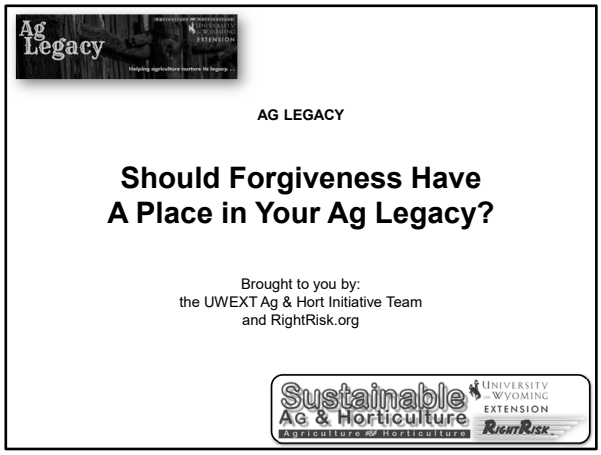


Welcome to another AG LEGACY recording.

AG LEGACY is a series of presentations and other online materials intended to assist rural families
in creating their own legacy by beginning the thought process and opening the lines of communication.

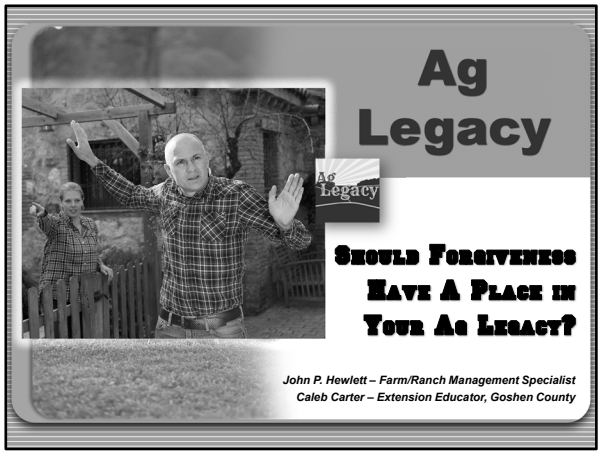
Today's recording will address the question: Should Forgiveness Have A Place in Your Ag Legacy?

Today's Speaker

John P. Hewlett
Ranch/Farm Management Specialist,
Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics,
University of Wyoming

I'm John Hewlett, a Ranch and Farm Management Specialist in the Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics at the University of Wyoming

I will be your speaker for today's AG LEGACY presentation.

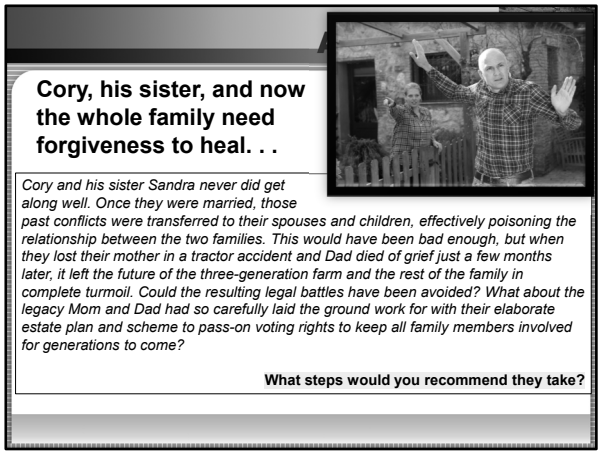


Most farm families feel like they have taken one or two steps toward the transfer of the farm or ranch to the next generation. Often, the problem is that only the founding generation has been involved in those steps.

Successful transitions usually involve both generations in on-going conversations. Sometimes barriers and challenges arise that either make conversations around this topic difficult, or perhaps even impossible.

In such cases, the real challenge is that most people do not have a good idea of what alternatives there might be or even where to turn.

Let’s take a deeper look.



