

TECHNIQUES, INTERVENTIONS AND STRATEGIES

The use of metaphor in the process of forgiveness within the therapeutic setting

Ann Watling¹ and Beverly Cole²

Corresponding author

Dr Beverly Cole, University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), IQ Building, SA1 Waterfront Campus, King's Road, Swansea, SA1 8EW
Email: beverly.cole@uwttd.ac.uk

Affiliation

¹ University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Wales, UK

Copyright

© National Wellbeing Service Ltd

Processing dates

Submitted: 7 March 2025; Resubmitted 27 June 2025;
Accepted: 16 July 2024; Published: 3 October 2025

Ethics

The MA and PhD research referred to in this article were granted ethical approval from the Athrofa Ethics Committee of the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David.

New paper statement

This paper has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration in any other publication.

Plagiarism checker

The article was submitted to the university [UWTSD] Turnitin Text Matching programme and a score of 4% was recorded. The majority of this related to direct quotations and the Authors' Biographies which were included in the draft.

Use of AI

No AI tools have been used in the research and creation of this article. Copies of drafts, notes, etc., are available upon request. Internet sources were used to check citations/references.

Funding

None declared

Declaration of conflicting interests

None declared

Acknowledgments

None declared

Abstract

The concept of forgiveness is an intricate phenomenon that facilitates the release of resentment and other painful emotions, whilst the process of 'letting-go' of unforgiveness enables individuals to be free from their connection to past hurts. Nonetheless, the meaning of forgiveness is commonly misunderstood by today's society.

There have been considerable advancements in measuring forgiveness, yet despite extensive research evidencing how forgiveness improves mental health, increases self-esteem, and fosters hope, the process of how forgiveness unfolds remains unclear. Furthermore, notwithstanding many examples of forgiveness models, there has been a paucity of research on the process of forgiveness itself. This paper therefore explores the process of forgiveness through a client-generated metaphorical lens.

Metaphors are fundamental to human communication across diverse cultures and religions, enabling individuals to understand abstract and complex concepts. They are deeply personal constructs, shaped by an individual's unique experiences and perceptions. Thus, metaphor can facilitate the process of forgiveness, portraying difficult-to-define inner experiences as more concrete and relatable.

How unforgiveness is currently addressed within therapy is considered, and the need for, and benefits of, a metaphorical model for working with forgiveness is introduced. It is proposed that such a framework could foster personalised insights and help a client identify where they 'stand' within their forgiveness journey. A metaphorical model for working with forgiveness is currently the subject of qualitative research to assess its potential as a therapeutic intervention that could provide significant insight into a client's inner-world, and enhance understanding of the process of letting-go of unforgiveness.

Keywords: *Forgiveness; Unforgiveness; Metaphor; Therapy; Counselling interventions*

INTRODUCTION

Every human-being has been hurt in some way by another, and the damage inflicted can linger and fester, as the offended struggles to address both the ensuing pain, and the

actions of the perpetrator (VanderWeele, 2024). Many emotional continuums, anxieties and uncertainties are embedded deep within such painful experiences, including self-positioning around the adage of 'to forgive, or not to forgive'.

Forgiveness is a complex and intricate phenomenon that facilitates the release of resentment and other painful emotions, and the process of 'letting-go' of unforgiveness allows individuals to sever their connection to distressing experiences. Ironically, though, the meaning of forgiveness is often misunderstood, contributing to enduring confusion about its nature. This confusion is summed up well by this observation, "What we seek to know better is subtle, difficult to define, multi-layered, and contains an element of mystery" (Dorwick, 1998, p. 287). Although made over twenty-five years ago, this statement remains profoundly relevant, encapsulating the persistent enigma surrounding forgiveness. It underscores the ambiguity of what forgiveness is - and is not - while highlighting the ongoing challenge to fully comprehend the dynamics of forgiveness and unforgiveness.

This uncertainty surrounding forgiveness continues, despite considerable progress in quantifying forgiveness in the decades since Dorwick's statement, and regardless of extensive research evidencing how forgiveness improves physical and mental health (Griffin, et al., 2020). Forgiveness has also been seen to encourage contentment, increase self-esteem and nurture hope (Maltby et al., 2001; Toussaint et al., 2001), reduce anxiety (Masarykova et al., 2022), lower levels of depression and aid psychological well-being (Mróz & Kaleta, 2023). Moreover, despite advances in the growth of forgiveness models, and evidence of the positive outcomes of forgiveness, there has been "virtually no focus" on the process itself (Strelan & Covic, 2006, pp. 1059-1085).

