

The Resentment You Are Still Carrying Is Load-Bearing

Why the grudge won't let go of you: it isn't a feeling you have, it is a piece of the self you have built.

There is a kind of addiction almost nobody names. We know the obvious ones — the drink, the pill, the phone at two in the morning. Underneath those there is another one, older and quieter: the addiction to your own thoughts. To your positions. To the story you have rehearsed so many times that it no longer feels like a story, it feels like the plain facts of your life.

Resentment is where that addiction shows itself most clearly. Ask anyone to let go of a grudge and watch what happens. It is not that they cannot. It is that something in them refuses, and the refusal comes with a strange dignity, as if you had asked them to hand over a wallet.

That reaction is worth studying rather than judging, because it is telling the truth about something.

“*The ego, this false sense of understanding who you are, is built on stuff like resentment, built on stuff like unforgiveness.*

TIM O. DAVIS — FROM A TEACHING PASSAGE, LIGHTLY CLEANED FOR PUNCTUATION

Here is what I think is actually going on. The grudge is not sitting in you like a stone in a shoe, an inconvenience you would remove if you only knew how. It is load-bearing. You have built part of your sense of who you are on top of it.

Consider what a resentment gives you. It gives you a position. As long as I am holding what you did against you, I am standing slightly above you. I am the one who was wronged, which means I am the one who was right, which means I am — in that small, private courtroom I run in my chest — the better person. Set the resentment down and that arrangement collapses. We are level again. Ordinary. Two people who each did some things.

So when someone says *I can't let it go*, listen to what they are protecting. It is rarely the injury. It is the elevation.

I do not think people are being petty when they do this. I think they are being human, and I think they are being sensible in a short-sighted way — because it does work, for a while. Holding something against someone genuinely lifts you up. It steadies you. It gives you a place to stand when you had none. The problem is not that it fails. The problem is that it

works, and the price is your peace, and you pay that price every day for years without ever seeing the invoice.

You can test this in yourself without much effort. Think of the one you would name first if I asked. Now notice that you have a case prepared. You could open your mouth right now and lay it out cleanly, with evidence, in order. That case has been maintained. Something in you has been keeping it current, filing the new pieces as they arrive, and that maintenance is not free — it runs on the same energy you would rather be spending on your work, your children, your sleep.

And here is what makes it so hard to see: the maintenance feels like justice. It feels like integrity. It feels like refusing to let something wrong be called right.

The way out is not to argue the case down. You cannot reason someone out of a grudge, including yourself; the mind will simply produce better evidence. What loosens it is seeing the structure. Seeing that the ego — this false sense of understanding who you are — is built out of exactly this material. Resentment, unforgiveness, the list of who owes you. Take that away and the question that surfaces is not *who was right*, it is *who am I, then?* That question is uncomfortable, and it is also the doorway.

So I would not begin by trying to forgive anyone. I would begin by noticing the lift. Next time the memory comes up, feel where it puts you — the small rise, the settling into the higher chair. Just feel it, without doing anything about it. Do not defend it and do not shame yourself for it. Shame only charges the thing further; curiosity discharges it.

What you will find, if you keep looking, is that the energy has been trying to leave for years and you have been holding the door. Releasing it is not a moral achievement and it is not a gift you give the other person. Most of the time they have no idea. It is simply taking your hand off a door you have been leaning on so long you forgot you were leaning.

And when it does go, it does not feel like winning. It feels like weight coming off. It feels like being level with someone, and finding out that level is where you can breathe.

THE PRACTICE

You are not holding the grudge. The grudge is holding a piece of who you think you are. Find out what it is holding up, and it starts to let go on its own.