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BREAKING THE CYCLES OF VIOLENCE IN LEBANON – AND BEYOND

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INTRODUCTION

Theories abound about the cycle of violence in Lebanon and how to end it. The perception of what drives and perpetuates this violence defines the approach taken to defuse it. There are two general modes of perception and corresponding prescription. The first is the structural or institutional mode whose pure form views political, economic or social constructs and disparities as the root causes of conflict. As a result, solutions are only given at this level, (e.g.: fixing political formulas or alleviating external interferences, religious differences or socio-economic grievances). One could term this a top down approach to conflict resolution. Find the right framework and conflict will disappear. The second, bottom up mode looks at the primordial bases for conflict. Its proponents point out the limitations of structural theories at explaining the real emotional drivers, the brutality, or the way the conflict takes on its own persona once commenced. Here, the role of interpersonal dynamics and the individual's psychological status and background provide the reasons for as well as the solutions to the problem.

Both these modes provide analysis critical to an understanding of the many factors involved in igniting, accelerating or merely tempting violence. Neither is sufficient to explain why these conflicts repeat in cycles across generations despite changes in structure and despite differences in educational levels or material well-being. They do not resolve pent-up grievances that provide the source-well for renewed conflict. Thus, they serve only to delay or repress violence. My approach is complementary to these two modes. It seeks to explain existing personal and structural relationships in an alternative light and offers a path to break cycles of violence at both levels. What can be instigated at the level of the individual can then be applied to groups of individuals and by extension to political formulas between such groups in order to make feasible otherwise doomed structural options.

Current as well as past, or more historic, conflicts affect us psychologically as individuals and in our relationships, especially with loved ones (not just 'others' or enemies). They shape our beliefs and patterns of behaviour. This contributes to our propensity to participate in the next wave of strife or pass it on to the next generation thereby creating a cycle of violence. Thus, each one of us plays some role in this cycle—either actively or passively. We each therefore bear some

responsibility in it. The responsibility becomes clearer when, through our beliefs and behaviour, we pass on traumas and grievances to our children. Similarly, we can see ourselves as receivers of inherited patterns and traumas from conflicts rooted before our time.

By addressing these issues and tackling them at the level of the individual and then the group, I believe we can defuse the emotional charges against the "other" that perpetuate these cycles. Central to transcending these emotional fuses is the concept of forgiveness. Where there is a lot of pain through conflict, addressing these emotions and forgiving can be one of the hardest challenges for a person to undertake. I do offer, however, some prescriptions for the individual and my hope is that decentralised networks of such like-minded persons who can work through this pain can then act as a source of encouragement for each other and for groups to create a political space for real reconciliation. This will then help in specific instances of violent disagreement and eventually, I hope, even at the structural political level.

Since I am talking at the level of the individual, I will start with my own personal story to illustrate how I came to explore these questions of cycles of violence and inherited grievances. I will also offer some examples from my professional work to show how I have put these theories into practice and how they have been reinforced by the work of others. I will then provide some tools that can enable the individual to address his or her personal stories and change behaviour that leads to conflict. Finally, through an explanation of the power of forgiveness at healing root causes of strife, I will offer some suggestions that I believe can help us break the cycle of violence in Lebanon.

MY STORY

Like so many millions of others, wars are part of my history. I was brought up in the Second World War; my father grew up in the First World War and lost a brother. My mother fled the Russian revolution, losing family members and grew up as a refugee. This familiar pattern has continued. I discovered Lebanon and my future husband in 1966. We enjoyed a few carefree years before the cataclysm of the civil war in Lebanon uprooted us all. It was in my own life that I began to see the concept of patterns between generations and repeating cycles.

What I felt instinctively, I learned that many others had formalised through extensive analysis: the concept of recurrence in conflict and the impact of trauma across

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generations. Anne Schutzenberger in 'The Ancestor Syndrome', for example, has looked at cancer, car accidents and war trauma and their effects on the descendents of the victims - in terms of their both feeling and *repeating* the original incidents.¹

In early 1984 a group of Lebanese living between Lebanon and London met regularly in our house to attempt to make a difference to what was going on in Lebanon, to try to understand what had brought us to this point and what could take us out of it – and be lasting. Of course, we didn't know the answers. So we set up the Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS) as a way of looking more profoundly at ourselves – our past, present and future.

In parallel to looking at historical facts and figures at the CLS, I reflected about the war in Lebanon and my own part in it. How can a country implode on itself so quickly and so violently? I felt helpless. I later realised that I too must be part of the war. I questioned: what part do I play in war? How can I contribute to peace?

I began to explore. What stirs such inhumanity? How do we create personal and collective hells? For years I took courses in various therapeutic disciplines. I also attempted to reconcile my spiritual life and personal 'beyond the brain'² experiences with a more scientific, psychological understanding. I believed this would help me communicate these experiences more effectively to myself and others. I learned how fear is used internally and externally to separate us from one another and from our inner instincts of loving others and indeed ourselves. Fear also acts as a vehicle for anger, pain and vengeance. This process of exploration led me to become a psychotherapist.

EXAMPLES OF ANCESTRAL INFLUENCE IN CREATING "CYCLES" OF VIOLENCE

One of my first clients was a young French teenager who came to see me in London. His goal was to become a general. That's odd, I thought, in the France of today. I then discovered that he also had a driving belief. "In order to be honourable, I have to die for my country." A real catch 22. I won't describe all the extraordinary details of the case, but I later found out that this boy's ancestors had been connected with the crusades and with the Levant for generations. His young cousin had also run away to fight in the Lebanese Civil war. Two lives today were

being tragically and unconsciously driven by beliefs created in the crusades by long dead ancestors.

