

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 Five: How Grudges can Make us More Forgiving.

Today, we're gonna be talking about forgiveness, and in particular, how grudges can make us more forgiving, which I realise sounds incredibly counterintuitive. We're all trained pretty much from birth, or certainly from early childhood, to believe that holding a grudge is the opposite of forgiving somebody. Obviously, it can be. If holding a grudge means you hate the person you have the grudge about, then that is the opposite of forgiving.

But I want to argue that holding a grudge needn't be the opposite of forgiving somebody and shouldn't be, and I in fact believe that if you hold grudges in the right way, that is actually an aid to forgiveness. If you hold grudges correctly, you will become a more forgiving person. And I really passionately believe this, however weird that sounds.

So, that's what we're gonna be talking about today. But before we get into that, I would like to play you a song. And before I play you the song, I'm going to tell you a little bit about the theme music to this podcast, which you've been ... those of you who've listened to all the episodes have now heard that theme music a few times. And I want to talk about that music because it links to the song.

The theme jingle for this podcast was written by my friend Annette Armitage. Annette and I have written two musicals together – she writes the music and I write the words – and so I have what I call a huge gratitude grudge about Annette, which means that I am very grateful to Annette, whom I adore, as well, as a person. I'm very grateful to her for sort of opening up this whole new

phase and area in my life, and I've really loved writing these two musicals with her. And the reason I call it a Gratitude Grudge is because, as you all hopefully know by now, I don't think grudges are a bad thing.

A grudge, again, as you should know if you've listened to previous episodes of this podcast ... My definition of a grudge is that it's something you want to remember because it still has a live relevance charge. And so that can be a good thing. I want to remember lots of things that I'm grateful to lots of people for, and I call those gratitude stories Gratitude Grudges. That is my name for them. It's all part of my plan to rehabilitate the word 'grudge' and prove to the world that it needn't be a bad thing.

So, I am a big fan of Annette's music. She wrote the brilliant jingle for this podcast, which I love. And I'm gonna now play one of the songs in our latest musical, which is called *Work Experience*, and it's a musical locked-room mystery. Our first one was a musical murder mystery, but this one is a musical locked-room mystery and it has a completely bizarre and eccentric plot, which I will not attempt to explain. But there's a song in it called 'Ballad of the Wrongly Accused.' And, basically, a local company which hasn't been making a profit takes a radical new turn; gets rid of all its staff and hires wrongly accused people who can't get jobs anywhere else because they were wrongly accused of various crimes and now no one will give them a chance.

So, I'm gonna play that song and then I'm gonna talk about why it's relevant to forgiveness. You should be able to guess, actually, why it's relevant. Lots of people, if they are accused of doing something bad, you know, then people just believe that they probably have done the bad thing and have trouble forgiving them, even though they don't know whether they've done the thing or not. So, anyway, here is 'Ballad of the Wrongly Accused.'

*Doesn't matter if you did it,
Doesn't matter what you say.
No-one cares if you're acquitted.
No one cares if on the day
That a murder was committed
On a street in Gamlingay,
You were eating a burrito
In a bar in Santa Fe.*

*Pretty soon you lose your house;
Shortly afterwards, your car.*

*There's a hundred different hashtags
For how gross they think you are.
Everybody in New Mexico
Swears you were in that bar.
Still, you're banished from the garden centre
And the cinema.*

*Everyone has their suspicions,
Their opinions and their thoughts.
They don't care how juries vote
Or what goes on in courts.
They petition to exclude you
From all parties, treats and sports
And you're banned alike by betting shops
And fivestar luxury resorts.*

*Former friends soon start to cut you
Out of every photograph.
Next you're urged to find a victim
Of a crime and give him half
Of your pension and life savings,
And then take him on as staff,
And you can't get served in shops without
A face-concealing scarf,*

*So you're treated like a monster,
And you fear it must be true,
When your mum and dad say, 'Darling
We trust everyone but you.'
How are we supposed to take this?
What are we supposed to do?
Is there any hope? Please tell us,
Oscar, can we count on you?*

So, that was 'Ballad of the Wrongly Accused' from *Work Experience*, a musical locked-room mystery by me and Annette Armitage. And since we're on the subject of forgiveness for this episode, I hope you all forgive me for playing you a song which was basically sung by me. I am not the world's greatest singer but I do make a valiant effort now and again, because I love singing. So, there you go. I've just inflicted my singing on you. I won't do it too often, I promise.

