

GRUDGES

Handout

(or you might like to use this in meditation style.)

Level A, B, C

This is a private exercise, in silence.

1. If I have a grudge, maybe it is against someone like this – my ex-partner, someone in my family, a judge or solicitor, another prisoner, prison staff.

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2. Feeling sorry for myself. Do I see myself as a victim? Am I looking for sympathy?

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3. Getting revenge is a very old human instinct. Is that what I want? If I try to “get my own back”, will that make anything better?

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4. Holding onto a grudge makes me feel self-righteous. If I am “right”, there has to be someone else who is “wrong”. Would this change if I let go of my grudge?

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5. Anger makes me feel powerful. If I give up my grudge, does that mean I am less powerful, or more?

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6. If I let go of a grudge, and forgive someone, is that a sign of weakness, or of strength?

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7. If I forgive someone, or give up my grudge, what difference might it make in my life?

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ADDICTION TO GRUDGES

Handout

Why we don't forgive and hang onto grudges

Let's look at some of the reasons we hang onto grudges:

1. We believe that letting go of grudges and forgiving someone is a sign of weakness. We might have to give up our tough, macho attitude and tell the truth. In fact, forgiving someone is really a sign of strength. It is usually the strongest and most mature individuals that are the first to forgive.
2. Letting go of grudges and forgiving someone means that we have to give up being a victim. Sometimes we like to feel sorry for ourselves.' This is a very human reaction. We may also want people to sympathize with us because we have been hurt or oppressed. Children often feel like victims when dealing with the adult world. But we are adults now and need to give up our childish ways. Taking responsibility for ourselves and forgiving others is the path to personal strength.
3. Letting go of grudges and forgiving someone means we have to give up our anger. Anger can be addictive. Anger may help us to feel powerful. Our anger may intimidate others. But we all know anger is not good for our emotional and physical health. Forgiveness is the step to inner health.
4. Letting go of grudges and forgiving someone means we have to give up our desire for revenge. When we have been hurt, we often feel put down and disrespected. It is a natural urge to want to get back at the person who hurt us in an effort to put ourselves "one up." However, we all know that instead of correcting the balance, we may initiate a cycle of revenge which can escalate. Forgiveness is the tool to break the cycle of revenge.
5. Letting go of grudges and forgiving someone means we have to give up our attitude of self-righteousness. For many of us it is important to be "good" and "righteous" and to oppose anything we see as "wrong" or "evil." In some ways, it may be hard for us to maintain our position as being a "righteous" person unless there are "bad" people out there that we can oppose. In fact, we may need to hang on to the "bad" people out there as a way to maintain our feelings as being "righteous" Forgiving someone may mean that we need to give up our self-righteousness and start being honest and real. Then the people we are in conflict with can become honest and real also.

Learning forgiveness in our personal lives will make us stronger people. We can then share our ideas to help those in our workshop lead more peaceful lives also.