

Good day!

How many times in your life have you felt personally affronted, offended or disappointed in someone's actions to the point where an apology seemed to be necessary?

Sometimes an apology seems important at the time but the incident fades in time to the point where the incident is forgotten and the need for an apology fades with it.

Other times, it is felt that an apology is so critical that the relationship cannot continue until the apology is delivered – and a suitable apology at that, not just any half-hearted apology.

It is normal that we sometimes feel an apology is warranted. If the need passes relatively quickly and the relationship continues undamaged, then Life proceeds as it always has and no one is the worse for the incident.

When a relationship becomes damaged or is permanently put on hold while waiting for an apology, then the person waiting for the apology needs to examine the 5 W's regarding the necessity of the apology.

What is to be gained by demanding or holding out for an apology? Is everyone better off while time passes without the apology that is expected? What is lost as this time passes?

Why is the apology needed? Can your life continue with or without it? Will receiving an apology somehow make your life so much better than if you had not received one?

Who benefits from waiting for this apology? Is it possible that waiting for an apology burdens the person waiting for it more so than the person who "should" be giving it?

When has a sufficient time elapsed before an apology is no longer necessary, or would someone rather wait indefinitely, regardless of the impact of this decision? When does someone realize that the need for an apology is not as important as what is lost in the relationship?

Where does the person waiting for the apology expect their life to go if they accumulate enough of these "must have an apology" incidents? That would present quite a burden on someone who already has the many challenges of life presented by living in the 21st century.

The fact is that the day you cannot forgive somebody for an act committed is the day you can stop expecting forgiveness for any act that you may commit against others.

It is also true that while receiving an apology may make your past seem better in your eyes, does holding out for one indefinitely make your future better? I doubt if it does.

The pain or hurt that we perceived for which an apology is demanded is often encased in a lot of emotion, which prevents us from analyzing the true source of it and prevents us from beginning the process of healing one's self and one's relationships.

This pain festers and grows on negative energy. It drags people down and becomes a preoccupying thought that prevents them from reaching their truest potential.

It is so easy to say "I will never let that person hurt me again" yet what is hurting you the most – the act committed against you or the negative energy that you are accumulating as you keep reliving the incident and affirming the need for an apology.

Alan Paton, a famous writer, summed it up nicely when he wrote, *"When a deep injury is done, we never recover until we forgive"*.

It is so easy to rationalize not forgiving someone by saying "If I forget this incident, then I am opening myself to being offended again later".

However, this thought continues the pain, hurt and other emotions that are wrapped around the original incident, preventing one from analyzing the incident and truly evaluating it on its merits.

Forgiving someone releases this negative energy and allows one to grow and to learn from the incident.

Isn't this what Life is all about – to learn from our experiences so that we can handle them better the next time? How can we expect to grow and experience Life to its fullest if we refuse to learn from the lessons offered to us?

Mahatma Gandhi once said, *"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong"*.

There is a common expression along the same lines that it takes a big person to forgive. It is easy to hold a grudge for a long time (or forever). It takes true internal strength to forgive.

Some people like to say they forgive someone but they never forget the incident. Is this true forgiveness, or do you at some level put the relationship on probation, waiting for the next affront to upset you all over again?

To not forget the incident when it is forgiven is not true forgiveness and people should not delude themselves by thinking that forgiving and not forgetting go hand in hand.

There are people who feel that punishment is warranted and that somehow the apology is connected with this punishment, almost as if the apology serves as a form of humiliation in the initial stages of retribution.

This adds unnecessary negativity to the need for an apology – the negativity associated with some form of revenge.

Life has a way of rewarding or punishing people when the time is right, whether that person wants it or expects it.

So rather than assuming that one has the right to be administering some form of justice, isn't it better to let Life handle each person as they deserve?

Plus, the incident that you think an apology is warranted for may be a single low point in an otherwise perfect life on the part of the other person – so what gives you the right to exact punishment on them for this?

On the contrary, perhaps you brought on the incident so what gives you the right to punish someone for an action that you brought on or instigated?

Forgiving some people may also confuse them. Some incidents may in fact warrant an apology but it is not worth waiting for, for some of the reasons discussed previously.

Forgiving this person will be a release for you and will offer a lesson to the other person, a lesson that they may not understand immediately.

Rather than try to impose a lesson on them, allow time to reveal the power of forgiveness to them. Sara Paddiston summarized this when she wrote, *"Sincere forgiveness isn't colored with expectations that the other person apologize or change. Don't worry whether or not they finally understand you. Love them and release them. Life feeds back truth to people in its own way and time."*

Holding grudges is also a great way to build enemies. Life is challenging enough without creating additional challenges.

If through a simple act, we can create or maintain relationships or at the very least, nullify an enemy, isn't this a better thing than to be looking over our shoulder as we watch out for the actions of our enemies.

Forgiving someone is not a license for that person to hurt again.

However, by forgiving them, you provide a learning opportunity to that person as well and through your actions, both parties grow.

If someone takes advantage of repeated forgiveness on your part, then it is time to review and discuss your relationship with that person.

Everyone has a purpose on this earth and we are all connected on many levels. Herman Melville noted, *"We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us*

with our fellow men; and among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects."

Since Life rewards or punishes based on our actions, the positive action of forgiveness will be returned to us in a positive way.

To be unable to forgive is to be unable to love.

Let us also not forget that we are not perfect. We have committed our own acts that perhaps we are not proud of, that someone else may expect an apology for.

We may choose to stand our ground, insisting that an apology is not necessary. At some point the proverbial "light" comes on and you see the situation for what it is – you are unwilling to apologize for something yet find yourself wondering why you can't receive an apology for a different incident.

Opening our hearts to forgiveness also enables us to apologize when the need is there and therefore we learn by forgiving.

So given all of this, why would you rather hold all of this negative energy inside you and allow it to cripple you, hold you back, encourage sleepless nights and inhibit your life.

Forgiveness, love and Life are intertwined. Free yourself from the trappings and negative energy of grudges, forgive those who need forgiveness, apologize to those you have affronted and know that you will have opened your heart and your mind to a better life – one where you can more easily recognize and accept Life's gifts and wonder.

Namaste – the Divine in me honors the Divine in you

Harry