Since then, time and again, my work as a psychotherapist has shown me the interconnectedness between present conflicts and deeply held, out of consciousness, ancient group grievances. I work to heal pain in the individual caused by events in his or her life and/or echoed from earlier generations. Such patterns can extend to groups of individuals with common grievances. Schutzenberger uses the example of the Balkans to show the links throughout history of a particular conflict:

During the Middle Ages, Ottomans (Muslims, Turks) and Serbs (Christians, Orthodox) fought for leadership in the Balkans. The Battle of Kosovo Fields (Kosovo Polje) ended with the defeat of the Serbs by the Ottomans on 28 June 1389 (cf. Volkan 1997). Serb leader Milos Kobolic assassinated the Sultan Murati; then in turn, Milo's brother-in-law Prince Lazar (later canonized) – was decapitated by the Turks. With the fall of Constantinople (1453) to the Turks and the end of the great Serbia (1459) the Kosovo Fields 28 June defeat became an historical trauma for the Serbs. When on the anniversary of the Kosovo defeat, 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, entered Sarajevo, he was assassinated by a Serb activist, Gavrilo Princip, for the humiliation of Serbia. This act sparked the First World War. On 28 June 1989, Slobadan Milosevic, Serbian leader, made a speech at the newly erected monument to the recently returned remains of Saint(Prince) Lazar at Kosovo Fields (with its inscription 1389-1989). He recalled Lazar's call to arms: "Never again will Islam subjugate the Serbs".³

Another topical example of history reflecting, some would say driving, current tensions can be observed in the state of dialogue today between Christianity and Islam. The last Pope, Jean Paul II, not long before his death, asked forgiveness in Bosnia-Herzegovina for the Catholic Church's past sins against humanity, human dignity and freedom. His successor, Pope Benedict XVI has offended many Muslims by quoting a 14th century Christian Emperor.⁴ Pope Benedict later repaired some of this damage when, on his journey to Turkey in December 2006, he prayed in the Sultan Ahmet (aka, the Blue) Mosque, facing Mekka. This symbolic act helped the reconciliation process between Christians and Moslems. It would appear though that the previous Pope better understood the 'live-wire' historical roots of grievances, as he persistently asked for forgiveness on behalf of the Catholic Church's past mistakes.

Many non-western cultures have always maintained a leading role for ancestors and their deeds in the present lives of their descendents... this provides an active link between the living and the dead in terms of behavioural inheritance.

On a lighter note, Michael Henderson, author of several books on Forgiveness, recently moved to Cornwall from the United States. I enquired "Cornwall must be nice and peaceful, I suppose?". He said "well, I have just met a farmer here and he asked me 'do you know why my village Bideford is not talking to Barnstaple?' 'No', I said. He answered, 'They didn't send enough ships to fight the Spanish in the battle of the Armada!'" (In 1588).⁵

At the Centre for Lebanese Studies' Conference 'Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon' in Beit Meri, on June 8th, 2006, after a talk I gave on this subject, a gentleman in the audience (Yahya Hakim) stood up to tell the following story of an inter-generational memory link coming up at a corporate level. He recounted how in Germany he was attempting to discover the reason for a marketing puzzle. Why did the internationally successful French company called Eminence not sell well in Germany? Market research over six months revealed that the name 'Eminence' reminded the Germans of the hugely powerful Catholic French Cardinal Richelieu who was known as 'Eminence' and dominated French policy between 1624 -1642.

Recently, whilst talking with an Ismaeli colleague,⁶ she told me this story. Her daughter, Sara, aged 8 was attending a school in the UK. She had a best friend whom she wanted to invite home. Her friend was delighted and both little girls were happy - until the grandmother of her friend stepped in and said "No, you cannot go to Sara's house" "Why?" "Because the Muslims killed Hindus (in India 150 years ago)." Sara was distraught and puzzled. She asked her mother "Are Muslims bad people?"

All of the above, were the unfortunate 'puppets' of what I call the memory 'puppet master' - a puppet master who lives in and feeds off the active pain of a memory hundreds, of years old, and who manipulates the present and the future, until the pain in the memory can be released, thereby destroying the food supply of the puppet master, whose power comes from the active pain still held in the memory - however old it might be.

The role and influence of events and beliefs from previous generations that perpetuate cycles and receptivity to hate is obvious to some, preposterous to others. Such thinking evolved early on in the field of psychology, as explained by Carl Jung in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.

I feel very strongly that I am under the influence of things or questions which were left incomplete and unanswered by my

parents and grandparents and more distant ancestors. It often seems as if there were an impersonal karma within a family, which is passed on from parents to children. It has always seemed to me that I had to answer questions which fate had posed to my forefathers, and which had not yet been answered, or as if I had to complete, or perhaps continue, things which previous ages had left unfinished. It is difficult to determine whether these questions are more of a personal or more of a general (collective) nature. It seems to me that the latter is the case. A collective problem, if not recognized as such, always appears as a personal problem, and in individual cases may give the impression that something is out of order in the realm of the personal psyche. The personal sphere is indeed disturbed, but such disturbances need not be primary; they may well be secondary, the consequence of an insupportable change in the social atmosphere. The cause of disturbance is, therefore, not to be sought in the personal surroundings, but rather in the collective situation. Psychotherapy has hitherto taken this matter far too little into account.⁷

Towards the end of his life Jung used the term 'ancestral unconscious' in his correspondence with the Jungian Erio van Waveren.⁸ On this topic, modern psychotherapy has advanced beyond the boundaries set by Jungian analysis⁹ because it does account for ancestral influences as opposed to mere archetypal assimilations during the subject's life.

Many non-western cultures have always maintained a leading role for ancestors and their deeds in the present lives of their descendents. As Malidoma Some, rooted in the Dagara culture argues, this provides an active link between the living and the dead in terms of behavioural inheritance.

It is my belief that the present state of restlessness that traps the modern individual has its roots in a dysfunctional relationship with the ancestors. In many non-Western cultures, the ancestors have an intimate and absolutely vital connection with the world of the living. They are always available to guide, to teach, and to nurture. They represent one of the pathways between the knowledge of this world and the next. Most importantly - and paradoxically - they embody the guidelines for successful living - all that is most valuable about life. Unless the relationship between the living and the dead is in balance, chaos results. When a person from my culture looks at the descendants of the Westerners who invaded their culture, they see a people who are ashamed of their ancestors because they were killers and marauders masquerading as artisans of progress. The fact that these

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*people have a sick culture comes as no surprise to them. The Dagara believe that, if such an imbalance exists, it is the duty of the living to heal their ancestors. If these ancestors are not healed, their sick energy will haunt the souls and psyches of those who are responsible for helping them.*¹⁰

If it is indeed the case that the link between living and dead is not static then there is a capacity to resolve “sick energy”. Indeed, there is a responsibility to do so by those who can act, i.e. the living.

At the other end of the scientific spectrum, new work is now being done to look at these phenomena at a genetic level—how our genes are affected by trauma. Last year, biologists including Professor Wolf Reik¹¹ of Cambridge, have found that genes have memory and this can be switched on or off. This gives a new biological dimension to what psychotherapists working with ancestral memories have known for some time. Their work represents a significant shift in scientific thinking and ties it up with much larger philosophical questions of personal and collective identity. Many philosophers have tried to understand what constitutes a person in his/her uniqueness (numerically and qualitatively) either by calling upon somatic principles (i.e. genetics) or psychological analysis (i.e. memory), and found both answers unsatisfactory.¹² However, one proposal, by D. Mackie¹³, came close to Reik’s suggestion of marrying memory and genes. Mackie postulated that it is an “embodied memory”, extending “before and after” our life span, that is central to understanding the identity of a person and consequently this person’s unique predispositions and behaviour¹⁴. Also, Reik’s discovery is changing the way the causes of disease are viewed as well as the importance of lifestyles and family relationships. As the biologist Marcus Pembrey in this new field of epigenetics says: “we are all guardians of our genome”¹⁵.

