivity	1		
Sincerity	1			
In terms of clients	Calming	7	23	
	Unfinished business	4		
	Psychological health	4		
	Self-forgiveness	4		
	Insight	2		
	Conflict resolution	1		
In terms of the relationship between counselor and client	A condition to benefit from counseling	1	4	
	Counselor helps the client to forgive	10		
	Counselor is forgiving to client	2		
	Possible	1		
		There isn't forgiveness; there is unconditional acceptance and tolerance	4	23
		There isn't forgiveness	2	

In terms of the relationship between the counselor and client, while some trainees thought forgiveness was important, others thought it was not important. The trainees who thought forgiveness was important pointed out that counselors help clients to forgive. Examples of expressions are following:

“... To show that faults are forgivable is important” (47, M). Other trainees mentioned, “Forgiveness is a feeling which develops people. Psychological counseling and guidance services must impart skills of forgiveness to people...” (41, F)

“... Guidance services must teach people that to forgive is normal...” (21, M)

The trainees who thought forgiveness wasn't important indicated that in the counseling process, forgiveness was not possible, and instead of forgiveness there were unconditional acceptance and tolerance, as exemplified in the following statements:

“... There is no concept of forgiveness in counseling because we have to accept the clients with all their faults...” (59, F)

“... There is no forgiveness in counseling because other skills we have to develop are unconditional acceptance and tolerance...” (50, F)

### Discussion

In this study, we aimed to identify the beliefs of counselor trainees about the issue of forgiveness and to discuss the place of forgiveness in counseling, which has recently become prominent in the Turkish literature. Five research questions were answered by 59 counselor trainees.

Starting with examining the beliefs of counselor trainees about the *meaning of forgiveness*, the results were grouped into four themes. Although these themes had similar aspects to those in the literature, they also had divergent aspects. First, we found that the majority of counselor trainees thought of forgiveness as a decision or response. This was parallel with Scobie and Scobie (1998) who defined forgiveness as a decision. The trainees also thought of forgiveness as a virtue, as did Roberts (1995). It was interesting that the trainees indicated that, under the decision or response theme, forgiveness was related to condoning and forgetting. However, the consensus found in the literature is that forgiveness does not mean forgetting or condoning (Enright et al., 1992; Fincham et al., 2005; Murphy & Hampton, 1988; Scobie & Scobie, 1998). Additionally, almost all of the definitions of forgiveness in the literature

emphasized that forgiveness involved abandoning anger (Hortwitz, 2005; North, 1987; Roberts, 1995; Taysi, 2007). However, in the present study, few participants mentioned that the meaning of forgiveness was to abandon anger. This raises an argument parallel with those of Hall and Fincham et al. (2005), Scobie and Scobie (1998), Akhtar (2002), and Ferch (1998) that deliberated whether the trainees' forgiving was real or not, and stated the importance of intentional forgiving by counselor practitioners, which will be developed further below.

Second, forgiveness was accepted by most of the trainees as an *interpersonal process*. However, fewer trainees accepted forgiveness as an intrapersonal process. The counselor trainees who said that forgiveness was related to an interpersonal process emphasized some conditions about the offender and the relationship between the offended and the offender, which is similar to findings in previous studies that found that the process of forgiveness may be influenced by the quality of the relationship between the two sides (Bugay & Demir, 2011, 2012; McCullough et al., 1998), who the offender is (Bugay & Demir, 2012; Hoyt & McCullough, 2005), and the willingness of the offender to apologize to the offended (Bugay & Demir, 2011; Eaton et al., 2007; McCullough et al., 1998). The results of our study showed that most of the counselor trainees approached forgiveness as a conditional process in an interpersonal context.

Additionally, few trainees regarded forgiveness as an *intrapersonal process*. Forgiveness was handled within an interpersonal context by some researchers, but forgiveness was mostly accepted as an experience independent from the offender, within the inner world of the offended. For example, Enright et al. (1992) indicated that forgiveness includes giving the offender the unconditional gift of acceptance. Haber (1991) pointed out that forgiveness was a one-sided practice from the offended to the offender, and McCullough et al. (2000) defined forgiveness as an intraindividual issue in an interpersonal context. Our results showed that the trainees failed to notice the innermost aspect of forgiveness. Moreover, in the literature, some researchers recognized the concept of forgivingness, which is a general tendency to forgive (Akl & Mullet, 2010; Berry et al., 2001; Emmons, 2000; Roberts, 1995). In our study, none of the trainees mentioned such a personality trait involved in the meaning of forgiveness.