To illuminate the process of forgiveness and unforgiveness, focus now shifts to the exploration of metaphor. Metaphorical concepts are a fundamental aspect of human communication, known to promote understanding of complicated topics (Stilwell & Stilwell, 2024; Thibodeau, et al., 2019), and are a fundamental aspect of human communication recognised across different civilisations, societies, and faiths. While various forms of metaphor exist [such as simple, complex, compound], alongside related representations like similes and allegories, for the purpose of this paper, metaphor is understood as an umbrella term encompassing all forms of metaphorical language or expression.

Lakoff and colleagues (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; 1999) were among the first to highlight the role of metaphor in shaping and organising human experience, and more recently, Malkomsen et al., (2022) emphasised the enduring therapeutic significance of metaphor within psychotherapy, whilst Stoycheva (2020, p.1) insightfully proposed that metaphor is a "therapeutic magic wand."

To contextualise metaphor within a real-world context, consider how often, in everyday life, metaphor is employed to describe feelings and experiences. For example: "Butterflies in my stomach"; "Seeing red"; "A roller-coaster of emotions"; "A weight on my shoulders"; "I'm under the weather"; "It went pear-shaped"; "I was miles away"; "I carry a torch for him". Consequently, it is little wonder that metaphor has secured a place within self-help and therapy, with the therapeutic process itself often described as 'a journey'.

Salih (2025, p. 84), suggests that metaphors have the ability to "connect concrete and abstract worlds", and other authors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lapham, 1997) debate the value of metaphor in making the invisible, visible. Yet, despite the cathartic benefits such profound insights can engender, pathways to such understanding can be simple. For instance, general examples of working with metaphor, either individually, or within therapy, might comprise of:

- (i) Starting a description around something that is worrying you, with the words, 'It is like...', and letting thoughts and feelings flow.
- (ii) Envisioning an image that symbolises a situation currently concerning you, and then reflecting upon it. For example, visualising an ambition as a mountain you have to climb (Vitalia, 2016) ... Where do you start? What might make the climb easier? What safety net/devices, do you have in place? Where are the footholds to help you climb to the top? Imagine how it would feel to reach the summit, what is the view like?
- (iii) Imagining your current emotions/circumstances in relation to the weather, describing and/or drawing the fog impairing your vision and/or the wind that blew you off course [See Macleans Weather Model (2016)].

In bringing together the concepts of forgiveness and metaphor, it is possible to reflect upon our relationship with forgiveness/unforgiveness, and contemplate how metaphor might assist this process. By way of illustration:

- (iv) A metaphor may evolve into an allegorical story. The emotional part of self could be envisioned as a garden path. When emotionally wounded by someone, the path becomes difficult to tread due to the sharp stones, brambles, and walls that attempt to protect. Unforgiveness blocks light and growth, draining the garden of its vitality. Forgiveness enables the 'gardener' to make a choice to clear the path, and make room for new life to grow.

- (v) Unforgiveness can be personified as a backpack full of heavy stones. Recent betrayals are sharp and jagged stones, whereas unspoken resentments and grudges are older, heavier stones. The backpack gets heavier as time progresses. Forgiveness is like taking each stone out, one by one, and deciding whether you still want to carry it. Consequently, the load can be lightened and the journey forward less painful. Forgiveness benefits the person carrying the stones, and not the person who added them.

These general and forgiveness related metaphors are capable of: transporting long-hidden memories to the surface; expressing words that cannot easily be spoken; dislodging ridged ways of thinking and invoking meaning-making through self-initiated conclusions.

The exploration of the relationship between forgiveness and metaphor that shapes this paper originated from two research studies that speak to the call by Barkham et al., (2024) for more research directly informing therapists' practice and enhancing the well-being of clients. The first study researched the therapeutic use of interpersonal forgiveness within counselling and led to current PhD research exploring the role of symbolic metaphor in the process of forgiveness within therapeutic settings (Watling, UWTSO, 2019; 2024). Consequently, this paper aims to encourage reflection upon the process of forgiveness/unforgiveness and raise therapeutic awareness around metaphor.

