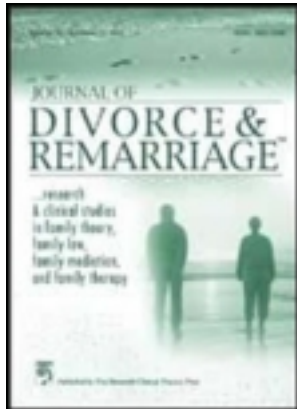


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## **Evaluation of an Intervention Designed to Help Divorced Parents Forgive Their Ex-Spouse**

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*This study evaluated a 1-day workshop combined with postintervention journal writing designed to help divorced parents forgive their ex-spouse. Participants (N = 99) were randomly assigned to a workshop with gratitude journal condition (WG), the same workshop with daily events journal condition (WDE), or a wait-list comparison condition (WAIT). Participants completed measures of forgiveness, well-being, and parenting at pretest, posttest (i.e., after the workshop but prior to journaling), and 1-month follow-up (i.e., after the journaling). Consistent with hypotheses, forgiveness of an*

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*ex-spouse and dispositional forgiveness were positively related to coparenting, and forgiveness of an ex-spouse was related to better mental health. Participants assigned to WG improved more on situational and dispositional forgiveness as compared to other conditions. Contrary to hypotheses, participants in WG and WDE did not improve over time more than WAIT participants on mental health or parenting measures.*

*KEYWORDS* divorce, forgive, forgiveness, gratitude, intervention, parenting

When the dissolution of a marriage is acrimonious, anger toward an ex-spouse can persist for many years (Dreman, Spielberger, & Darzi, 1997). Relinquishing anger can be especially challenging for divorced parents when there is ongoing hostile communication related to parenting. Although there might be adaptive functions of holding onto anger immediately following a divorce (Somary & Emery, 1991), hostility has been linked to physical health problems (Vandervoort, 2006), poor coping strategies (Vandervoort), and depression (Nabi et al., 2010).

In addition to adversely affecting health and coping, hostile feelings toward an ex-spouse can negatively impact children. Anger can precipitate high-conflict coparenting, which relates to poor adjustment in children following divorce (Trinder, Kellet, & Swift, 2008), and parental alienation, which occurs when children become aligned with one parent and reject the other without apparent justification (Bernet, Von Boch-Galhau, Baker, & Morrison, 2010). Moreover, Dreman, Tsemach, and Levin (2002) found that state anger among divorced mothers was related to negative parenting attitudes.

#### FORGIVENESS AS A STRATEGY FOR COPING WITH DIVORCE

Given the potential consequences of ongoing parental hostility, strategies that reduce hostility, such as forgiveness, could have beneficial effects. Forgiveness involves transforming angry feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward an offender into a more positive and peaceful approach. Importantly, forgiveness does not involve condoning wrongdoing, forgetting, reconciling, or foregoing a fair legal settlement (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000).

Research has shown that forgiveness of an ex-spouse relates to better postdivorce adjustment (Rohde-Brown & Rudestam, 2011; Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004), improved coparenting (Bonach, 2009), and

decreased parental conflict (Bonach & Sales, 2002). Despite these findings, only a few empirically validated forgiveness interventions have focused on divorce. Two interventions were designed to help children adjust to divorce (Freedman & Knupp, 2003; Nousse, 2007) and two were for adults going through a divorce (Palamattathil, 2002; Rye et al., 2005). To our knowledge, ours is the first forgiveness intervention designed specifically for divorced parents. Of particular interest is whether program effects differ between men and women. Men and women often face different responsibilities following divorce with respect to child custody arrangements and financial obligations. There is also evidence for sex differences in forgiveness that can vary depending on context. For instance, a meta-analysis of 70 forgiveness studies showed that women were generally more forgiving than men (mean  $d = .28$ ; Miller, Worthington, & McDaniel, 2008). Similarly, Wade and Goldman (2006) found that women improved more than men on forgiveness following an intervention. However, another study found that men were more forgiving within the context of marital relationships (Miller & Worthington, 2010). In light of these findings, sex should be examined as a possible moderator between forgiveness interventions and their effects.

