

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 Two: A Grudge is Not a Feeling.

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Now, I've read lots and lots of dictionary definitions of the word 'grudge' and I think they're all wrong. You might think, 'Well, the dictionary knows more about it than you do,' and normally I'd be inclined to think that too.

But the trouble is: when I read the dictionary definitions, they don't correspond at all to how I define my grudges. They are really really *not* descriptions of the grudges that I hold, and I think this could explain why I think grudges can be great and the dictionaries I've looked at definitely don't seem to think that.

So, first of all, let me read you some of the dictionary definitions. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says: 'A grudge is a long-lasting feeling of resentment or dislike.' The *Collins English Dictionary* says: 'A grudge is a persistent feeling of resentment, especially one due to some cause, such as an insult or injury.' *Urban Dictionary* defines a grudge as: 'A bad feeling or hate that you hold against another person for something bad they did or you think they did to you.'

So, all of those three definitions have something in common. They all say that a grudge is a feeling, and they all say that a grudge is a *negative* kind of feeling – resentment, dislike, hate... all of these are bad things. Now, I don't think a grudge is a feeling. A feeling might be a symptom of a grudge, and often when we have a grudge, it might be accompanied by strong feelings, and some of those might be negative. Like, your grudge might be accompanied by hate or rage or bitterness or annoyance or anything like that. But it's complicated

because those feelings might be a result of the incident or event that caused the grudge. And I think it's really important to separate out the feelings that initially might be attached to your grudge because those feelings are there as a result of the incident that caused the grudge, from the grudge itself.

I know that a grudge cannot be a feeling of resentment or anger because most of my grudges... certainly all of the ones that are in my book, *How to Hold a Grudge*, and all of the ones that I'm gonna tell you about on this podcast... last week, some of you will remember that I told you a story about Richard and Sarah who made me sleep in a very dirty bed in their house). When I think about that story, I have no anger, no resentment, no negative feelings, I don't sort of have any dark thoughts about them. In fact, what happens when I think about that story of Richard and Sarah and the gritty bed, the only feeling I have is this kind of delight, really. I just think it's so funny that that happened. It's so funny that I stayed with some friends and they said, 'I hope you realise we're not gonna bother to give you clean bedding or anything like that; you'll just have to take the bed as you find it...' And then I went upstairs and how I found the bed was full of grit and sand. That actually strikes me as really hilarious, and when I remember myself lying there, thinking, 'Not really sure what to think about this. Should I just try and go to sleep amid the sand? Or should I, you know, get up and do something about this?' I just find it immensely entertaining. So, no negative feelings at all.

So, okay. If I was gonna be true to the dictionary definitions that I've just read you, and if I was gonna respect those definitions, I would have to conclude that my grudge about Richard and Sarah is not a grudge. I would have to think, 'How can this be a grudge? It hasn't got *any* negative feelings attached to it.' And yet, it *is* a grudge, because I remember it. It still feels like something I want to remember. When I think about Richard and Sarah it is part of – part of the group of things I want to be aware of and remember in relation to them. And I don't feel exactly the same way about them as I feel about all the friends of mine that I've stayed overnight with who have always given me a clean bed to sleep in. I have different thoughts and different feelings as a result of what happened at Richard and Sarah's house *vis a vis* the gritty bed.

Okay. So, I don't think that those definitions, therefore, in all those dictionaries can be correct. I think what's happened there is that the dictionaries are thinking that because there might have been negative feelings initially, at the immediate aftermath of the incident, that those have to sort of be hard-baked into your grudge, and that if you hold that grudge, say, for ten years, that those negative feelings will always remain.

So, my view about negative feelings is: you have to allow them to be there. If somebody treats you badly or unfairly or cruelly, you're going to have negative feelings like hurt and betrayal and maybe disgust or anger... Those feelings are going to arise naturally inside you, and if you have this idea in your head that you shouldn't hold a grudge, that you should forgive, that you should move on, that will often have the effect of you, kind of, putting pressure on yourself. You might think, 'Damn! Richard and Sarah are my friends. I don't want to be having negative, angry feelings about them. That might mean that I'm a negative, angry person, and it's always wrong to hold grudges, isn't it? So, I must forgive them, I must not feel these negative feelings, I must feel positive feelings.'