Forgiveness was also accepted as a multidimensional construct by some researchers. In particular, as a part of multidimensional forgiveness, several researchers raised the importance of the self-

forgiveness issue (Downie, 1965; Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1996; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001). Whereas, none of the counselor trainees in the present study indicated that forgiveness could be a multidimensional concept.

When these results about the first research question are considered in their entirety, they indicate that, although counselor trainees have some information about the meaning of forgiveness, *they do not actually know what forgiveness is*. They consider forgiveness as a conditional process in an interpersonal context, not as a personality trait or a multifaceted concept. It is obvious that counselor trainees are not aware of the importance of forgiveness for their personal development. Actually, all the other results of the present research maintain the continuity of these approaches by participants.

The results of the second research question revealed four themes concerning counselor trainees' *level of forgiveness*, including sensitivity to the circumstances of the offense, unconditional forgiveness, lasting resentment, and interaction (relationship) facilitator. The first three themes were parallel with the grouping of Akl and Mullet (2010) about the aspects of forgivingness, which was mentioned previously in the introduction section. Divergent from Akl and Mullet, the theme of interaction facilitator was added in our study. The sensitivity to the circumstances of the offense theme included some conditions that influenced the trainees' decision regarding forgiveness or unforgiveness. Similar to the results of the first question in this study, these results also showed that most of the trainees had an understanding of conditional forgiveness in their own life. On the other hand, it was interesting that the number of trainees who defined themselves as forgiving was quite high.

At first glance, although this seemed to be a good result for the trainees, some of them were not satisfied with this situation. For example, a trainee said,

"... I think that I am highly forgiving. I forgive people easily. Actually, I am angry with myself about this issue. I accept people's mistakes, so this doesn't make me happy..." (3, F)

In the literature, generally, forgiveness seems psychologically healthy; but at the same time, some researchers pointed out that if a person is too forgiving, it can be unhealthy and there can be some psychopathological conditions (Akhtar, 2002). The above example statement supports this opinion. It is obvious that unconditional and intentional forgiveness is important, but if someone cannot keep

a balance, it can create some conflicts within his/her inner world. For the theme of lasting resentment, the results indicated that some counselor trainees were not successful in forgiving. In particular, some of them only forgave in appearance, but in reality, they still experienced negative emotions like anger or resentment. In the literature, this situation was called pseudo-forgiveness. In pseudo-forgiveness, it seems like there is forgiveness that leads to some positive consequences, but in fact, the offended condones the damaging act and never forgets (Scobie & Scobie, 1998). Pseudo-forgiveness is a process of self-deception (Hall & Fincham, 2005) and is not healthy (Akhtar, 2002). It is obvious that the trainees are generally apt to attribute some conditions about the offender and the offense to their forgivingness. Although most of them think that they are forgiving, some of them are not satisfied with these approaches and *they cannot distinguish real forgiveness from pseudo-forgiveness*.

The results for the third question revealed that most of the trainees had *experiences of forgiveness*. Their sharing about these experiences showed that their experiences about forgiveness were mostly conditional. In particular, an apology and an awareness of the offender about his/her fault had important effects on their decisions to forgive. In addition, some trainees indicated that although they had forgotten, they had still negative emotions. This result shows that instruction about real forgiveness will be beneficial for trainees.

The *factors that influence forgiveness* were grouped into five themes. Almost all of the trainees indicated that the factors related to the offender were most important. Repentance, accepting of fault, insisting on fault, intention, and apology were the most important factors about the offender. Parallel to these results, the study of Bugay and Demir (2011; 2012) found that most of the participants indicated that "intention" was important, and almost half of the participant indicated that "who the offender was" and "apology" were important. Many studies have indicated similar results (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; McCullough et al., 1997; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991). Additionally, Hall and Fincham (2005) found that when the size of the damage increased, self-forgiveness was reduced, and apology affected self-forgiveness positively. According to Braithwaite, Fincham, and Lambert (2009) the thoughts about the properties of the offense had an effect on forgiveness. Similar to this opinion, in terms of factors relating to the offense, our study found that the extent of damage, the

type of offense, and repetition of the offense were important. Likewise, Bugay and Demir (2011) found that the extent of damage was an essential factor. According to Worthington and Wade (1999), the emotional valance of the relationship affects interpersonal forgiveness. If a relationship is defined as negative, an offense can confirm the person's negative view of an already negative relationship. Therefore, in negative relationships, forgiveness is difficult, while in positive relationships forgiveness can be more likely. Parallel with this opinion, relational factors were also found to be quite important in the present study.