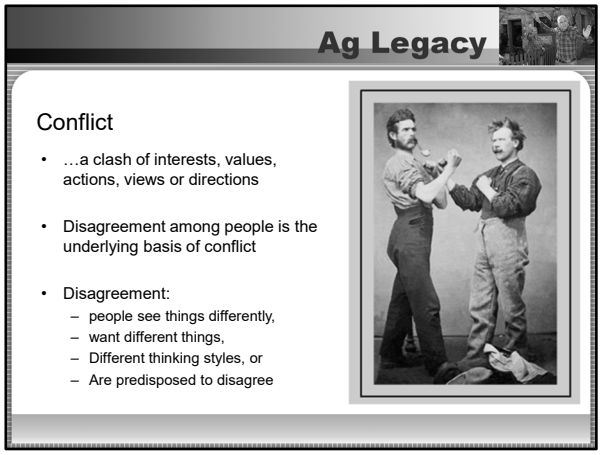
Cory, his sister, and now the whole family need forgiveness to heal. . .

Cory and his sister Sandra never did get along well. Once they were married, those past conflicts were transferred to their spouses and children, effectively poisoning the relationship between the two families.

This would have been bad enough, but when they lost their mother in a tractor accident and Dad died of grief just a few months later, it left the future of the three-generation farm and the rest of the family in complete turmoil.

The question is, "Could the resulting legal battles have been avoided?" What about the legacy Mom and Dad had so carefully laid the ground work for with their elaborate estate plan and scheme to pass-on voting rights to keep all family members involved for generations to come? Is there another way?

What steps would you recommend they take?



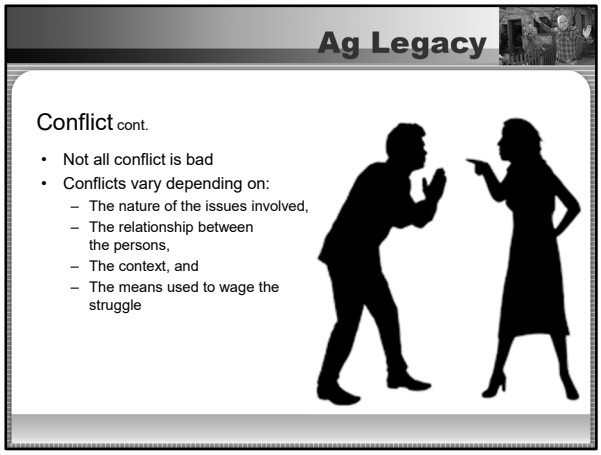
Conflict is a fact of family life. According to the Family Firm Institute, 20 percent of family businesses report weekly conflict, another 20 percent report monthly conflict, and 42 percent report conflict three to four times per year.

Conflict is a clash of interests, values, actions, views or directions.

Disagreement among people is the underlying basis of conflict.

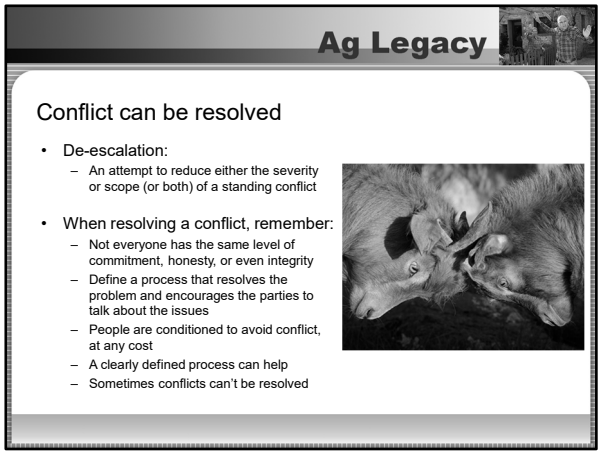
People disagree because they see things differently, want different things, have thinking styles which encourage them to disagree, or are predisposed to disagree.

It is rare to hear someone describe conflict in a positive way; for example, saying “Our family just went through a positive conflict to reach a new, improved level of trust with one another.”



Not all conflicts are destructive. There are many levels to conflict between individuals, whether they are family members or not.

