Forgiveness in a context of mental health

‘I’ll never forgive myself/the other’
as seen from a relational psychodynamic approach

EC RSH18 Coventry University Hanneke Muthert j.k.muthert@rug.nl
Forgiveness in a context of mental health

‘I will never forgive myself.’
Sverre Lunde Pedersen, Amsterdam, 11-3-2018
Forgiveness in a context of mental health
Forgiveness in a context of mental health
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Kwennie Cheng, NRC, 11-05-2018
Forgiveness in a context of mental health

1) How do we use forgiving nowadays?

2) How do specific contexts influence these conceptualizations?

3) How do 1) and 2) interact with a psychodynamic view on the psychological function of forgiveness?
Forgiveness in a context of mental health: content

1) *Not forgiving* as seen by Rebecca and Jill in their contexts (clinical case stories)

2) The capability for mourning & forgiving in Ogden’s *modes of being*

3) Modes of being $\leftrightarrow$ Rebecca & Jill
Forgiveness in a context of mental health:
1. Rebecca

R: He [psychologist] makes me responsible to change and the offenders remain unpunished.

SC: *What does that mean to you spiritually?*

R: That injustice can go on forever. Victims should undergo therapy to endure this injustice.

SC: *What do you believe?*

R: Injustice needs to be addressed. And victims need a helping hand. I am not the only one bullied repeatedly just because I am not able to meet the norms some idiots consider appropriate!
Forgiveness in a context of mental health:

1. Rebecca

**SC:** A human child should not be bullied.

**R:** Indeed!

**SC:** It happened to you and it never should have happened.

**R:** That’s right.

**SC:** It needs to remain because it should not have happened. Like a skandalon. [a stumbling block]

(...)
Forgiveness in a context of mental health:
1. Rebecca

R: That’s exactly why I am so angry because those Godforsaken caregivers won’t let the cross upright.

   SC: would you let the cross standing upright the rest of your life?

R: [followed by a firmly] Yes!

   SC: I’ll respect that.

Source: KSGV 2-80 pp.74-89
Forgiveness in a context of mental health:

1. Jill

@ Esther Veerman
Forgiveness in a context of mental health: 1. Rebecca & Jill on forgiveness in their context

Rebecca:
 Forgiving them would mean that I have to give up on justice.
 Caregivers don’t understand.

Jill:
 Forgiving myself or him would deny and destruct my own life.
 Others don’t see nor hear me
 in working with disabled children I feel alive
Forgiveness in a context of mental health:

2. Thomas Ogden’s Modes of being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mode 1</th>
<th>Mode 2</th>
<th>Mode 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Self image’</td>
<td>No dominant ‘self’</td>
<td>‘Self’ as object</td>
<td>‘Self’ as subject and object</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ordering principal</td>
<td>Sensorial sensations</td>
<td>Partial objects (Splitting)</td>
<td>Whole objects (Repression)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic fear</td>
<td>‘Deflation’</td>
<td>Destruction of the good</td>
<td>Being left alone/abandoned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbolization</td>
<td>Pre-symbolic ‘It is’</td>
<td>Symbolic equivalence ‘It is what it is’</td>
<td>Using symbols ‘It is as if ...’</td>
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Forgiveness in a context of mental health:
2. Modes of being + Darian Leader

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| How can the public domain support: | Social attention | (Symbolic) witnesses | Recognition subjective mourning processes & creative examples |
Forgiveness in a context of mental health:
3. Rebecca, Jill & the Modes of being

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