

The Counselor's Corner

Several years ago, I was relaxing on a beach in Florida when two overbearing women settled near me, soaking up all of my peace with their loud "know it all" conversation. I will always remember when one woman said, "I am so angry at her that if she died, I wouldn't go to her funeral". That seemed harsh to me, but I am wondering if the target of this revenge plan would really care. The woman with the real problem seemed to be the one hanging out on the beach, obsessed with the past. Her future plans of retaliation robbed her of being in the present and appreciating the beauty of the sun, the peaceful sound of the waves, and the warmth of the sand.

This comment is extreme, but provides a great example of how grudges can backfire, taking a toll on our body, mind, and social interactions. All emotions trigger chemicals in the body, but when it comes to anger and grudges, our sympathetic nerve system gets thrown out of balance when Cortisol floods it. The release of too much Cortisol is toxic. An April 11, 2015 posting by Christopher Bergland, "Holding a Grudge Produces Cortisol and Diminishes Oxytocin" is supported with sound studies. Stress and high blood pressure often result when our bodies get too much Cortisol. Holding a grudge, he says, "is a form of self-sabotage".

Harboring a grudge is a practice without merit. It often becomes a priority, an obsession that makes poor use of the 1440 minutes we are given each day. It takes work to make sure that we do not speak or acknowledge another. Like a spy, we feel compelled to gather secret information to spread our gossip. We often deprive ourselves of some of our social life by refraining to attend events for the sake of avoidance. When we do choose to participate, we try to steer clear, sending out bad vibrations, and often will drive a wedge between us and our friends and/or family members. Like the evil queens in Disney cartoons, our obsession can alter our physical appearances. We can be terrifying with our commitment to make another look bad.

Once we immerse ourselves in a grudge, it is difficult to escape. However, difficult things are not impossible. We possess a free will. There are many articles to help us move forward and function in a mentally healthy way. Getting out of the habit of holding a grudge takes time and practice, but the reward is great. Only when we let go and make room in our hearts, minds, and on our calendars for better pastimes, will we be free.

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