Conflicts vary depending on the nature of the issues involved, the relationship between the persons involved, the context, and the means used to wage the struggle. These elements can all affect the degree to which a conflict will be destructive or constructive.



Conflicts can be defused and even resolved.

De-escalation is an effort to reduce either the severity or scope (or both) of a standing conflict.

When considering the best strategy for resolving a conflict, keep the following points in mind:

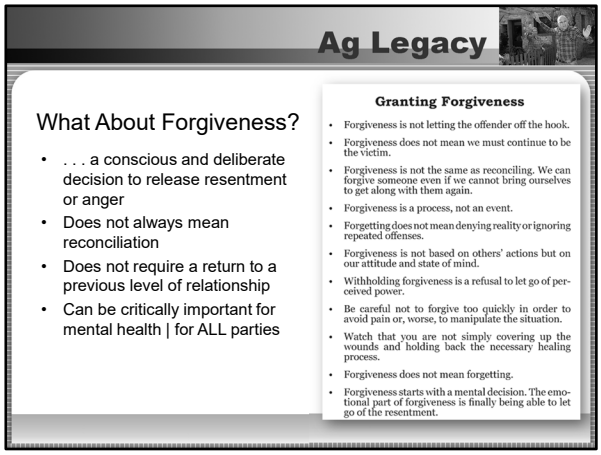
• Not everyone has the same level of commitment, honesty, or even integrity.

• It is important to define a process that resolves the problem and encourages the parties to talk about the issues in a controlled and reasonable way, even if those issues are intensely personal.

• Many people are conditioned to avoid conflict at any cost, that conflict is bad, a failure. Overcoming this tendency to avoid conflict is hard and conflict resolution training is a good first step.

• One of the most important elements of all successful families and family businesses is a clearly defined process for dealing with group and personal conflicts.

• Sometimes conflicts can't be resolved and must simply be respectfully accepted as differences.

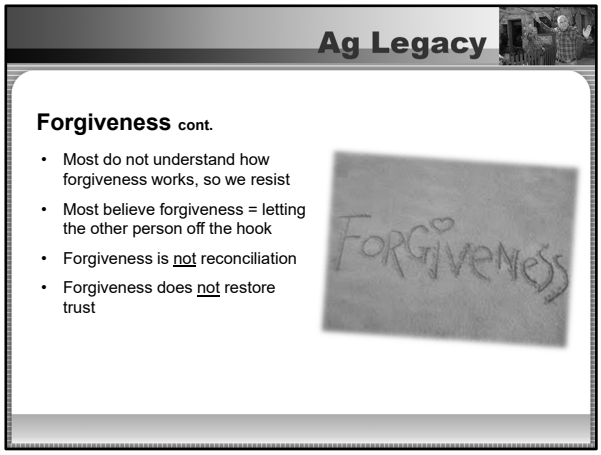


Forgiveness might be defined as the conscious and deliberate decision to release resentment or anger.

Forgiveness doesn't necessarily mean reconciliation.

The person who forgives is not required to return to the same pattern of relationship or accept the same harmful behaviors from another.

In addition, forgiveness is critically important for the mental health of anyone who has been harmed or victimized. It allows people to move forward, rather than holding them back to reexperience a past injustice or injury.



One reason we resist forgiving is that we don't really understand what forgiveness is or how it works.

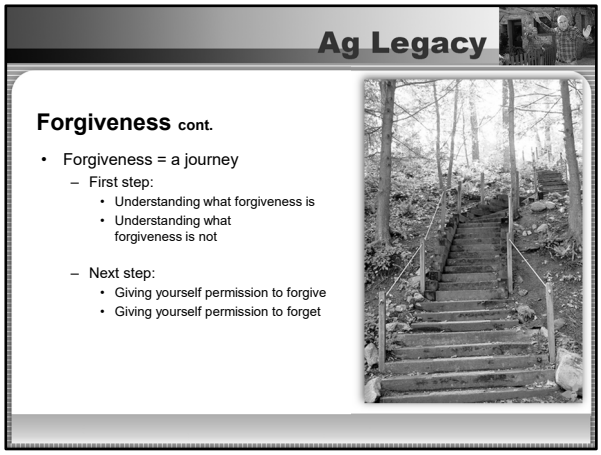
We think we do, but we don't.

