

# Exploring The Effectiveness of Forgiveness Therapy in Enhancing Self-Forgiveness Among Adult Children of Divorced Parents: A Case Study

Devi Mariyani<sup>1</sup>, Yulia Ayriza<sup>2</sup>, Farida Harahap<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

## Article Info

### Article history:

Received Jul, 2025

Revised Oct, 2025

Accepted Oct, 2025

### Keywords:

Emotional Healing;  
Forgiveness Therapy;  
Parental Divorce;  
Self-Forgiveness,  
Trauma Recovery

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy in enhancing self-forgiveness among women affected by parental divorce. The subject, a 26-year-old female entrepreneur, was struggling with self-blame, particularly following the trauma of her parents' divorce. The research applied the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) to assess self-forgiveness levels before and after a structured six-session intervention. The forgiveness therapy, based on Enright's model, involved phases such as uncovering pain, decision to forgive, working through emotions, and deepening the process. Data collected showed a significant improvement in the client's ability to forgive herself, as evidenced by her higher scores on the HFS after completing the therapy. The study reveals the critical role of forgiveness interventions in addressing emotional pain, particularly self-blame, in the aftermath of traumatic life events like divorce. Findings also highlight the therapeutic potential of structured forgiveness programs to improve psychological well-being and life satisfaction. This case study contributes to the growing body of literature on forgiveness therapy and its application in trauma recovery.

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## Corresponding Author:

Name: Devi Mariyani

Institution: Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta

Email: [devipsikologi18@gmail.com](mailto:devipsikologi18@gmail.com)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The emotional consequences of parental divorce often have a profound and lasting impact on children, especially adult children who continue to struggle with emotional pain and feelings of guilt. In many cases, these individuals harbor self-blame, believing their actions or existence may have contributed to their parents' separation. Such

emotions hinder personal development, necessitating therapeutic interventions like forgiveness therapy to help individuals address and heal from these psychological wounds.

Self-forgiveness is a critical component of emotional well-being, as it allows individuals to free themselves from feelings of guilt and blame. According to [1], without self-forgiveness, individuals may

experience increased levels of anxiety, depression, and distress. It is particularly significant in the context of parental divorce, where children often internalize the breakdown of family relationships, feeling responsible for the event's occurrence.

Forgiveness therapy, developed by [2], offers a structured approach to overcoming feelings of self-blame and guilt. This therapy involves several stages, including acknowledging emotional pain, deciding to forgive, working through negative emotions, and deepening the forgiveness process. While forgiveness therapy has been widely used in various contexts, its application in addressing emotional difficulties resulting from parental divorce remains underexplored.

Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of forgiveness therapy in reducing anger, resentment, and guilt [3]. However, much of this research has focused on broader traumatic experiences, leaving a gap in understanding how forgiveness therapy works in the specific context of adult children affected by parental divorce. Moreover, self-blame is a common emotional response among children of divorced parents. [4] suggests that children internalize their parents' separation and feel responsible, often carrying this guilt into adulthood, which can become a barrier to self-forgiveness.

Recent studies, such as those by [5], highlight the long-term emotional challenges faced by adults whose parents divorced in childhood. These individuals are more likely to experience mental health issues, including depression and anxiety. The persistence of unresolved feelings of guilt underscores the need for therapeutic interventions like forgiveness therapy, which can help individuals cope with these emotional burdens and heal from the lasting effects of parental separation.

Emotional regulation theory suggests that individuals with better coping mechanisms for negative emotions are less likely to suffer from mental health disorders [6]. Forgiveness therapy facilitates emotional regulation by helping individuals reframe

their negative emotional responses, thus enabling them to process past trauma more effectively. The self-forgiveness process is crucial in this context, as it allows individuals to alleviate feelings of guilt and self-blame, thereby enhancing emotional resilience.

A key distinction in the study of forgiveness is between forgiving others and forgiving oneself. According to [1], people tend to forgive others more easily than they forgive themselves. While the difficulty of self-forgiveness has been discussed in the literature, particularly among those who have experienced trauma like parental divorce, it remains insufficiently explored. This study addresses this gap by examining the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy in enhancing self-forgiveness in individuals affected by parental separation.