In some parts of India they train baby elephants by tying one leg to a large chain and post for the first few years. When the elephant is large it then doesn’t go anywhere. It stays a prisoner of its memory. We too are prisoners of old memories and are chained to the past. We act today because of deeply rooted grievances which haven’t been dealt with; sometimes for generations. Not only, therefore, do we have to face and deal with the consequences of conflict in our own lives but we also have to deal with the effects of what has been passed down.

HOW TO BREAK THE CYCLE? HOW TO BECOME ‘GOOD’ ANCESTORS?

Jonas Salk, the famous polio vaccine biologist is often quoted as saying: “our greatest responsibility is be good ancestors”.¹⁶ Yes, but how? How do we become good ancestors and refrain from passing on trauma or negative beliefs to future generations? How do we stop being the prisoners and the puppets of the stinging memories of strife that we can still feel today as though we ourselves were present at that first event? How do we clean up what I call our “ancestral arteries” so that our children are free to act in the now, free from the blocks which echo from the past, and clog up our todays and our tomorrows? When working with the past, “the goal is to let our history inform us, not control us.”¹⁷

In order to break free from these inherited patterns and thereby end unhelpful or destructive cycles, we must undergo a process that falls broadly into three steps. Each step can occur sequentially or simultaneously. The process can apply to specific issues of conflict or to broader parts of our lives. The first step is to take responsibility for the active or passive role we play in propagating a conflict. The second involves creating a space for self-reflection so that we can become aware of noxious behaviours and beliefs that reinforce that role. The third is to release the source of grievances we hold on to so that we can be free to replace old habits and thinking with new life-affirming ones thereby creating “positive cycles” around us and for our children. Releasing the source of grievance that would otherwise compel us to repeat and pass it on can only be done through a process of understanding and forgiveness.

We cannot force nor be forced to undertake the process that leads us to understanding and forgiveness. We can become willing to do so; to allow ourselves to bring about this change in the perceptions that underpin our attitudes. I have observed through my work that it is when individuals choose to take these three steps that patterns which might otherwise seem immutable or pre-destined can be dissolved.¹⁸

Step 1– Taking responsibility

By taking responsibility for our own choices, for our own lives and for the part we may be playing in any conflict, imbalance, tension, grievance or problem, we learn that we have a way out

It takes courage, honesty and humility to see the role we play in the different conflicts around us... We need to observe those grievances that come from deep in the past of our family or group, religion and nation; how they affect or drive us today.

from existing patterns. We discover that we do certain things or think in certain ways quite 'unthinkingly'- because that is the way they have always been done or thought about. It takes courage, honesty and humility to see the role we play in the different conflicts around us. Ironically, as we begin to look at the conflict from a more reflective position in relation to ourselves, we may suddenly feel that we are not as personally or directly involved even while accepting our role in it for the first time. This reflective distance can also serve as a space within which alternative perceptions can be entertained. It leads us to the second step: altering our behaviours and beliefs about a conflict - opening a door to a more compassionate view.

Step 2- Changing our behaviour and beliefs

I have seen time and again that as individuals learn to deal with their personal grievances within families, they can break a cycle of repetitive pain, anger and violence which has been there for generations - thereby endowing theirs and their children's future with a new behavioural inheritance. This does not mean we all have to go into therapy, but it does require us to be *self reflecting* and as we do that, we are less likely to hold onto our own mind sets or to be pre-disposed to project blame on to everyone else for mistakes in our own life situations.

Once we are ready to take advantage of, and actively enter into, this new personal space for reflection, we can begin to transform our behaviours and actions. We can become aware of the behaviours and beliefs that reinforce the negative patterns of the past and keep us stuck in the cycle. This awareness may come to us in quiet moments of reflection, in dreams, intuitively, or through the feed-back from others and sometimes through accidents or illness, when we realise we have to change in order to choose a life-enhancing path. A path which leads us to become more compassionate with aspects of ourselves and with others.

Although some of the paths to becoming aware and changing behaviour may seem obvious, they may be quite hard to follow. Here is a sample of what we can undertake to help ourselves:

■ Become aware of what motivates our actions and reactions - specifically towards those with whom we are in conflict. This entails digging under the surface for a candid assessment of our driving beliefs and desires. (Writing them down, so we do not forget or glide over them can help us confront difficult issues about ourselves.)

■ Move beyond thinking of ourselves as a 'victim', a 'persecutor' or a 'saviour' - all these aspects are fuelled by anger/fear/guilt. As we become more accepting, forgiving and more compassionate with ourselves, and others, we can let go of and dissolve these negative energies and cease to project them on others. "A person should never be reduced to his or her trauma."¹⁹

■ Notice what we feel: whatever the feeling is (sadness, happiness, love, anger, fear, pain) we need to allow ourselves to *feel it without judgement*. We must remember that we hold 99% of the same genetic code as chimps; all our territorial and fight/flight/freeze responses are activated from the animal areas of the brain - not our reflective human ones. We therefore need to learn to minimise fear-activated knee-jerk reactions by practicing the human qualities of choice and reflection. This helps us to take responsibility for our own emotional life and also allows us to deal with painful feelings. Mind-body techniques to lower the stress and bring the body back to centre are useful tools when the anxiety is intense.²⁰

■ Notice the grievances in our lives. This includes those we feel towards others or that we perceive they feel towards us. Grievances lead to endless cycles of revenge. As Gandhi remarked "an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind". We need to observe those grievances that come from deep in the past of our family or group, religion and nation; how they affect or drive us today. We also need to address current gripes and grievances with others, even though there may not be 'justice' or an apology. This includes listening to others' grievances and complaints about us with an open mind.

■ Notice when we ignore or avoid, do not listen to, or exclude 'the other' and vice versa. This will be a guide to something deeper that needs addressing. Engage 'the other' by staying open and moving towards talking with 'the other' rather than closing up and running from them. As well as stepping into the shoes of 'the other' and seeing ourselves from 'the other's' perspective.