So, okay. That song is about something I feel quite passionately about, which is that I fear the world is not very good at giving second chances. People who are accused or suspected of doing things wrong are often widely condemned, especially in the age of social media. People are very keen to go online and say, 'Well, I might not be able to prove it but I think So-and-So's a terrible, awful person who did a terrible, awful thing.'

Since I joined various social media platforms – twitter, Facebook, not so much Instagram, that's still mainly nice pictures, but definitely Facebook and Twitter – there's a lot of condemnation. There's a lot of writing people off, for things they might not even have done. And sometimes, the people have definitely done the bad things, and obviously then it's even harder for them to get a second chance. So, I find this so, so depressing. One of the reasons I wrote my book about grudges and one of the things I say and really stress in the book is that I would give a second chance to anybody – you know, or rather I haven't yet come across somebody to whom I wouldn't give a second chance. I've done quite a lot of work in prisons over the years. I mean, not proper hard work, but, you know, popping in to do writing workshops and talk about books, that sort of thing.

And, you know, I've met people who've committed terrible crimes. And I still believe in second chances for human beings. However unpopular that opinion becomes, I will always believe in it. I will always believe passionately in the principle of innocent until proven guilty and beyond reasonable doubt. All of those things.

So, that possibly explains why, in my latest co-written musical, I just wanted to have a song, that, by using comic absurdity exaggerated up to the max... I just wanted to have a song about how awful it is to be wrongly accused of something. And actually, if you're accused of something that you have done, or even convicted of something that you have done, that's hard as well. Because, you know, often, however sorry you are, it's very hard to get a second chance.

So, why am I banging on in this quite earnest manner? It's because I just want to make it absolutely clear how pro-forgiveness I am. Now, I'm also incredibly in favour of holding grudges, and that's why I've written a book telling everybody to hold grudges. And I think these two things are not opposites. I think they go together perfectly. And let me explain why.

Let's say somebody does something terrible to me. Let's say somebody tries to set fire to my house, and I immediately think to myself, 'Forgiving people is

good. I want to be a forgiving person. I mustn't be angry. I mustn't think less of the person. I mustn't hold a grudge. I must forgive them.' Now, the chances are my emotions will not yet be ready to forgive that person because what's just happened, the think they've just done, has scared me and wounded me and I'm not okay. And morally, I think, you know, they should not have set fire to my house. There's no excuse for it. I am cross. I am worried about my house. All of those things. And if I try and repress those feelings, they are not gonna go away.

And I think we've all probably experienced minor incidents where, you know, you'll be pushing your supermarket trolley along an aisle, and you'll lightly and accidentally nudge another shopper with the corner of your trolley, and that other shopper will turn on you and absolutely savage you. You know, really sort of venomously go, '*Watch where you're going, you ignorant git!*', or something that seems so out of proportion. You know.

Road rage is a good example of that sort of thing or, you know, sometimes if you don't notice that someone's stepped aside to let you pass. You're just oblivious because you're thinking about, you know, a deadline that's coming up. And you walk past, and then the person tuts, 'Huh! Don't bother saying thank you.' Things like this happen all the time in day-to-day life, and I believe that these things happen because those people – the people who overreact viscerously to tiny things – those people have probably repressed their naturally arising negative feelings in situations where those feelings were appropriate.

I mean, I can think of an example of somebody I know. Let's call her Molly. Molly comes from a culture and an environment and a family where loveliness and niceness and jolliness is prioritised really highly, to the point where almost nobody is allowed to express a negative thought or opinion, or – and this is the crucial thing – say that something bad has happened or that somebody has done something wrong to them. It's almost like the whole environment that Molly is embedded in just won't allow any negative feelings or observations or anything like that.

So, Molly is 99% of the time brimming with loveliness. But on the rare occasions where Molly feels slighted or something doesn't go her way, she will administer a tongue-lashing more extreme, obscene, and uncontrollable than anything I've ever seen. And I am pretty sure that's because she's sort of imbibed this view that it's not okay to express negative feelings, even in a moderate way. So, she tries not to express them at all, and then they boil over in stressful situations.

