

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is crucial to the health of a relationship.

Since we experience hurt and forgiveness differently, it can be a challenge to apply new methods when we need to forgive one another.

Instead of retraining you on how to forgive, we want to encourage you to think about it differently. Forgiveness is often associated with healing a **deep hurt**, and while this is important for those situations, that scenario is not applicable to relationships that are not working through significant issues. You can begin to identify forgiveness in daily life by recognizing everyday lapses in thoughtfulness that require you to forgive your partner and for your partner to forgive you. An everyday lapse in thoughtfulness can be as simple as when you forget to notice your fiancée's new haircut, or when your partner of 10 years forgets to bring the garbage can to the curb this week, or even when your partner of 50 years washes your new white shirt with his red sweater. These simple lapses in thoughtfulness can be acknowledged, addressed, and forgiven with small conscious effort.

A **deep hurt** refers to a situation in which a significant level of forgiveness is required such as infidelity.

Unfortunately, there will be times in your relationship when you will need to put more effort into forgiveness. In preparation for those times, we want to remind you what **forgiveness** is and what it isn't.

Forgiveness is a process that promotes healing and is a starting point for reconciliation.

Forgiveness isn't forgetting, condoning, or perpetuating injustice. It isn't granted on demand and it doesn't automatically guarantee reconciliation.

If forgiveness seems unachievable, it's okay to seek professional help.

Forgiveness is the decision or choice to give up the right for vengeance, retribution, and negative thoughts.

A NOTE ABOUT SELF-FORGIVENESS

Don't forget to forgive yourself! We often think of forgiveness from the perspective of the victim forgiving the transgressor, and while this is often the case, you will never truly feel healed until you forgive yourself. If you take responsibility for your actions and abandon any remaining self-resentment, this will help prevent that hurt from finding a way back into your relationship years down the road.

DISCUSSION

// Consider forgiveness – How does forgiveness currently play a role in your relationship? Have you and your partner ever reflected on forgiveness? Did you reflect individually or together?

// Identify a few everyday lapses in thoughtfulness you are responsible for that might impact your partner and vice versa. How does this acknowledgement help your relationship? What healthy ways can you start talking about everyday lapses in thoughtfulness?

// How are unforgiven issues currently impacting the health of your relationship? Is there a cluster of unacknowledged everyday lapses in thoughtfulness causing resentment? Is there a significant hurt that needs attention?

// When you forgive or are forgiven by your partner, do you experience a sense of relief? If so, describe to your partner what this sense of relief feels like.

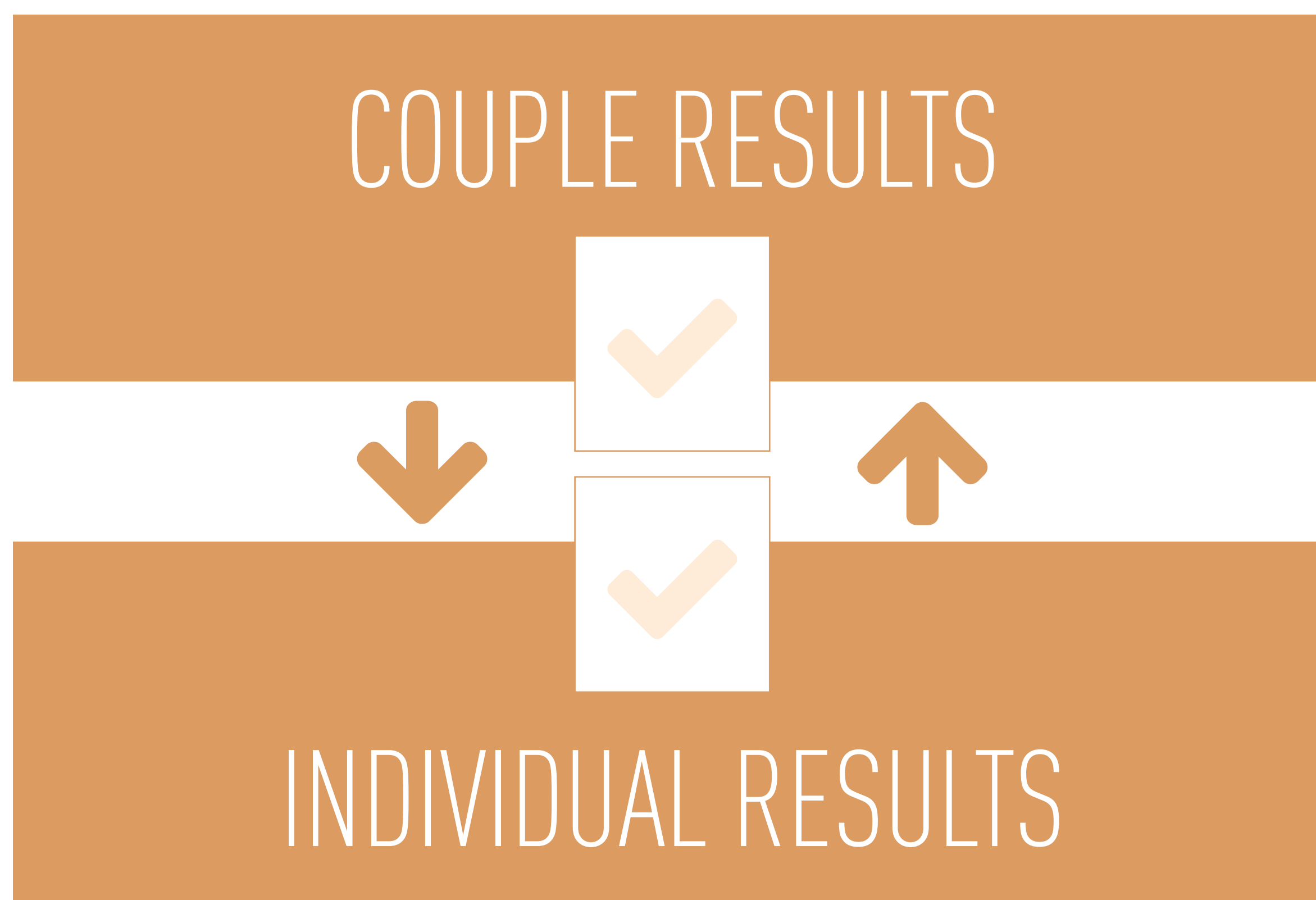
// Discuss what the most difficult part of forgiveness is for you. What are the easiest things to forgive and what are the hardest? How is forgiving your partner different or similar to forgiving another member of your family?

CHECK IN WITH CHECKUP

Check in with your Couple Checkup results

by reviewing the *Conflict Resolution* and *Spiritual Beliefs* sections of your report.

Look at your couple results for both sections – Are you surprised by the suggested discussion items?



Look at your individual results for both sections
– Does this accurately reflect how you feel in your relationship?

TAKEAWAY

Recognize the role forgiveness plays in your relationship by identifying its presence in daily life and its healing power when working through deep hurts.

APPLICATION

Exaggerate the act of forgiving in your relationship for a period of time, even just a week, to see how often it happens. Here's an example: you forget to start the dishwasher after dinner and there are no clean coffee cups for your partner to drink their morning coffee from – take responsibility for your action. Your partner should acknowledge your efforts and forgive you, and then you should forgive yourself. By going through the amplified motions, you'll see how effortlessly you already incorporate forgiveness into your relationship.

NEXT STEPS

If the day comes when a more significant hurt needs to be forgiven, both partners should revisit the discussion points above to prime your interaction. This will help each of you work through seeking and granting forgiveness.

SECTION SUGGESTION

Consider exploring **Intimacy** or **Commitment** next.