Reflecting upon the relationship between forgiveness and therapy, along with the connection between metaphor and therapeutic sensibility, prompts consideration of the potential benefits of a metaphorical framework for understanding forgiveness. These objectives are met by a brief review of literature, followed by an exploration of how forgiveness is currently addressed in therapeutic settings. A case is then made for incorporating metaphor as an intervention for working with forgiveness. The paper concludes with final reflections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the integration of forgiveness with therapeutic metaphor, beginning with the paradox that, despite being extensively researched (McLaughlin et al., 2024), the process of forgiveness, clients' understanding, and psychotherapists' knowledge of how it unfolds, remain unclear. The concept of metaphor and its therapeutic value are then

considered, before exploring how the integration of forgiveness and metaphor could significantly enhance therapeutic practice.

The concept of forgiveness has been defined in many ways. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2019) defines forgiveness as encompassing several concepts - the cessation of resentment or anger towards the offender or giving up the need to find restitution or no longer needing to take revenge for wrongdoing. Conversely, Enright and Coyle's (1998) forgiveness prerequisite is that the offended offers the offender a gift of love and compassion. Considering forgiveness definitions, Strelan and Covic (2006), accurately conclude that understanding the forgiveness process is perplexing, as researchers frequently disagree on its definition, and find it challenging to identify the process's outcome or conclusion. Regardless of the definition applied, however, forgiveness has consistently been recognised as a valuable tool for resolving both personal and relational issues (Masarykova et al., 2022), and hailed as a vital component in repairing relationships (McLaughlin et al., 2024).

Nonetheless, the varied discourse on the benefits of forgiveness can sometimes obscure its complexities, highlighting this construct as a complex and challenging human experience for psychotherapists to navigate. This ambivalence is complicated, and compounded by the longstanding tendency of researchers to interpret forgiveness in varying ways. These include emotional, decisional, and ambivalent conceptualisations. Emotional forgiveness replaces negative emotions toward the offender with positive ones (Worthington & Wade, 1999), whilst decisional forgiveness is a cognitive response by the offended to reduce negative emotions and substitute them with positive sentiments toward the offender (Fincham et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 1995). Ambivalent forgiveness occurs when the offended coexists with negative and positive experiences toward the offender (Thompson et al., 1995).

Therapeutic uncertainty around how to work with forgiveness is also documented, especially since Wade et al., (2013) found forgiveness-based interventions more effective than non-specific approaches. Wade's study has limitations, including its age and the limited alternative interventions considered. Nevertheless, it offers the valuable insight that a key factor in facilitating effective forgiveness interventions is the amount of time therapist and client dedicate to exploring the topic. This seemingly affirms the value of the therapeutic relationship, yet despite this, and other, tentative links between the therapeutic relationship and working

successfully with forgiveness/unforgiveness (Wade et al., 2013), forgiveness still receives limited attention within counselling relationships (DiBlasio & Benda, 2008).

Even more concerning, is that, despite extensive research emphasising the benefits of interpersonal forgiveness, several studies between 2000 and 2022 catalogue how therapists recognise the value of forgiveness, yet are unsure how to incorporate it into therapy. For example, Konstam et al., (2000), in an old, yet seminal, study, found that whilst 94% of therapists believed it appropriate to introduce forgiveness with clients, they were uncertain about the process of forgiveness. Similar findings were noted by Legaree et al., (2007) who observed limited consensus among therapists on how to integrate forgiveness into therapy. Cannon (2013) also explored therapists' attitudes towards forgiveness, and again, found that whilst most therapists viewed forgiveness as a beneficial technique, a knowledge deficit existed around the theoretical application of forgiveness techniques in practice. Moreover, Masaryková et al., (2022), qualitatively studied forgiveness with Slovakian psychologists, and found that although some participants considered forgiveness an important aspect of both their personal lives and therapeutic practice, they did not actively incorporate it into therapy. Reasons for this included a feeling that such work has a different focus, their perception that clients did not need to forgive, and/or insufficient information about the concept of forgiveness. Uncertainty therefore persists among practitioners about the process of forgiveness and how to implement it effectively in therapy.

The concept of metaphor sits alongside these observations on forgiveness. Metaphor is defined as a figure of speech that eliminates the need for explanation or description, so that meaning and understanding can be enabled through imagery (Stilwell & Stilwell, 2024). The Oxford English Dictionary (OED, 2024) defines metaphor as transference to an object different from, but comparable to, that to which it is literally applicable; describing something by saying it is something else.