I think that this is what happens when we try and force ourselves to forgive before we are ready. I think it also happens when other people judge our negative feelings. So, typically what will happen is, you know, someone will, you know, do something awful to me or somebody – I mean, I'm only saying 'me' because I'm me, not that people do more awful things to me than to anyone else – but let's say, you know, somebody tries to set fire to my house. Instead of allowing the anger and hurt that has naturally arisen to just be there, and saying to myself, 'Yeah, of course I feel angry. I'm gonna allow that feeling. I'm gonna allow myself to feel that this shouldn't have happened and that it's fine for me to be angry for as long as I damn well want. It's fine for me to adjust my opinion of the arsonist and make sure they don't come to visit very often. And all of those things.

If, instead of doing that, I'm putting pressure on myself – if I'm judging my negative emotions and saying to myself, 'Forgive! Come on, don't hold a grudge. You know, that poor person, he's having a hard day. He's just recovering from chicken pox. Don't think nasty thoughts about him,' then I'm not allowing myself to have those negative feelings that I'm absolutely entitled to have and bound to have. I'm disapproving of myself for having those feelings.

And then what will often happen is that other people will then join in with that pressure. You've probably all had the experience of saying to somebody, 'Hey, something really awful was done to me. I was walking down the road, and Martin walked up to me and just bashed me over the head with a heavy hammer.' And very often the person you say that too – instead of saying, 'How terrible! You should definitely hold a grudge about Martin' – instead of saying that, people will say, 'Oh. Well, I mean, I'm sure Martin didn't *mean* to do that. I mean, he was probably just holding the hammer carefully and it slipped, because, I mean, he is lovely. Remember that time he bought *me* a bunch of flowers?'

This is very often what will happen. And so, we get messages all the time from ourselves, from other people, from the world, that we must almost forgive immediately and banish our negative feelings in a sort of artificial way before they're ready to move on naturally. Now, I think that is directly related to the fact that the world is becoming more and more unforgiving.

I can't remember if I've said this quote before on this podcast, but it's certainly in my book and I think it's an amazing and very true quote. It's from Eckhart Tolle, who wrote *The Power of Now*. He said: 'Whatever we fight, we

strengthen. And what we resist, persists.’ This is so true of negative feelings. We are all going to have them. Not just once on a Friday when we’re twelve, but all the time. Every day, we will have some negative feelings. We’ll be cross, we’ll be upset, we’ll be something – you know – something that’s not jolly and lovely and idyllic. And if we try to repress these negative feelings then we deny their validity and we make them stronger. And then they express themselves in scary ways, like seeing on Twitter that somebody has been accused of doing something they might or might not have done, and joining in with the condemnation and saying, ‘Yeah! Of course he’s a git! How could he not be a git? I’m totally on the side of everyone who’s trashing him, without knowing any of the facts.’

So, if we want to make society and people more forgiving, a better way to proceed, I think, is to allow those naturally arising feelings of anger, sadness, betrayal, all things that are gonna arise naturally in our dealings with other people. And if we allow them, and also allow ourselves to hold a grudge about the grudge-sparking incident, then... Because, remember, in a previous episode, I’ve talked about how a grudge is not a feeling. So, we have those negative feelings in response to the sparking incident. We allow them, we welcome them, we embrace them, and already by doing that – by embracing your negative feelings – they then have nothing to resist. They will pass much more quickly, and we will find ourselves feeling more inclined to be benevolent and forgiving if we just allow ourselves at first to be angry, or whatever it is we naturally are.

But a grudge is not a feeling. So, while allowing the feelings, we can separately construct and create our grudge story. And in my book, *How to Hold a Grudge*, I go through in great detail how to actually get that grudge story written, processed.... There’s lots of stages and lots of detail. And in doing that, we focus on creating an artefact, which is the story. *That* is a positive, creative thing to do. It involves our analytical skills, because then we process the grudge, we categorise it, we grade it. All of this is, you know, laid out with step-by-step instructions in my book. And that is a constructive thing.

And so, just being engaged in that process takes our attention and focus away from stewing in negativity. So, our negative feelings which have been allowed to stay there and put up their feet and hang out there for as long as they want ... you know, they will just shift. Partly because they’re being made welcome. Partly because we’re focussing on something positive, which is writing this grudge story from which we can then learn lessons. We can reinforce our own

values that matter most to us. And so, that is why constructing and holding a grudge is an aid to forgiveness.

