

A Monthly E-Newsletter By Alice Wheaton

Bringing Out the best in others

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The Power of Forgiveness by Alice Wheaton

Our piece of mind is more precious than wealth and power. No amount of money can buy it and without peace of mind, our emotional and physical health suffers.

Forgiveness is a hot topic today, perhaps because we are searching for peace in the chaos and unhappiness that hangs over society. Forgiveness, as defined by Webster's new International Dictionary, is *to cease to feel resentment against another because of a wrong committed*. It makes sense that the opposite of forgiveness is resentment. The dictionary's definition of resentment is *anger and ill will in view of real or fancied wrong*. Those real or perceived wrongs may have occurred years ago and the perpetrator might not even recall the event, yet we carry all that anger, resentment, and blame for years. Any healer, either mystical or medical, will alert clients to the dangers and rampant damage caused by these feelings. It has been said that resentment is the same as pouring a cup of poison for another but drinking it yourself.

Many people prefer to be right than to be happy. When we hold resentment towards another, we justify and defend our position, maintain our *rightness*, and carve out a niche of superiority for ourselves. This position of needing to be right circumvents happiness and holds us in a cradle of false security. We take comfort in this feeling of being better, in some way, to our friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, etc. This self-righteousness is the constant companion of resentment. This deadly combination of self-righteousness and resentment is a fortress keeping love, passion, and the juiciness of life at a distance. This fortress prevents our hearts from receiving and sharing the wide, varied, and full expression of the offerings life has to offer. It is as if a sentry of guards is positioned around our hearts, standing at attention and demanding that there is *'nothing in, nothing out'*. Sadly, because our hearts and minds have held the deadly duo of resentment and anger for a prolonged time, this defended and limited state *feels* normal.

The anger I am talking about in this duo is not a quick burst of emotion but the deep abiding seething anger that usually accompanies a thirst for revenge, and lays a figurative yoke of blame and shame around the neck of the real, or imagined, perpetrator. This deep-seeded anger isolates.

Imagine a garden watering can sitting for a few days with just a teaspoon of battery acid added to the water inside. Even a little acid over time will cause irreparable damage to that can. Holding resentment, blame, and anger wreaks similar havoc on the core of our being.

Aside from feeling peace of mind, there are other benefits to releasing resentment. Let us view our heart as a container that holds the capacity to *feel* ten gallons of emotion.

When resentment, anger, and fear occupy eight gallons, there is only room for two gallons of love. When our heart has a diminished capacity, it makes sense that the overall results in our lives are also diminished. You cannot fill a ten-gallon bucket with gold and diamonds when it is already occupied with sand and rocks!

At this point, you may want to reflect on your life and your attitudes, and wonder if there is room in your heart to forgive the indignities of the past and receive more of everything that God yearns to deliver to you. Harboring the last vestiges of resentment may be the stone blocking your door to health, happiness, prosperity, and love.

There are four types of forgiveness that most of us will need to seek in our lifetime. The first is God's (or your version of a Higher Power's) forgiveness. The second is the forgiveness of others for real or imagined infractions towards us. Third, is the forgiveness of ourselves for our own imperfect path towards our destiny. The fourth, and most difficult bridge of forgiveness to cross, is helping others to forgive us of our transgressions against them. This is a very challenging step because it requires us to feel vulnerable. The first three processes of forgiveness are completed in privacy. When we 'go public' and seek others' forgiveness, we open ourselves to rejection. Asking for forgiveness is an important step to releasing the past – it helps us come full circle. In the process, the burden of shame and guilt lifts, and self-esteem and confidence are restored.

Hand in hand with forgiveness is the importance of *forgetting* the anger and hurts from the distant or recent past. Forgetting is vital because to remember the past is to re-injure oneself and to be stuck there. Without forgetting, there is no peace of mind. Without peace of mind, there is *bondage* to others. This bondage vaults us into 'victim' mode, allowing our peace of mind to be unnecessarily impacted by others.

Life is too short and the consequences too harsh to live in the past. *That was then and this is now* can become one of the phrases we use to jolt our self away from yesterday. Ruminating about those unhappy days keeps resentment and hurt active. Anyone in the grip of resentment suffers emotional, physical, and spiritual isolation. That is a high price to pay for holding onto bad memories and inner rage.

The ideal is to live with peace of mind; go through life without defenses or pretences. This way, we become receptive to all of the opportunities life has to offer. If your heart and mind has an emotional capacity of ten gallons, let the entire capacity be filled with peace and possibilities rather than resentment and rage. The positive results will show sooner than later. If not now, when?

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