

Welcome to *How to Hold a Grudge*. I'm Sophie Hannah, bestselling crime writer, creator and host of this podcast, and author of the world's first ever book on the specific subject of grudges. Many of us believe it's always wrong and bad for us to hold a grudge – but what if our grudges, when handled correctly, can be positively good for us, and for others? What if grudges are actually great: not a cause for guilt, but exactly what we need to lead a happier, safer, more fulfilled life? If you're intrigued and want to know more, you can listen to a new episode of this podcast every Thursday between now and 27 December. Join me and guests to find out how to use grudges to transform your life for the better, and to make the world a more peaceful and compassionate place.

And now ... Episode One: Grudges Can be Great!

Welcome to Episode One. I have to say, doing a podcast about grudges is something that I never expected I would ever do. In some ways, it just feels like such a weird thing to be doing and no weirder, in fact, than writing a book about grudges, which I've also done, and which I also at one point would never have thought I would ever do.

So, let me tell you how I came to be the world's only grudge guru. I mean, I'm really hoping that I will be joined soon by other grudge gurus who hear about my book and hear about this podcast and think, 'I want to be a grudge guru too!' Because being the only grudge guru is quite a responsibility. You know, if I'm wrong about something, where are the other equally eminent grudge gurus to point out my mistakes? Maybe some of you will be those very people. I really hope so.

Let me tell you how all this came about. So, I was chatting to my sister, and I said to her: 'One day, I'm really sure that I'm going to write a self-help book. I read stacks of self-help books. Apart from crime, I basically read in two categories: crime fiction – I'm a crime writer, so obviously I'm also a crime fiction addict and reader; I read loads of it – but I also read self-help books. I am absolutely into them; I have been for years. I tend to read them electronically. Normally, I prefer to read books in paper form, but with self-help books it actually helps to read them on a Kindle, or an e-reader. Because, when, you know, your parents come round, you don't want them to see on the shelves a book called *Grotty Parents and How to Avoid Hitting Them Every Time You See Them*.

So I have an extensive collection of self-help books on my Kindle, and I always sort of thought, 'I'd quite like to write one but I don't know what I'd write one about. I don't know what my angle would be.' Then, one day, someone had annoyed me – which is not an unusual thing to happen, other people can be quite annoying. I was having a chat with my sister and saying, you know, how annoyed I was, and one of the things I was actually most annoyed about was that I had behaved like a wimp. Often, when we're annoyed at other people, what we're most annoyed about is the way we reacted. Often, we veil annoyance at ourselves and kind of pass it off as annoyance at other people. I do that all the time, and it's very bad.

So, I was saying to my sister, 'I think I might write a self-help book called *How to be a Doormat*.' And my sister said, 'No, don't do that.' I said, 'Oh! Thank you for being so supportive. Why not?' And she said, 'Well, you're not a doormat.' So, then I thought, 'Surely, she must be mistaken here. Of course I'm a doormat.' I could think of loads of incidents where I thought I was being very doormat-like. So, I ran through a list of incidents and said, 'What about when this happened and I did that? And what about the time that that happened?' My sister said, 'You know, you're not a doormat but what you are is someone who holds grudges.'

And I immediately recognised this description of myself, but I kind of thought, 'Well, isn't everyone someone who holds grudges? You know, how can you go through life, certainly for 47 years – that's how long I've been around – how can you spend 47 years on this planet and not be someone who holds grudges?' So I said this to my sister; I said, 'Come on, we all hold grudges,' and she said, 'We-ell... Yes, but not quite in the way you do. Like, you really think about your grudges and you regard them as an anthology of stories you carry around with you. You know, grudges really is a thing that you devote a lot of care and attention to, and you enjoy telling grudge stories.' And I had in fact just told her a load of grudge stories. I'd fast-forwarded through them, in my attempt to prove that I was a doormat.

So, I said, sort of offhand and without being serious at all, 'Well, maybe I should write a book about grudges instead.' And after we'd had that conversation, I thought to myself, 'Is she right? Am I more interested in grudges than most people are? Do I hold more grudges than most people do? And if so, why? I wonder if there's a particular kind of person or personality type that's more likely to hold grudges, as opposed to, for example, my husband barely holds grudges.'

Actually, the grudges he does hold, I kind of hold for him because he forgets them. When I was researching the book, I said to him, 'Tell me about some of your grudges,' and he couldn't think of any. So, then I thought of some, and I said, 'What about this one? And what about that one?' and he kind of went, 'Oh yeah, yeah, I suppose... maybe that's a grudge...' and I thought, 'Actually, you don't have *any* grudges! I have your grudges, in a different compartment from mine. So, clearly, my husband and I are different kinds of people – and, you know, there must be lots of psychological literature, I thought to myself, about what kind of people hold grudges; whether they're good for us, bad for us.