And the trouble is that when you put pressure on yourself not to feel those negative feelings that have naturally risen within you... the effect that has is that it strengthens the negative feeling. The guilt that you punish yourself with for having the negative feeling, the idea that you punish yourself with, that you shouldn't be the kind of person who remembers things and holds grudges .... The effect that actually has is to make your negative feelings more powerful and more resistant.

And if someone wrongs you, if you allow yourself to think, 'That was out of order, what they did, and I'm understandably angry about it because I know that I deserve to be treated better, and I'm not gonna put *any* pressure on myself to not feel angry, because there's nothing wrong with me feeling angry in this situation. It's just perfectly natural and it's justifiable...' If you adopt that approach instead, although this sounds counterintuitive and unexpected, what actually happens is that your negative feelings, having been welcomed in and allowed, they will actually pass more quickly. Whereas, if you try to resist them, they will bubble away under the surface, and you might succeed in convincing yourself that you have no negative feelings about the person who just punched you in the face for no reason, but then the next day when you're running for a bus and someone else steps in front of you by accident, you might turn on that person and savage them, even though they've done nothing wrong, because your negative feelings that you've tried so hard to repress from the situation where you had every right to feel negative feelings have kind of splurged up, and they're spilling over now into areas of your life where they don't belong.

So, it's much easier, much better, and much more in line, actually, with inner peace and enlightenment and all those good things to allow those negative emotions. But it's also important, I think, to distinguish them from what a

grudge is. So, these definitions, I think, are wrong on so many levels. First of all, I am living that you can have a grudge for many years and for it to have no negative feelings embedded in it. So, therefore, if that's possible, a grudge is not a feeling. It can't be.

And I know loads of people who I've said, you know, 'Tell me about your grudges,' and they tell me these stories in a, you know, delighted and humorous way, and it's absolutely clear that there's no negative emotion at all wrapped around that grudge story. But the grudge story is still there, and they keep it, and they think of it as a grudge, and they like having it. And I think those of us who like having their grudge collections, we wouldn't like them if they were filling us with bitter negativity. We like them because we've realised that a grudge doesn't have to be and shouldn't be accompanied by negative feelings that are going to make us feel miserable.

Other problems with these definitions... and, so, let's look again at the Collins dictionary one. *A persistent feeling of resentment...* Okay, so we've dealt with the 'persistent feeling'; the resentment needn't persist. The resentment can have vanished or evaporated within a week of the original inciting incident, and the persistent thing is just the desire to remember the story. But then the Collins definition goes on to say, *especially one due to some cause such as an insult or injury.* Now, that can be true. Many, many grudges – probably even most grudges – are caused by what we perceive as an insult or injury. But it's also possible to have a grudge about someone who you *know* has done absolutely nothing wrong.

So, a good example of this sort of grudge is the Territorial Grudge. Now, in a future episode I'm gonna talk about all the different grudge types. I've invented a classification system, because no one else has ever done any work on grudges, so I couldn't refer to someone else's classifications system, so I had to invent my own. And I'll be telling you about all the different grudge types in a later episode, but I'm just gonna talk about this one type now, which is the Territorial Grudge. Now, that's really common when someone has done absolutely nothing wrong, and yet because we feel that they've sort of invaded what we think of as our territory, we have a grudge at them. And we can have that grudge while acknowledging that they've done absolutely nothing wrong before.

So, a good example of that is... let's say that there's a house which has been up for sale for ages, and it's about six houses down the road from your house. And then, one day, you see that that house has a 'Sold' board in the garden, and

you think, 'Ah! Okay, that house is sold.' And then, a few weeks later, you see a removals firm van, and your new neighbour is moving in, and lo and behold, that new neighbour is your boss from work. Now, whatever you think about your boss – and actually, let's make this more interesting by saying that you really like your boss. She's great, you get on with her, she's maybe even a friend of yours outside of work. And there she is, moving in six houses down from you. She hasn't told you that she's going to do this. She didn't ever say to you, 'Hey, I went for a viewing of a house that's just near you.'