Most of us assume that if we forgive others who have offended us, it is the same as letting them off the hook and then they get to go about their merry way, while we unfairly suffer from their actions.

Further, we might also think that we are required to be friendly with them again or to pick up with the old relationship where we left off.

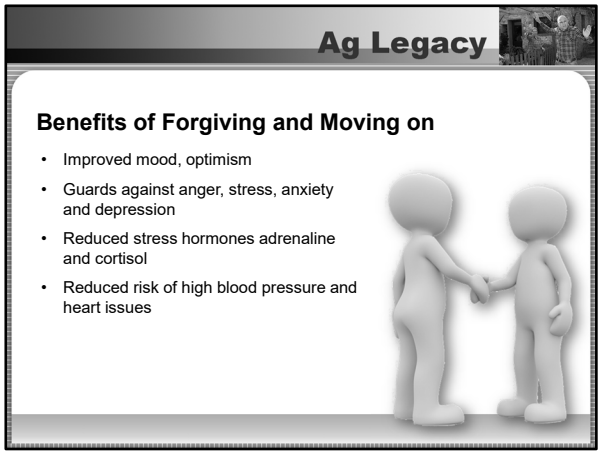
Forgiving does not mean we are expected to continue trusting those who broke trust with us.

Forgiveness may be a step in the direction of reconciling or towards again trusting someone. However, many other steps will normally be required first.



Forgiveness is a journey and the first step is understanding what forgiveness is and what it is not.

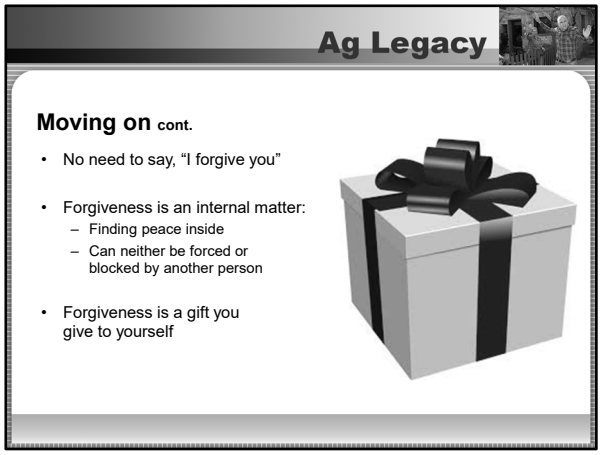
The next step is giving yourself permission to forgive and forget, letting go of the bitterness while always keeping very clearly in mind your rights to healthy boundaries.



Forgiveness has been shown to elevate mood, enhance optimism and guard against anger, stress, anxiety and depression.

Carrying the hurt or anger of an offense leads the body to release stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol.

Eliminating the perpetual flow of those hormones may also explain why forgiveness provides physical health benefits, such as lowering the risk of high blood pressure and heart problems.



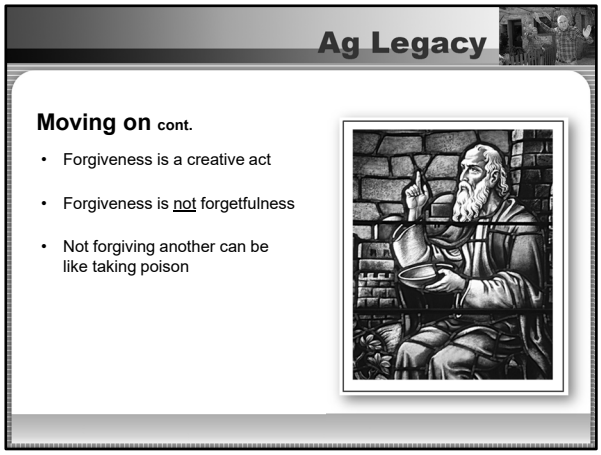
Making a verbal statement "I forgive you" is not required to begin the process that heals the hurt.