And I like to talk about it with an economic analogy. So, there's a chapter in my book called 'How to Balance your Grudge Budget', which it won't surprise you to learn I have abbreviated 'grudge budget' to 'grudget' because that's just such an irresistible word, waiting to be invented. And I do think it's like money. And what I say in the book is, if you imagine somebody gives you \$1,000,000 just out of the blue. You were not expecting it. You thought you knew what your income was likely to be for the rest of the year, for the foreseeable future. And you're walking down the road, and a benevolent stranger says, 'Here, I've got more money than I need. Have a million dollars,' and you think, 'Ooh! Amazing. I'm so thrilled. I've got this \$1,000,000 I wasn't expecting to get.' And you walk past a jeweller's shop and you see the most beautiful diamond ring which happens to cost exactly \$1,000,000.

Now, are you going to buy that ring? Probably not, because then you've got a lovely ring but you've got no more financial security than you had before. Most people in that situation, I think, would not spend that million dollars on a ring, however beautiful it was.

Now, imagine the same scenario again but slightly different. You're walking down the road, this generous stranger gives you \$15,000,000. Then you walk past the jeweller's shop. You see the ring for \$1,000,000. It's the most gorgeous ring you've seen. You would *love* to have that ring. Well, in that situation, you *might* buy it. Right? Because you've still got ...you could buy that ring and have the most beautiful piece of jewellery you've ever seen, and you would still have \$14,000,000. You would not worry about whether you could afford to pay your council tax. If you had \$14,000,000 you wouldn't worry about anything.

So, I think that's a really good analogy. If I have my grudge – my positive, instructive, protective grudge – firmly in place, and it goes something like this: *Remember that William set fire to my house so in future when I see William I'm gonna make sure that I see him far away from my house. When I next move, I'm not gonna give him my new address. But I am gonna keep in touch with him and, you know, I'm gonna continue the relationship in as much as I can.* You know, because, in some other ways I might like him, or whatever. I'm not actually advocating maintaining a relationship with someone who's tried to set fire to your house, but it's just a sort of extreme and silly example.

So, if I've got my grudge in place, which tells me how I need to behave differently towards William in future, how I'm gonna think differently about William in future, my grudge story will also reinforce that what William did to me and my house really matters. It was not okay. I never put any pressure on myself to kind of go on as if that never happened and wipe the slate clean. The slate has my grudge story on it and I want it to remain there. Then I'm protected. Then I've symbolically acknowledged that the wrong that was done to me mattered, and that will predispose me to be much more forgiving towards William. That will actually enable my mind and my heart to kind of clear and I don't have to fill my heart with angry thoughts about William because my grudge story is there to tell me all that I need to know and remember. So then my heart, if it wants to, can be free to think, 'Well, I actually love William despite everything.'

So, I believe that if we could start to think of holding grudges in the right way as being an aid to forgiveness, we might actually make the world a more forgiving place. Because the world is terribly unforgiving, and that is going to cause even more problems than it's already causing. If you look almost anywhere, on the news, online, in your personal life, you will see many, many instances of how a lack of forgiveness is making things a whole lot worse for an awful lot of people. And I think that one of the things directly responsible for this state of affairs is that we're putting pressure on ourselves to forgive and move on and not live in the past. We're putting pressure on ourselves in completely the wrong way. And so we're creating resistance to that, and so everyone feels slighted and invalidated and more angry.

Now, I'm gonna consult my guest experts, Helen Acton and Anne Grey, about this topic, because I would imagine they've both had many, many therapy patients over the years, and I would imagine that forgiving someone or perhaps the inability to forgive someone, or the inability to forgive yourself, is something that comes up an awful lot in therapy.

Anne and Helen. Can you see any logic in my theory that actually giving ourselves permission to hold a grudge and formally creating that grudge and deciding to keep it actually enables us to be more forgiving? Or are you unconvinced? Do you still believe that holding a grudge is the opposite of forgiving someone?

