

10 COPING STRATEGIES

When Resentments Are
Ruining Your Inner Peace

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Resentments Explained	2
Impact Of Resentment On Wellness.....	4
Signs Of Resentment	5
10 Coping Strategies When Resentments Are Ruining Your Inner Peace	7
Identify Primary Emotions	7
Seek Therapy	8
Practice Forgiveness	8
Release The Trigger	9
Be Open-Minded	9
Stay Present	10
Practice Empathy.....	10
Set Boundaries And Expectations.....	10
Implement Kindness	11
Express Your Feeling	11
Conclusion	12
References	13

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Introduction

Resentment is very closely linked to anger. A resentment is a negative feeling or ill-will held towards someone or something stemming from the past. It involves a sort of bitterness centered around the belief of having been treated unfairly.

When a person is experiencing resentment, they are re-experiencing the past injustice (real or perceived) and stimulating the old feelings of hurt connected to them. Those feelings often involve disgust, anger, disappointment, and sadness, among others. Resent often and easily can lead to feelings of hatred if not addressed and resolved (The Tapping Solution, 2016).



Resentments Explained

Resentments can be short-term or long-term and they can be major or minor. Typically, minor resentments are those that last short-term while those resentments that are major last for a longer period of time.

Minor and short-term resentments tend to be those that are forgotten or more easily addressed because the impact (physically, mentally, or emotionally) of the event or situation was minimal.

However, those resentments stemmed from situations that had a more substantial impact are generally deemed major and can stimulate negative feelings long after the event has passed (Mager, 2017).

Resentment generally involves rumination or spending a substantial amount of time thinking about the situation or event that has created the resentment.

While many people believe that holding on to the resentment is a means of punishing the perpetrator of the offense, it is often the person holding onto the resentment that ends up suffering the most.

This is because holding onto the resentment works as a form of mental and emotional bondage, keeping people tied to the event and negative feelings for a prolonged period of time. The stronger the resentment the more time is generally spent reflecting on it and that keeps the embers of negativity brewing for longer (The Tapping Solution, 2016).

The most common and usually the most powerful negative emotion tied to resentment is anger. Anger, when tied to resentment, is an emotional response to wrong or injustice (real or



perceived) that leads people to be emotionally stimulated in a way that can lead to poor emotional control and impulsivity.

Also, persistent anger can lead to even more intense feelings such as rage. It is significant to note that in many situations anger is the secondary emotion. It usually sets in subconsciously and very quickly in response to someone or something that evokes feelings of hurt, betrayal, fear, or inadequacy (the primary emotions).

Anger arises as the more dominant emotion in these situations because primary emotions are linked to feelings of vulnerability that tend to make people uncomfortable and distressed. Thus, anger acts as a shield and distraction and eventually leads to resentment if not addressed by first dealing with the underlying primary emotion (Mager, 2017).



Some of the purposes anger serves in these situations are as follows:

- To place focus on a scapegoat (individual, group, entity)
- To deflect primary emotions so they can be kept at bay
- To provide a sense of control and power