It has little or nothing to do with another person because forgiveness is an internal matter.

To forgive another simply means you no longer allow another person's actions or words to cause you resentment, anger or pain.

Forgiveness is the experience of finding peace inside and can neither be compelled nor blocked by another.

Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.



Forgiveness is a creative act that changes us from prisoners of the past to liberated people at peace with our memories.

It is not forgetfulness but does involve accepting the promise that the future can be more than dwelling on memories of past injury.

To not forgive another person is like taking the poison (continuing to suffer for what they did or didn't do to you) and then expecting THEM to die!

All families experience interpersonal conflicts.

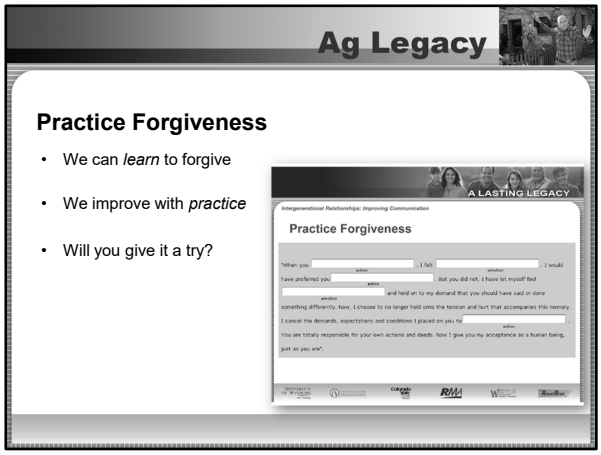
It is not a matter of if, but a matter of when. Anytime you put two or more people together for more than ten minutes, you run the risk of interpersonal conflict.

Many times, conflicts arise over a failure to practice good communication or where communication has broken down.

Everyone involved must communicate effectively to successfully establish a legacy for future generations.

Both the founders and the incoming generation must understand the processes and basic skills that make up human communication, including questioning, listening, explaining and reflecting.

In addition to the verbal aspects, non-verbal communication is also vitally important. Facial expression, posture, orientation and voice tone all add richness to the message and can also be a source of confusion in communication.



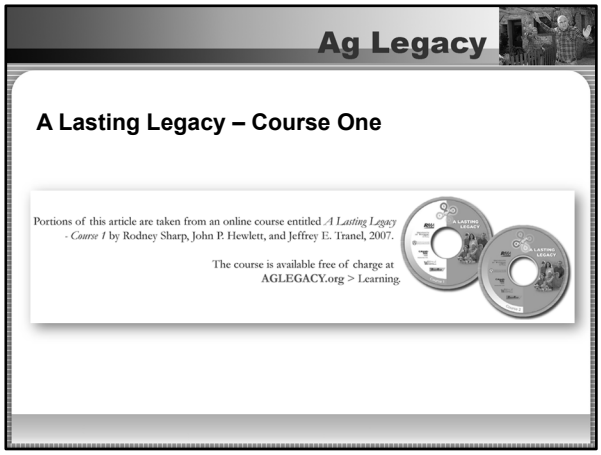
Perhaps even more important, past hurts or conflict can effectively prevent or break the lines of communication.

All too often we hear stories of individuals in a family or entire family units that will no longer communicate or interact with others. Where a break has already occurred, forgiveness may be the only path forward.

Luckily, granting forgiveness is something we can learn to do and we get better at it with practice.

Consider that a person who has offended you in some way is standing in front of you. Imagine speaking the dialog outlined in the figure. Visualize filling in the blanks with words that feel most appropriate to you.

When you are done, you may want to write this down and practice speaking the words out loud.