In aligning metaphor with therapy, in particular, psychotherapists' use of metaphor, McMullen and Tay (2023) helpfully classify effective metaphorical use within psychotherapy. They refer, for example, to 'unconventional, 'novel', or 'living' metaphors, which, because they are original and inventive, have an element of surprise, thus engendering new awareness. 'Key' metaphors are also cited as having therapeutic value, in, for example, providing a metaphor for the 'self' or whole person,

whilst 'stock' metaphors, will have been previously formulated and planned by the therapist for selective use with a particular presenting issue.

Notably, literature on the principles and processes of metaphor in psychotherapeutic interventions demonstrates that metaphors can help create a therapeutic space by establishing and maintaining contact (Feldman, 2023), and verifies that they are particularly effective in bypassing a client's defensive mechanisms, thus allowing them to feel safer exploring "buried experiences" (Cox & Theilgaard, 1987, p. 69). Literature also evidences that metaphors can create a conceptual distance from intense and potentially overwhelming emotional experiences, facilitating more manageable engagement with these feelings (Arlow, 1979), yet paradoxically, there is a dearth of research on how psychotherapists reflect upon the use and effectiveness of metaphor as a therapeutic tool (McMullen & Tay, 2023).

The gap in literature focusing specifically on the use of metaphor to facilitate forgiveness is particularly significant and invites conjecture. It is therefore speculated that the therapeutic use of metaphor and the process of forgiveness are similar, as both involve a journey of emotional processing, perspective-taking, and ultimately a transformation in how an emotional injury is perceived. It follows, therefore, that by integrating metaphors into forgiveness therapy, psychotherapists can support clients in navigating the complexities of forgiveness, encouraging greater self-awareness, and facilitating emotional healing.

In summary, this literature review highlighted the significance of forgiveness in addressing personal, relational, and mental health challenges (McLaughlin et al., 2024), while recognising the role of metaphor in fostering safety during the exploration of profound experiences and facilitating emotional connection (Arlow, 1979; Cott, 2020; Cox & Theilgaard, 1987). Despite the recognised importance of forgiveness, therapists often remain uncertain about how to work with it effectively (Konstam et al., 2000; Legaree et al., 2007).

Significantly, having considered the process of forgiveness, metaphor, and their relationship to therapy, the need for further research into these topics, both separately and jointly, identifies a knowledge gap, where existing research is limited on both the process of forgiveness using therapeutic metaphor, and the integration of these phenomena in therapeutic practice. Current PhD research explores these concepts (Watling, UWTSO, 2024), and following sections encourage a more nuanced understanding of forgiveness through a client-generated metaphorical lens. How

forgiveness is currently addressed within therapeutic settings is explored, setting the scene for the consideration of a new metaphorical approach for working with forgiveness.

WORKING WITH FORGIVENESS WITHIN A THERAPEUTIC SETTING: THE PRESENT SITUATION

Therapeutically working with forgiveness can be complicated, because forgiving is a deeply personal and convoluted experience that can be problematic because of the pain and betrayal an individual may have experienced. In response to the gaps in literature on the process of forgiveness, a brief overview of two forgiveness models, currently used in psychotherapy, is provided.

Robert Enright (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000) and Everett Worthington's (Worthington, 2006) forgiveness models are among the most widely recognised approaches in forgiveness therapy. Both models promote emotional recovery and forgiveness through a sequential process, with the offended individual engaging in affective, behavioural, and cognitive tasks before moving to the next stage. Nevertheless, despite their similarities, they differ in focus and underlying theoretical frameworks.

Enright's process model (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000) is grounded in moral philosophy and psychology, and is rooted in the moral and developmental growth of the person granting forgiveness, independent of whether reconciliation occurs.

Conversely, Worthington's Pyramid model [R.E.A.C.H.] (Worthington, 2006) uses a religious/ spiritual framework to integrate this model's psychological principles, although this can be used within a secular approach. Forgiveness is offered as the catalyst for emotional health, personal well-being, and spiritual growth. Reconciliation is perceived as beneficial, but not mandatory.

Both models advocate empathy toward the offender, with the altruistic gift of forgiveness introduced in the initial stages. This gift is considered essential in fostering meaningful understanding of the offender's humanity. In contrast, Lewicki, et al's., (2016) model of interpersonal forgiveness offers reconciliation as a fundamental component, advocating that restoration or repair of a relationship is the primary goal of some offended individuals.