Post-traumatic growth (PTG), defined by [7], refers to the positive psychological changes that individuals experience following adversity. While forgiveness therapy is commonly used to address the negative effects of trauma, it can also promote PTG by helping individuals reframe their trauma in a more meaningful way. This process, however, has yet to be explored in the context of parental divorce, making this study's focus on PTG particularly relevant.

In the past decade, numerous studies have explored the role of forgiveness therapy in addressing the emotional consequences of parental divorce. Research by [8] highlighted how forgiveness therapy enhanced self-acceptance and emotional regulation in adolescents from divorced families. [9] demonstrated that forgiveness therapy facilitated post-traumatic growth, improving emotional resilience. [10] found that forgiveness significantly reduced anxiety and depression in children of divorced parents, while [11] identified key dimensions of post-traumatic growth, such as appreciation of life and personal strength, among young women affected by divorce. Similarly, [12] underscored that post-traumatic growth mediates the effects of adverse experiences, reducing psychological distress [13] explored the benefits of forgiveness in chronic illness,

finding positive correlations with post-traumatic growth, while [14] showed that forgiveness education positively influenced adolescent adjustment to parental separation. Additionally, [15]; [16]; [17] confirmed that children's forgiveness following divorce improved their psychological well-being. These studies collectively highlight the importance of forgiveness therapy as an effective intervention for emotional healing in individuals affected by parental divorce.

The concept of self-compassion, as articulated by [18], involves treating oneself with kindness and understanding during times of failure or difficulty. Cultivating self-compassion can reduce feelings of self-blame and increase emotional resilience. [19] suggest that integrating self-compassion exercises within forgiveness therapy can significantly enhance emotional well-being. This study aims to investigate how self-compassion can be incorporated into forgiveness therapy to improve self-forgiveness among adults dealing with parental divorce.

While much of the research on forgiveness therapy has been conducted within Western contexts, there is a significant gap in empirical data regarding its application in non-Western settings, especially among individuals affected by parental divorce. This study fills this gap by examining the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy for adult children of divorced parents in an Indonesian cultural context, which may provide insights into culturally sensitive interventions for emotional healing.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *The Role of Forgiveness Therapy in Self-Forgiveness*

The literature on forgiveness therapy suggests that self-forgiveness is a crucial component of emotional well-being, particularly for individuals grappling with guilt, self-blame, and unresolved trauma. According to [2], forgiveness therapy helps individuals confront and reframe negative emotions, allowing them to process their feelings of

guilt and achieve emotional healing. Studies have shown that self-forgiveness reduces the risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression [1]. For adult children of divorced parents, unresolved guilt and self-blame often stem from internalizing the divorce, leading to long-lasting emotional consequences. Forgiveness therapy provides a structured approach to challenge these internalized beliefs and foster emotional resilience [1]. The therapeutic process involves reframing the trauma and enabling individuals to accept themselves despite past events, contributing to improved psychological well-being.

### 2.2 *Forgiveness Therapy and Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG)*

Recent research highlights the role of forgiveness therapy in promoting post-traumatic growth (PTG) among individuals affected by childhood trauma, such as parental divorce. [7] define PTG as the positive psychological change that occurs as individuals struggle with adversity. Studies suggest that forgiveness therapy is a key facilitator of PTG, helping individuals to transform negative experiences into sources of personal growth [2]. For adult children of divorced parents, this can involve recognizing the trauma as a source of strength rather than something that defines their identity. Research by [12] supports the view that post-traumatic growth is significantly enhanced by forgiveness interventions, as they encourage individuals to reinterpret past pain as a catalyst for greater empathy, resilience, and self-compassion. The integration of PTG in forgiveness therapy can provide individuals with a transformative experience, enabling them to develop healthier emotional coping mechanisms and improved relationships.

### 2.3 *Emotional Consequences of Parental Divorce and the Need for Forgiveness*

[17] explores the emotional impact of parental divorce on children,

emphasizing the pervasive feelings of self-blame and responsibility that often arise, especially among adult children. This emotional burden can hinder the process of self-forgiveness, as individuals struggle with the belief that they were somehow at fault for the divorce. In many cases, these feelings are compounded by societal expectations that children maintain family harmony, reinforcing irrational guilt. Forgiveness therapy, therefore, plays a pivotal role in helping individuals differentiate between their emotions and the reality of the situation, promoting the understanding that parental conflict is not the child's fault. Research by [10] further demonstrates that forgiveness interventions reduce anxiety and depression by addressing these irrational beliefs and fostering self-acceptance. Through this therapeutic approach, adult children of divorced parents can dismantle the guilt they carry and begin to heal emotionally, allowing them to build healthier self-concepts and improve their overall psychological health.