She knows where you live, she knows very well. After the viewing when she made the offer, had it accepted, she still didn't tell you. She still didn't come in and say, 'Hey! Just to let you know, I've had an offer accepted on a house down the road from you.' She didn't tell you; she also therefore didn't ask you, and you might have strong views on which would be appropriate. Maybe you think, well, if she'd just told you then that would be better and you wouldn't have any need to have a grudge. Or you might think, 'Actually, telling isn't enough. She should *ask* me. If I was going to move in six houses down from someone I knew really well and saw every day at work, I would definitely say to them, 'Hey, you know, how would you feel about this? Because obviously, you know, I don't want to move in if you would feel weird about having me just down the road.'"

So you might have a quite powerful grudge about your boss for doing that, but at the same time, hopefully, if you're a reasonable human being, you might think: 'Come on. Anyone can buy whatever house they want. Even if the house had been next door to me – even nearer than six houses down – my boss is a free agent. That house is for sale. I don't get to decide and control who lives on my street.' You might be really aware of all those reasons why technically your boss hasn't done anything wrong at all, and yet you might still hold a powerful grudge.

Now, another great example of this – and this is something I know of from a personal situation... so, let's say we've got two friends, Mary and Suzanne, and they've been best friends since childhood, and then suddenly Suzanne starts to date and go out with and to fall in love with Mary's brother. Now, again, there's no reason technically why she shouldn't do that. There's no obligation for Suzanne to think, 'Well, I will regard Mary's brother as off-limits to me, just as much off-limits as if he were Mary's boyfriend.' I think most people would agree that to get together with your friend's boyfriend and steal him away from her, that is not a good thing to do if you're a friend, and most people would understand that a grudge might result from that sort of behaviour. But to go out with your best friend's brother – well, what's the problem with that? Your

best friend is not in love with her brother. There's no sort of betrayal involved there. The brother is a single bloke and available to be gone out with.

So... and that, in fact, in the real situation that I know of, that is very much what Suzanne and the brother both strongly argued. 'Why the hell shouldn't we get together? We're both free single people. Our getting together isn't in any way an action that's against Mary, and so she shouldn't take it as such. And if we were to deny ourselves the opportunity to get together and form this relationship, we would be ruining what would potentially be a really great relationship just to keep Mary happy, because Mary in an ideal world wouldn't want her brother and best friend to get together.' So... you know... I don't know whose side you'd be on in that scenario, but I think rationally you'd have to say the brother and Suzanne have got a totally valid point there.

And yet, I totally can see how Mary would be really upset and would have a grudge, and would maybe think, you know, 'Yes. Okay. They've got a perfect right to get together, but I just think that they could have just not done that. Because they must surely know how uncomfortable this is for me.'

This kind of situation is actually referred to in the TV show *Seinfeld*. I don't know if any of you watch *Seinfeld*. If you haven't seen it, you really should watch it. It's the most brilliant and hilarious show. And linked to *Seinfeld* and very similar to it in some ways is another show called *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Both are created or co-created by Larry David, who is brilliant and hilarious, and both shows – both *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* – are all about grudges. The grudges we hold against other people for serious or trivial reasons; the grudges other people hold about us... so I would really recommend, if any of you are thinking of training to become grudge gurus, watch every episode of *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

In one episode of *Seinfeld*, George Costanza is outraged because somebody from one area of his life suddenly turns up in an area of his life where he did not expect that person to turn up. And he goes mad about it, and he can't bear it, and he calls it 'worlds colliding.' So, in the Mary, Suzanne, and the brother example, that is what Mary doesn't like: the fact that her two worlds have collided. And, you know, there are loyalty and privacy issues involved. So, if she's been telling Suzanne all of her secrets for her whole life, she would have reasonably expected that those secrets would have never been relayed to her brother. But if suddenly Suzanne is getting together with her brother and if that relationship lasts, well, pretty soon Suzanne might have a bigger loyalty to the

brother than she does to Mary, and so there's no guarantee that she won't then tell him some or all of Mary's secrets.

So, that kind of think Mary might well worry about and might well cause a Territorial Grudge. And none of the dictionary definitions acknowledge that we can have a grudge about someone who's done nothing wrong. And I think most proud and practised grudge-holders would acknowledge that you sometimes can.

So. Okay. A grudge is not a feeling. I hope I've proved that to everyone's satisfaction. And it's not always something that we have or hold about somebody when they've done something wrong. So, then, what is it? If I don't think that's what it is, what do I think it is?