#### JOURNAL WRITING AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING FORGIVENESS INTERVENTIONS

Expressive writing exercises can have beneficial effects (e.g., Gortner, Rude, & Pennebaker, 2006) and have been incorporated into forgiveness interventions (e.g., Stratton, Dean, Nonneman, Bode, & Worthington, 2008). One promising type of writing assignment involves maintaining a gratitude journal (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude is positively related to forgiveness (Friedman & Toussaint, 2006) and, based on Fredrickson's (2004) broaden and build theory of positive emotions, could increase other positive emotions that promote forgiveness. More research is needed to explore whether gratitude journals can enhance the effectiveness of forgiveness interventions.

#### PRESENT STUDY

We had two primary goals for our study. First, we tested the hypothesis that forgiveness of an ex-spouse and dispositional forgiveness would be positively related to mental health and adaptive parenting. Second, we evaluated the effectiveness of a forgiveness workshop designed for divorced parents. We adapted an 8-week intervention developed by Rye et al. (2005) into a 1-day workshop format. There were several reasons for this adaptation. To begin, we sought to better address issues relevant to parents

and believed that a 1-day workshop format would better accommodate their busy schedules. Moreover, we sought to extend the intervention by providing writing assignments that could be completed at home. We hypothesized that participants assigned to a forgiveness workshop combined with subsequent gratitude journal assignments (WG) or the same workshop combined with subsequent daily events journal assignments (WDE) would show greater improvement on measures of forgiveness, well-being, and parenting between pretest and posttest than those assigned to a wait-list condition (WAIT). We also hypothesized that participants in WG would improve more on outcome measures between posttest and follow-up than those in WDE and WAIT.

## METHOD

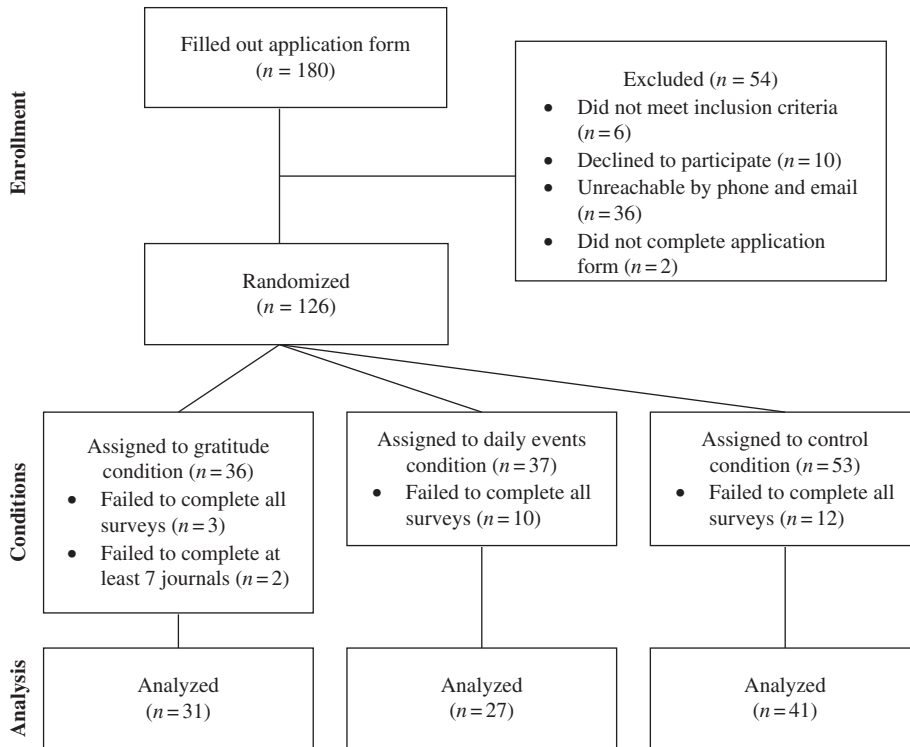
### Participant Recruitment and Procedure

We recruited participants ( $N = 99$ ) from one medium-sized and one large city in the Northeastern United States. Recruitment was conducted through media interviews and advertising, e-mails to professionals working with divorced parents (i.e., psychologists, lawyers, divorce support group leaders), announcements in church bulletins, and information posted in various locations around the community. Ads promoted a free workshop for parents who were divorced or going through divorce and who wanted to work on letting go of anger toward their ex-spouse.