And I thought, 'I'm gonna look. Because if there is a self-help book of that sort, then I would love to read it.' So, I went to the computer and I Google searched 'books about grudges', and I went to Amazon and I typed 'grudge' and 'grudges' into the search box, and I was absolutely astonished – I mean, absolutely gobsmacked – to discover that there was not one single book on the subject of grudges. I couldn't believe this. So, okay, I have a lot of grudges. My husband forgets all his and so doesn't have any – but still, I knew I'd met loads of people who were more like me than like him and have grudges, so I did a sort of flick through, mentally, of all my favourite songs, all my favourite movies, all my favourite plays, and they're full of grudges!

I mean, you know, the crime genre, obviously, is full of grudges. Some of my favourite crime novels are heavily grudge-based. Some of you might already know that I'm a *massive* Agatha Christie fan. Two of her finest novels, *The Mirror Crack'd From Side to Side* and *Murder on the Orient Express* are, and I'm gonna say this in a way that doesn't include any spoilers, but they are what you would have to call heavily grudge-based stories. And so are many, many movies I can think of: you know, *High Plains Drifter*, *Cape Fear* – just, grudges are all over the place.

And, with most kinds of human experience that are incredibly common – you know, most things we all go through and suffer from and experience day to day – they are just hundreds if not thousands of books around about all those things. If you look for books about grief or forgiveness... I mean, there's lots of books about forgiveness, there's a few about anger, but not a single book existed on the specific subject of grudges.

So, then I thought, 'Okay, well maybe there aren't loads of books, but there are probably lots of articles in psychology journals. You know, there must be,

somewhere, a hidden stash of material on the subject of grudges.’ And basically, there wasn’t. So, there were a few articles in, sort of, academic psychology journals, but they were very specific. They were usually, ‘What I found related to the fact that people who hold a lot of grudges might tend to be people who see things in very black and white terms,’ but there wasn’t a sort of comprehensive examination of the phenomenon of grudges. And as soon as I realised that, I thought, ‘I really, really want to look into this, I want to research it, and I want to write that book.’

And one of the reasons I wanted to write it, as well as to see what there might be in a comprehensive book about grudges, was that I was also aware and reminded from my conversation with my sister that so many people take for granted that grudges are a bad thing to have, and that, you know, being someone who has loads of grudges and is happy about that is kind of a weird thing. Because, why would you be happy about kind of negative things in your life? And I knew, from my own experience, that all of my grudge stories were not negative and have no negative impact on me, and have actually a positive impact. So, I thought, actually, you know, this self-help book that I was at this point only vaguely thinking of writing was already starting to take shape. I knew I wanted to analyse the subject, and I knew I wanted to write a book saying, ‘Hey! My grudges have done me no end of good, and if that’s true for me then maybe that can be true for you as well.’

Then I started to think about my self-help book collection, of all the self-help books I’d read, and I realised that, you know, most of them – much as I loved reading them, and I did really love reading them – a lot of them were just too positive and enlightening for me. So, my favourite self-help book that I’ve read is probably *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. That is a brilliant, brilliant book, and it outlines a philosophy of life and a way of living that absolutely makes sense. It’s beautifully written, and he really does show you how to think and live and proceed, if you want a peaceful, pain-free, suffering-free life. And you can’t fault him on any of the logic, and reading his book really makes me feel better about everything. But the downside of it for me was that, as I read it, I thought, ‘This is all great and it makes perfect sense, but for somebody like me – an ordinary, occasionally bitchy, very often flawed person – it’s just not... just not practical.’

And I remembered a conversation I’d had with my sister when I was going through my Eckhart Tolle phase, because I’d read this book and I’d thought, ‘I’m gonna do all these things! I’m gonna be enlightened like Eckhart Tolle! I’m gonna be the way his is and think the way he thinks, and then pain and stress

and trouble will just roll off me, like rain off the wax bonnet of a car.' And while I was in this phase, I was telling my sister about someone who'd done something wrong to me, and I said, 'And I forgive them and I'm full of inner peace. And my sister didn't believe me. She said, 'You haven't *really* forgiven them, though, have you? You're still a bit annoyed. It's not like it's as if it never happened. I mean, come on, you're just pretending to be enlightened, aren't you?' And, annoyingly – those of you who have younger sisters will know how annoying it is when they turn out to be right about things – annoyingly, she was right.