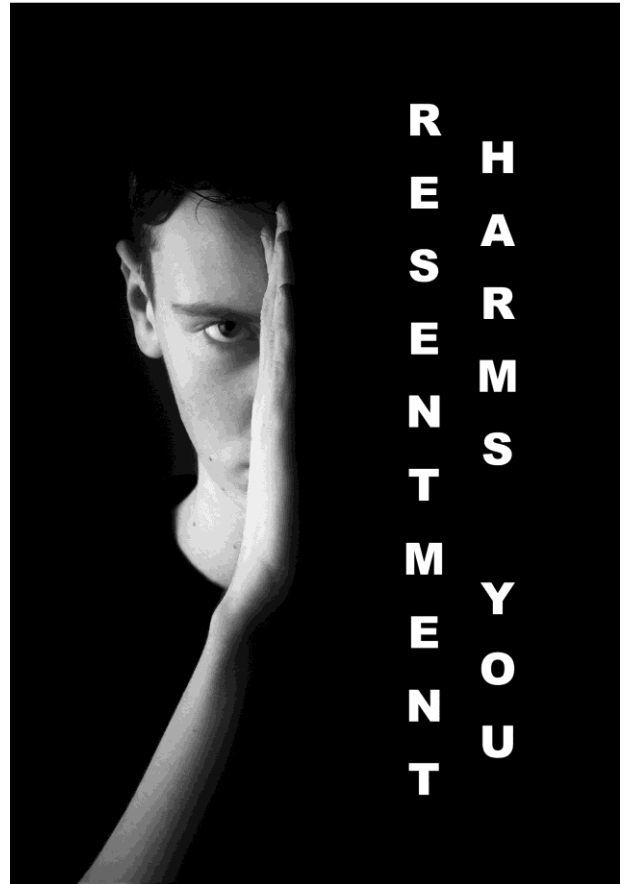
A common thread among most anger and resentment is that it is formulated based upon a flawed belief or misperception. One such distorted belief includes the idea that others should behave in a manner that aligns with your own desires. Another such distortion is assigning meaning or motive to another person's actions.

Such flaws can generate negative feelings and resentment based on a poor foundation, essentially making the resentment baseless. Thus, it's important to reflect on your feelings and thoughts to ensure anger or resentment felt is appropriately justified.

Although of course there are times when anger and resentment are appropriate and justified, often they are built on a foundation of distorted belief that others should or must act the way you want them to.

If you allow yourself to become angry or resentful whenever situations don't go the way you prefer, then you are effectively giving control of your feelings to others. It's similar to using a remote control to change channels on the TV. If your feelings depend on how other people behave, you are giving them the remote control to your emotions (Mager, 2017).

Some examples of situations that can lead to resentment include jealousy, public humiliation, being taken advantage of, or experiencing discrimination/ prejudice. Resentment also can be more severe based on the person who perpetrated an offense.



Experiencing an offense at the hands of someone close to you or someone who holds great value is more likely to generate offense versus experiencing it at the hands of someone you deem insignificant or someone you don't have a real relationship with (Mager, 2017).

Impact Of Resentment On Wellness

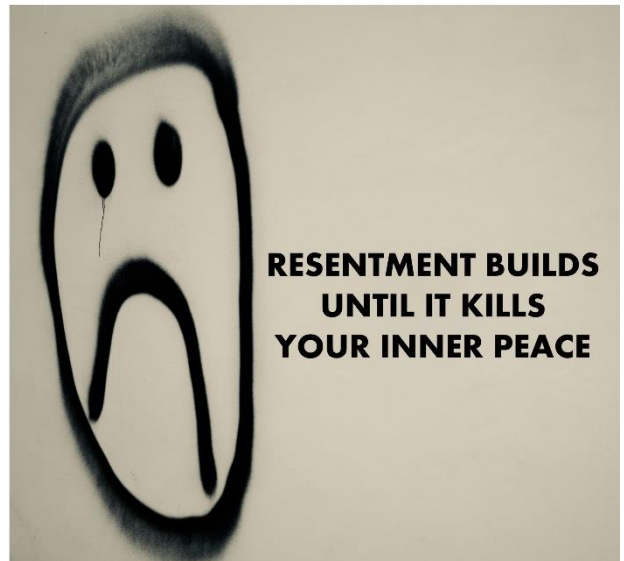
Harboring resentment can prove to be harmful for your physical and psychological wellness. Physically, resentment can impact the body's hormonal systems, immune system, and other major body systems leading to similar impacts in the body as prolonged exposure to extreme stress.

Such issues can include:

- A weakened immune system
- Hormonal dysfunction
- Heart problems
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Chronic pain and headaches/migraines
- Many others

Psychologically, harboring resentment and the negative feelings that accompany it wreaks havoc on our mindset.

- Loss of inner peace and serenity
- Chronic anger
- We become more pessimistic and tend to view things from a negative lens
- There can even be social impacts as a result of holding onto resentment. As one experiences more negative physical and mental impacts on health it decreases the ability of one to relate to others and the quality of relationships between people (Don't Judge Your Life, 2016).