In Figure 1, we outline the process of selecting participants. We randomly assigned participants to conditions. To ensure adequate enrollment at each workshop, intervention participants who could not attend the workshop due to scheduling conflicts ( $n = 23$ ) were reassigned to WAIT and replaced by participants originally assigned to WAIT. We administered the pretest about a week before the workshop, the posttest a few days after the workshop, and the follow-up about 1 month after the workshop. We gave participants \$10 gift certificates to Amazon.com for each completed survey.

### Participant Characteristics

Participant ages ranged from 31 to 74 ( $M = 49.6$ ,  $SD = 8.4$ ), and the majority were female (76%) and White (91%) with other participants identifying as African American (4%), Asian/Pacific Islander (3%), American Indian (1%), and Latino/Latina (1%). The highest levels of education reported included high school diploma (11%), associate's degree (16%), bachelor's degree (33%), and graduate degree (39%). Most participants were either Protestant (34%) or Catholic (39%). Other religious affiliations included Jewish (11%), Muslim (1%), or none (15%).



**FIGURE 1** Number of participants at each stage of the study.

All participants were either divorced (49%) or separated (51%). On average, the amount of time since the divorce or separation was 2.8 years ( $SD = 3.3$ ) and participants had been married 16.2 years ( $SD = 9.0$ ). Number of divorces ranged from none (i.e., those who were separated) to four ( $M = .70$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) and participants were either not dating anyone (70%), in a long-term relationship (18%), casually dating (9%), or remarried (3%). Number of children ranged from 1 to 11 ( $M = 2.3$ ,  $SD = 1.5$ ), and 24% had adult children. The majority of participants with children under the age of 18 had full (22%) or joint custody (59%).

Most participants reported that their ex-spouse had wronged them in more than one way including failure to fulfill obligations (90%), verbal abuse (86%), lying (82%), undermining parenting (67%), infidelity (51%), malicious gossip (50%), financial wrongdoing (41%), and physical abuse (29%). On a rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all harmful*) to 4 (*very harmful*), participants indicated a high level of perceived harm ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = .59$ ). Participants who were currently in therapy (40%), in a divorce support group (2%), or in both (3%) were included in the sample because it provided a real-world test of the intervention effectiveness and preventing

participants from seeking therapy while attending our program would have been unethical.

### Workshop Leader

Workshops were led by a licensed clinical social worker with a doctoral degree, 18 years of college teaching experience, and seven years of clinical experience. Training consisted of meetings with the head of the research team before and after each workshop. The workshop leader was instructed to address all of the main content areas in the intervention manual. During each workshop, a licensed clinical psychologist remained in the audience to assist participants if they required individual attention.

### Intervention Content

The workshop was based on the intervention created by Rye et al. (2005), which has been shown to facilitate forgiveness and improve mental health. The original intervention consisted of eight weekly sessions lasting 90 minutes each (total intervention duration = 12 hours). The adapted workshop was divided into four units lasting 90 minutes each (total intervention duration = 6 hours). At each workshop, the number of participants who completed all study requirements ranged from 9 to 20 and they were assigned to sit at tables of 3 to 6 people, which allowed for small-group discussions.