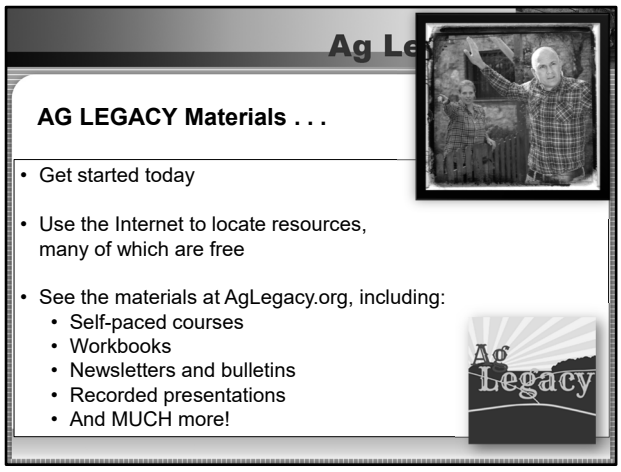


We will all leave a legacy whether we plan to or not.

You might consider forgiveness if the legacy you leave behind is more important to you than making sure that you keep the conflict going to the bitter end.

Portions of this article are taken from an online course entitled A Lasting Legacy - Course 1.

The course is available free of charge at AGLEGACY.org under the Learning tab.



AG LEGACY can help, materials are available. . .

- We recommend you get started making positive steps toward your Legacy today!

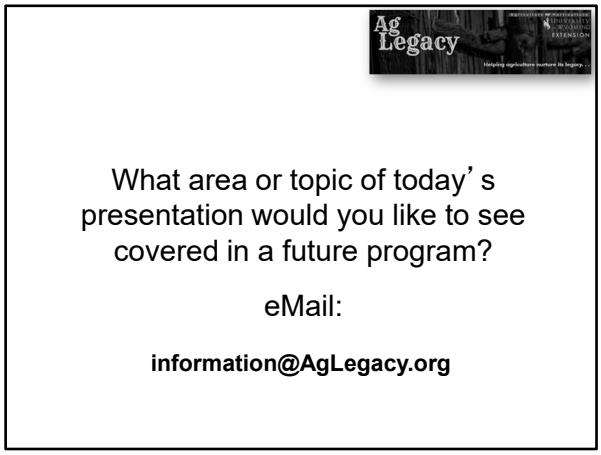
- Use the Internet to locate additional resources if needed | Many are available free of charge

- Also, see the materials at AgLegacy.org, including:
  - Self-paced courses, Workbooks, Newsletters and bulletins, Recorded presentations
  - And MUCH more!

Keep in mind, it is never too late to get started, especially where the individuals involved are interested in resolving differences.

Remember, forgiveness is a gift you give to yourself and your legacy.

Plan to take a step or maybe two in order to get things rolling soon..

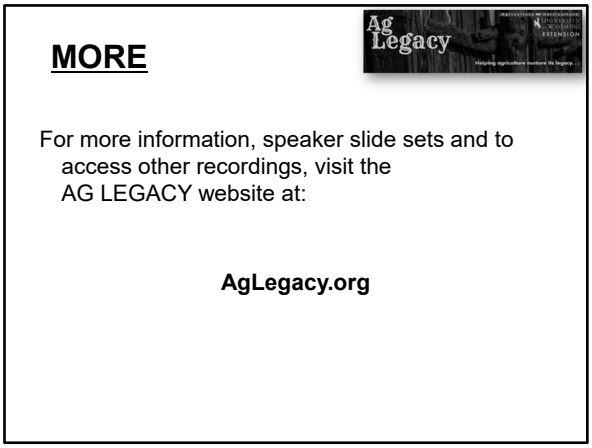


We would like to hear from you about topics or presentations you would like to see offered in the future.

Please consider sending an email to information@AgLegacy.org

OR

Visit AGLEGACY.org for more information



In closing, let me extend my thanks to our AG LEGACY team for making this series possible.

We would also like to thank you, our viewers, for taking time to view this AGLEGACY recording. We sincerely hope that you find today's content of value in your work.

We hope to see you again in one of our upcoming programs. Until then, we offer you our sincerest hope for success in creating an AG LEGACY for yourself and your family.

…..For AG LEGACY… I'm John Hewlett