Malcolm and Greenberg's (2000) comment that the quality of the therapeutic relationship may be as significant within a client's process of forgiveness as the specific forgiveness model employed, coupled with the lack of clarification around the process of how individuals forgive, raise several issues. For

example, how therapists determine whether to incorporate a forgiveness intervention, and decide which approach might best serve an individual. Deep-seated within this uncertainty is the acknowledgment that a particular forgiveness model or approach may not be suitable for all clients. This could be because the intervention might limit the flexibility clients may need to navigate their particular and highly individualised nature of forgiveness, or because, whilst reconciliation may be a desired outcome for some, it may not be psychologically beneficial or appropriate for others. This emphasises a therapist's crucial role in empowering clients, and providing them with the information and opportunity to engage with healing approaches they may not have considered, whilst maintaining client autonomy.

This brief consideration of current modes of tackling forgiveness reveals that therapeutically working with forgiveness can be challenging due to its intensely personal and complex nature. This, in conjunction with the dearth of research around the therapeutic process of forgiveness, underpins the need for a new model to guide its integration into therapy.

WORKING WITH FORGIVENESS IN A THERAPEUTIC SETTING: THE CASE FOR A METAPHORICAL MODEL OF FORGIVENESS

In contrast to the previous section which characterised current techniques of therapeutically focussing on forgiveness, this section proposes a new way of working with the process of forgiveness through a client-generated metaphorical lens.

Interest in the relationship between metaphor and forgiveness emerged through therapeutic encounters, when the first researcher became intrigued by the recurring metaphor of 'being wounded' many clients used to describe their emotional pain. The prevalence of this descriptive, yet specific, metaphor when addressing unforgiveness resulted in current PhD research to formulate a 'self-C.A.R.E metaphorical model for forgiveness' (Watling, UWTSD, 2024). Simultaneously, through raised awareness whilst supervising MA/PhD research around forgiveness, the second author also observed the frequency and profundity with which clients used imagery/metaphor when reflecting upon poignant experiences, together with a tendency to relate emotional pain to suffering or being wounded. These shared therapeutic and research experiences evoked a reflexive process that enriched the content of this paper.

Kopp and Craw (1998) discuss how exploring clients' metaphors can help an individual better understand their situation and

thus identify potential strategies for change. Indeed, their work underscores the importance of attending to clients' metaphoric language to access deeper cognitive and emotional processes. It is therefore postulated that using a metaphorical model as a therapeutic tool to introduce and work with interpersonal forgiveness can offer an idiosyncratic and powerful intervention. The use of metaphor can facilitate a client's understanding of abstract emotions and experiences and help to make multi-faceted psychological processes, like forgiveness, more accessible and easier to understand. Metaphors can also bridge a client's internal world and therapeutic dialogue, facilitating deeper exploration of emotions such as hurt, anger, and forgiveness.

Importantly, using a metaphorical approach also encourages client-led exploration, facilitating individuals to shape their own understanding of forgiveness in a way that resonates personally. This flexibility is especially useful in addressing the nuances of forgiveness in situations where past trauma, resentment, or anger are present. Metaphors can also empower clients to work through emotions at their own pace, and in a manner that feels safe, hence not only facilitating emotional insight but also creating an environment where clients can process and release negative emotions more effectively. Potentially, this approach could enhance resilience, promote personal growth, and contribute to long-term emotional well-being. Metaphors could enable the process of forgiveness to become a more perceptible experience, transforming an ambiguous inner-experience into something more palpable and relevant. As metaphors are shaped by a client's personal experiences, a metaphorical framework for forgiveness would also enable clients to gain unique understanding of where they are in their personal forgiveness journey.

Consequently, and mindful of the disturbing observation by Mahon (2023), that there has been little improvement in therapeutic outcomes over the last four decades, a metaphorical model for forgiveness may empower therapists to facilitate deeper appreciation of a client's inner-world, enabling more in-depth understanding of the process of letting-go of unforgiveness.

Developing these concepts and disseminating a metaphorical model of forgiveness could, therefore, turn an intangible and illusive inner-experience into something more distinct and significant. Nonetheless, the interpretations contained within this paper remain superficial until the conclusion of the PhD research, when it is hoped that the definitive forgiveness model will not only continue to positively impact the authors' therapeutic practice, but will also strengthen the practice of

other psychotherapists, and add to the literature on therapeutic approaches. In the meantime, it is hoped that this paper will inspire psychotherapists to identify with their use of metaphor as a therapeutic intervention, and reflect upon their experience of forgiveness/unforgiveness in the consulting room.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The disclosure of unforgiveness is very familiar to psychotherapists, and using metaphor effectively is a core skill within therapeutic settings. In bringing these concepts together, this paper has suggested the need for, and value of, a metaphorical model for forgiveness.