Unit 1 included introductions and small- and large-group discussions about how participants had been wronged by their ex-spouse. After identifying various emotions that participants reported experiencing, the leader narrowed the discussion focus to anger and addressed possible benefits and problems associated with remaining angry toward an ex-spouse. In Unit 2, discussion focused on how ongoing anger and hostility toward an ex-spouse can impact children. Research on the harmful effects of high-conflict parenting on children's adjustment to divorce was presented. Cognitive behavioral therapy techniques were discussed as a means of helping participants monitor and modify their thoughts to diminish anger, increase feelings of peace, and promote empathy to enhance constructive communication about parenting. In Unit 3, the concept of forgiveness was directly addressed, along with research on mental health benefits. Participants explored strategies for promoting forgiveness and obstacles to forgiveness. Finally, in Unit 4, the group leader presented the REACH steps to forgiveness (Recall the hurt, Empathize with the offender, Altruistic gift, Commitment to forgive, Hold on to forgiveness) developed by Worthington (1998) and discussed how forgiveness can be promoted through reframing the wrongdoing, spiritual coping strategies, daily affirmations, and reading about forgiveness. Participants were led through a guided meditation and discussion about the role of



self-forgiveness. The workshop ended with an opportunity for participant reflection on the workshop and their plans to implement the workshop strategies.

## Study Conditions

Following the workshop and completion of the posttest, participants were instructed to spend 10 to 15 minutes daily for 10 weekdays writing a gratitude journal (WG) or keeping a journal of daily events (WDE; journal assignments were adapted from Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Those with Internet access returned their journals daily via e-mail, which allowed us to monitor when the journals were completed. A few participants without Internet access returned journals via the U.S. Postal Service. Participants assigned to the WAIT condition completed study surveys at approximately the same time as intervention participants and later had the opportunity to attend the workshop.

## Measures

### DEMOGRAPHIC AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Participants completed questions on demographics (i.e., age, sex, ethnicity, level of education, and religious affiliation), divorce context (i.e., length of time separated or divorced, number of times divorced, new relationship status, level of contact with ex-spouse, and type of wrongdoing committed by ex-spouse), and children (i.e., number of children and their ages, type of custody). Participants rated perceived severity of the wrongdoing committed by their ex-spouse on a rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all harmful*) to 4 (*very harmful*), and indicated whether or not they were currently in therapy or a divorce support group.

### FORGIVENESS MEASURES

The Forgiveness Scale (Rye et al., 2001) was used to assess the degree to which participants had forgiven their ex-spouse. Participants rated their agreement on Likert-type items with response possibilities ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The Absence of Negative subscale (Forgiveness AN; 10 items) assesses the extent to which participants have overcome negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward an offender, whereas the Presence of Positive subscale (Forgiveness PP; 5 items) assesses the extent to which participants exhibit positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward an offender. The Forgiveness Likelihood Scale (Rye et al., 2001) was administered to assess dispositional forgiveness. Participants read 10 hypothetical scenarios and indicated how likely they would be to

forgive the person on a rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 5 (*extremely likely*).

#### MENTAL HEALTH MEASURES

On the Center for Epidemiology Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977), participants rated how often they experienced depressive symptoms on 20 items with response possibilities ranging from 1 (*rarely or none of the time*) to 4 (*most or all of the time*). Participants indicated their level of gratitude on the Gratitude Questionnaire–6 (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002), which involves rating level of agreement on six items with response choices ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

#### PARENTING MEASURES

The Coparenting Questionnaire (Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001) was modified for divorced couples and completed by participants with children under the age of 18. On this questionnaire, participants rated the frequency of parenting behaviors on 14 items with response possibilities ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Participants also completed the Child–Parent Relationship Scale (Pianta, 1995), which includes 15 statements with response possibilities ranging from 1 (*definitely does not apply*) to 5 (*definitely applies*). Those with more than one child were instructed to think about the child who was having the most difficulty coping with the divorce.