■ Notice how we judge or blame or hate 'the other', and perhaps deny our own part in a conflict. The easiest way to become self aware is to realise that what we reject in ourselves, or have not forgiven in ourselves, we may be projecting onto others. When we accept this realisation, we

Those who are humiliated and bullied become humiliators and bullies themselves, particularly when they find someone weaker. Most of the dictators and despots of the world were humiliated as children: Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein etc.

are taking a positive step to remove our participation in the most common cause of bickering, fights and wars.²¹

■ Notice fear and how we use it or it uses us. Fear of losing control leads us to try to take greater control – usually control of the future, in order to feel that we will be safer. The need to dominate comes from fear. Become aware of old wounds connected with power struggles both within and without. Become aware of feeding fears with guilt and the self-attack of 'not being strong enough, good enough, acknowledged enough, powerful enough, nice enough, brave enough, rich enough, beautiful enough etc.' – all of which keep us in 'victim mode'. Victims usually feel helpless. To escape endless self-attack we strive to get free and to feel more powerful by attacking someone else who is weaker.

■ Notice building walls within ourselves against what we may believe to be the justice of forgiving. True justice can only be available to us when we have released the dynamic of revenge driven justice. This courageous step prevents the cycle of violence.

■ Notice fear-mongering and the feelings connected with it, whether it is our own or others who are doing the fear mongering (including our leaders or the Press/TV etc).

■ Notice any signs of despair then make another choice, a commitment towards life. Despair is possibly our greatest enemy. Many people, including great leaders, have survived the most incredible hardships by keeping a sense of faith and hope.²²

■ Notice humiliating, shaming, dominating and bullying actions. Those who are humiliated and bullied become humiliators and bullies themselves, particularly when they find someone who appears weaker. We also bully ourselves and become self-created victims, using the voice internally of whichever authority figure originally dominated us, (until we can forgive that person or persons). Be aware that every time we humiliate someone, we risk setting off a chain reaction; a time bomb thrown into the future.

Humiliation is a particularly strong cause of vengeful behaviour. Indeed it is not hard to see from our own lives, from school, family and war. People, tribes and nations, who

have been humiliated, humiliate. The memory stays live, if it is not healed.

Most of the dictators and despots of the world were humiliated as children: Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein etc. The same dynamic applies to a long list of groups: Germany was humiliated after the First World War, which led to the Second World War. The list is endless: Israelis and Palestinians; Hutus and Tutsis; Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq; colonialists and the colonised; and blacks and whites in South Africa and in the USA. Not to mention the 286 different militias in the Lebanese civil wars enumerated by Samir Khalaf.²³ In Lebanon the deep memories of humiliation and domination of and by different groups is at the root of many of the difficulties we have today in creating a country. I suggest that we shall not be able to bridge our differences until we have dealt healthily with these recent, old and ancient wounds.

This list of behaviour awareness and change is in no way exhaustive. It is a sample of what is needed to help us to become more compassionate and understanding and therefore more capable of facing our fears and pain.

There are many different methods to reach this same goal, whether by working with groups of like-minded people, reading books or other spiritual practices. There are now many thousands of non-violent communication groups worldwide as well as hundreds of others working on Truth and Reconciliation techniques that can assist individuals and families in this step of behavioural change.²⁴

As we uncover the noxious patterns and reinforce helpful ones, we become more open and capable of resolving the fundamental sources of the fear/pain/anger/vengeance that we may hold on to so dearly. In order to cover this last step, we also need to learn how to forgive.

Step 3– Forgiving

I thought that the only hope for the world lay in an all-embracing attitude of forgiveness of the people who had been our enemies. Forgiveness, my prison experience had taught me, was not mere religious sentimentality; it was as fundamental a law of the human spirit as the law of gravity. If one broke the law of gravity one broke one's neck; if one broke this law of forgiveness one inflicted a mortal wound on one's spirit and became once again a member of the chain gang of mere cause and effect from which life has laboured so long and so painfully to escape.

Laurens van der Post, *The Night of the New Moon*²⁵

Forgiveness therefore is ultimately an act of self-preservation, not a gift to be bestowed on others by us, (or by others on us), but received as a grace by surrendering our pain... and offered to ourselves and others, and even to events beyond our control...

The only thing that will bring us closer to lasting peace is a different way of facing our memories than we have used before. This requires leveraging the formidable power to change in the human heart in order to forgive. It does not mean forgetting, or brushing things under the carpet. Nor does it mean continuing the lies and betrayals that characterise war and which can fester for decades, or denying and covering up memories that are painful or shameful.

Hewitt and Wheeler²⁶ provide a succinct review of the current academic definition of forgiveness:

Although there is no consensual definition of forgiveness, most researchers in forgiveness agree with the definition proposed by Enright and Coyle.

"In genuine forgiveness, one who has suffered an unjust injury chooses to abandon his or her right to resentment and retaliation, and instead offers mercy to the offender."²⁷

Enright and Coyle follow North's²⁸ notion of forgiveness. Forgiveness begins with hurt and pain. The injured has a moral right to anger and resentment but chooses to give up this right and desire for revenge. Instead he or she shows compassion, benevolence and love to the offender. This notion of forgiveness stresses the importance of the forgiver's free and unconditional choice, and requires the forgiver actively to involve in the process of changing either attitude or behaviour. Forgiveness is regarded as an interpersonal process which occurs only between people but not between a person and an inanimate object or an event. Most researchers also concur with the views of Enright et al²⁹ that forgiveness is to be distinguished from pardoning, condoning, excusing, forgetting and denying. It is related to, but different from, reconciliation. McCullough³⁰ further suggests that the essence of forgiveness is the prosocial motivational change on the part of the offended. In forgiving, the offended becomes less motivated to harm but more motivated to do acts that will benefit the offender.

Where I differ with some of the above is that I find that the term 'offers mercy to the offender' can seem patronising. I think of forgiveness as a self healing process, which results in benefits for one and all. Forgiveness therefore is ultimately an act of self preservation, not a gift to be bestowed on others by us (or by others on us), but received as a grace by surrendering our pain and offered to ourselves and others, and even to events beyond our control, with a willing and open heart. Our freedom comes when we realise that in order to thrive and survive and to break out of our prisons of resentments and hate, we do not have another choice but to forgive and live our true purposes - fully

alive. It is in this way that we become good ancestors.

In his book, *The Art of Forgiving*, Lewis Smede gives six simple statements of what forgiveness is not about:

1. Forgiving someone who did us wrong does not mean that we tolerate the wrong he or she did.
2. Forgiving does not mean that we want to forget what happened.
3. Forgiveness does not mean that we excuse the person who did it.
4. Forgiveness does not mean that we take the edge off the evil of what was done to us.
5. Forgiveness does not mean that we surrender our right to justice.
6. Forgiving does not mean that we invite someone who hurt us once to hurt us again.³¹

I believe that forgiveness begins with a choice to become free. It is a supreme grace. We cannot manipulate grace, but we can make a space for it. That space, I believe, comes from a willingness to understand and to let go of that which holds us in pain and resentment. It is not easy, though it can be spontaneous. We may think we should forgive someone else, or ourselves, or an event, but pressurizing ourselves will often make us resist. So I suggest that we do not force anything, either on others or on ourselves.

