

GROW

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Courage

ACTIVITY SHEET

It's obvious to most people that it takes courage to start a new business, move to a new city or country, get married, or even go into battle. But it may also take courage to engage the smaller things in life, for example, speaking up for oneself, asking for help, looking for work, or holding on to hope. It especially takes courage to love, forgive or befriend others again following hurt, disappointment or mistreatment. Courage is the final character-strength found possessed by those who GROW through difficult circumstances



PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you:

- (a) take off your emotional armour and lower your defences
- (b) understand the importance of reconciling your past so as to get on with your future
- (c) appreciate the link between courage and vulnerability (in learning to love again)

Emotional Armour

Soldiers in battle wear armour to protect against the dangers of conflict. However, once the battle is over, and the soldier has left the battlefield, it doesn't make much sense for them to continue walking around with their armour strapped on. In the same way, if you've gone through difficult times, perhaps you've put on some emotionally defensive armour to protect yourself from being hurt again. However, unless you learn to lower your defences, emotional armour will get in the way of life and start to weigh you down.



DEFENSIVE SHEILD

People use mental or emotional shields to protect themselves from being hurt again. This manifests as mistrust of others and withdrawal from people



COUNTER-ATTACK WEAPON

People use mental or emotional weapons to attack others when they feel under threat. This manifests as anger, bitterness and being unfairly critical of people



SURRENDER

People give up and surrender to their circumstances when they feel hopeless. This manifests as self-blame, pessimistic future outlook and helplessness

WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE UNDER ATTACK OR BEING THREATENED, IT IS NORMAL TO WANT TO PROTECT AND DEFEND YOURSELF WITH MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL ARMOUR. HOWEVER, ONCE THE BATTLE IS OVER, PROTECTIVE ARMOUR IS NO LONGER USEFUL. AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF GROWING THROUGH DIFFICULTY IS HAVING THE COURAGE TO LOWER YOUR DEFENCES AND LEARN TO TRUST AGAIN.

Lowering Your Defences

One of the most effective ways of transitioning from victimhood into victory is to develop servant leadership qualities. By taking the focus off yourself and working together to bring blessing, value and benefit to others, you fast-track the development of courage and confidence. 'Care and kindness' is the key that frees you from a toxic victim-mindset.



Using the following list of Defensive Shields, Counter-attack Weapons and Surrender, identify how many protective pieces of armour you are still wearing?

SHIELDS	✓	WEAPONS	✓	SURRENDER	✓
Not letting people get close to you		Being angry towards people		Failing to change your circumstance	
Refusing to trust people		Being critical of other people		Blaming self/others for what's happened	
Withdrawing from people		Not forgiving those who have hurt you		Believing nothing will change; losing hope	
Not accepting help from others		Expecting the worst of people		Having a negative outlook on life	
Being constantly worried		Thinking of retaliation/ revenge		Embracing your 'victimhood'	

The thought of taking off your mental or emotional armour and letting down your defences may seem daunting. However, doing so takes a weight off your shoulders and brings freedom.

Q: What is the impact of keeping your mental or emotional armour on, even when the battle is over?

HINT: How does it affect yourself and those you are in relationship with

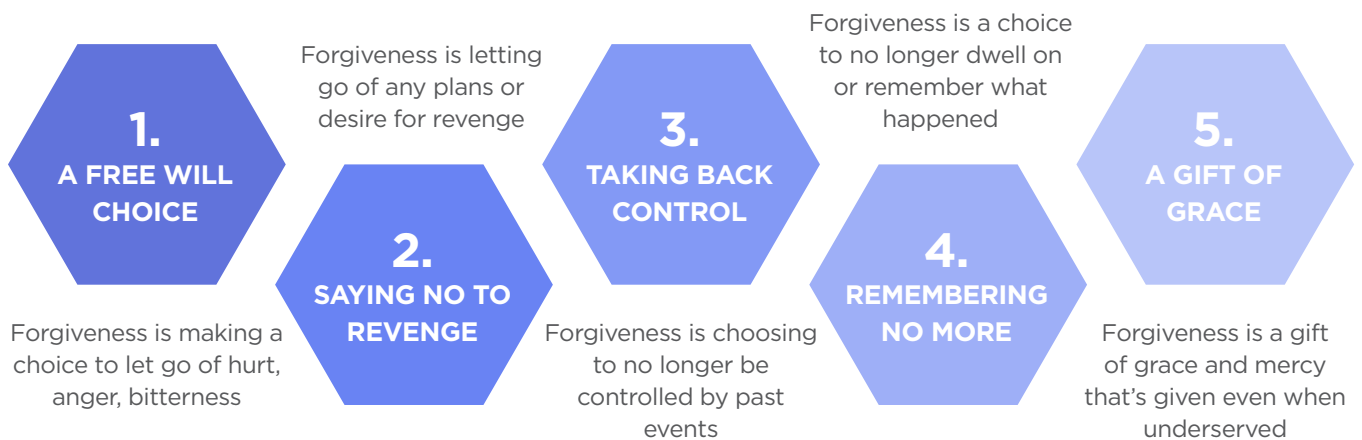
Q: What would be the impact of taking your mental or emotional armour off and letting your defences down?