HA: *I can see that holding a grudge in the way you describe it is a way of bearing witness to the experience. This experience mattered. What you felt about what happened to you mattered and matters and continues to matter, and that vowing to yourself that you won't forget it, I think, paradoxically, could allow you to forgive. Because, very often, choosing not to forgive is about a need to keep something alive.*

You know, it's a need to say – it is a way of saying, 'This matters. I'm not going to forgive you, because this matters. It hurt me.' But, actually, if you can find another way to say it matters, then that could allow you to let go of that need to keep it alive.

Okay. So, that sounds like you do broadly agree, then?

HA: *I think, in terms of your definition...*

My definition, yeah.

HA: *... of grudges. I think that...*

Yes, I'm definitely talking about *my* definition of grudges.

HA: *Because your definition doesn't include bitterness. And I think that's a really key distinction...*

Yeah.

HA: *... between, perhaps, a more traditional definition of 'grudge' and the way you talk about it.*

Yeah, yeah. Okay. What about you, Anne?

AG: *Yeah. I agree with Helen. I think you said that beautifully. And what I would say is that, what you're doing in – with your way of dealing with grudges, is you're allowing yourself to step back from the emotional intensity of the original feelings. So, by making a story, and especially when you're able to give the story a title, maybe even use humour, you're detaching yourself from the intensity of the original feelings... of the original hurt, if you like. The original wound.*

Yeah.

AG: *That's all extremely healthy. So, in doing that, you're able to then see that you have a choice, then, whether or not you continue in the original feelings of anger or blame, or whatever it is against the person involved, or whether you feel you actually want to be freed up to forgive the person. Because we know that forgiveness is very freeing. If we're carrying unforgiveness with us, then what happens is we're carrying that incident, that person, with us.*

And what does forgiveness mean to you? Because I've heard different definitions. I mean, we've been talking about the two different definitions of grudges: my correct one and the widely-accepted, completely wrong one. *[General laughter]* But there are different definitions of forgiveness. I heard forgiveness defined by some self-help writer – I can't remember who it was, but somebody defined forgiveness as simply letting go of the negative feelings so that they're not there, they're not bothering you any more. And whoever it was that said this said that it's actually nothing to do with your thoughts about the other person – you can behave or think about them however you want – but forgiveness to this person just simply meant the negative feelings are gone and you're no longer sort of having them inside you. And I was surprised by this definition, because that was not what I understood forgiveness to mean.

HA: *What did you understand it to mean, then?*

Well, I understood it to mean that you feel positive about that person again. So, your feelings for them are not in any way less friendly, charitable, affectionate than they were before the incident, even if your thoughts and behaviour have changed. So, I have many people that I have grudges about – I always say 'grudges about', not 'grudges against', because a good grudge shouldn't be against anybody – so, I have people in my life who I have grudges about but I feel every bit as benevolent towards them as I would if I didn't have the grudge, and yet I might think and behave differently because of some past incident.

So, I guess my definition of forgiveness is: your feelings for that person haven't been impaired. You don't like them less. You're not less favourably disposed towards them emotionally... which is different from 'I'm not angry any more,' I think. So, I think the difference, actually, between the two definitions is: this self-help author that I read, whoever it was – the other person and how you felt about them wasn't mentioned in the description of forgiveness. It was just: the negative feelings have gone, you're no longer clinging onto them – that's it. Whereas my definition of forgiveness is: positive feelings again, as if the

incident hadn't happened, but because of the grudge, different thoughts, behaviours, and lessons learned, because of the incident that sparked the grudge.

HA: *I think for me, Sophie, I would agree more with your definition. I mean, I think, in a sense, you're talking about two different ways of thinking about us as human beings. One is that we, you know, the idea that we are entirely responsible for our own feelings; that no one can make you feel anything. You'll often hear, you know, positive psychology people say that. Versus an idea which is a much more relational idea – that we are in the world, with people, and the way we experience ourselves is always in relation to people. We don't live in a little sort of bubble of isolation... Which is the way I think about us. You know, forgiveness, for me, is a very relational concept. It's about you and the other person.*

Yeah.

HA: *It's about an exchange of feelings with the other person. And, to me, the idea of forgiving somebody privately in a little room entirely separate from them doesn't really make a lot of sense. So, for me, whether you express it or don't to that person, absolutely it will be about informing how you now feel about that person.*

Okay. Anne, would you... Which of the definitions resonates most with you?