I was just pretending to be fully enlightened, while secretly knowing that I was totally incapable of being enlightened to the level that Eckhart Tolle is. And yet, I knew all the theory. If I'd taken a theory exam on, you know, enlightenment mindsets and how to live in an enlightened way, I could probably have got 100%. But what I couldn't achieve was getting to a point where, when somebody did something absolutely outrageous or horrible or mean that really upset me, I just couldn't imagine ever not wanting to bitch about them for a while and, you know, hold a grudge. Because in those situations, holding a grudge actually feels like the right thing to do. And my grudges, I felt, had always, you know, stood me in good stead, and benefited me.

This was, you know, a few years earlier that I'd been having my enlightened Eckhart Tolle phase. So when I had that later conversation with my sister and realised that there were no books about grudges, once I started to think like that, I thought that actually maybe I could achieve enlightenment, of the sort that I wanted to achieve – you know, on my own terms. My kind of enlightenment, which would be based on *not* getting rid of all my grudges, which I very much didn't want to do. I remembered how often I'd read a self-help book and thought, 'Oh, I love this idea, but if I tried to put this into practice, if I try to live this way, I'll have to get rid of some of my grudges! And I don't want to do that.'

So, I became quite excited about the prospect of writing a book in which I would argue that holding grudges is good for us. So, the name of this episode, *Grudges Can be Great*, is something that I really believe, and it's what I put forward in my book. Now, I should say that this podcast is not just a repeat of what's in the book. There'll be a lot of stuff in the book that I don't cover in the podcast, because, you know, I don't want to just repeat what's in the book. I want to cover new ideas on the subject of grudges all the time. So there's gonna be quite a big difference between the podcast and the book, but what

they both have in common is a firm belief that grudges *can* be great. Now, I say 'can be' because grudges are not *always* great.

If, for example, you have a grudge about Fred, and because of that grudge you go round to Fred's house and kill all his potted plants and punch his dog on the nose and throw a custard pie in his face, that is not good. If your grudge harms somebody else, if your grudge harms you – let's say you have a grudge that you're absolutely eaten up with bitterness about, and twenty years pass and you get more bitter every day and you're absolutely eating yourself up with those negative feelings – then that *obviously* is not a good approach.

But the problem is that a lot of people think that that is what a grudge has to be. A lot of people imagine that a grudge *has to be* full of and fuelled by negativity, that it can lead to horrible acts of revenge, and that it's generally a harmful and damaging thing. And what I passionately believe is that that does not have to be what a grudge is at all.

I'm going to give an example now, and this is an example that is not in the book. I have so many grudge stories that I think are entertaining and hilarious and I couldn't put them all in the book, so this podcast is gonna contain quite a few that aren't in the book.

This grudge is about some people, and obviously I'm gonna change their names, so let's call them Richard and Sarah. I used to be in the habit of going to stay with Richard and Sarah every so often, and they were always very nice, very welcoming, very friendly. Anyway, one night, I went to stay with them, and they were clearly a bit stressed about their various work situations, they both have quite demanding jobs, and, you know, you can tell if you walk into a household that's stressed. People are sort of dashing about, saying, 'I'm so stressed!' and, you know, as a houseguest, you feel a little bit bad sometimes, as though you're imposing on them. So I said, I can't remember exactly how it came up, but I said something like, 'Are you sure it's okay to stay? I mean, please don't feel you have to make up a bedroom. You know, I can easily just sleep on a sofa or, you know, whatever makes life easier for you.'

And Richard laughed, as if to sort of say, *You don't need to tell me this*. And he kind of said, 'Don't worry. We're not making up a clean bed for you. You'll just have to sleep in the bed as it is.' So, I kind of thought, I don't know if I actually said, 'I don't require a clean bed.' I think I said, 'I'm happy to sleep on the sofa.' Anyway, I thought to myself, 'Oh, never mind. You know, I'm probably being a

bit fussy and picky, wanting clean bedding to be put on the bed just because I'm coming to stay. I'll be fine. The bed doesn't have to be 100% perfectly clean.' I didn't think anything of it.

Then, that night, I went up to bed. The bed was, like, *ludicrously* not clean. So, actually in the bed, towards the bottom of the bed, was what looked like, sort of, debris from a building site. I don't know how it had got in there. I'm sure Richard and Sarah didn't deliberately go upstairs with a bag full of rubble and sprinkle it in the bed. I don't know how that bed got to be so gritty, but it really did feel as though someone had taken some rubble from a building site and just sprinkled it all over the bed or, you know, maybe some sand from the local beach.

So, I thought to myself, 'Okay, so what they were actually boasting about was the fact that they're not going to change the bedding, and, presumably, they might know that the bed is full of sand and rubble.' So, in the end I slept on the bed rather than in it, because it was too gritty to sleep in.

