

LET GO OF YOUR GRUDGES

Michael Josephson
CharacterCounts.org

As we approach the New Year [also, good advice for beginning Lent], it's a good time to clean out the clutter in our lives. That means disposing of useless papers and unused stuff but also throwing away old grudges.

The prevalence and durability of grudges proves Maya Angelou's observation that people don't always remember what you said or did, but they do remember how you made them feel.

Grudges are nothing more than toxic memories of how someone made us feel.

But Confucius taught that "To be wronged is nothing unless we continue to remember it." So why do so many of us choose to consciously preserve and revisit toxic feelings that detract from our happiness?

Perhaps we fool ourselves into thinking we can inflict some sort of pain on the person who wronged us. In fact, holding on to a grudge is like holding on to a hot stone. It doesn't hurt the stone or the person who gave it to us; it only hurts the one holding it. Carrying a grudge is like being stung to death by one bee.

It doesn't matter how justified the bitter feelings are or how right we are. Holding on to a grievance turns pain into suffering. In a peculiar way it empowers the wrongdoer to hurt us again and again.

So start out this New Year [Lent] by giving yourself a great gift. Muster the good sense and strength to root out and release deep-seated and long-held resentments.

If you can, forgive and forget. But all that's really necessary is a firm decision to let go of your grudges so you can move forward and free yourself of the chains of resentment.