AG: *Well, I think both are helpful and, if you like, I'd like to – I guess I'd like to combine them. For me, it's... one way of saying this is, it's never about the outside. It's never about the other person. It's never about the outside circumstances. There's always a choice for us to place our awareness on how we wish to feel now, right now in the moment. It was coming back to this moment now. And so, if there's a sense that somebody has done something which we need to forgive, and if we're carrying that with us, then that's disturbing our peace right now. And for me, I don't want anything to disturb my peace right now, and I always want to relate to others with love and compassion.*

So, if somebody has done something to hurt me – or, rather, has done something which I feel things of hurt about; I feel angry or upset, rejected, whatever it might be – then I would see that as something for me to address. And that might involve speaking to the other person and saying something, but I would hope that I would be able to act with wisdom and discernment, which is

what I see you doing with the way that you're describing how to hold a grudge; that you're remembering and valuing your experience, and you're then using that to inform your behaviour now. And I would say you're doing that with wisdom and discernment. So, I would hope to do the same thing, but I would hope to be able to release any feelings that I have about the other person because, for me, it's never about the other person anyway.

Let's talk about this because this, actually, I had it in mind as something I wanted to ask you both. I am, as you both know, really hooked on self-help. I just love reading self-help books. Apart from crime, self-help is the genre which I read most. And I have recently-ish discovered this podcast called *The Life Coach School*, the host of which is a life coach and a life coach instructor, so she trains life coaches as well. Her name is Brooke Castillo, and she's an American woman. And her podcast, *The Life Coach School*, is so interesting and gripping and I'm completely addicted to it, but one of the things she says ...

A lot of what she says, I just instantly agree with and go, 'Yeah! This is so right. This is so wise!' And I've kind of adopted a lot of her theories. But one thing she says quite often that I always kind of think, 'Oh, hang on a minute. Really not sure about that, I might still have to disagree with you about that,' is that she often says, 'Nobody else has the power to hurt us, ever. Nothing anyone else does can ever hurt us. It is we who decide either to give people the power to affect our feelings or to not give them the power and to retain power ourselves over our own feelings. Nobody can hurt us or make us suffer apart from us.'

Now, in my experience, that doesn't chime with my experience of life, because I'm pretty sure that even if I thought to myself, 'From now on, nothing anyone says or does to me will make me suffer at all because I'm gonna choose not to,' and I can see the brilliance of the theory... if I could apply that, I might well do it because it would be ace. Someone could be really vile to you and you could just go, 'I'm not suffering because of this,' and that would be great. But I don't – I certainly believe that *I* could never get to the point where nobody could make me suffer at all. And so, I was interested – I actually wrote it in my notes. Can other people hurt us, or not?

Helen, you have strong views! I can tell from the look on your face.

HA: *I do have strong views on this. I couldn't disagree with her more on this. I think it's a really dangerous positive psychology-esque theory, that doesn't fit with human nature. It doesn't fit with the human condition, and I think it*

absolves the hurter of the responsibility, and places it on the hurtee, for the feelings that have been created in whatever's gone on between those two people. And I think, again, it shifts the focus from a relational dynamic, which is about what happens between two people, it shifts the focus from that onto 'me in my little bubble and what am I going to choose to feel?' And, to me, that just isn't the human condition.

And I think, also, it is a close relative of the idea that, you know, we were talking about in an earlier episode. The idea that we are responsible for getting breast cancer because we have in some way behaved badly. I think somebody who has then been perhaps abused very badly – are they responsible for feeling hurt by that? No. it's the responsibility of the person who hurt them.

But I would also come back to, just, the conversation we just had about forgiveness. For me, forgiveness isn't the end goal. I think there are many situations where forgiveness isn't necessarily the most helpful thing to do or feel. So, for me, it isn't always about getting to a place of peace and serenity and forgiveness. It's something more alive than that and I think that aliveness is, again, relational. It's about how we are with other people. And the reality of that is, of course people can hurt us. We might have options about what we do with those feelings, but nevertheless somebody else did something hurtful to us that made us feel hurt.

So, probably like me, you would be much happier with a less bold claim along those lines. Because I have no problem accepting the view that people can do hurtful things to us and we can try and sort of tailor our reactions to that to protect ourselves and minimise.

HA: *Absolutely.*

You know, we don't have to just sort of respond by going, 'You hurt me and now I'm hurt forever.' We can sort of use various tactics.