Now, I did not stop liking Richard and Sarah. I didn't have any sort of lasting negative feelings about them. But I did form a grudge. What does that mean? What it means is that I thought to myself, 'This is something that I want to remember happened.' And now, you know, it becomes relevant to look at what the definition of a grudge is, because I have a different definition to the traditional one. And my definition is just that: *A grudge is a story about something that happened, that you want to remember because it still feels relevant.* I'm going to talk about this more in Episode Two, but for now I will just say that I wanted to remember that this had happened, because it felt like an important thing to remember.

And in fact, after that night, I didn't stay with Richard and Sarah again. I still saw them, I'd happily hang out with them, get together with them, but I always made my arrangements so that I didn't have to stay at their house, because I felt it was relevant that they had decided to make me sleep in a bed that was full of rubble. And by remembering that story and holding that grudge, I was able to protect myself from future experiences along the same lines. I think that, the minute you give yourself permission to do that, the minute you permit yourself to think, 'This happened, it does matter, I'm gonna remember it, and I'm going to change my thoughts and behaviour accordingly in whatever way I choose to,' that giving yourself that official permission and allowing your grudge to form and to stay there immediately takes the pressure off you. You

don't think, 'I must move and pretend it didn't happen, I must think and behave exactly the same as I did before. Otherwise, I'm being unforgiving.'

Now, we're gonna talk in a later episode about why holding grudges is not the opposite of forgiving people. It's really not. I actually think, if you give yourself permission to hold that grudge, you're giving yourself permission to think differently, to feel differently. So, I had new thoughts about Richard and Sarah as a result of my grudge. One of the new thoughts I had was, 'Richard and Sarah are proud to make guests sleep in a bed full of gritty sand.' [laughs]

And, you know, I'm not even saying that in a judgmental way. Maybe they're not like that with all their guests. Maybe some of their other guests, they do change sheets for. Maybe there's something about me that they think I would particularly benefit from sleeping in a load of gritty sand one night. Maybe they think I'm too spoilt by nights spent in hotels and my house, and maybe they think it will be character-building for me to sleep in some sand. Whatever their reason, I'm not angry with them – I actually think it's hilarious – but I do want to remember that Richard and Sarah think it's okay to put me in a bed full of gritty sand, and therefore I want to change my thinking and behaviour so far as it relates to them, to make sure that I don't end up staying in their house again.

Now, with your grudge in place, you can then feel absolutely free to pursue the relationship, to carry on the friendship, which enables you to always give second chances. If, one time when I'm in a pub with Richard and Sarah and they say, 'You know, we've been thinking about that time when we didn't change the bedding even though we knew that a builder had come and dumped a load of debris from his building site in the bed. You know, we've been feeling a bit bad about that and we just want to assure you that if you were to stay with us again, we would make sure that didn't happen.' If they say that, fine. Then I'll change my policy again, then I don't need that grudge any more, it's no longer relevant. I don't need to remember that that incident happened, and I can discontinue that grudge.

So, that is just one fairly absurd example of how having grudges can serve you well. I have avoided other uncomfortable nights by having that grudge. Now, one of the things that I think is really important with our grudge stories – and in one of the chapters of my book, I talk about how to process your grudge. There's a long and detailed process, and going through that whole process for each grudge is really, really helpful because just the formality and the routine of the process enables too to get some distance from the incident, it enables you to craft it as though it were a story about someone else, and that gives you

a certain amount of objectivity, and it gives you something positive to do. You're creating your great and helpful grudge, and if you're busy doing that, and analysing it – thinking, 'is this a helpful version of the story or would it be more accurate if I did that?' – you don't have much time or energy to spare feeling bitter and planning to wreak a terrible revenge. Which is great, because getting revenge is always bad and wrong.

So, one of the things I encourage people to do as part of the grudge processing routine and process is to identify, what was the right thing to do in the story, and what is the right thing to do now? So, if we take my Richard and Sarah example, the right thing to do might have been to go downstairs and say, 'Look, I'm really sorry but there's a load of grit and sand in the bed. Is there any way you can give *me* some clean bedding and I will put it on myself?' I didn't do that, because I at the time was very, very reluctant to raise anything problematic. My natural default setting is not to raise anything that might cause controversy or be problematic or make people think I'm annoyed. I would naturally go to great lengths to hide the fact that I'm annoyed or upset about anything. I don't know why. Maybe I should get a therapist to help me with that. But that might have been the right thing to do. Or, it's possible that the right thing to do is what I did, which was sleep on top of the bed – and, you know, I was totally fine. I slept on top of the bed, I didn't make a fuss, I formed my grudge, and that informed my future behaviour.

