We are told a lot of things about forgiveness from sources such as clergy and religious traditions, articles in popular magazines, and self-help books. Some of this advice may be helpful but much of it is misleading at best. Yet whatever is written or said about forgiveness, there is no question that it is something that people experience in their ordinary lives. Over the years, my colleagues and I have gathered stories about the process people move through and the obstacles they run into as they deal with experiences of being hurt by people who are important to them. In this talk, I will speak about some of the shared themes in these accounts. These stories help us understand why forgiveness is often difficult to arrive at and why it is not something that we can reach by “trying harder.”

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