HA: *We have lots of choices about what we might do with that feeling.*

Yeah.

HA: *But it doesn't stop the fact of somebody hurt us.*

But it doesn't mean that somebody has hurt us. Yes.

HA: *Hasn't. Yeah.*

Yeah. I think I agree with that. Anne, what do you think about that? Do you? I mean – you are the most – in terms of, like, enlightenment and positive thinking as presented by the sort of self-help industry – you and Eckhart Tolle, the author of *The Power of Now*, are the only two people I've ever encountered (so, I know you and I don't know Eckhart but I've read him) ... You and he are the only people I've ever encountered who I actually do believe you are properly enlightened.

So, like, I can't imagine you... Let's say you're in your kitchen one morning with your husband, and you open your emails, and someone's sent you a really annoying manipulative passive aggressive email. I can't imagine you even in the moment reacting by going, 'Look at what this annoying rotter has sent me. I'm so pissed off.' And I can't even imagine you feeling that or saying anything along those lines. And I can't imagine Eckhart Tolle doing that either.

So, have you reached a point in your sort of enlightenment journey where you feel nobody can hurt you, and it's all up to you now and how to react?

AG: *Well, I would say that... Thank you very much. [laughs] I still can feel hurt, definitely, and still emotion runs through. I mean, I was – I had an episode of road rage the other week. This is very funny, actually, because I was very tired. My husband and I had travelled back from France the night before.*

Yeah.

AG: *And [laughs] this is just very funny, listeners, because we've just gone into complete darkness.*

[general laughter]

Yes. Here we are talking about enlightenment, and all the lights in the room where we're recor.... Ah! There they are. Enlightenment! The lights have come back on!

AG: *Let there be light.*

Yes. *[laughs]*

AG: *Yes. I was very tired. I'd had a very... we'd driven back from France the night before. I'd had very little sleep. I was driving with my husband. Somebody beeped me very aggressively from behind and I swore at them. My husband was on the phone to my oldest son [laughs] and so, not only did my husband witness me swearing, but so did my eldest son.*

So, no, of course, things flash through us still. You know, certainly in my experience, just talking about myself. Yeah, of course. You know, I can still feel hurt if somebody says something rude or unkind.

Yeah. So, would you then disagree with the premise that nobody else can ever hurt us?

AG: *It's rather.... It's more to do with coming back to the moment. And, if we're talking about enlightenment, this is my understanding of enlightenment: that we're able to choose, now, for peace, now. It's only ever about now.*

But don't you have to – before you make that choice to feel peace now – you have to experience the thing that you want the peace *from*?

AG: *Well...*

Presumably, you have to... I mean, I guess, actually, Brooke Castillo would not say that we can make it so that we never feel even a moment of hurt or anger. She does say that she has to do what she calls 'regular thought-work,' so that when something happens that could potentially hurt her, she presumably has to sort of say to herself, 'Right! I'm gonna choose not to be hurt,' in response to that (presumably) feeling of hurt that arises inside her.

But I'm very pedantic about these definitions. If someone says to me, 'No one can hurt you,' what I take that to mean is that they're saying, literally, no one can make me experience even a nanosecond of hurt, which I don't agree with.

AG: *So, I would just say it a different way, I think, which is that we're human beings. You know, it's very like that. I don't know about Eckhart Tolle, but in my own experience I know, of course, there's still emotion. And that's a wonderful thing. It's a wonderful thing to experience human emotion. But my experience of it is that I don't want to hold onto it. I want it to move through. So, if there's upset or whatever it is, I want it to be able to move through me, so that I can choose to have the experience that I want now.*

Yeah.

AG: *Because the experience of peace now is so much more attractive. It's so much more rewarding than going into thoughts about all the feelings. It's so much more rewarding than an expiration of thinking or emotion. So, it's not pushing emotion away. It's allowing that – allowing it to move thorough. It's not judging myself or anyone for having emotion. Absolutely not. But it's saying, when we notice – when we become aware of the moment, then we have a choice in that moment, to place our awareness on what we really want.*

And is it always in that moment? So, won't there be... because I absolutely can accept that we can behave and think and feel in a certain way that will encourage negative feelings to pass more quickly, but I certainly can't banish or process negative feelings in a brief moment. So, if something happens that makes me very angry or very upset, it will generally take me a couple of weeks before I'm kind of feeling a bit more, 'Oh well, right,' cheer up again.

