



WHO DO I HATE?

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Well, OK, maybe “hate” is too strong a word, but certainly there are people who I don’t get along with easily, and even some people who I think have seriously offended me. Some of those people share my home. I hope I’m not alone in having these feelings because then I would feel even guiltier.

Following are some things I’ve learned in trying to work on healing the broken relationships in my life.

1. To have a broken relationship with someone means at some level I really care about him or her, otherwise I’d just write them off. There are too many things in life to be concerned about to waste energy on people I don’t even care about.
2. Those closest to me annoy me the most, but at least in a healthy family we have the underlying love and common destiny to ask forgiveness and go on.
3. Every family has a black sheep. Not everyone in the family may agree on who the black sheep is.
4. Sometimes the sheep themselves are colorblind. The family member I disdain probably thinks I’m the problem and vice-versa. In the end, I suppose we’re all spotted sheep.
5. Differentiate between a grudge or annoyance and a toxic or harmful relationship. The grudges are often healed by time and/or a sincere apology, or simply deciding to overlook the minor offense. The really toxic relationships (spouse abuse, repeated infidelity, manipulative or controlling relationships) often are best dealt with by putting distance between us and counseling.

To get past the anger or annoyance and move to healing, I’ve found several things to be helpful. Perhaps you would find them useful also.

- Do I have the same fault for which I’m criticizing another?
Sometimes I’m sensitive to another’s shortcoming because I don’t like it in myself; or perhaps the opposite. Maybe I have difficulty accepting a person who has a very different personality from myself.
- Focus on the positive qualities of the person I’m having trouble with.
Once when I was trying to do this I forced myself to think of five talents or positive characteristics of a person I felt had done me wrong. At first it was hard. Qualifiers kept creeping in, like “He accomplishes a lot, but that’s the problem, he’s too task oriented”, or with my child, “She’s creative, but I wish she would trade some of that creativity for a little more self-discipline”. I just kept at it till I could find five genuine things I liked about the person. The funny thing was that I started out doing this just as an interesting exercise, but I ended up feeling more kind-hearted toward my “enemies” just by reminding myself of their redeeming characteristics.
- Who am I condemning?
Sometimes, the hardest person to forgive is myself. I may feel discouraged about not being able to change a bad habit, or mad at myself because of a bad or selfish choice I’ve made. To break through this impasse I’ve practiced being more tolerant of *others* – to

judge *them* less. As I practice forgiving others, even in little things, I can better accept that I could also be forgiven. It might be forgiving the fool who cut me off in traffic, the relative who manipulates family relationships, or the ex-spouse who's still trying to control me

- Try confession.

I know it's not in fashion these days. (By the way for those of you who haven't tried it in awhile, we now call it "reconciliation.") But there was some deep wisdom in having to say one's faults out loud to another person and a cleansed feeling from having taken the pain to do it. Doing penance need not be just a meaningless ascetic discipline but is part of the human need to make restitution to move toward forgiveness.

- Beyond personal forgiveness

While it's important to start with myself and make the relationships around me right, healing can extend to the bigger church and society. Here's a challenge –wouldn't it be a powerful witness if the Catholic Church could reconcile with men and women who are estranged from the church? As for our society, I dream of the day when the rich nations (us) would be willing to forgive debts of third world countries. After all, we're polluting the whole planet's air and water by our over consumption, maybe it would be only fair.

But back to what you and I can do something about. Regardless of the hurt I have received or inflicted on another, it needn't be a permanent condition. Is it time to let go of one of your hurts? Don't wait another thousand years to say, "I'm sorry", or "I forgive you", or "Let's be friends again." If not today, when?