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# IMPRESSIONS

INSIGHTS FROM THE PRACTICE OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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*is published by  
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a clinical  
psychologist in  
practice in Fairfax,  
Virginia and covers  
topics which may  
be of interest to  
professionals  
providing services  
to children,  
adolescents, adults  
and their families.*

Many adults who struggle with depression and self-esteem problems have been wronged in the past. For example, they may have been abused as children, had an alcoholic parent, or been exploited in relationships.

When these adults seek therapy they have an opportunity to develop insights about past bad experiences and to move beyond the anger and pain which maintains their unhappiness and depression. Understanding the past can reduce anguish but sometimes is not enough to remove the emotional barriers to healing.

## Forgiveness

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Clinical Psychologist*

Sometimes one must forgive the debt incurred by those who caused the pain even when not forgiving the person. Forgiveness is a misunderstood concept particularly since religious thinking has transformed forgiving into a kind of absolution.

Forgiveness is something one does for oneself, not a gift one bestows upon others as if

to rewrite history and say the wrong never occurred. To forgive a debt of money would involve giving up on getting the money back but would not include pretending the money had never been loaned.

Therapeutic forgiving means being able to lose the conviction that one is owed and will be repaid even as one does not lose the conviction that one has been harmed. Energy needed for healing and moving forward is liberated when one stops searching for repayment or expecting an emotional restitution which will never come.