The right thing to do now... that is sometimes different from what the right thing to do then was. And often we hold grudges – and we can see this when we write down our story – we often hold grudges when we didn't do the right thing to do in the moment. And part of that grudge might be annoyance at ourselves that we didn't do that right thing. And if that right thing to do is still available for you to do now, then you can still do it and you should still do it, but often the right thing to do in our grudge stories is no longer available as an option now – in which case, there's no point worrying that you didn't do it. Instead, what you should do is identify the right thing to do.

In relation to Richard and Sarah, okay, I missed the opportunity to go downstairs and say, 'Can I please have some clean bedding?' Never mind, I won't beat myself up about that. what's the right thing to do now? I've decided that the right thing to do now is to continue to be friends with them, absolutely not to decide that they're in any way bad people because of the incident. I think it's quite possible that different people have very different attitudes to kind of 'roughing it'. Some people might think, 'look, it's a bed, isn't it, in a warm house? Nothing to complain about – bit of sand and grit never killed

anyone.' And that's absolutely fine. So, I don't in any way think that Richard and Sarah are selfish, bad, or wrong to have made me sleep in a sandy gritty bed, but I do want to protect myself from that experience again. I'm maybe not sufficiently good at roughing it or slumming it and I would rather sleep in a bed that didn't have a load of rubble in it. So, I've done the right thing to do now – and I think I actually even did the right thing to do then, which was just find a way to sleep in that room in a way that suited me.

So, now, I am quite happy to have that grudge and loads of others like it. But I am aware that a lot of experts, a lot of psychological experts, have clients and patients whose lives are made a bit worse by their grudges. You know, they're very much linked in with negative feelings, with anger, with bitterness, with pain. So, I spoke to two experts about grudges and about whether they think of them as bad things or as things that can ever be helpful, and whether their patients and clients have suffered from grudges or benefitted from them.

So, Helen Acton and Anne Grey, welcome to the *How to Hold a Grudge* podcast. I've got lots of questions that I'm dying to ask you, but first of all I wondered if you could just each introduce yourselves to the listeners. Helen, you go first.

HELEN ACTON: *I am Helen Acton. I'm an existentialist psychotherapist and I work in private practice and at Trinity College, University of Cambridge.*

Thank you. Anne?

ANNE GREY: *I'm Anne Grey, and I've been a homeopath for about thirty years and an EFT practitioner and meditation teacher for the last twenty years.*

Excellent. Well, thank you very much for agreeing to be on the podcast. The first thing that I would like to ask you is: both of you very kindly agreed to read my book, *How to Hold a Grudge*, and to contribute some comments about various things that I was writing about. Before I contacted you and asked you whether you would read the book and make comments, and before you read my theory of grudge-holding, how did you think about grudges? Did you sort of think that they were just purely negative things, or did you have sort of mixed feelings about them? Because presumably you've both come into contact with lots of patients and clients who have grudge-related issues...

AG: *Yeah. I found it really interesting, actually, because I definitely would have said that I thought holding a grudge was a negative thing... What's also interesting is that I can't remember anyone coming along and saying that they were holding a grudge, but, undeniably, very many people come having been hurt by incidents with other people or circumstances of life, and those kinds of hurts or wounds or whatever, or traumas, whatever people describe them as, would have come under the category as you've described it of grudges.*

And I'd say, having read your book, I feel like you've made an extraordinary contribution, actually, to people being able to actually start to really release themselves from the live charge of the original hurt or wound or upset or trauma by defining it as a grudge and then by identifying how to deal with it in the way that you have. So, I've found that, although I have more to say, I think that the steps you're suggesting people take are actually very healthy.

Okay. Thank you. Helen, what about you?

HA: *Before I read the book, I probably had mixed feelings about grudges. I think as a holder of grudges myself, I would probably have defended them, not particularly knowing why they were helpful to me until I really thought about it in the context of your book. But I think, in terms of clients bringing grudges, as Anne says, people wouldn't necessarily frame it in that way, but I think I would have associated the word 'grudge' with something held very bitterly. I think it's a word that would be used about something that's held... that's eating away at somebody in an unhelpful way. So I think that's probably how I would have thought about it before I read...*

Yeah. And that's interesting. I mean, in the next episode after this one, I'm gonna talk a bit about the official dictionary definitions of 'grudge'. Because they all do say that a bitter, negative, or angry feeling is... you know, that's the definition – that's what all the dictionaries think a grudge is. So, my definition, which I've put forward in the book... I mean, maybe it's a bit sort of arrogant of me to just decide I define it differently. But the reason I do define it differently is because when I started to become interested in this topic I realised that my grudges – most of them, unless they're very fresh and recent – they don't have any negative feelings attached to them and a lot of them have positive feelings attached to them. So that was why I started to think of grudges differently.