And when I was writing my book about grudges, I thought, 'Well, I need to have a definition that I can work with, and I need to have a sort of detailed definition and a more quick definition.' So, this is what I came up with for what my definition of a grudge is – and by that I mean what a grudge *should be*. So, yes, a grudge can be a feeling of immense hatred that lasts for forty years. I don't think it should be; I think that is a bad and dangerous grudge that could cause you harm, that could cause other people harm, and in a future episode I'll talk a bit about the kinds of grudges that we all shouldn't have. But for my definition of a grudge, I'm talking about what I think a grudge should be and can be and what the word means to me.

So, this is what a great grudge can or should be. *A true story from your past, involving a negative hurtful or suboptimal experience of some sort, that it feels important to remember, now and into the future.* So, the minute we accept that our grudges are stories, and not bad feelings, then that immediately takes some of the potential harmfulness out of the grudge.

So, it's a story about something that happened in the past (this is now a slightly longer definition). And the past can be, you know, ten years ago or two seconds ago. Once you become an experienced grudge-holder, you will notice that you start to form grudges in real time. And that is brilliant for a range of reasons – and I've noticed this change in myself. So, what used to be the case was that I was someone who kind of just happened to have grudges. A negative experience would happen – someone would upset me or annoy me – and I would feel all the negative feelings that arose naturally from that experience. And then some time later, I would realise that either the feelings were still there, or I still had that grudge – I would kind of become aware of it much later,

as something that popped up in my mind when I thought about that person or something that hadn't gone away.

That was before I consciously decided that holding grudges was good and something I was gonna do deliberately and consciously, and knowing it was a beneficial thing to do. But once I'd had lots of practice at that way of approaching grudges, what I found often happened was that, as the inciting incident was occurring ... so, sometimes I'm gonna call this the inciting incident, sometimes I'm gonna call it the grudge-sparking incident, or the GSI. So if you hear me talking about the GSI, I mean the grudge-sparking incident.

And so, I am noticing, as I become a more experienced and practised grudge-holder, that the grudge starts to form in a very conscious way, as the inciting incident is happening. And so, what will often happen is ... Let's say, I'm having a conversation with somebody and they suddenly start to be massively horrible and unreasonable, I almost get to bypass the stage where I feel outraged and angry and hurt and upset. Because as soon as that bad behaviour starts, the grudge collecting voice in my head will say, 'Oh! Let's get your antennae ready and polished for this incident. This seems like something that might be grudge-worthy.'

And then I will observe what's happening, assessing it for whether indeed it is grudge-worthy, in which case I need to start thinking about my grudge story, what sort of a grudge is it, what grade of a grudge is it... so as well as inventing a classifications system of grudge types, I've also invented a sort of grading or scoring system, which will enable you to – and enable me to – evaluate how powerful your grudge is. So, I'm thinking about all these things, often, while the grudge-sparking incident is actually taking place. And that means that I don't have an awful lot of energy left over for feeling upset, feeling angry, feeling, 'How could he do this to me?'

I might still have those feelings, but they are very, very weak and transient. Another reason that they're so weak and transient is that there's part of me thinking, 'Yay! Another great grudge!' Now that I'm someone who really understands that grudges are good for us, or can be and should be good for us, it's actually not that bad a thing to happen, to get a new one. And if you get a new one of a new type, that's really good.

So, I've got a new grudge. This is my newest grudge that I'm gonna tell you about, and it's a new type. So, I have a friend who very much doesn't like being asked to do something – being asked to do anything that he might not want to

do. I don't know whether this is because he finds it hard to say 'no,' or he just resents the idea that anyone might ever ask him to do anything... I'm not sure, because I've never discussed it with him overtly. But he does like every other possible kind of communication. And he's a very chatty person, and he's always wanting to chat about this, that, and the other.

So, knowing what kind of person he is, I try as much as I can not to ever ask him to do anything. But this isn't always possible because sometimes we're jointly involved in things – work-related things – where I have to ask him to do something. And I've noticed that what he does – and this has come up recently – he just doesn't answer any of the sort of conversational openings that I make about whether or not he will do the thing. He just doesn't answer them. He just acts as if I haven't sent him those emails, while at the same time emailing me constantly about other stuff that he wants to chat about and that he wants me to answer.