Sometimes we feel we will let someone 'off the hook' by forgiving them, that they do not deserve to be free of our righteous judgment of them. The problem is that we are the ones who remained bound. We may spend a whole lifetime subjugated to this righteousness, enslaving our own lives and the lives of those around us to the same cause.

When we think of forgiveness, the fear may arise that evil will remain unpunished. It is as if forgiving might mean to give up the right to punish evil. Despite all of this, I have to see what evil does to me; it makes me want to react to evil with evil. Then I see everything with dark glasses and it alienates me from life. Forgiving means bidding goodbye to evil, in order not to be guided by it any more. A process of reconciliation may take some time, as the other side has to recognize its faults also. With forgiveness, however, I don't have to wait and waste time. Forgiveness gives me the freedom to love now. When we attain this freedom, we realize that those who have done evil are themselves its victims. In forgiving we do not lose anything, rather we receive a gift.

Father Adrija Vrane, Bosnia 1998³²

Forgiveness is an internal journey. It can be one of the hardest things to allow ourselves to undertake and requires real courage.

Scilla Elworthy and Gabrielle Rifkind state in their book *Making Terrorism History* that "the power of change in the human heart is formidable. It is what can transform violent activists into statesmen."³³ Mandela, together with Tutu, courageously stepped out of the cycle of violence and terror to save South Africa and millions of lives, by taking a road to forgiveness, via truth and reconciliation, not revenge. As Tutu famously said "There is no future without forgiveness."³⁴

WHY FORGIVENESS?

We need to remember with passion what has happened in the immediate or distant past but above all we need to release what I call the 'sting' in that memory. It is when the 'sting' remains entrenched in the memory that the memory becomes so destructive, triggering us to repeat the same thing over and over again, whenever our safety seems threatened. Through forgiveness we remove that sting (but not the memory). My work has shown me time and again that forgiveness is an effective process that frees us of the burdens of anger, guilt, fear and hate. It is essentially therefore a self-preserving act.

We are not alone in tapping into the healing effects of forgiveness. Forgiveness is being used in a host of therapies to deal with pain. According to Hewitt and Wheeler, "recent literature on counselling and psychotherapy reveals an increased interest in the application of forgiveness."³⁵ They state that in the United States, for example, forgiveness has been used as a brief therapy³⁶, as intervention for people hurt in relationships^{37,38,39}, as psychological healing for adult incest survivors⁴⁰, and as therapy to heal intergenerational pain⁴¹. In the UK, recent research has seen the use of forgiveness in therapeutic contexts by counsellors and psychotherapists as well as by spiritual directors.⁴² Stanford University's Center for Research in Disease Prevention, oversaw the Stanford Forgiveness Project (SFP) set up by Dr Fred Luskin. The SFP then evolved into an umbrella organization for numerous Stanford research projects addressing forgiveness.⁴³ These projects documented how forgiveness can enhance not only psychological health, but reduce anger, blood pressure, depression and stress.

In spite of all the above studies, the Western World is seen as a newcomer to forgiveness. Using traditional forgiveness methods, many Ugandans have decided that they do not wish to continue to fight the war against the rebels from The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA is reputed to have abducted

more than 20,000 children while the war itself has killed over 100,000 with 1.5 million displaced. Now the people are using their own forgiveness ceremonies to welcome back the rebels into society and to 'cleanse the sins'. Rwot Acana, chief of the Acholi population of northern Uganda has declared that through 'stepping on the egg', the former rebels are being forgiven. Almost all the rebels in the LRA were abducted as children and forced to carry out atrocities on their own communities. These same communities are now forgiving them, even though 'justice' has not been seen to be done.⁴⁴

EACH INDIVIDUAL CAN START TO HELP TO BREAK THE CYCLES OF VIOLENCE

Forgiveness is an internal journey. It can be one of the hardest things to allow ourselves to undertake and requires real courage. It cannot be imposed: it must be undertaken by each individual because every person has his or her unique relationship with their memories and ancestry. I believe it begins with being willing to take responsibility for finding a way to heal our own grievances - even when we wish to blame others and feel we have a right to do so. In this way we free ourselves and our children from great burdens. This process can often be triggered listening to others' narratives of forgiveness.

Of all the approaches available to break the age-old cycle of violence and counter-violence so endemic to Lebanon, I believe none is more potent than forgiveness. Forgiveness is, in its essence, a spiritual force with boundless therapeutic virtues. It is upheld by all the great religions and wisdoms. In the Qur'an alone there are about 200 references to forgiveness in various forms. The New Testament is rich in forgiveness teaching. You only have to search the internet for the word 'forgiveness', to find thousands of wise quotes on forgiveness from those who have tested it. In Lebanon today, education, economic prosperity, social welfare and all efforts at integration can do much to quell fears and clear misconceptions between different and segregated communities. They nonetheless need to be consolidated by forgiveness, in order to transcend painful memories and grievances to redirect this energy into genuine venues for peaceful and creative coexistence.

Battles reverberate throughout history. Every act has a resonance in time: war-like actions create waves that affect

Through an act of leadership, forgiveness can take whole groups beyond the traps of past wounds and grievances and into a creative future.

our lives, our children's lives, and the lives of those we may never meet. We create cycles of violence and grievances that are self-perpetuating, until we develop the ability to use the key of forgiveness in the present and connect with the understanding that the roots of grievances often lie deep in the past.

The concept of forgiveness is therefore an essential key to reconstruction and rehabilitation. Without it, the impressive projects underway in Lebanon may well be eclipsed by the same forces which razed their predecessors. Friends can live in the same shack and remain friends but enemies, embittered by the feelings of enmity and revenge, cannot share even a palace in the hope of becoming friends.

EXTENDING THE THREE STEPS TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE AT THE STRUCTURAL LEVEL

Though it must encompass the internal journey, avenues towards forgiveness can be created and reinforced at the structural level as well. Committed individuals can also create bridges to other members of their group or community. Approaches can then be made at the inter-communitarian level. This has already happened in many parts of the world including Lebanon, where there are several groups working towards peace, reconciliation and forgiveness. Through an act of leadership, forgiveness can take whole groups beyond the traps of past wounds and grievances and into a creative future.