HINT: How would it affect yourself and those you're in relationship with

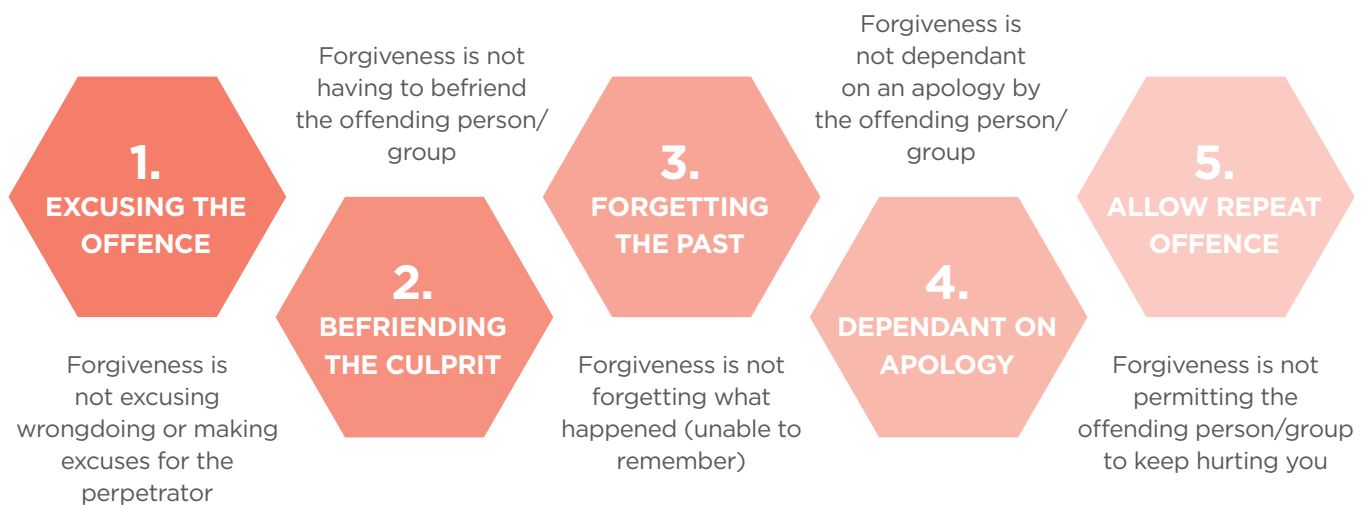
Reconciling Your Past


When someone has hurt or betrayed you (or those you love), forgiveness is typically the last thing your human nature will want to pursue. However, when you don't forgive, you run the risk of becoming bitter, angry, resentful and untrusting. Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the chains of emotional bondage that would otherwise prevent you from moving forward. Forgiveness requires you to take off your protective armour, lower your defences and allow yourself to feel vulnerable once again. Therefore, forgiveness takes great courage.

FORGIVENESS IS:



FORGIVENESS IS NOT:





**There is a
difference between
holding someone
accountable for their
actions (justice)
and holding on to
negative emotions
(unforgiveness).**

**BY UNDERSTANDING THIS
DIFFERENCE, YOU'RE ABLE TO
RECONCILE YOUR PAST AND GET
ON WITH YOUR FUTURE.**

The Antidote to Poison

When someone has wronged you, the hurt, pain and bitterness you desire to hold onto is like poison that actively serves to destroy. Forgiveness is the antidote that neutralises the poison and saves us. However, the taste of drinking the antidote (forgiving someone who doesn't deserve it) is very unpleasant, making us want to resist at all costs. But if you truly understand the importance, power and liberating effect of forgiveness, irrespective of the taste, you'll want to drink it without delay.



