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## Give Up the Grudge

By Debbie DeAngelo  
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Are you holding a grudge?

A grudge is defined as a “feeling of ill will or resentment” toward another person. It’s often felt after being hurt, disappointed, or frustrated by someone. Some psychologists believe that it’s a form of self-protection. You may hold onto what someone did or said, so that if faced with it again, the red flags go up in your mind.

When asked, most people will reply, “No, I don’t hold grudges.” They may not even realize that they’re doing so. According to a 2022 Trustpilot survey that

polled 12,000 adults globally, 78% of respondents were harboring lingering resentment. However, one-third admitted that they no longer had a clear recollection of the incident anymore. The most often-cited themes that triggered these feelings were: someone going behind one's back, being falsely accused, lending someone money or an item that wasn't returned, someone taking credit for one's work, poor customer service, and being mocked.

How do you know if you're carrying around acrimonious feelings? There are some common characteristics that accompany unresolved resentment. A few hallmark signs include avoiding the person; feeling angry, wronged, or holding negative thoughts against them; and continually becoming upset with them over unrelated issues. A classic example would be ruminating about past conversations or behaviors that leave you feeling steamed, anxious, or in a bad mood.

Holding onto grudges and anger only hurts you, not the target of your wrath. It's often said that anger is a punishment we give ourselves for someone else's mistake. Whether you realize it or not, your health is affected too. Frequent bouts of anger and hostility contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, depression, decreased immune system functioning, and chronic inflammation.

Enter the role of forgiveness. Even though forgiveness may not be easy, it's definitely worth it. Forgiving someone who you feel has wronged you begins with the decision to forgive. It's intentional and requires a concerted effort. A frequently cited obstacle to forgiveness is that we think it implies condoning the other person's actions. It does not. It's not about the individual who wronged you or the situation. It's about the person you strive to be and living your life peacefully. Forgiveness means that you refuse to give others authority over your life. You're releasing the bitterness and reclaiming power over your emotions.

This healing process is something that can occur in your own heart and mind, whether or not you actually involve the other party. Also, it can happen even if the offender isn't sorry, doesn't apologize, or isn't remorseful. It's completely within your control. Begin by becoming aware of the antagonistic feelings and the fact that you're still holding onto them. Identify the specific emotions surrounding the incident. It also helps to learn something from the situation as you process it and move towards a sense of detachment from it. This doesn't happen overnight, so if you need help, don't hesitate to seek out professional guidance.

You will soon find that forgiveness is very liberating. That's why it's a gift you give yourself.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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