Worksheet 4.27 Letting Go of Grudges (Reivich, 2004) Activity Instructions

Think of a person from your past who you are holding a grudge against or have been in conflict with. How is this grudge affecting you? How is it affecting the other person? Those who study forgiveness have discovered that forgiving does not mean forgetting, condoning, pardoning, or excusing the transgression and the goal of forgiveness is not necessarily reconciliation (Enright and Coyle, 1998; McCullough and Witvliet, 2002; Seligman, 2002). Rather, forgiveness is something you do for yourself in order to reduce your level of psychological distress through the release of toxic negative emotions. It has been said that the opposite of love is not hate (rather, it is indifference), since hating someone takes just as much energy as loving them, with the direction of the energy being the only difference. The negative energy and emotion that you put into not forgiving can, over time, cause major negative health outcomes while the person who committed the transgression against you suffers no further ill effects due to unforgiveness (vanOyen Witvliet et al., 2001). It seems that by not forgiving, you allow your transgressors to victimize you all over again and for an indefinite amount of time. Essentially, forgiveness allows you to take your power back. That being said, forgiveness is something that you must freely choose to do and something that will take hard work.

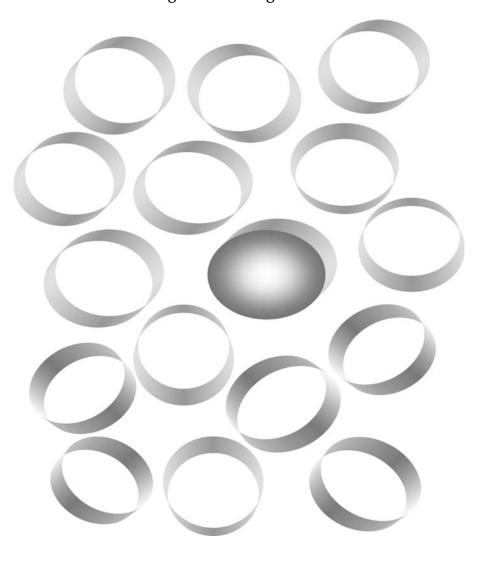
To help get you started down the path of forgiveness, you are being asked to participate in a forgiveness exercise that works off of the principles of both gratitude and forgiveness. Think about a person you are holding a grudge against and then recall and write down as many things as you can about that person for which you are grateful. The idea is that seeing the person in his or her entirety and recalling gratitude will loosen the grudge and allow the process of forgiveness to proceed.

Locate the center circle on the next page. In that circle, briefly describe what the person you are holding a grudge against did that led you to become angry or hurt by them.

Next, write one word or sentence that describes some aspect or characteristic of the person you are holding your grudge against for which you are grateful. These could be things that he or she has said or done for you. They may be very important or more minor, and they could be things in the present or things from the past.

After completing this activity, take some time to reflect on the questions that follow.

Letting Go of Grudges Exercise



	Letting Go of Grudges Activity Reaction Questions
1.	As you look at the grudge surrounded by the sea of gratitude, are you able to see the situation differently? Do you feel any differently about the person? Why or why not?
2.	Do you feel any more ready or willing to work toward forgiveness (remember, forgiveness is for you, not the person who wronged you)? Why or why not?
3.	If the person who wronged you is someone you would like to continue a relationship with, do you feel as if you are now in a better position to work toward reconciliation? Why or why not?