Having read my book and knowing my definition of the word 'grudge,' do you think, I mean, you might think that the process I'm advocating is a useful and helpful and a good one... does my definition of the word 'grudge' feel more or

less accurate than the dictionary definition of a grudge being a feeling of resentment or bitterness? Or do you think there can be two different definitions?

AG: *Well, it seems there are now two different definitions. Now you've created a new definition of grudge, which, I think is very helpful. And enabling people to see that actually it is possible to be able to be released from that kind of eating away aspect of a grudge in order to be able to see that actually it's something that can be – can be dealt with – can be categorized and all the things that you do in your wonderful book...in order to actually... in order to be released from the live charge it's associated with. And that's what I'm most interested in.*

Yes. So, in order to be released from the negative feelings that might accompany a grudge story?

AG: *Yes, exactly.*

Yeah. It's interesting, though, because the phrase 'live charge' ... I think we need to define that, because, in my definition of 'grudge', I use 'live charge' to mean 'a live charge of relevance and usefulness'. But I think that you are using 'live charge' to mean an active negative feeling, maybe.

AG: *Yes.*

So, I actually changed the book.

AG: *Oh, right.*

After you gave me your notes, I made sure to add 'live *relevance* charge' because, I think, you know, there's lots of ... certainly lots of my grudges, they're still very relevant. That's why I keep them and feel that they're important to maintain in my grudge cabinet, but they don't have any active negative feelings associated with them. So, in that sense, that part is no longer live, but the instructive value of the grudge is still what's giving it the live relevance charge.

HA: *I think, for me, to come back to your question about the two definitions...*

Yeah. So, I just wondered whether, having read my book and now knowing my definition of a grudge but still knowing everyone else's definition of the word 'grudge'... are you convinced of my definition? Or do you now think there can

be two different ways to hold a grudge? Like, my way and the way that involves lots of negative feelings, or...?

HA: *I think I'm now convinced there are two ways to hold a grudge. Because I think I'm now convinced there are two meanings that a grudge can hold. I would almost come at it from having read your definition, made me think again about ... well, made me think from the start about what's useful about a grudge. I mean, your whole premise is that grudges are useful, they're informative, they're a positive force for good.*

And I think having just possibly dismissed the idea of a grudge as something bitter and unhelpful, just reading your new definition of it made me really think about, 'Actually, this is a useful thing to do. This definition of a grudge feels like it fits with something that could be thrown out – you know, in terms of a baby being thrown out with the bathwater.' If you just dismiss a grudge... actually, there's a really positive side to it too. So I think, for me, both the two definitions can co-exist.

Okay. Yeah. I mean, I'm not expecting the whole world to change it's definition of 'grudge,' but I just sort of noticed that, you know, most of my grudges... there's just no feelings at all associated with them anymore, other than, they're funny stories to tell, and things that feel relevant to me because they contributed towards making me the person I am now.

HA: *And for you, Sophie, so if there was a grudge you were holding that does feel bitter, or does feel negative, you would define that as something else...?*

Well. So, this is... the next episode is all about this. What I would say is that if I have a feeling of rage or bitterness... and, don't get me wrong! I have plenty of them! You know, if something bad happens, or if someone does something to me that I regard as unfair, I feel things very strongly. I'm not a kind of mild temperament, sort of, 'Oh, well! I'm sure it will be fine.' I can be... you know... very, very... I can have very strong negative feelings. But I don't define that as a grudge. I just define those as negative feelings, and so if those negative feelings have been sparked by an incident, then I just separate out in my mind the *feelings*, which will pass when they're ready, and the *grudge*, which is something I construct and create and classify and grade and think, 'Ooh! What can I learn from this? Why has this happened? What's the good thing about it having happened? What can I get out of it that is beneficial?'

And that process of, first of all, giving myself permission to think, 'Right, this is grudgeworthy – officially grudgeworthy. Now I'm gonna set about making my grudge, and now that I'm actually a collector and researcher of grudges in an official capacity, it's obviously great to get a new one. Yay! Okay, I'd rather that person hadn't hit me over the head with a hammer, but yay! I've got a new grudge!'

Okay, and all of that, that I do to create the grudge story and add it my collection, actually gives me a focus for my energies that takes my energies away from just stewing and wallowing in the negative feelings. I just find that the negative feelings pass incredibly quickly.

