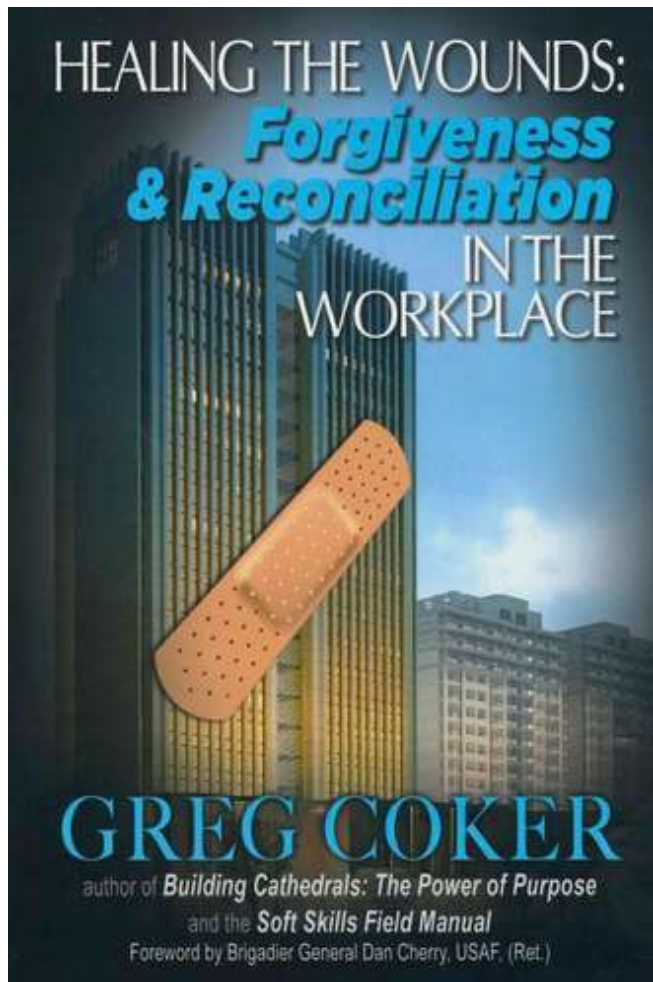


## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES:

### Coker's insightful primer is highly recommended

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*"Healing the Wounds: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Workplace" by Greg Coker. Robert G. Clark, Publisher, 2019. 205 pages, \$29.95.*



"If you have two people in your organization who used to work well together but for whatever reason now they don't, the end result is they're costing your business money, preventing productivity and likely delaying delivery of your products and services to the market," Greg Coker explains near the beginning of "Healing the Wounds: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Workplace," his insightful new primer on a challenge that is all too familiar to many contemporary organizations.

"Additionally, this conflict is thwarting the innovation and creativity needed to compete in today's global economy," he continues. "And don't be fooled that it's just between these two people. Employees, consultants, customers and many others see, feel and are impacted by this tension (especially if the conflict is between two visible leaders in your organization)."

So begins the author's dissection of one of the major disruptors of business and industry. Think about the company or agency where you spend most of your waking hours. How often does conflict occur? More importantly, how often is it allowed to metastasize, inevitably

evolving into a major impediment to achieving the goals and objectives at the heart of your organizational mission?

Well, the good news Coker is here to proclaim is that the damage conflict invariably causes doesn't have to become a major obstacle that could potentially derail your entire enterprise. There is a better way – one that deals with the underlying causes of ongoing conflict and not just the symptoms. In the final analysis, it's all about preserving, augmenting and enhancing relationships.

"Healing the Wounds" consists of nine chapters, each dealing with a different, although interrelated, dimension related to the central theme that serves as the foundation for this self-described "personal, private workbook." Make no mistake, this is not one of those conceptually prescriptive primers that tend to dominate the business section at your local bookstore. Rather, this is a very hands-on, applications-oriented roadmap for achieving results in the proverbial real world. Most chapters conclude by asking the reader to further refine and expand upon the personal action plan that was introduced and initiated at the beginning of the manuscript.

I was particularly impressed that Coker included chapter four, “Spiritually Speaking,” in which he delves into an aspect of conflict that is often avoided altogether or relegated to a footnote referenced only in fleeting. The truth is that all of us are spiritual beings in some sense and many times the encounters we have at work have implications within this realm.

“How does forgiveness and reconciliation benefit everyone in the workplace?” the author asks. “When someone with whom you associate with at work hurts you, puts you through a traumatic and distressing experience (emotionally or physically), it is easy to hold on to rage, resentment and/or thoughts of retaliation. And holding onto those emotions can only lead to possessing an unforgiving attitude, one that has no intentions of ever coming to a place of reconciliation. Such an attitude can only spawn anger and bitterness into all new experiences and into every current and future relationship.”

Guilty as charged (like many readers, I would venture to speculate).

The narrative is infused with numerous activities, exercises and assessments designed to precipitate constructive introspection at a deeper level than comparable efforts. In fact, it is impossible to read “Healing the Wounds” without finding yourself caught up in exactly the kind of self-reflection the author sees as being essential for individual and collective growth.

Moreover, there is an aura of realism in virtually every sentence he writes. Witness the following from “The Best Version of You and Me,” the seventh chapter and one of my personal favorites: “Certain personalities take longer than others to develop lasting relationships. Give it time; don’t give up, in most cases it will be worth it. However, certain people you will never be able to develop a relationship. It’s them, not you. Move on.”

Perhaps like many readers, it took me a while to come to this realization. It was reassuring to know, however, that I was not the sole cause of the failure to make a lasting and mutually beneficial connection to others.

A little later in the same chapter, I was also inspired by this simple yet deceptively profound insight: “For anyone to be successful, it is crucial that there exists within them the desire to be great or at least better than their current state. Without this desire, there would be no motivation or cause for action. Simple wanting or a wish will not produce results, as it is just wishful thinking. What is needed is a deep burning desire for something that will automatically result in actions that will bring results.”

Coker is the founder and chief executive of The Institute for Soft Skills, a full-service leadership development and consulting firm that specializes in customized training focused on organizational and individual effectiveness. His previous books include “Building Cathedrals: The Power of Purpose” and “Soft Skills Field Manual: The Unwritten Rules of Succeeding.”

“Hopefully, I’ve provided some degree of motivation for you to consider forgiveness and reconciliation as a key issue within your organization,” Coker laments near the end of the book. “And, perhaps a key issue for you personally. Bottom line, the majority of those that have been hurt and/or have hurt others are not only open to forgiveness and reconciliation, they’re seeking it!”

In the final analysis, it is obvious Coker knows his subject matter intimately; his message is one that needs to be widely disseminated and discussed. I could instantly relate to much of his prose and I am confident “Healing the Wounds” would be an excellent addition to both your personal as well as your professional library. Highly recommended.

– Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.