Signs Of Resentment

It may not be blatantly obvious to you that you are harboring resentment towards a certain person or situation, yet there are some signs that can help you identify whether what you are feeling is resentment.

Such Signs Can Include:

- Constant fighting or bickering with an individual
- Constantly finding faults with an individual

- Engaging in passive-aggressive behavior when dealing with an individual or in a certain environment, or detachment from the individual or circumstance
- Ruminative/obsessive thinking about the situation or the principal individual where overthinking plagues the person holding the resentment
- Decreased Interest in Physical Intimacy if the resentment is held with a romantic partner
- Feelings of regret can occur when resentments have built up over time. This can manifest in avoiding the person, withdrawal from the relationship and emotional detachment.

While one of these signs alone might not signal resentment, a combination of two or more could be a first signal that you are harboring resentment regarding a particular situation or towards a certain individual (Hazari, 2020).

10 Coping Strategies When Resentments Are Ruining Your Inner Peace

When resentments are disturbing inner peace there are measures that you can take to help you get a hold of your emotions and promote wellness. The following outlines ten specific measures for achieving those outcomes.

Identify Primary Emotions

As explained above, many resentments are formed around anger, but anger is often not the primary emotion being experienced. In order to get to the root of the resentment, one must get to the root of the emotions being experienced to first see if they are valid and if so how to address them so that the resentment can be eradicated.

First, one must determine the primary emotions.

- Rather than anger which many people attribute to their resentment, often feelings like fear, embarrassment, or disappointment truly rest underneath anger and resentment.

Once you can determine what you really feel you can then figure out if those feelings are valid.

- This can be done by thoroughly assessing the situation and conversing with the involved parties to determine their intent and motives as well as whether your reactions and feelings are based in reality or a misconception.

Should you find that the emotions are rooted in flawed logic you can release the negative feelings and subsequently the resentment

However, if you find the feelings are valid you can address the primary emotions such as the fear or embarrassment which naturally releases anger and removes resentment (Don't Judge Your Life, 2016).

Seek Therapy

There are certain scenarios and situations that require the assistance of trained professional therapists to work through.

At times resentment can be so strong and so deep that you need to work with a professional to truly unpack the trigger and develop modes and methods for tackling the resentment little by little. There are a host of situations where resentment is normal to feel and even warranted, for instance in the case of abuse.

Thus, being able to work through primary emotions and developing a plan to break down and release the resentment with someone trained to deal with such severe circumstances can be the key to freedom from resentment (Don't Judge Your life, 2016).



Practice Forgiveness

“Forgiving someone doesn’t mean condoning their behavior. It doesn’t mean forgetting how they hurt you or giving that person room to hurt you again. Forgiving someone means making peace with what happened. It means acknowledging your wound, giving yourself permission to feel the pain, and recognizing why that pain no longer serves you. It means letting go of the hurt and resentment so that you can heal and move on.” - Daniell Koepke

Forgiveness is easier said than done, but it can be incredibly freeing. There is a misconception that forgiveness is for the other person and is essentially giving them a pass for their actions or behavior.



However, forgiveness is actually for you. It releases you from bearing the burden of the action perpetrated against you and allows you to release the offense so you can move forward in your life.

Though challenging, forgiveness is worth the effort and should be pursued if struggling with resentment. Forgiveness can be linked to improved self-esteem, less stress and anxiety, decreased signs of depression, boosted immune system, and a more positive outlook.