#### PROCESS MEASURES

Immediately following the intervention, both the intervention leader and a research assistant independently completed a form to assess the degree to which the leader adhered to the intervention manual content. To measure group cohesion within workshop subgroups, participants completed at posttest the Secure Emotional Expression subscale of the Therapeutic Factors Inventory–Short Form (MacNair-Semands, Ogrodniczuk, & Joyce, 2010). The scale consists of nine items with response possibilities ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

## RESULTS

### Preliminary Analyses

#### FIDELITY TO THE MANUALIZED INTERVENTION AND MANIPULATION CHECK

Records from research assistants who attended the workshops showed that although minor content areas were occasionally missed or shortened due to time constraints, all major content areas were covered. Moreover, the

leader indicated that topics presented at all workshops were “very similar” or “fairly similar” to content specified in the manual. A rater who was masked to condition examined completed journal entries of approximately 38% of workshop participants and correctly identified participants’ assigned conditions 95% of the time.

#### ANALYSIS OF PRETEST DIFFERENCES

We assessed for pretest differences on demographic and background variables using analyses of variance (ANOVAs; continuous variables) or chi-squares (categorical variables). The only significant difference across conditions concerned divorce status,  $\chi^2(2, N = 99) = 6.00, p = .05$ , with more WDE participants being separated rather than divorced as compared to the other conditions. This variable was controlled in subsequent analyses.

ANOVAs were computed to assess differences across conditions at pretest on major outcome variables. A significant difference was found across conditions on gratitude (GQ-6),  $F(2, 95) = 4.44, p = .01$ , with participants in WG scoring higher at pretest ( $M = 38.82, SD = 2.84$ ) than those in the other conditions (WDE:  $M = 34.63, SD = 7.98$ ; WAIT:  $M = 34.89, SD = 6.61$ ). Thus, the pretest gratitude score was included as a covariate in subsequent analyses with this measure. No other differences at pretest were found. Moreover, an ANOVA revealed no differences in group cohesion across the four workshops.

#### Analyses of Major Study Questions

##### RELATIONSHIPS AMONG FORGIVENESS, MENTAL HEALTH, AND PARENTING MEASURES

We computed partial correlations to assess the pretest relationship among forgiveness, mental health, and parenting, controlling for length of time since the divorce or separation and perceived severity of wrongdoing. Consistent with the first hypothesis, gratitude was positively related to forgiveness (AN;  $r = .24, p = .046$ ) and forgiveness (PP;  $r = .40, p = .001$ ). Only forgiveness (AN) was negatively related to depression ( $r = -.52, p < .001$ ). Coparenting was positively related to both Forgiveness (PP;  $r = .24, p = .045$ ) and dispositional forgiveness ( $r = .35, p = .004$ ). Contrary to hypotheses, dispositional forgiveness was not significantly related to depression or gratitude and neither situational nor dispositional forgiveness was related to parent-child relationship.

#### INTERVENTION EFFECTS

Separate repeated measure analyses of covariance were computed for each outcome variable, with condition and sex as independent variables,

**TABLE 1** Repeated Measures Analyses of Covariance With Time  $\times$  Condition  $F$  Values Comparing Conditions on Outcome Measures