### 3. METHODS

This study employs a case study approach to explore the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy in improving self-forgiveness among a woman affected by parental divorce. The approach enables an in-depth investigation into the participant's emotional and psychological transformation following the intervention. The case study method was chosen due to its ability to provide rich, detailed data on an individual's therapeutic journey and the impact of the therapy on her self-forgiveness and emotional well-being.

Additionally, this research follows a pre-test and post-test design, where self-forgiveness is assessed before and after the therapeutic intervention using the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), which allows for

objective measurement of changes in the participant's ability to forgive herself.

The participant in this study is a 26-year-old female entrepreneur who has experienced significant emotional distress due to her parents' divorce. She struggles with self-blame, which is rooted in the belief that she caused her parents' separation. The participant was selected based on the presence of high levels of self-blame, as assessed through an initial interview. This selection criterion ensures that the case study focuses on a participant with clear emotional struggles that could potentially benefit from forgiveness therapy. Demographic Information:

- 1) Age: 26 years old
- 2) Gender: Female
- 3) Occupation: Entrepreneur
- 4) Psychological Background: Struggles with self-blame due to parental divorce.

#### 3.1 Instruments

The primary instrument for measuring self-forgiveness was the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), developed by [1]. The HFS assesses three dimensions of forgiveness:

1. Forgiveness of Self
2. Forgiveness of Others
3. Forgiveness of Situation

The HFS consists of 18 items and uses a Likert scale with four response options ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (4). This instrument was administered before the intervention (pre-test) and after the completion of the therapy (post-test) to measure any changes in the participant's ability to forgive herself.

Additionally, qualitative interviews were conducted throughout the intervention to capture the participant's emotional responses, cognitive shifts, and overall experience. These interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in the discussion while ensuring that key areas of interest were addressed.

### 3.2 Intervention (Forgiveness Therapy)

The intervention employed in this study is forgiveness therapy based on [2] model. This therapy model is structured around four phases:

1. Uncovering Phase
2. Decision to Forgive Phase
3. Work Phase
4. Deepening Phase

The therapy consists of six sessions, each lasting between 60-120 minutes. The sessions were spaced over a period of 6 weeks, allowing for reflective pauses between sessions. The stages are designed to help individuals move from initially confronting their painful emotions to eventually achieving deeper self-forgiveness and emotional peace.

Detailed Session Breakdown:

1. Session 1-2: Uncovering Phase

The first-two sessions focused on acknowledging and confronting the negative emotions surrounding the participant's past experiences, specifically her parents' divorce. The participant was encouraged to explore feelings of self-blame, anger, and resentment.

2. Session 3: Decision to Forgive Phase

The third session was dedicated to helping the participant decide to forgive herself. The participant was guided to see forgiveness as a conscious choice, rather than a passive response to external circumstances.

3. Session 4-5: Work Phase

The fourth and fifth sessions concentrated on working through emotional pain and negative self-perceptions. These sessions involved exercises designed to replace self-blame with self-compassion and empathy.

4. Session 6: Deepening Phase

The final session helped the participant integrate her

learning from previous sessions into her daily life. It focused on reinforcing the decision to forgive and finding meaning in the process of emotional healing.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedure

#### a. Quantitative Data:

The HFS was administered to the participant at two points:

1. Pre-test: The participant completed the HFS before starting the therapy, providing baseline data on her level of self-forgiveness.
2. Post-test: After completing the six sessions of forgiveness therapy, the participant completed the HFS again to assess changes in her self-forgiveness levels.

#### b. Qualitative Data:

Throughout the intervention, the participant participated in semi-structured interviews following each session. These interviews were designed to capture her subjective experience, insights gained, and perceived emotional shifts. The data from these interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to emotional healing, self-forgiveness, and the participant's perspective on the effectiveness of the therapy.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

#### a. Quantitative Analysis

The data from the pre- and post-tests on the HFS were analyzed using paired t-tests to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the participant's self-forgiveness scores before and after the intervention. The paired t-test was chosen because it compares the means of two related groups (pre-test and post-test) to determine if there are significant changes over time.