How well do you understand forgiveness?

Q: What does the following statement mean?

“I don't forgive because they're honourable; I forgive because I'm honourable.”

ANSWER IDEAS: Forgiveness reveals the courage and character of the gift giver. If you've ever asked God to forgive you, He didn't extend grace and mercy because of how good you were, rather He forgives because of how good and merciful He is. Rather than the goodness of the 'recipient', forgiveness reveals the goodness of the 'gift giver'. When we forgive others (who've been 'dishonourable'), we declare who we are ('honourable').

Q: If an offending party deserve punishment, why should they be forgiven if they don't deserve it?

ANSWER IDEAS: If you seek justice on your own (fuelled by hurt, pain and bitterness), justice breaks down and becomes revenge. Retaliating in anger requires you to lower your standards and become like the perpetrator. When you wish someone would 'go to hell', you send yourself there at the same time. Your role is simply to let go and move on; leaving room for justice to be dispensed by the appropriate authority.

Q: How is it possible to forgive someone who hasn't apologised, who may not be sorry/remorseful, or who may not even be alive anymore?

ANSWER IDEAS: The practical application of forgiveness has little to do with the offending party - and everything to do with the person who is extending the gift. The practical outworking of forgiveness is simply letting go of your hurt, pain, bitterness and resentment; making a daily conscious choice to no longer dwell on what transpired; wishing them well (no longer wanting evil to befall them) and moving on with your life.

WHEN YOU COME TO
UNDERSTAND WHAT
PRACTICAL FORGIVENESS
REALLY MEANS, YOU'LL
DISCOVER...

**forgiveness
has more to do
with the 'gift
giver' than it has
to do with the
'recipient'
of forgiveness.**

Forgiveness is only a stone's throw away



PRACTICAL ACTIVITY:

Find a stone that represents your hardship. For example, you may choose a large rock to represent big hurts, or a jagged rock representing sharp pain. The stone you hold in your hand represents the pain that you have endured, and the hurts that you've been holding on to. It may represent a person/group who has wronged you or a situation which has bred bitterness and resentment in your heart. As you hold that stone in your hand, squeeze and feel the stone's characteristics (e.g. size or sharpness) that represents your hurt and pain. Head out into an open space (e.g. a field) or to the edge of a drop off (e.g. cliff, lake or river). Remember, it takes courage to lower your defences and let go of your bitterness and resentment. When you are ready, throw this stone of hurt and pain as far away as you can – never to be picked up again.

Q: Who have you chosen to forgive today?

Q: How did it feel to throw the stone of hurt and pain away?

Q: What can you do to ensure you don't go pick up your hurt/pain/bitterness again?

Q: What can you do if your hurt and pain unintentionally resurfaces in the future?

IT'S NOT UNTIL YOU EXTEND THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS THAT YOU DISCOVER THE GIFT IS REALLY INTENDED FOR YOU.

Courageous Love

Learning to love again requires courage. You cannot have courage without vulnerability. When you make the choice to love, you are taking a risk that you may get disappointed or hurt once again. When it comes to courageous love, there are three different types of vulnerability.

Having the courage to love, despite the risks, is the 'highest good' human beings are capable of and our greatest expression of freedom.

We are vulnerable in romantic love when we love someone who may, or may not, love us back.

1

We are vulnerable when we love friends and family who may betray our trust or abandon us.

2

We are vulnerable when we love and forgive people who have hurt us, knowing we may get hurt again.

3

COURAGEOUS LOVE IS:

- Exercising the freedom to extend love, both to those who are easy and difficult to love
- An opportunity to grow and mature (not an obligation)
- An act of service, kindness and care that's fuelled by good intent

Virtue in Action

Courageous love reveals more about the person who is extending it than it does about the person to whom love is being extended. Courageous love means acknowledging the vulnerability we feel, yet choosing to love anyway (e.g., choosing to extend love whether or not it's deserved or likely to be returned).

01 EDIFICATION

Using kind and encouraging words towards friends or family members (highlighting what you love about them or why you value them). This especially requires courage if you do it in a public setting where your words of praise or adoration are witnessed by others.