Measure		Gratitude <sup>a</sup>		Daily events <sup>b</sup>		Waitlist <sup>c</sup>		$\alpha$	$F$	$p$
		$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$			
Forgiveness (AB) <sup>d</sup>	Pre-	28.51	7.55	27.92	6.64	29.30	6.57	.79	1.29	.28
	Post-	31.51	8.21	29.18	8.06	30.76	8.69	.90		
	Follow-up	34.08	8.18	31.68	7.53	32.81	8.51	.90		
Forgiveness (PP)	Pre-	14.71	4.05	13.29	5.26	13.71	4.63	.79	2.76	.03
	Post-	15.23	3.33	13.88	4.16	13.77	4.43	.81		
	Follow-up	16.60	3.18	14.63	4.49	14.11	5.22	.85		
Forgiveness Likelihood <sup>d</sup>	Pre-	24.04	8.61	20.67	7.42	22.61	7.52	.89	2.72	.04
	Post-	28.57	9.76	22.10	9.53	23.17	7.11	.92		
	Follow-up	29.17	10.87	23.45	8.50	24.94	8.23	.93		
Depression	Pre-	38.28	11.02	39.50	13.57	38.30	11.49	.74	1.48	.21
	Post-	35.92	11.45	39.99	15.69	37.74	11.87	.77		
	Follow-up	33.89	9.42	35.56	11.81	35.55	13.39	.77		
Gratitude <sup>e</sup>	Pre-	38.71	2.82	34.77	8.11	34.89	6.61	.87	1.31	.27
	Post-	39.07	3.32	34.69	8.73	35.80	5.26	.88		
	Follow-up	39.89	2.70	34.56	7.74	36.16	5.71	.91		
Coparenting <sup>f</sup>	Pre-	48.43	4.46	49.94	8.31	48.46	6.90	.69	.57	.68
	Post-	49.21	5.26	48.95	6.45	47.73	7.36	.71		
	Follow-up	48.70	5.19	50.36	8.68	48.76	7.26	.76		
Parent-Child Relationship	Pre-	57.82	13.97	56.53	10.94	53.58	13.04	.92	2.05	.09
	Post-	58.35	12.59	58.50	10.45	54.27	13.12	.92		
	Follow-up	61.06	11.80	57.79	9.61	53.73	13.95	.94		

Note. Divorce status and number of children with ex-spouse were controlled for in all analyses.

<sup>a</sup> $n = 31$ . <sup>b</sup> $n = 27$ . <sup>c</sup> $n = 41$ . <sup>d</sup>Greenhouse-Geisser corrections were employed to adjust for violations of the sphericity assumption. <sup>e</sup>Pretest scores on the GQ-6 were controlled for in the analysis of covariance for this measure. <sup>f</sup>Only participants with children under 18 completed this measure (workshop with gratitude journal:  $n = 21$ ; workshop with daily events journal:  $n = 17$ ; wait-list comparison:  $n = 32$ ).

controlling for divorce status and number of children with the ex-spouse. As shown in Table 1, a significant Time  $\times$  Condition interaction for forgiveness (PP;  $F = 2.76$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ ) was found. Follow-up analyses comparing conditions found that participants in WG improved more on forgiveness (PP) than those in WAIT. In particular, participants in WG steadily improved on forgiveness (PP) between pretest, posttest, and follow-up. In addition, a significant Time  $\times$  Condition interaction was found with dispositional forgiveness ( $F = 2.72$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ ). Follow-up analyses revealed that participants in WG improved more over time than those in the other conditions. In particular, they improved significantly between pre- and posttest and maintained gains at follow-up. No significant Time  $\times$  Condition interactions were found with any of the mental health or parenting outcome measures. Moreover, no significant Time  $\times$  Condition  $\times$  Sex interactions were found on any of the outcome variables.

## DISCUSSION

Consistent with hypotheses and previous research (e.g., Bonach & Sales, 2002) forgiveness of an ex-spouse (PP) and dispositional forgiveness were positively related to coparenting following divorce. Although the direction of causality is unclear, forgiveness might enhance coparenting, either by increasing motivation to coparent or by enabling parents to consider new parenting strategies that involve their former spouse. Future research should assess the direction of causality and examine the cognitive and behavioral mechanisms that mediate this relationship.

Also consistent with hypotheses and previous research (Rohde-Brown & Rudestam, 2011; Rye et al., 2004), forgiveness of an ex-spouse was related to better mental health. Specifically, forgiveness (AN) was related to less depression and both forgiveness (AN) and forgiveness (PP) were positively related to gratitude. Contrary to hypotheses, dispositional forgiveness was not related to better mental health. These findings could have important implications for clinicians working with clients experiencing difficulty adjusting to divorce. Clients might benefit from learning about the link between forgiveness of an ex-spouse and postdivorce adjustment and from learning skills that facilitate the forgiveness process. In particular, depressed clients might wish to consider how holding onto anger toward their ex-spouse could adversely impact their mood. Learning strategies for forgiving one's ex-spouse might be more useful than strategies designed to promote forgiveness across situations, although more research is needed to test this possibility.