### **b. Qualitative Analysis:**

The transcribed interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the qualitative data. The themes were organized based on the participant's emotional journey throughout the therapy, focusing specifically on the evolution of her self-forgiveness and her cognitive and emotional transformation during the intervention.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical guidelines for psychological research. Informed consent was obtained from the participant before beginning the therapy and data collection. The participant was assured of confidentiality, and her participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Additionally, any identifying information was kept confidential, and all data was securely stored.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability**

To ensure validity, the HFS was used, a well-established instrument for measuring forgiveness, which has been widely used in psychological research. The interviews were designed to explore various aspects of the participant's emotional journey, adding to the construct validity of the study. For reliability, the study used standardized procedures for administering the HFS and conducting the interviews. The data analysis was performed by the primary researcher, ensuring consistency in the interpretation of the results.

### **3.7 Limitations**

While the study provides valuable insights into the impact of forgiveness therapy on self-forgiveness, there are some limitations. The case study design limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. The study also focused on a single participant, and the outcomes might

differ in individuals with different psychological backgrounds or traumatic experiences. Further studies involving larger sample sizes and diverse populations are recommended to assess the broader applicability of forgiveness therapy.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The primary objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy in enhancing self-forgiveness among women affected by parental divorce. The results indicate a significant improvement in the participant's self-forgiveness, as measured by the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS). The pre-test scores placed the participant in the very low self-forgiveness category, while the post-test scores moved the participant to the medium category. This finding reflects a positive shift in the participant's emotional state and self-perception after undergoing the forgiveness therapy.

The results from the HFS showed that the participant's self-forgiveness scores increased substantially from a mean of 3.8 in the pre-test to 7.4 in the post-test. The paired t-test analysis revealed a statistically significant difference ( $t = 4.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that the forgiveness therapy led to an improvement in the participant's ability to forgive herself. These findings underscore the effectiveness of the structured intervention in reducing self-blame and promoting emotional healing.

This transformation is reflected not only in numerical data but also in the participants' subjective experience, as revealed through interviews during the therapy sessions. The participant demonstrated an increased awareness of self-blame patterns, which they had previously regarded as absolute truths. In the fourth session, they began to recognize that the guilt they felt was an emotional inheritance from an unhealthy family dynamic, rather than an immutable fact. They expressed, *"I used to think, maybe if I were more obedient or better, they wouldn't have separated. But now I realize, I*

*was just a child back then... it wasn't my responsibility.*" This realization marked the beginning of a significant emotional transformation, where the participant began to accept that they deserved to forgive themselves and release the burden they had carried for so long.

Further, this cognitive shift was accompanied by a restructuring of deeply ingrained internal beliefs. Beliefs such as *"I caused their divorce"* began to be replaced by a new understanding that the conflict between their parents was their responsibility as adults. This process highlights the effectiveness of reframing techniques employed during therapy. The participant remarked, *"I started to separate what actually happened from what I felt. It turns out that the guilt I've been carrying wasn't a fact, but a feeling I never spoke about."* This underscores the idea that therapy not only serves as an emotional intervention but also deeply engages with cognitive processes and self-identity.

In addition to cognitive changes, the participant showed improved capacity to manage negative emotions. In the post-therapy interview, they stated that they were now more capable of recognizing when feelings of guilt began to arise and utilized self-regulation techniques such as positive affirmations, mindful breathing, and journaling as strategies for emotional management. *"Now, when I start feeling guilty, I take a deep breath and then write it down in my notes. That really helps me avoid sinking into negative thoughts again."* This evidence suggests that therapy not only results in transient changes but also equips participants with long-term emotional skills that support psychological resilience and balance.

Another significant change was observed in the participant's interpersonal relationships. Before therapy, they reported difficulty opening up to social support, feeling unworthy of attention or affection from others. However, as the therapy progressed, they began to rebuild relationships that had previously been strained, particularly with siblings and close

friends. They mentioned, *"I became brave enough to talk to my best friend, whom I used to avoid because I was ashamed of my own feelings. Now, I realize I need them."* This signifies that psychological transformation through therapy also impacts the quality and trust in the participant's social relationships.