HA: *I think that's something I found when reading your book, when you talk about your own grudge stories. There's something about the process of acknowledging, 'This is a grudgeworthy incident, I'm now going to create a grudge out of it, grade it, classify it, and look at how that can help.' Seeing that very process seemed to be something that helped release things about it.*

Yeah. Well, I mean, the aim is not to necessarily release the negative feelings – because, well, my view, actually, about negative feelings – and I'm interested to know what you think about this, Anne, because I think you're probably the most positive person I know [*laughs*]... But, my view about negative feelings is, there's no way I'm ever going to be able to avoid having them. For as long as I exist in a world with other people, then there are going to be issues and problems and clashes and, you know, times when people behave badly, and I can't avoid feeling angry, sad, all those things... that's just part of the human experience. So, I'm not actually concerned with avoiding or minimising those feelings. I think, possibly, the reason I say that is that I am naturally an incredibly happy person, so the balance of my feelings is always much more towards happiness.

So, if I am angry about something, I don't in any way sort of think, 'Oh, I shouldn't be. I wish this feeling would pass.' And the same with sadness, and the same with whatever I'm feeling. But I do, I mean, one of my problems with a lot of what's written in the self-help field, is that some of the books I've read, which in every other way are brilliant, seem to be starting from the starting point of, 'We *can* conquer a void and bypass our negative feelings,' and I don't necessarily believe that. But, Anne, am I wrong about that.

[*AG laughs*]

I mean, I won't be at all offended. I won't regard it as grudge-worthy if you tell me I'm wrong. You have official permission to tell me I'm totally wrong about that.

AG: *I like what you say about that. In fact, I love one of the things you say in your book. Am I allowed to refer to later parts of your book?*

Yes, yes, absolutely.

AG: *Because towards the end of the book, you say that by allowing yourself, by accepting that you have negative feelings, it's like pouring positivity and kindness over those feelings. And I love that because that's exactly how I would wish all of us could...*

So, you're being kind to your negative feelings by not trying to boot them out of the way before they're ready to move on?

AG: *Well, I'll say it my way, so that ... It seems to me that as human beings, we all have negative feelings from time to time. You know, it's simply part of human nature, and it may be that through different... certainly from my own experience, if I can just talk about directly my own experience, I know that I have a tendency – I have less of a tendency to experience anger or, say, sadness now. But, you know, of course, if circumstances were to bring something... there would be a natural response to that, of negative feelings – what we call negative feelings. I think the crucial thing is just to allow what's there and not judge ourselves. So, if there's anger or sadness or jealousy or whatever it is that's going through us, it is allowing that to be there...*

Yeah.

AG: *And then it's like, when we do that... so, the way I see it is like there's a kind of disruption of energy moving through us, and so if we allow that energy to be there, and we allow it to move, then it can move very gracefully, and it might not need anything else. And that's really what you're describing when you say that you can feel very intensely emotional in a way that we might call negative, but very often that can move quickly, and that's because you have a very ... To me, what this is to do with is the fact that you are a naturally very happy person, a very buoyant person, and so emotions can run through you easily and gracefully, and that's a great thing.*

Yeah. And actually, I mean, that thing of sort of allowing and welcoming the feelings and then they pass more quickly, that's something Eckhart Tolle says in *The Power of Now*. That, you know, if you try and fight and repress something it will pop up even stronger, so that's... I can see how... in fact, I remember, when I first came to see you... in fact, let me tell the story because this is how we first met.

I was trying to get pregnant and failing for many, many months. And somebody I worked with in the publishing world said to me, 'When I was trying to get pregnant and failing, I went to see a homeopath, and, you know, within a couple of sessions, I was pregnant and I don't know whether it was because of the homeopathy but I always felt that that was the thing that worked.'

And I thought, 'Actually, I really fancy doing that, because going to see a homeopath is something I would never do, and I like doing things I would never do.' It wasn't something that would have occurred to me, and so I made an appointment to come and see you as a homeopath, and I didn't know that I was already pregnant at the point when we had our first meeting. But then, because you were so amazing at, just, sort of talking therapy, I came to see you for eight years or something. And you were always very kind and allowing of my negative feelings – because, I remember, I used to come and give you long diatribes about everyone I was pissed off with, and you never once said to me, 'God, you're really bitchy, aren't you?'

[*laughs*] I mean, you always acted as if everything I was saying was fine – to be saying these things. And I came to realise that maybe I could look at things in a slightly less black and white way, so that was that in action really, wasn't it?