Consistent with Rye et al., (2005), this study showed that a forgiveness intervention designed for divorced individuals can facilitate both dispositional and situational forgiveness. With respect to dispositional forgiveness, participants assigned to WG improved significantly more than participants in the other conditions. Participants in WG improved on dispositional forgiveness between pretest and posttest and maintained gains at follow-up. Because gratitude journaling did not begin until after the posttest, the workshop was likely responsible for the initial increase in dispositional forgiveness scores. With respect to situational forgiveness, participants assigned to WG improved more than participants in WAIT on forgiveness (PP). The improvement was relatively steady from pretest to follow-up, suggesting that both the workshop and the gratitude journal might have contributed to effects. If so, this would be consistent with research showing that the combination of a forgiveness intervention and an expressive writing assignment can be effective (Stratton et al., 2008).

To our knowledge, this is the first study that has found an intervention that includes gratitude journaling to be more effective in facilitating forgiveness than another type of journaling. A possible reason for this finding comes from Fredrickson's (2004) broaden and build model of positive emotions,

which suggests that gratitude might stimulate other positive emotions that contribute to forgiveness. Based on these findings, clinicians might consider assigning gratitude journal exercises as homework for divorced clients who are working toward forgiveness.

Contrary to hypotheses, there was no evidence that the forgiveness workshop improved mental health. In contrast, the forgiveness intervention for divorced individuals designed by Rye et al. (2005) as well as forgiveness interventions designed for other populations (e.g., Freedman & Enright, 1996; Rye & Pargament, 2002) resulted in improved mental health. The failure of the intervention to improve mental health might be related to the failure to increase forgiveness (AN). In our study, only forgiveness (AN) was inversely related to depression. Previous research has found that forgiveness (AN) predicts adjustment to divorce better than forgiveness (PP; Rye et al., 2004).

Similarly, no program effects were found on measures of coparenting or parent-child relationship. Given the complexity of custody arrangements and coparenting following divorce, a 1-month follow-up assessment might have been too short to detect change. Also, previous research has found evidence of a dose-effect relationship in forgiveness interventions, such that longer interventions produce a larger treatment effect size (Worthington, Sandage, & Berry, 2000). There might also be advantages to spacing interventions so that participants have an opportunity to process information better and practice forgiveness strategies between sessions.

There was no evidence that sex moderated treatment effects. Based on informal comments, intervention participants seemed to appreciate that both men and women were included in the workshops. However, intervention participants were predominately women, which is consistent with most other published forgiveness intervention studies (see Worthington et al., 2000). Forgiveness intervention researchers might wish to consider whether advertising and recruitment strategies can be modified to achieve a better balance of male and female participants.

### Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be noted. We relied exclusively on self-report measures of forgiveness. Although this is common for forgiveness intervention studies, other assessment means such as observer report (see Rye et al., 2005) are needed. Delivering the intervention in 1 day might have been more convenient for participants, but spacing the intervention out over a longer amount of time could allow for better incorporation of the workshop content into participants' lives. Longer evaluation periods following forgiveness interventions might be needed given the complex and challenging interactions divorced parents often experience with their ex-spouse.

## Clinical and Research Implications

In spite of these limitations, this study makes several important contributions. To our knowledge, this is the first study to evaluate a forgiveness intervention designed specifically for divorced parents and to examine whether the effects of a forgiveness intervention can be enhanced through gratitude journal writing. Based on our findings, clinicians and researchers might wish to consider incorporating gratitude journal exercises into forgiveness interventions. In addition, the finding that forgiveness relates to coparenting has interesting implications for clinicians working with divorced parents. Although the direction of causality has yet to be tested, it is possible that helping divorced parents to forgive will make them more willing to coparent or might facilitate better communication, which could lead to coparenting. Coparenting has clear benefits for children, assuming that both parents are competent and loving. Because of the potential benefits of forgiveness of an ex-spouse, researchers and clinicians should continue developing and refining forgiveness interventions in a way that maximizes the positive impact on mental health and parenting practices.

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