For example, at the recent Religions for Peace 8th World Assembly in Kyoto titled "Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security" in August 2006, hundreds of committed religious and community leaders from all over the world, representing all major religions, participated in commissions on conflict, reconciliation and healing. The policy resolutions from almost all the group discussions highlighted forgiveness as a means to solve and prevent further conflict.

In addition to working on behaviour awareness and forgiveness at policy conferences and in community discussions, there are many other ways in which society can teach children self-reflection and learn about their behavioural patterns as well as providing opportunities for the public at large to engage in these practices. Here is a shortlist of examples:

■ Investing in skills and understanding of new approaches connected with war prevention. Especially exploring how to transform the dangerous 'stings' from the past to enable individual and group healing to take place.⁴⁵

■ Bringing into our educational curriculum psychological know-how for dealing with grievances and learning to understand and respect the 'others' point of view. In Lebanon the stark need for this was highlighted by Dr Shuayb's empirical research.⁴⁶

■ Such training in self reflection should be introduced into the curriculum during the years of high brain development. Modern neuroscience shows that the frontal lobes of the higher cortex do not start to develop until the teenage years and continue to develop into our 20s; i.e. from ages 12 to 22.⁴⁷

■ Providing opportunities for different groups to learn about one another through joint activities, everyday tasks and family interactions. Groups demonise 'the others' so as to sanctify their brutality. I spoke to an ex-sniper who said he found it easy to kill 'the other' until one old lady he was targeting in his sights, reminded him of his grandmother. After so many deaths this at last brought home to him that 'the other' was not so different, but a human with the same emotions and fears.

■ Understanding 'the other' with compassion acts as a barrier to violence. Therefore we must move away from segregation and create more avenues to share our human selves more fully with each other. Public and private institutions can help by creating public spaces and architecture which encourage healthy pluralism and mixing of groups. The Garden of Forgiveness in Beirut⁴⁸, for example, envisages such a public space in a setting that engenders self reflection. In this way, it can provide a structural setting to encourage the individual down the path of self awareness and forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

I have come into this world to see this: the sword drop from men's hands, even at the height of their arc of anger, because we have finally realised that there is only one flesh we can wound.

Hafiz, Persia, 14th century

As we begin to address our own cycle of fear, anger and guilt, we also create a new momentum of transformation around ourselves, in the lives we touch and within our group or community.

My inner and outer journeys have led me to understand that I do indeed play a part in war and peace. I have realised how important it is for me to take responsibility for the parts of myself that can contribute to fear and war-like acts or feelings in me and around me.

The alternative to real healing is bleak: the memory of war, like the harrowing events themselves, may be trivialized, forgotten, buried, or denied and hence, prone to reappear suddenly, as they did in the Lebanon of our lifetime.

I believe that breaking the cycle of violence starts with personal accountability and responsibility from each one of us. This entices us to make space for reflection and thereby allows us the chance to be more compassionate and understanding towards ourselves and others. We can therefore transform our behaviour and thereby break with patterns of conflict and violence based on fear and anger that may have been handed down unwittingly to us over generations. Forgiveness is the most powerful process available to us for getting at the root causes of these destructive emotions without repressing or forgetting them. It is not an easy path but the cycle can be broken.

The cycle itself starts inside each of us. But it extends itself naturally to groups and can take on a political dimension. The psychological definitions used to explain behaviour within the self can also be extended to explain the actions and reactions between groups. Example: A father bullies his child; the child bullies himself and the weakest one nearest to him. A group acts in the same way. Therefore addressing the psychology of the self also affects the actions of the group.

As we begin to address our own cycle of fear, anger and guilt, we also create a new momentum of transformation around ourselves, in the lives we touch and within our group or community. We can build on this momentum to create new avenues that help us to reinforce and accelerate the process of healing and through that to break the cycles of violence. Each one of us is therefore a vital part of the whole. We are all responsible as individuals in creating a new and viable and peaceful Lebanon.

Forgiveness is an expression of tolerance and love. It is the subordination of hatred and vengeance. Forgiveness is, above all, a human necessity and a means to live. Without forgiveness friendships end, love terminates, and eventually the beauty of life ceases to refine our senses. Without forgiveness no one will ever learn from a mistake or bad luck but will be blinded by retaliation and killed by pride.⁴⁹

Young medical student at the American University of Beirut 1998

FOOTNOTES

¹ Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger, *The Ancestor Syndrome*, Appendix 8, Routledge, 1998. (Originally published in French as *Aie Mes Aieux!* in 1993).

² 'Beyond the brain': A term used by the Scientific and Medical Network for an annual series of conferences exploring the frontiers of applied spirituality and consciousness research. It refers to what can be traditionally called a 'mystical' experience or one which is not derived from rational thought alone. It is called 'beyond the brain' because it is a state where the feeling of consciousness is powerful yet beyond any linguistic articulation derived from the human brain. The Scientific and Medical Network is an international group based in the UK and consists mainly of qualified scientists, doctors, engineers, psychologists, philosophers, therapists and other professionals. The conferences are supported by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the British Psychological Society.

³ Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger, *The Ancestor Syndrome*, p.28, 1998.

⁴ During a lecture in Cologne, September 15 2006.

⁵ Conversation with Michael Henderson, April 2006. (Author of *The Forgiveness Factor*, Grosvenor Books USA, 1996; and *Forgiveness: Breaking the Chains of Hate*, Arnica Publishing 2003).

⁶ Story recounted by Charlotte Hayani of Agha Khan University at the Museum of World Religions Meeting, 22 Jan. 2007

⁷ Jung, C.G., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p.233-244, Pantheon, New York, 1963.

⁸ Personal communication from Roger Woolger PhD., Jungian Analyst, June 2006.

⁹ Jung, C.G., *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Routledge, 1991.

¹⁰ Some, M., *Of Water and the Spirit*, p.9-10, Penguin, 2005.

¹¹ Dr Wolf Reik, based at the Babraham Institute, and his team published the report in *The Journal of Biological Chemistry* 2004, www.jbc.org. It establishes Epigenetics and proposes a control system of 'switches' that turn genes on or off – and suggests that things people experience, like nutrition and stress, can control these switches and cause heritable effects in humans.

¹² Wiggins, D., *Identity and Spatio-Temporal Continuity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1967; Olson, E., *The Human Animal: Personal Identity Without Psychology*, Oxford University Press 1997; Thomas Nagel, 'Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness', *Synthese* 22: 396-413, 1971 and reprinted in Perry 1975 and in Nagel, *Mortal Questions*, Cambridge University Press 1979.

