

Presentation title:

## Forgiveness and self-forgiveness in the process of helping others among former incarcerated people and addicts

**Speaker:** Ety Elisha (The Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Israel)

**Co-author:** Esthi Shachaf-Friedman (Ashkelon Academic College, Israel)

The current presentation focuses on the preliminary findings of an exploratory phenomenological study on the subjective perspectives of former incarcerated people and addicts that are currently involved in peer support roles, referring to them as the "wounded healers". The focus of the study is on their perceptions regarding forgiveness and especially self-forgiveness. Forgiveness to self and others was found as a crucial component in recovery. Past findings demonstrated that the process of being involved in helping others promotes compassion and empathy to self and others. Thus, one might presume that the ability to develop forgiveness is relevant to recovery, may not only promote recovery but is also related to the development of empathy known as relevant to recovery and desistance from criminality. However, as the subject of forgiveness is hardly explored, it is interesting to learn more about their relationship especially in the worlds of 'wounded healers'. Our search sought after themes related to forgiveness and self-forgiveness in narratives produced by 26 in-depth interviews with "wounded healers". We were interested to find whether these themes are found at all and if so, to better map the perception in relation to other topics in the world of the participants. Our preliminary findings show the apparent place of the concept of forgiveness in 'wounded healers' world. Themes indicating a tendency to be more forgiving towards others were voiced, especially to others who harmed them. The reparation of self-image was addressed.