

FORGIVENESS:

UNDERSTANDING THE FIVE BASIC COMPONENTS

To help children understand the broader concept of forgiveness, teachers in the early grades use the International Forgiveness Institute's forgiveness education curriculum guides to focus on the five basic components involved in forgiving another person: the ideas of inherent worth, moral love, kindness, respect, and generosity.

- 1. Inherent Worth.** This is the important idea that all people have deep worth and this is because they are people, members of the human family. This deep worth cannot be earned nor taken away. It is an essential part of each person. Within the context of forgiveness, it is akin to the idea that we are to love the offender, but dislike the offense. As children learn that all people have deep worth (even following injustice), they will be laying an important foundation for forgiving.
- 2. Moral Love.** When we morally love someone, we love him or her unconditionally, despite his or her flaws. Certainly, someone who morally loves another can ask fairness of him or her. Yet, the one who morally loves has the other person's best interest at heart. Moral love is not a selfish or self-centered love. It has that lavish notion of love that Joseph showed to his brothers. Moral love underlies true forgiveness.
- 3. Kindness.** When people are kind, they tend to be warm-hearted, concerned about the other person, and humane. People who practice kindness are laying the foundation for forgiving. Some people talk about the "change of heart" that occurs when someone forgives. The stony heart becomes the softened heart.
- 4. Respect.** When someone shows respect, he or she regards the other person highly. Some people think that respect must be earned. We believe, following the great philosopher Immanuel Kant, that people possess intrinsic value to such a degree that we should respect all persons. We respect not because of what people do, but rather because of who they are. As children practice respecting all people, they make forgiveness easier in the future.
- 5. Generosity.** To be generous is to give abundantly. It is a gift-giving that surprises and delights the recipient. If children can learn to be generous, they will be in a better position to understand what it means to give a gift of forgiveness to someone who hurts them.