02 ACTIONS

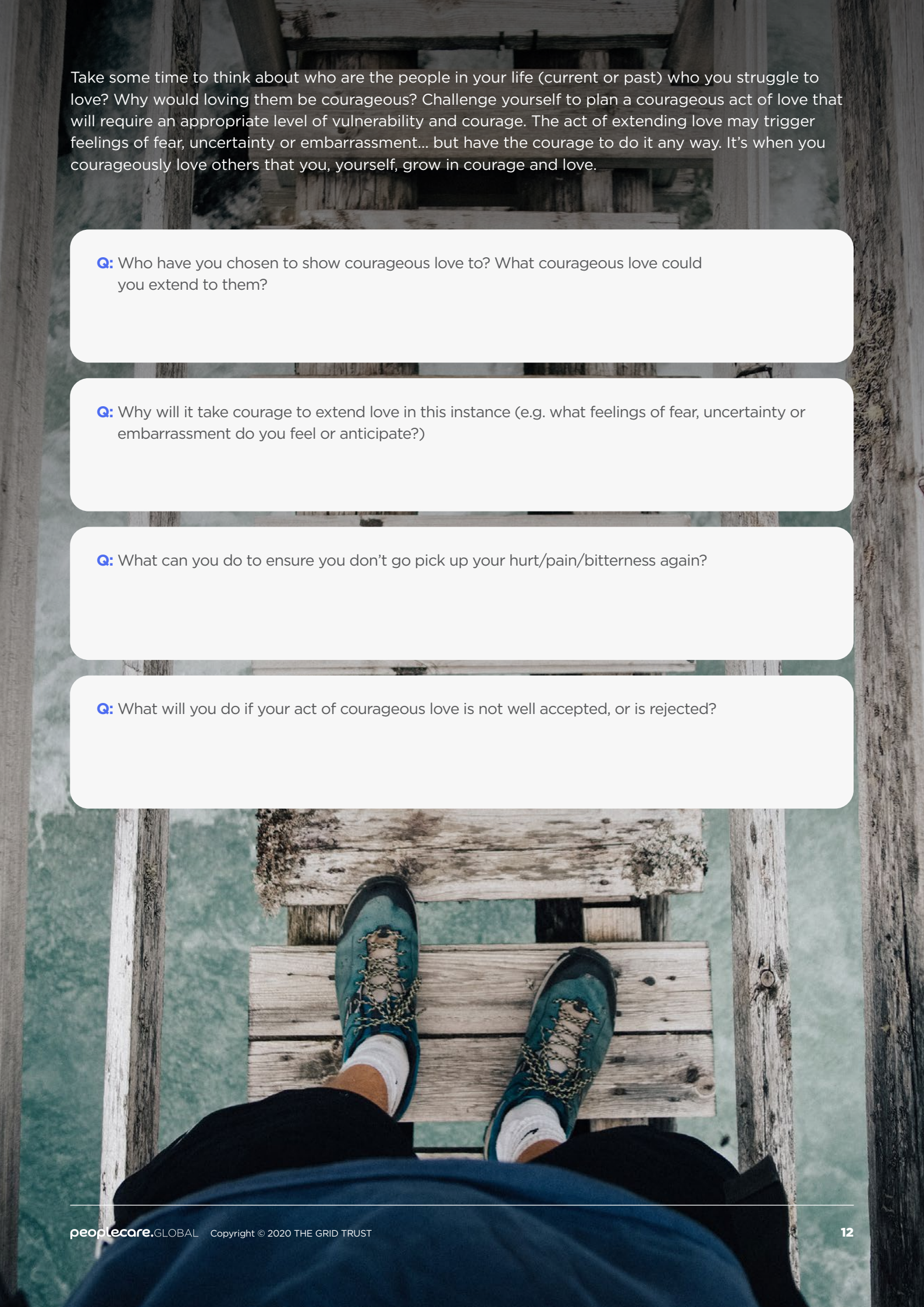
Being generous with your actions (going out of your way to do something kind). This especially requires courage if you're not too familiar with those you're serving and if there's no apparent reason for your care.

03 GRACE

Extending grace and mercy to those who don't deserve it (especially those who have hurt you). Forgiveness is the ultimate expression of courageous love.

LOVING, DESPITE THE RISK, IS WHAT MAKES COURAGEOUS LOVE THE GREATEST OF ALL VIRTUES.





Take some time to think about who are the people in your life (current or past) who you struggle to love? Why would loving them be courageous? Challenge yourself to plan a courageous act of love that will require an appropriate level of vulnerability and courage. The act of extending love may trigger feelings of fear, uncertainty or embarrassment... but have the courage to do it any way. It's when you courageously love others that you, yourself, grow in courage and love.