The conclusion of the therapy process was marked by the integration of meaning into life experiences previously viewed as wounds. The participant began to perceive the divorce not only as a source of suffering but also as a learning moment that shaped their resilience and empathy. In the final interview, they stated, *"I used to want to forget everything, but now I want to make peace. I don't want to erase the past, I want to use it to become stronger."* This reflects the emergence of post-traumatic growth [7], wherein the individual not only recovers from trauma but also experiences psychological growth as a result of successfully processing their emotional wounds.

This transformation becomes even more meaningful when viewed within the cultural context of Indonesia, which upholds the value of family harmony. Within this value system, divorce is still often considered a moral failure, and children, even if not directly involved in the conflict, are symbolically positioned as the guardians of family unity. This places children under a dual psychological pressure: they must not express their emotions but still feel responsible for the family's breakdown. The participant in this study reflected this burden when stating, *"I felt like a failure as a child because I couldn't keep the family intact."* This statement highlights how social norms reinforce irrational guilt, making the process of self-forgiveness an act of psychological resistance against unhealthy cultural narratives. Therefore, forgiveness therapy not only functions as an individual healing tool but also as a cultural intervention that deconstructs socially imposed expectations.

The findings above demonstrate that the participant's process of change occurred not only quantitatively but also through a profound psychological journey. The following discussion elaborates on each

phase of therapy based on the theoretical framework underlying the intervention.

#### **4.1 The Role of Forgiveness Therapy in Emotional Healing**

The integration of forgiveness therapy into emotional healing for individuals grappling with trauma particularly in the context of parental divorce has proven to be an effective approach. Drawing from [2] model of forgiveness therapy, the intervention focuses on facilitating deep emotional healing through four critical phases: uncovering pain, decision to forgive, work phase, and deepening phase. Each of these stages addresses specific emotional responses that individuals harbor as they process trauma and work through guilt, anger, and self-blame. The combination of structured emotional processing and cognitive reframing techniques fosters healing by allowing individuals to regain control over their emotional responses, ultimately contributing to post-traumatic growth [7].

#### **4.2 Uncovering Pain**

The first phase of forgiveness therapy, the uncovering pain phase, involves confronting the emotions linked to trauma in this case, the emotional scars left by the divorce of the participant's parents. This phase aligns closely with [20] Cognitive Appraisal Theory, which emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and evaluating emotional responses as a first step in coping with trauma. According to this theory, individuals must first appraise the emotional weight of a situation to determine the appropriate coping strategies. In this case, the participant's struggle with self-blame believing her existence played a role in the divorce was a key emotional response that needed to be addressed before healing could begin. The therapeutic process encouraged the participant to confront these negative emotional appraisals and acknowledge that they were irrational and

disproportionate. This recognition serves as the foundation for the emotional regulation that follows in later phases of therapy.

**Empirical Evidence:** Several studies support the notion that self-blame following trauma can have a debilitating effect on emotional healing. Fehr, [21] found that individuals experiencing self-blame after traumatic events, such as parental divorce, often report higher levels of depression and lower levels of self-esteem. Similarly, [22] demonstrated that self-blame in trauma survivors inhibits the ability to engage in effective coping strategies and emotional growth.

#### **4.3 Decision to Forgive**

The decision to forgive occurs in the third session of therapy, a crucial point in the emotional healing journey. This phase aligns with [21] model of forgiveness, which argues that the decision to forgive is a critical cognitive process. In this phase, individuals come to realize that their emotional responses, particularly those centered on self-blame, are irrational, and that forgiveness is not just about excusing past wrongs but about regaining control over one's emotions and thoughts. The participant's decision to forgive herself did not happen instantly; rather, it emerged through cognitive reframing strategies learned during therapy. These strategies helped the participant recognize that the guilt and self-blame associated with her parents' divorce were unfounded, leading to the release of these emotional burdens.

**Empirical Evidence:** Forgiveness as a cognitive choice has been well documented in empirical research [23] demonstrated that individuals who made a conscious decision to forgive were able to experience significantly higher levels of emotional well-being and psychological healing. [22] also found that cognitive reframing, a core technique in forgiveness therapy, significantly reduced emotional distress



in participants dealing with relational trauma.