Reflections focussed on current PhD research that considers such a metaphorical tool and its potential to: inform the counselling profession; integrate into any therapeutic modality and/or training programme; enrich the training of psychotherapists, and ultimately benefit clients.

Client-generated metaphors are advanced as a technique that can deepen emotional understanding and offer a pathway to exploring interpersonal forgiveness. However, such use of metaphor must be isomorphic to the client's problem, story, and situation, allowing the client to see themselves within it, and discover new ways to perceive their challenges; a process that nurtures individual resilience and reduces the emotional impact of past and present trauma.

It is also proposed that by understanding the dynamics of forgiveness, psychotherapists can better identify factors that facilitate or hinder it. Hence, empathy within the therapeutic relationship is enhanced, and a safer, more supportive space for clients to explore forgiveness is created. Within this safe space, forgiveness-oriented interventions offer a client-led, counsellor-facilitated framework to help clients process and release negative emotions tied to past pain, promoting personal growth and well-being.

Resultantly, it is posited that by integrating a forgiveness model into their practice, psychotherapists can contribute to positive mental health outcomes by facilitating the release of resentment, bitterness, anger, and thoughts of revenge which improves physical and mental health (Toussaint & Cheadle, 2009).

Forgiveness undoubtedly has the potential to positively transform lives, and in authoring this paper, further areas for reflexivity surfaced (see box).

Reflection Points

• How might psychotherapists:

- (i) Enhance understanding of the process of letting-go of unforgiveness
- (ii) Discover how facilitating deeper insights into a client's inner-world of forgiveness can help clarify the endpoint of forgiveness
- (iii) Explore how a metaphorical model for forgiveness could empower them to offer an alternative approach

• What might a suitable metaphor for forgiveness be?

- (i) A 'wounded' metaphor?
- (ii) A more generic metaphor around 'letting-go' or 'releasing weight' rather than encompassing feelings?
- (iii) Several metaphors merged?

• Metaphorical wounding, rather than just metaphor?

In conclusion, these reflections lead us back to Dorwick's (1998 p. 287) assertion introduced earlier, that, "What we seek to know better is subtle, difficult to define, multi-layered, and contains an element of mystery", certainly holds true when applied to forgiveness. Research therefore continues. ■

Citation

Watling, A., & Cole, B. (2025). The use of metaphor in the process of forgiveness within the therapeutic setting. *European Journal of Counselling Theory, Research and Practice*, 9, 2, 1-9. <https://ejctrap.nationalwellbeingsservice.com/volumes/volume-9-2025/volume-9-article-2>

Biographies

Ann Watling is a PhD student at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and an accredited member of the BACP and NCPS. She is a counsellor and counselling supervisor across private practice and the voluntary sector. In addition to her clinical work, Ann is a trainer for Cruse Bereavement Care, a leading UK charity providing support to individuals grieving the death of someone close. With a background in nursing and midwifery, she is also particularly interested in the impact of women's birthing experiences and their psychological transition to motherhood.

Email: 1551426@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0004-4535-3958>

Beverly Cole is a lecturer and PhD/MA research supervisor within the Academic Discipline of Psychology and Counselling at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David. In addition to her academic roles, she is an accredited member of the BACP and a practicing psychotherapist/counselling supervisor within the NHS, private practice, and the voluntary sector. Her research interests include Heuristic Self-search Inquiry, Auto-ethnography and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. She has a particular interest in research in the training and supervision of psychotherapists.

Relevant publications include:

Noble, H. J., & Cole, B. J. (2024). Falling into Glăveanu's Gap: A lyric essay searching for resilience through creativity. *European Journal for Qualitative Research*, 14, 48-61.

Noble, H. J., & Cole, B. J. (2020). Re-writing the pain: A Lyric Essay. *European Journal for Qualitative Research*, 10, 16-27.

Edworthy, A., & Cole, B. J. (2012). 'Cycles of Self Esteem'. *Social Care and Neurodisability*, 3(1), 27-36.