¹³ Mackie, D., 'Personal Identity and Dead People', *Philosophical Studies* 95: p.219-242, 1999.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/tvradio/programmes/horizon/ghostgenes.shtml>

¹⁶ See for example:

<http://www.nsf.gov/news/speeches/lane/slsmeft.htm>

¹⁷ Conversation with Madie Gustafson, lawyer, September 2004.

¹⁸ All this presupposes, in the words of Sartre that as individuals we need to choose the Fundamental Choice of *life*, of a world free from conflict and must achieve it through a state of authenticity. In other words, we are more than the sum of our inheritance, memories and experiences. Furthermore, we are transcendent beings capable of change even in the face of pernicious influences that might seem

irreversible. Knowing that we can break free of even the heaviest weight of behavioural predisposition can lead to a certain freedom to act. In the case for breaking the cycle of violence, that action needs to work through forgiveness. Otherwise, we are assuaged only for a short while from the boulder of predisposition.

¹⁹ Interview with Neuropsychiatrist Boris Cyrulnik, *Humanities*, No 45 December 2001.

²⁰ 'Brain Gym' refers to a series of mental exercises developed by Dr. Paul Dennison and Gail E. Dennison. It develops the brain's neural pathways the way nature does, through movements.

²¹ See Levy, P., *Shadow Projection: The Fuel of War*, 2006.

²² For example, Nick Yarris, a prisoner on death row after 22 years was vilified for a crime for which he was proved innocent by DNA testing in 2004. When asked if he felt revengeful, he answered "what's the point in leaving hell if you take it with you". (Michael Buerk BBC radio 4 26-9-06).

²³ Conversation with Samir Khalaf, June 2006.

²⁴ There are also many people and groups working on the power of forgiveness: a few of the ones I know personally are: Dr. Fred Luskin at Stanford, Dr. Enright at University of Wisconsin-Madison, The Templeton Foundation, Harvard Medical School, The Scientific and Medical Network, Brandon Bays 'Journey' work, Chuck Spezzano's Psychology of Vision, The Course in Miracles Network, Initiatives for Change, Carolyn Myss, Marianne Williamson, Deepak Chopra, Jampolsky Dr. Roger Woolger, and Thich Nhat Hanh. There are many other authors on forgiveness who include techniques that have been tested and proven to touch all areas of an individual's life and health.

²⁵ Van der Post, L., *The Night of the New Moon*, Hogarth, 1970. 'The Night of the New Moon' is August 6, 1945, the end of the day on which the world's first atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. At that time Laurens van der Post was in a Japanese prison camp in Java. For him and for the thousands of prisoners in the hands of the Japanese in South-East Asia, the bombing of Hiroshima was not the remote and localised act of war that distance would suggest, but an event which had a direct and profound influence on their fate. In his account of their ordeal, Laurens van der Post tells a story that goes beyond the confines of their captivity into the whole human tragedy of Hiroshima and its significance for the history of our time.

²⁶ Hewitt E. and Wheeler S., *Counselling in higher education: the experience of lone counsellors*, p.1, January 2004.

²⁷ Enright R.D. and Coyle C.T. Researching the process model of forgiveness within psychological interventions, *Dimensions of Forgiveness*, Worthington E.L. (ed.) Templeton Foundation Press. Pennsylvania, p.140, 1998.

²⁸ North J. "Wrongdoing and Forgiveness", *Philosophy*, 62, p. 499–568, 1987.

²⁹ Enright R.D., Gassin E.A. and Wu C. Forgiveness: a developmental view, *Journal of Moral Education*, 21, p.99–114, 1992.

³⁰ McCullough M.E., "Forgiveness: who does it and how do they do it?", *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10, p.194–197, 2001.

³¹ Smede, L.B., *The Art of Forgiving*, Ballantine Books/Random House, April 1996.

³² As recounted by Michael Henderson in *Forgiveness: Breaking the Chains of Hate*, preface XVIII, Arnica Publishing 2003.

- ³³ Elsworthy S. and Rifkind G., *Making Terrorism History*, p 90, Rider, London, 2006.
- ³⁴ Tutu D. *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Rider & Co. 2000.
- ³⁵ Hewitt E. and Wheeler S., *Counselling in higher education: the experience of lone counsellors*, p. 1, January 2004.
- ³⁶ McCullough M.E. and Worthington E.L., "Promoting forgiveness: a comparison of two brief psycho education group interventions with a waiting-list control", *Counselling and Values*, 40, p.55–68, 1995.
- ³⁷ Al-Mabuk R., Enright R.D. and Cardis P. "Forgiveness education with parentally love-deprived college students", *Journal of Moral Education*, 24, p.427–444, 1995.
- ³⁸ Coyle C.T. and Enright R.D., "Forgiveness intervention with post-abortion men", *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 65, p.1042–1046, 1997.
- ³⁹ Hebel J.H. and Enright R.D., "Forgiveness as a psychotherapeutic goal with elderly females", *Psychotherapy*, 30, p.658–667, 1993.
- ⁴⁰ Freeman S.R. and Enright R.D., "Forgiveness as an intervention goal with incest survivors", *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 64, p. 983–992, 1996.
- ⁴¹ Murray R.J., "The therapeutic use of forgiveness in healing intergenerational pain", *Counselling and Values*, 46, p.188–198. 2002.
- ⁴² West W., "Issues relating to the use of forgiveness in counselling and psychotherapy", *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 29, p.415–423, 2001.
- ⁴³ Examples of such research papers are: "Effects of group forgiveness intervention on perceived stress, state and trait anger, self reported health, symptoms of stress and forgiveness" F. Luskin, C. Thoresen, A. Harris, S. Standard, S. Benisovich, J. Bruning and S. Evans 2001; "The art of forgiveness" F. Luskin 2001; "Forgiveness, physical health and disease: what's the relationship"? C. Thoresen, A. Harris and F. Luskin 2000; "Science and forgiveness interventions: reflections and recommendations" C. Thoresen, F. Luskin and A. Harris 1998.
- ⁴⁴ Will Ross BBC Uganda 25 Oct. 2004.
- ⁴⁵ Alexandra Asseily has developed a simple way in which individuals and groups can personally contribute to the peace in the World. Copies of the process can be obtained from the Centre for Lebanese Studies. An example of this is attached in the Appendix.
- ⁴⁶ See chapter 8 in this book.
- ⁴⁷ A team led by Dr. Deborah Yurgelun-Todd at Harvard's McLean Hospital has been using MRI scans to follow development of teen brains (National Institute of Mental Health: "Teenage Brain: A Work in Progress", 2001; and "Inside the Teenage Brain", PBS 2002. "In many ways, it's the most tumultuous time of brain development since coming out of the womb" says Dr. Jay Giedd at the National Institute of Mental Health, 2002.
- ⁴⁸ The Garden of Forgiveness (Hadiquat as Samah) is presently being built by Sollidere in the Beirut Central District, between three mosques and 3 cathedrals, and with 3,000 years of archaeological remains within it. The Garden was initiated by Alexandra Asseily in 1997 and designed by Gustafson Porter. It is due to be completed in 2008. The design has been shown in the MoMA, New York and elsewhere and the idea of a Garden of Forgiveness, is now sprouting in other places around the World.
- ⁴⁹ Jamal Kobeissi, Beirut, Lebanon. May 1998.