Finally, the trainees handled *forgiveness in counseling* in terms of counselor traits, experiences of clients, and the relationship between the counselor and the client. In the literature, forgiveness is generally thought to be important for clients, and several researchers have pointed out that forgiveness is an important therapeutic technique and have made some suggestions about the use of forgiveness in counseling (Berecz, 2001; Fitzgibbons, 1986; Murray, 2002; Rotter, 2001; Wade et al., 2005). Remarkably, the results of our study indicated that the counselor trainees mostly thought of forgiveness in the counseling process as a trait of counselor. In terms of counselor traits, forgiveness was related to the principles of counseling. According to our participants, unconditional acceptance, which is a Rogerian principle, is the principle most nearly related "to being forgiving" for a counselor. They thought that a counselor must be forgiving. Moreover, the literature considers the task of a counselor in the therapy process is to be an appropriate role model to the client (İkiz & Karaca, 2011; Jodry, 2003; Johns, 1996; Tursi & Cochran, 2006). It is possible that in the present study, these counselor trainees deem that a counselor "must be forgiving by taking notice of being a model to the client." Moreover, if a counselor is forgiving, helping a client with forgiveness can be easier.

In terms of the clients, trainees pointed out that forgiveness is an important issue. This result shows that the counselor trainees are aware of the positive effect of forgiveness on psychological health, as asserted in the aforementioned studies (Avery, 2008; Karremans et al., 2005; Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006; Maltby et al., 2001; Ross et al., 2004; Tse & Cheng, 2006). The literature emphasized that forgiveness is helpful for solving unfinished business (Hope, 1987). In this study, the trainees thought that forgiveness was important to help clients understand and solve "unfinished business." They understood that

unforgiven experiences, people, or situations establish cumulative needs that clients need to resolve in order to live more psychologically healthy lives.

Some trainees handled forgiveness in terms of the relationship between the client and the counselor, indicating that a counselor must help clients to forgive and that this is an important issue. However, some counselor trainees indicated that this was not important. Similar to this result, some studies have indicated that helping clients to let go of past resentments, grudges, and bitterness is an important therapeutic goal (Berecz, 2001; Wade et al., 2005). Although the trainees were aware of the important role of the counselor in forgiveness, none of them mentioned how a counselor can benefit from forgiveness in the counseling process. It is obvious that the results about the place of forgiveness in counseling bypass these issues: under which conditions forgiveness is appropriate, when the counselor can encourage clients to think about forgiveness, what are the things that must be addressed while working on forgiveness with a client, and the models of forgiveness that can be used while working on forgiveness in the counseling process. This result raises the necessity for trainees to be educated about forgiveness.

When we handled these results in their entirety, the results revealed that counselor trainees should be educated to discover and resolve their inner hurts and transfer their theoretical knowledge to their own lives. They seem to be confused between principles of counseling and the construct of forgiveness, or somehow get lost considering their wants, needs, beliefs, vocational knowledge, and life philosophy when thinking about forgiveness as a personal and a professional tool. Moreover, as a useful therapeutic technique, forgiveness education should be developed as Ergüner-Tekinalp and Terzi (2012) mentioned in their review, and implemented through counseling education programs. By creating more opportunities for trainees to learn how to use effective counseling interviewing techniques and forgiveness as a therapeutic technique, counselor educators should help trainees to be qualified to help their clients in the future, to resolve hurts, and to reconceptualize a realistic view of themselves and the world. Forgiveness education can be expanded by using vignettes (McCarron & Stewart, 2011) and case studies consisting of ethical dilemmas. This effort to promote the study of forgiveness in counseling should facilitate enlightenment concerning its virtues in the counseling relationship and counselor development.



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