AG: *Yeah. I mean, the way that I see it, and this is in line with a lot of what you've written in the book, is that if the emotions are there, then we need to let them move. You know, if we hold onto them, then it's, you know, that's not great for us. So, we allow them to move and sometimes it can just move through us quickly in the way that you describe but other times, if something's hanging round – you know, if there's some kind of hurt or trauma or whatever it is that there's still some intensity around that – then it's really healthy to express that.*

It's not always healthy to express it at the person who we think is the cause of it, if you like, because very often it's not about the other person. It's about whatever's going through us. If we express it to somebody who listens, understands without judgment – without prejudice, if you like – but who listens

and allows that to move, then what happens is... what I see, and I've seen it time and time again and I experience it myself in my own life, is that that energy can move then. And then – this is the crucial bit – we then have a chance then to focus on how we want to feel – to focus on what we want now. And, so, what you're doing – going back to the grudges – it seems, what you're doing is, you're allowing the person that's holding the grudge to be able to say, 'Yes, it's okay to have these feelings.' That's very affirming for somebody.

Yes, exactly. And, Helen, do you have a similar thing for your... do you call them clients or patients?

HA: *Clients.*

Clients. Okay. I remember asking you that, Anne, once: 'Am I a client or a patient?' You presumably have clients who talk about people who have hurt them or behaved badly towards them. And I think you said in one of your comments on my book that ended up in my book, that is one of the roles of a psychotherapist, to listen in a kind of validating, supportive way, and not to go, 'Oh, you're making a fuss about nothing,' and 'He probably meant well,' or anything like that.

HA: *Absolutely. You know, one of the roles of a psychotherapist is to bear witness to a person's story, and there's something about having somebody, as Anne says, listen to it, accept it as a valid thing to be feeling, a valid thing to be expressing, that is... that does allow something to shift, something to move. I mean, for me, I'm an existential psychotherapist, so my influences are the existential philosophers, who were big fans of what we might call the negative emotions, so...*

Oh, were they?

HA: *Absolutely. They basically believed that the natural human condition is what we would now call a negative one.*

Right...

HA: *That if we get glimpses of happiness, glimpses of peace, then we're lucky, but that's the best we can hope for. So, for them, they would say there's something unnatural about denying those feelings on a regular basis and expecting anything else. Certainly, sugar-coating them, you know...*

We're going to talk about sugar-coating [*laughs*] in a later episode.

HA: *But I think there's something about being heard and having a story, as I say, witnessed, that allows something to move through us. I wouldn't talk about energy in the way that Anne does, but, you know, for me, emotions are messengers and they are always information, they're always a call to action in some way, and when a messenger's knocking on the door, the more you ignore it, the louder they're going to knock.*

Once we can let that messenger in, once we can get in a relationship with the feeling, something can begin to shift. We can begin to choose what we're going to do with that feeling. We can't choose whether to feel it or not, but we can choose what we're going to do with it.

Yeah.

HA: *For me, it's, well, when people do talk about the experiences they've had – what we might say, grudges they're holding – it's really important not just to bear witness to them, hear them, validate what they're feeling, but to move into their part in that. You know, what's their responsibility now? What are they going to do with that? How do they want to move forward in their life with that? And if you just push it away, and say, 'I don't want to feel negative feelings,' you're never going to get to that stage.*

And, also, it's really common in therapy to have clients come, and what's causing a struggle or conflict in them is some kind of belief that it's not okay to feel anger. Or sadness, or bitterness. And, so, all they're doing is carrying these feelings with them, that they are judging themselves for all of the time. And if you can get to a place with a client where they will allow themselves to feel that anger, express it, whatever form that might take, then something can change.

Excellent. Well, thank you very much, both of you, for those insights, and you're gonna be back in many future episodes! It's interesting to hear, you know, experts talking about the subject, because I'm just, you know, a crime writer [*laughs*] who has an interest in this. But you two have had lots of years of experience of dealing with the clients' and patients' grudges at the coalface. So, thank you very much for joining me, Helen Acton and Anne Grey.

HA: *Thank you.*

AG: *Thank you.*

That's all for this week. Thanks for listening. Please write a review if you'd like to share your thoughts. I won't hold a grudge if you don't because that would be an *invalid grudge*.

If you have a grudge which you'd like me to analyse in the next season of this podcast, please email me – I'm sophie@sophiehannah.com – or tweet me at @grudgesaregreat. Remember, just because I'm currently the only person attempting to be a grudge guru, that doesn't mean I've thought of everything. I'd love to hear your ideas.

If you want to read all of my grudge-related wisdom, as well as my personal top ten grudge stories, all of that is in my book, *How to Hold a Grudge: From Resentment to Contentment – The Power of Grudges to Transform Your Life*.

Thanks again for listening, and I'll talk to you next week, when we'll be looking at why grudges are not feelings. See you then.