Email: beverly.cole@uwtsd.ac.uk

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0004-1911-2528>

References

- Arlow, J. A.** (1979). Metaphor and the psychoanalytic situation. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 48(3), 363-383.
- Barkham, M., Charura, D., Cooper, M., Gabriel, L., Hanley, T., McLeod, J., Moller, N., Reeves, A., & Smith, K.** (2024). The role of BACP in maximising the potential of counselling and psychological therapies research in the UK: Benefitting clients, communities, and societies. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 24, 1133-1140.
- Cannon, C. F.** (2013). *Therapists' Attitudes Toward Forgiveness: The Relationship Between Forgiveness Conceptualizations and Predicted Likelihood to Assist Clients to Forgive During Treatment*. Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 109.
- Cott, M.** (2020). *'It's Like Slow Juicing...': A Thematic Analysis of Client-generated Metaphors in Psychological Therapy Using Interpersonal Process Recall* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the West of England). <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/index.php/preview/6913039/Final%20Approved%20Version.pdf>
- Cox, M., & Theilgaard, A.** (1987). *Mutative metaphors in psychotherapy: The Aeolian mode*. Tavistock.
- DiBlasio, F. A., & Benda, B. B.** (2008). Forgiveness intervention with married couples: Two empirical analyses. *Journal of Psychology and Counselling*, 27(2), 150-158.
- Dorwick, S.** (1998). *Forgiveness and other acts of love*. Norton & Co.
- Enright, R., & Coyle, C.** (1998). Researching the process model of forgiveness with psychological interventions. In E. Worthington (Ed.), *Dimensions of forgiveness: Psychological research and theological perspective*. 139-161. Templeton Foundation Press.
- Enright, R. D., & Fitzgibbons, R. P.** (2000). *Helping clients forgive: An empirical guide for resolving anger and restoring hope*. American Psychological Association.
- Feldman, O.** (2023). Therapist experiencing of metaphor in person-centred relationships. *Person-Centred & Experiential Psychotherapies*, 23(2), 143-157.
- Fincham, F. D., Hall, J. H., & Beach, S. R. H.** (2005). 'Til lack of forgiveness doth us part: Forgiveness in marriage. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of forgiveness*. 207-225. Routledge.
- Griffin, B. J., Cowden, R. G., & Shawkey, L. A.** (2020). Bibliography of narrative reviews and meta-analyses on forgiveness (2004-2018). In E. L. Worthington, Jr., & N. G. Wade, (Eds.), *Handbook of forgiveness* (2nd Edn, pp. 335-344). Routledge.
- Konstam, V., Marx, F., Schurer, J., Harrington, A., Lombardo N. E., & Deveney, S.** (2000). Forgiving: What mental health counsellors are telling us. *Journal of Mental Health Counselling*, 22, 253-267.
- Kopp, R. R., & Craw, M. J.** (1998). Metaphoric language, metaphoric cognition, and cognitive therapy. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 35(3), 306-311.
- Lakoff, G.** (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought*. 202-251. Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M.** (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M.** (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*. Basic Books.
- Lapham, L. H.** (1997). *Waiting for the barbarians*. In Balzac's garret. Verso.
- Legaree, T. A., Turner, J., & Lollis, S.** (2007). Forgiveness and therapy: A critical review of conceptualisations, practices, and values found in the literature. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 33, 192-213.
- Lewicki, R. J., Polin, B., & Lount, R. B.** (2016). An interdisciplinary model of forgiveness in the workplace. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 30(2), 107-127.
- Maclean, S.** (2016). A New Model for Social Work Reflection: Whatever the weather. *Professional Social Work*, 1, 28-29.
- Mahon, D.** (2023). *Evidence-based counselling & psychotherapy for the 21st century practitioner*. Emerald.
- Malcolm, W. M., & Greenberg, L. S.** (2000). Forgiveness as a process of change in individual psychotherapy. In M. E. McCullough, C. E. Thoresen, & K. I. Pargament (Eds.), *Forgiveness: Theory, research, and practice*. 179-203. Guilford Press.
- Malkomsen A, Røssberg J. I., Dammen T., Wilberg T., Løvgren A., Ulberg R., & Evensen J.** (2022). How therapists in cognitive behavioural and psychodynamic therapy reflect upon the use of metaphors in therapy: A qualitative study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 22(1).
- Maltby, J., Macaskill, A., & Day, L.** (2001). Failure to forgive self and others: a replication and extension of the relationship between forgiveness, personality, social desirability and general health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 29, 1-6.
- Masaryková, M., Záhorcová, L., & Dršťáková, Ž.** (2022). Qualitative analysis of psychologists' views of forgiveness in counselling and therapy. *Qualitative Report*, 27, 1264-1286.