Or I might be happy in the rest of my life, but if something significant happens which makes me angry or upset, yes, the negative feelings will pass, but not in the moment. I couldn't be all peaceful about it ten minutes afterwards.

AG: *Well, I use other techniques to help with that, as you know. I mean, I use EFT – emotional freedom technique – which I find enormously helpful in enabling things to move through more quickly, whether that's something that's happening right now or whether it's a memory from the past that's still disrupting my peace now, or if it's fear for the future, anxiety for the future, whatever it is – then I would definitely use a technique to help me. If it wasn't going through easily and gracefully and I wasn't able to, just right now, come back to, you know, my peace now, the eye of the storm now, if you like... even if the energies and the emotions are running through, it's still possible to go to inner peace, to the eye of the storm. But if it isn't, if I'm caught up in the storm, I will do something to help me.*

So, in my experience – you know, in my case – I would use EFT or I would take a homeopathic remedy or a flower essence or any of the things. You know, there are very many beautiful, amazingly effective therapies out there that can assist us to move these things more gracefully.

Interesting. it's so great to hear these different perspectives. I just love the fact that we all actually see things slightly differently, which is really interesting.

Well, thank you very much to Helen and Anne for that amazing contribution. It's really wonderful to have proper experts on this podcast, because, as I hope I've fully confessed many times, I'm just someone with strong views about grudges. I'm not a therapist of any sort, so it's great to have proper therapists to discuss these things with.

And I wanna finish this episode with one little anecdote. Because, probably, some of you are still thinking, 'Yeah, but, come on. Holding a grudge *is* the opposite of forgiving someone, and, however you dress it up in fancy words, we're still gonna think that holding a grudge is the opposite of forgiving.'

So, I just want to tell you a little story. I was talking to a relative of mine. Let's call her Amelia. I was talking to Amelia, and Amelia had just been massively let down and treated appallingly by somebody she cared about, and she said to me, 'I really want revenge. I want to destroy him. I want to attack him, and I just want to do something so awful to him, to make him suffer like he's made me suffer.'

Now, when I heard this, my actual emotional reaction was, 'Oh, yikes. This is sounding really dangerous. She definitely shouldn't do anything at all other than just steer clear of him in future.' I was about to open my mouth and try and say that in the most tactful and diplomatic way possible, and I suddenly thought, 'No. Anything I say now... you know, she is justifiably furious and wounded, and if I say *anything*, even however mild, it's going to cause more resistance in her.

So, instead, I said, 'Okay, you wanna wreak a terrible revenge. Here's what you *could* do.' And then I described a terrible revenge – a really inspired and creative... I mean, I was quite proud of myself for thinking of this dastardly plan. But I just outlined it step by step, as though I... you know, as though I was kind of saying, 'Yeah, well, why don't you do this? This is a great terrible revenge.'

And as she listened, her face sort of changed. And as I got to the end of my horrific revenge plan, she just sort of turned to me and went, 'No. I... No, I think that would be terrible, if I did that. You know what? I think I'm just gonna avoid him from now on.'

And I was so thrilled. I was like, 'Yes! I have successfully used reverse psychology!' Whereas if I'd said anything like, 'Oh, come on, that's a bit harsh,' or, 'Oh, you shouldn't really do anything,' she would have said, 'Well, it's alright for you to say. You're not the one he betrayed. I think I'm actually going to kill him.'

So, this is what I mean. I didn't invalidate her feelings. By laying out a revenge plan, I was acknowledging her right to have a grudge, and I still believe she has every right to have a grudge against this person who behaved so appallingly. And then she didn't have to fight to prove to me that her grudge was valid, and then she lost her desire for revenge.

And so, you can do this in your own head. Allow yourself to dream up an elaborate and brilliant revenge plan. As long as you don't do it, it's not doing any harm, and you might find that by being sort of indulged in this way, your negative feelings will pass very quickly. And when I say, 'you might find,' what I mean by that is that I think you definitely will find that. Because holding a grudge, allowing yourself official permission to do so, is a massive aid to being able to forgive emotionally much more quickly.

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 grudges, justice, and karma. See you then.