4.4 Work Phase and Emotional Regulation

The work phase of forgiveness therapy focuses on replacing self-blame with empathy and self-compassion , which has a direct link to [6] theory of emotional regulation. Gross asserts that individuals who develop the capacity to regulate and reframe their emotions in a healthier manner exhibit greater emotional resilience. In this phase, the participant engaged in activities such as writing letters of self-compassion and reframing memories of her parents' divorce, allowing her to focus on self-acceptance rather than guilt. These activities align with [18] concept of self-compassion, which has been shown to help individuals reduce self-blame and enhance emotional resilience.

Empirical Evidence: [18] found that self-compassion is a significant predictor of emotional well-being. [19] also demonstrated that cultivating self-compassion significantly decreases negative self-appraisals and promotes psychological recovery. This aligns with the work phase in forgiveness therapy, where self-compassionserves as a tool for healing emotional wounds related to trauma.

4.5 Deepening Phase and Post-Traumatic Growth

The final phase of forgiveness therapy, the deepening phase, focuses on internalizing forgiveness and fostering post-traumatic growth [7]. In this phase, the participant began to reinterpret the trauma of parental divorce as a source of strengthrather than a defining weakness. This aligns with [7] post-traumatic growth theory, which posits that individuals who experience trauma can find deeper meaning in their experiences, leading to

psychological growth and resilience. By internalizing forgiveness, the participant was able to view her experience not as a source of shame but as a personal challenge she could overcome, thereby contributing to her emotional and psychological growth.

Empirical Evidence: Research on post-traumatic growth has consistently shown that trauma survivors who reframe their experiences as opportunities for growth often experience higher levels of life satisfaction and emotional well-being. [24] found that post-traumatic growth was associated with increased self-compassion and psychological resilience in survivors of relational trauma.

The analysis of forgiveness therapy through its various phases uncovering pain, decision to forgive, work phase, and deepening phase demonstrates its potential to foster emotional healing and psychological growth in individuals affected by parental divorce. By drawing from [20] cognitive appraisal theory, [21] model of forgiveness, [6] emotional regulation theory, and [7] post-traumatic growth framework, the therapy provides a comprehensive approach to healing that targets self-blame, guilt, and unresolved trauma. The empirical evidence supports the therapeutic efficacy of these approaches, underscoring the importance of forgiveness and self-compassion in overcoming emotional wounds caused by relational trauma. This study contributes valuable insights into how forgiveness therapy can promote self-forgiveness, emotional resilience, and post-traumatic growth, offering crucial implications for clinical practice and future research in the domain of trauma recovery.

Table 1. Forgiveness Therapy Frameworks and Findings

Phase of Therapy	Theoretical Framework	Empirical Findings	Related Journal Articles
Uncovering Pain	Cognitive Appraisal	Acknowledge and	Fehr, Gelfand, & Iyer

Phase of Therapy	Theoretical Framework	Empirical Findings	Related Journal Articles
	Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	appraise emotional responses as a first step in coping with trauma, particularly self-blame.	(2020); McFadden et al. (2019)
Decision to Forgive	Forgiveness Decision Model (Worthington, 2006)	Forgiveness is a critical cognitive process, helping individuals regain control over emotions and begin healing.	Worthington et al. (2019); McCullough et al. (2020)
Work Phase	Emotional Regulation Theory (Gross, 2002)	Regulating negative emotional responses through reframing and self-compassion reduces self-blame and promotes healing.	Neff (2003); Leary et al. (2007)
Deepening Phase	Post-Traumatic Growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004)	Trauma survivors experience personal growth by reinterpreting negative experiences as sources of strength, not weakness.	Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004); Calhoun et al. (2017)

Source: Analysis results, 2024

The significant improvements in the participant's self-forgiveness scores support [3] forgiveness therapy model, particularly the efficacy of structured interventions in addressing deep-seated emotional wounds. Additionally, these findings align with the Self-Compassion Theory by [18], which emphasizes the importance of treating oneself with kindness and understanding in times of failure. The participant's improvement in self-forgiveness is a direct reflection of her ability to engage in self-compassion, replacing the internalized blame with a more nurturing self-view.

Moreover, the positive outcomes observed in this study resonate with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) principles [25], as the therapy incorporated cognitive restructuring techniques to challenge the participant's distorted thoughts of guilt and inadequacy. This approach proved effective in helping the participant reframe her beliefs about her

role in her parents' divorce and embrace a more balanced perspective.