Release The Trigger

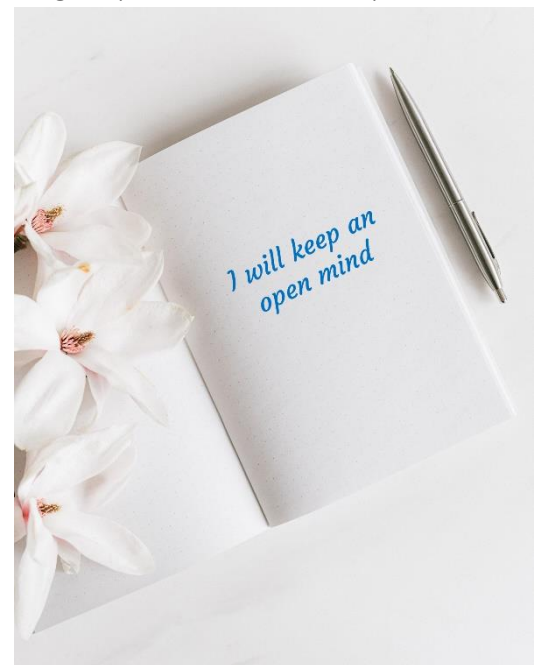
Sometimes forgiveness is simply not possible, or you may recognize that the process of forgiving will be incredibly long-term. In these situations, it may be more beneficial to remove the cause of the resentment from your life while you work towards forgiveness or altogether.

This could look like ending a friendship or relationship or leaving a job if you feel that the incident or situation is something you cannot release or work through if you are continuously confronted with the person or thing (Don't Judge Your Life, 2016).

Be Open-Minded

Practicing open-mindedness is about exploring the potential that you may have contributed to the situation or scenario causing the resentment you feel. Very rarely are we totally innocent victims of mistreatment (though we certainly can be in cases such as discrimination or abuse).

However, in many more situations we bear some type of responsibility in the outcome. Thus, by taking time to reflect on how we might have played a role we can shift the blame from the other person and extend grace with the understanding that you too played a part in the situation.



Stay Present

A common reason people harbor resentment is because they fail to remain present. Bringing past incidents, conflict, or hurts into the present is one of the quickest ways to develop resentment.

This is because you begin to keep a record of wrong that rests in your mind and that you draw from when you experience a present hurt. The key is not to link what you're experiencing in the present to something in the past. Rather to be intentional about focusing on the now and not attaching deeper meaning to it (Hazari, 2020).

Practice Empathy

Empathy involves putting yourself in another person's shoes or in another scenario and experiencing things as they would. Too often we assume how people might feel or should feel given a particular set of circumstances or details. However, empathy requires intentionally stepping out of your comfort and making the effort to see things and understand things from the other side.

In doing so you may uncover the ability to extend grace and mercy based on understanding their feelings, thoughts, or other contributing factors. This does not excuse the behavior but can offer some insight into why a person acted as they did or why a situation played out as it did. Thus, this helps you to be less resentful and move forward (Hazari, 2020).

Set Boundaries And Expectations

When you have expectations of others that fail to be met or boundaries are unclear and lines of comfort are crossed it can be easy to form resentment. This is why setting clear expectations and boundaries is essential.

When you've established boundaries and expectations for yourself and others that have been clearly communicated and agreed upon, others are in a better position to deliver which decreases the likelihood of disappointment and therefore resentment significantly.

Implement Kindness

It may seem counterintuitive to be kind to someone you are presently feeling resentment towards, but it can be a useful strategy. When you make a conscious effort to engage with compassion you rob the person of the emotional power, they have over you.

Additionally, kindness towards others, particularly the person(s) you feel resentment for influences the mind and works to break down negative emotional barriers so that you can have more empathy and understanding. Plus “killing them with kindness” so to speak can also impact them and lead them to apologize which can also help you feel the compassion needed to forgive and move on.



Express Your Feeling

Sometimes the simple act of releasing the resentment and the negative emotions accompanying it can be all you need to truly release the resentment. Some people don't actually need a resolution, but simply need to feel heard or understood.

Thus, expressing feelings can be a great way to accomplish this. This can be done by talking to a friend or family member, journaling, writing a letter to the person, or recreating a scenario and talking through it by yourself. In doing so you might find an internal resolution that helps you release resentment and move forward.

Conclusion

Resentment does not have to control your life. You can take measures to release your resentment and move forward. Failure to release resentment can lead to problems physically, mentally, and socially that can impact your productivity, effectiveness, and overall sense of happiness and well-being.

However, addressing resentment requires intentionality and commitment. It may not be a quick process but it is sure to be a worthwhile process as it will free your mind and emotions from the weight of negativity and allow you to be your best self.

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