Q: Who have you chosen to show courageous love to? What courageous love could you extend to them?

Q: Why will it take courage to extend love in this instance (e.g. what feelings of fear, uncertainty or embarrassment do you feel or anticipate?)

Q: What can you do to ensure you don't go pick up your hurt/pain/bitterness again?

Q: What will you do if your act of courageous love is not well accepted, or is rejected?

Review Reflect Reveal

Congratulations on having completed the GROW program. This program was designed to help you effectively deal with setbacks, personal difficulties or tragic circumstances, and develop the character-strengths that facilitate growth. What were the crucial lessons you learnt and the key benefits that you take away?

SESSIONS	What did you learn? How was your life impacted? What did you enjoy most?
SESSION 1 SOWING & GROWING	
SESSION 2 AUTHENTIC HOPE	
SESSION 3 FUTURE OUTLOOK	
SESSION 4 BELIEF & TRUST	
SESSION 5 THANKFULNESS	
SESSION 6 CARE & KINDNESS	
SESSION 6 COURAGE	

Q: What's been your greatest personal benefit from participating in GROW?

Overall, how well do you think you have personally grown?

No progress	A little progress	A lot of progress	I achieved my goal
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Personal Evaluation

If a healthy seed is planted in fertile soil and it receives sunlight, water and nutrients (the right conditions), growth is not just possible, it's inevitable. Personal growth is not reserved for the lucky few, it is available for everyone. Throughout this program, you have considered, developed or embraced core character strengths (namely hope, belief, thankfulness, kindness and courage). Let's now take one final snapshot of how well you're functioning in the various aspects of your life.

MENTAL

The following statements describe your mind's way of thinking. If you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

Positive thinking	OR	Negative thinking
Problem solving	OR	Problem focused
Clear thoughts	OR	Confused thoughts
Creative ideas	OR	Dull & boring ideas
Looking forward (planning the future)	OR	Looking back (remembering the past)

EMOTIONAL

The following statements describe your heart's way of feeling. If you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

Hopeful & optimistic	OR	Hopeless & pessimistic
Feeling happy	OR	Feeling sad
Courage & bravery	OR	Fear & worry
Like myself	OR	Dislike myself
Calm & content	OR	Frustrated & angry

BEHAVIOURAL

The following statements describe your personal actions. If you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

Productive	OR	Unproductive
Peaceful (getting along)	OR	Aggressive (getting into arguments)
Patient	OR	Impatient
Friendly & socially engaging	OR	Unfriendly & socially withdrawn
Taking responsibility	OR	Avoiding responsibility

RELATIONAL

The following statements describe your conduct towards others. If you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

Helpful toward others	OR	Unhelpful towards others
Concerned about others	OR	Concerned about myself
Kind towards others	OR	Unkind towards others
Caring & intimate towards loved ones	OR	Cold & distant towards loved ones
Encouraging of others	OR	Critical of others

SPIRITUAL

The following statements describe your belief in and about a Divine Creator or God. If you don't believe in the existence of God, ignore these descriptions and score yourself five points for this section. However, if you do hold on to a faith and you had to choose one over the other, which description would best describe you over the past week?

My Divine Creator is blessing me	OR	My Divine Creator is not blessing me
Devoted to my Divine Creator	OR	Confused about my Divine Creator
My Divine Creator is pleased with me	OR	My Divine Creator is disappointed with me
Thankful for so many things	OR	Finding it difficult to be thankful
Believing my Divine Creator loves & cares for me	OR	Believing my Divine Creator may have abandoned me

SCORING

Allocate yourself a score of '0' for any selection you made in the left column (positive) and allocate a score of '1' for any selection you made in the right column (negative). Add up all your 1's and record the scores below.

MENTAL	=	/5
EMOTIONAL	=	/5
BEHAVIOURAL	=	/5
RELATIONAL	=	/5
SPIRITUAL	=	/5
TOTAL SCORE	=	/25



NOTE: BE ENCOURAGED Compare your scores with those obtained in session 1. If you receive a lower score in this evaluation compared to your first, congratulations... this suggests you have grown considerably. However, if you only observe marginal improvement, no improvement at all (perhaps even having a higher score in the end than when you started), be encouraged. Remember, some seeds grow fast, others take longer to germinate and grow. Even if growth seems slow, keep in mind that sometimes the slowest seeds to sprout can end up becoming the biggest trees in the garden. Keep watering. With continued application of the skills learnt in the GROW program, there remains potential for great success.