APPENDIX

WHAT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD?

Steps towards a Peace Process

To encourage peace, harmony, and understanding between peoples regardless of their ethnic origin or religion

The following five steps are for all who desire to develop a greater awareness of peace in their own life and acquire more skills to apply around them. They can be used for all three stages of conflict: prevention before conflict, resolution during conflict and reconstruction after conflict.

What is normal is the ebb and flow of tensions that form part of a healthy interaction among the life forces which influence us in this World. Conflict **need not be the norm, but the exception**. When tensions rise high, conflicts can erupt and we often blame others for our grievances instead of taking responsibility for the part which we may have played in fuelling the tensions.

These five steps can be experienced individually **by anyone**, with ample time to explore and share their experiences and emotions with others in this exercise. The practice of open communication, which includes compassionate listening among individuals and **actively facilitating group dynamics, is helpful to the process**.

This peace process encourages a general spiritual awakening and awareness of our divine inner voice.

Step 1 – Taking responsibility

The first step towards a peace process is to take responsibility for one's own part in any conflict/imbalance/tension/grievance/problem with courage, honesty, and humility, even if one does not feel personally involved in conflict.

Step 2 – Asking and Reflecting

The second step is to ask a number of questions, examples of which are found on the following pages of this leaflet.

A few guidelines about the Asking and Reflecting process:

- Sit or stand quietly, relaxing for 15 – 20 minutes. Allow thoughts to come and go to clear the mind of daily events and to become quiet.
- Ask each question internally and wait patiently – the reply may come in a variety of ways: a picture, a series of pictures, words in the head, words written on an internal screen, a feeling, thoughts, and a combination of all or some of these responses.
- Reflect for a few moments on what has been received and get an inner understanding.
- Pause, relax and clear your mind, before asking the next question

Step 3 – Forgiving

The third step is to understand the power of forgiveness. By allowing for forgiveness of oneself and others, including our ancestors, we can let go of guilt, shame and fear. We then no longer need to uphold the same grievances from one generation

to another. As we forgive others, we forgive ourselves and vice versa. (Many of us resist forgiveness because of the feeling, conscious or unconscious, that in so doing we are letting a significant 'other' off the hook and/or betraying our obligations to ancestors if we let go of their negative beliefs and grievances. This resistance blocks us from fully expressing our giftedness.) *Asking for forgiveness can be done at any time in this peace process.*

Step 4 – Releasing

The fourth step is to release within ourselves all obstacles that prevent each one of us from promoting peace in us and around us at this time. *Asking for release can be done at any time in this peace process.*

Step 5 – Sharing

The fifth step is to share and experience this peace process with others. Practising this process transforms both us and our environments towards peace.

Peace Asking and Allowing:

At this time...

1. What is peace for me?
2. In what way am I preventing peace in and around me?
3. What is the special gift (**spiritual or physical**) I am not yet fully using to bring peace in me and around me?
4. In what way am I preventing peace in my body?*
5. What is the gift that I am not yet using to bring peace to my body?
6. In what way am I preventing peace with [name of the person/s with whom I have the greatest conflict]?

* *Questions 5 and 6 to be repeated replacing the word 'body' with other key words, such as: self, family, work, group, nation, world*

Forgiveness Asking and Allowing:

A) At this time...

- What stops me from forgiving myself?
- How do I forgive myself?
- Can faith allow me to forgive myself?
- What is forgiveness when it comes from grace and faith?
- What is my gift for peace when I have fully forgiven myself or allowed myself to be forgiven?

B) At this time...

- Who is the "victim" in me?
- Who is the "persecutor/victimizer" in me? (The "racist", the "enemy", the "terrorist", the "other", etc.)
- Who is the "saviour" in me?
- How can I enable these aspects in myself to be forgiven?
- How can I be enabled to forgive these aspects in others?

C) At this time...

- How may I fully accept the "other" to bring unity to myself?
- What is the potential for world peace when I fully accept the "other"? - How is it when all parts of me are fully in harmony?

Ancestors:

The following questions related to family history, experiences, ancestral beliefs and patterns are essential to understand the deeper roots of present conflicts:

At this time...

- What do I model or inherit from my father's *family line*, which is no longer appropriate?
- What do I model or inherit from my father, which is no longer appropriate?
- What do I model or inherit from my mother's *family line*, which is no longer appropriate?
- What do I model or inherit from my mother, which is no longer appropriate?

Ask for the grace of an inner awareness of forgiveness for ourselves, our parents, and our ancestors.

At this time...

- What is the gift from my father's *family line* which I am not yet fully using in my life at this time?
- What is the gift from my father, which I am not yet fully using in my life at this time?
- What is the gift from my mother's *family line* which I am not yet fully using in my life at this time?
- What is the gift from my mother which I am not yet fully using in my life at this time?

Ask for an inner awareness of gratitude for ourselves, our parents, and our ancestors.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As witness of the pain of the civil war in Lebanon, Alexandra Asseily decided to explore her own responsibility for war and peace and became a psychotherapist.

She is a governor and founder of the Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford, on the Board of the Guerrand-Hermès Peace Foundation and Balamand University and a former member of the Advisory Board of the Centre for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University.

Alexandra's focus is to find ways of resolving conflict – whether in the individual, family, tribe or nation – by helping to understand and then release pain and negative beliefs passed on by previous generations. She initiated The Garden of Forgiveness in central Beirut, and has travelled widely to help various ethnic and social groups to nurture understanding and co-operation.

Alexandra is married to George Asseily and lives between Beirut and London.

ABOUT THE GUERRAND-HERMÈS FOUNDATION FOR PEACE

The Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace believes peace is a human concept that can be achieved when individuals are in touch with their own humanity. Inspired by this belief, the Foundation has, at its core, the aim to enable transformation that allows humanity within each individual to flourish.

The foundation supports Mrs Alexandra Asseily's work in developing understanding of forgiveness as a peace process.