The improvement in self-forgiveness and emotional regulation observed in this case study also speaks to the attachment theory [26], which suggests that emotional regulation and self-perception are heavily influenced by early attachment relationships. In this case, the participant's attachment to her parents' emotional responses during their divorce played a pivotal role in her emotional suffering. Forgiveness therapy helped the participant detach from these negative attachments, fostering emotional independence and healthier interpersonal dynamics. Furthermore, the study demonstrates the role of social support theory [27] in emotional recovery. Although the therapy was individual-focused, the participant was encouraged to seek support from trusted individuals, which reinforced the therapeutic gains and provided an additional layer of emotional resilience.

The findings from this study offer valuable insights for clinical practitioners working with individuals who have experienced trauma, particularly those affected by familial issues such as divorce. Forgiveness therapy, especially when tailored to address self-blame and guilt, can be an effective intervention for those struggling with negative self-perceptions. This case study also highlights the importance of integrating self-compassion exercises into therapeutic practices to promote long-term emotional recovery. In clinical settings, therapists can use a combination of cognitive restructuring and emotional processing techniques, as demonstrated in this study, to help clients break free from harmful patterns of self-blame and self-criticism. The therapeutic model used here has potential applications for treating various forms of trauma, including relationship breakdowns, grief, and other emotional disturbances.

Despite the promising outcomes, this study has limitations that need to be acknowledged. The case study design limits the ability to generalize the findings to a larger population. Furthermore, the relatively short duration of the therapy (six sessions) may not fully capture the long-term effects of forgiveness therapy. Future research should focus on larger sample sizes, follow-up studies to assess long-term benefits, and exploring variations in therapy duration to determine the most effective treatment strategies.

Future studies should explore the cultural context of forgiveness therapy, as cultural differences may influence how individuals process and engage in forgiveness. Additionally, research should investigate the potential benefits of combining forgiveness therapy with other therapeutic interventions, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) or

dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), to enhance emotional regulation and resilience in individuals recovering from trauma.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that forgiveness therapy significantly enhances self-forgiveness among adult children of divorced parents, addressing the deep-rooted feelings of guilt and self-blame they often experience. Based on Enright's framework, this intervention effectively helps individuals process emotional pain and move toward self-compassion. Post-therapy, participants showed marked improvements in emotional well-being, including reductions in guilt, anxiety, and self-blame. These findings highlight the importance of forgiveness therapy as a powerful tool for trauma recovery, offering an effective means of emotional healing for those dealing with relational wounds, particularly those caused by parental divorce.

This research contributes to trauma therapy by demonstrating the applicability of forgiveness-based interventions in enhancing emotional resilience and mental health. By focusing on self-forgiveness, the study bridges a gap in existing literature, showing that forgiveness therapy can foster post-traumatic growth [10] and self-compassion [18] in individuals affected by familial trauma.

Given the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy, policymakers should consider integrating forgiveness-based interventions into public mental health programs to promote emotional resilience, especially for individuals from divorced families. Clinicians should incorporate structured forgiveness therapy models, such as Enright's framework, into their practices, focusing on reducing guilt and self-blame in children of divorced parents. Future research should expand on the theories of post-traumatic growth and self-compassion by incorporating forgiveness therapy as a central element in the healing process for individuals affected by familial trauma,

especially parental divorce. Future studies should explore the long-term effects of forgiveness therapy and its applicability across different cultural contexts. Additionally, research should investigate the potential for combining forgiveness therapy with other therapeutic approaches to improve overall mental health outcomes.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank and acknowledge the informants for their willingness to share their experiences as young mothers. This research received no specific grant from any public, commercial, or nonprofit funding agency.

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## BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS

	<p><b>Devi Mariyani</b>   is a researcher in the field of positive psychology in families and cyberpsychology. She completed her undergraduate degree in Psychology at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan and her master's degree in Psychology at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. email: <a href="mailto:devipsikologi18@gmail.com">devipsikologi18@gmail.com</a></p>
	<p><b>Yulia Ayryza</b>   is a Professor in the field of Developmental Psychology at the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. She completed her Ph.D. at Universiti Sains Malaysia. email: <a href="mailto:Yulia_ayryza@uny.ac.id">Yulia_ayryza@uny.ac.id</a></p>
	<p><b>Farida Harahap</b>   is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, with expertise in clinical psychology and counseling. email: <a href="mailto:Farida_Harahap@uny.ac.id">Farida_Harahap@uny.ac.id</a></p>