McLaughlin, A., Marshall, J., & McAuliffe, K. (2024). Developing conceptions of forgiveness across the lifespan. *Child Development*, 95(6), 1915-1933.

McMullen, L. M., & Tay, D. (2023). Research review of psychotherapists' use of metaphors. *Psychotherapy*, 60(3), 255-265.

Merriam-Webster.com. (2019). Definition of *forgive*. Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/forgive#:~:text=The%20meaning%20of%20FORGIVE%20is%20to%20cease%20to,forgive%20in%20a%20sentence.%20Synonym%20Discussion%20of%20Forgive>.

Mróz, J., & Kaleta, K. (2023). Forgive, let go, and stay well! The relationship between forgiveness and physical and mental health in women and men: The mediating role of self-consciousness. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(13), 6229.

Oxford English Dictionary [OED]. (2024). Metaphor (n.), sense 23 September 2024. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/metaphor_n?tl=true#:~:text=A%20figure%20of%20speech%20in%20which%20a%20name,a%20metaphorical%20expression.%20Cf.%20metonymy%20n.%20C%20simile%20n.

Salih, A. (2025). The Power of Metaphors in Psychotherapy: Enhancing Therapeutic Communication, Emotional Expression, and Transformative Change. *Journal of Humanities and Education Development*, 7, 80-84.

Stoycheva, V. (2020). *The everyday unconscious: How the mind works when we are not looking*. Psychology Today Blog. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-everyday-unconscious/202001/are-metaphors-your-secret-magic-wand-in-therapy>

Stilwell, P., & Stilwell, C. (2024). First things first: What is metaphor? In *Routledge Handbook of Medicine and Poetry*. Routledge.

Strelan, P., & Covic, T. (2006). A review of forgiveness process models and a coping framework to guide future research. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 25(10), 1059-1086. .

Thibodeau, P. H., Matlock, T., & Flusberg, S. J. (2019). The role of metaphor in communication and thought. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 13(5).

Thompson, M. M., Zanna, M. P., & Griffin, D. W. (1995). Let's not be indifferent about (attitudinal) ambivalence. In R. E. Petty & J. A. Krosnick (Eds.), *Attitude strength: Antecedents and consequences* (pp. 361-386). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Toussaint, L. L., Williams, D. R., Musick, M. A., & Everson-Rose, S. (2001). Forgiveness and Health: Age Differences in a U.S. Probability Sample. *Journal of Adult Development*, 8(10), 249-257.

Toussaint, L., & Cheadle, A. C. D. (2009). Unforgiveness and the broken heart: Unforgiving tendencies, problems due to unforgiveness, and 12-month prevalence of cardiovascular health conditions. In M. T. Evans & E. D. Walker (Eds.), *Religion and psychology*. Nova Publishers.

VanderWeele, T. J. (2024). The Power of Forgiveness: New evidence from a randomized trial. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/human-flourishing/202303/the-power-of-forgiveness?msocid=1873ab690e6b6bd91031bf5b0f7e6ada>

Vitalia, I. L. (2016). Mountain metaphor to increase self-efficacy. *Current Trends in Natural Sciences*. 5(10). pp. 123-126.

Wade, N. G., Hoyt, W. T., Kidwell, J. E. M., & Worthington, E. L., Jr. (2013). Efficacy of psychotherapeutic interventions to promote forgiveness: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 81(5), 1026-1042.

Watling, A. (2019). *The therapeutic use of interpersonal forgiveness within counselling*. MA Dissertation. [Unpublished]. University of Wales, Trinity Saint David.

Watling, A. (2024). *'The self-C.A.R.E metaphorical model for forgiveness'* [In trial]. PhD research [Unpublished]. University of Wales, Trinity Saint David.

Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Wade, N. G. (1999). The psychopathology of unforgiveness and forgiveness and implications for clinical practice. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18, 385-418.

Worthington, E. L., Jr. (2006). *Forgiveness and reconciliation: Theory and application*. Routledge.

GENERAL DISCLAIMER

Content offered for informational/reflective purposes only and not for diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of mental health issues.

If you are concerned about your emotional well-being or experiencing any significant mental health problems, it is strongly recommended that you consult a relevant professional.