So, I haven't yet had time to give this kind of grudge a name. But if I had to think of a name off the top of my head, I might call it a Selective Communication Grudge. So, I am someone who – and I didn't realise this until my friend showed me that I'm this kind of person by my reactions to his behaviour – I am someone who believes that if I'm in communication with someone, that necessarily involves, and ought to involve, answering the bits of the conversation that are important to them as well as just talking about the things I want to talk about. So, I don't think I would enter into a conversation with someone, or allow a conversation to continue, if I wasn't willing to respond to something they wanted to ask me. I wouldn't just ignore their questions about the thing that was obviously important to them, as if they didn't exist while bombarding them with all the stuff that I wanted to chat about, and expecting them to engage with that.

So, again, there's no anger at all about this. I don't think my friend is a terrible person or selfish. In fact, he's not selfish. He's a very – he's a very considerate and thoughtful person in loads of ways, but for whatever reason, he's just decided that it's absolutely fine for him to ignore fairly urgent questions that I need answers to from him. So, you know, I find this fascinating. I would not have thought... I kind of noticed this vaguely, this tendency in him before, but because I thought, 'Well, surely no one would actually do that,' I just thought, 'Oh no, you know, maybe he just didn't receive that email.'

But recently I've had a chance to see a proper lengthy example of this behaviour, and it's definitely a thing. You know, it's definitely not that my

emails have gone astray. He's literally just choosing not to answer them, so... Amazing, I've got a new grudge type, Selective Communication Grudge, and, you know, that's a great thing for me. And when I noticed that he was behaving in this way and decided to form this grudge, I mean, I didn't have any time or energy or inclination to feel angry or hurt or anything like that, but it was a story that I'd want to tell myself, that I wanted to share with other people maybe, as I've just shared it with you, and that I wanted to remember because it might influence – in fact, it will influence – how I relate to him in future.

So, it's not productive for me to have a relationship with him where I'm waiting for him to answer me about anything or I'm waiting for him to do something in order for me to do something that I need to do. That is not gonna work, because in a situation where I need someone else's contribution in order to do what I need to do, if that person just never answers me, that's not gonna work for me. So, from now on, my relationship with this chap will be just as friendly, just as nice, and I will like him just as much – but I'm never waiting for an answer from him in order to get on with what I need to do. That is part one of my definition. It's a story about something that happened in the past, that you don't want to forget. You want to hold onto it and to sort of bookmark it in your mind.

Now, why do you want to bookmark it? Because there's an important lesson in it. There's a signpost. There's something that you do or don't want to be or do. That sounds a bit tongue-twistery, so I'm gonna say that again. *There is something that you do or don't want to be or do.* And you want to use this grudge story to reinforce your resolve in this regard. So, you know, I want to be someone who always answers queries promptly, even the ones where I think, 'Argh, that's a pain. Oh, not that thing. Someone's written to ask me what train I'm gonna be on, and do I want collecting from the station, and this is for an event that's in two months' time. I just want to watch *Better Call Saul* on Netflix. Huh, I just won't answer them.'

Now, we all have that temptation. We all think, 'I'll just neglect that email because that's a bit of a pain in the arse email, and I'll answer this nice one saying, you know, *Here's some gossip. Let me tell you a fascinating story.*' And I personally want to be someone who doesn't leave people waiting and wondering why they're not getting a reply. So, I'm gonna make more of an effort than I previously did, even if my reply is just, 'Afraid I can't think about this now, I'm snowed under, can I get back to you in a month?' Even just that is about making people feel that you're taking their needs into account as well as yours.

Okay, so the next part of my definition is: a grudge story might powerfully remind you of a value that you hold dear. So I guess that applies to my grudge story that I've just told you as well. so, a value that I hold dear is, you know, if I want people to take an interest in me and give me what I need then I have to take an interest in them and give them what they need. Reciprocity – the importance of reciprocity – is a value that I believe in.

In fact, one of the grudge types in my value gradation system is the Failure of Reciprocity Grudge. And that has two subspecies: there can be a Direct Failure of Reciprocity Grudge or an Indirect Failure of Reciprocity Grudge. He doesn't ever answer any of the questions I ask him: that's a Direct Failure of Reciprocity Grudge.

An indirect one, and I've had experience of this as well... I refrain from tweeting, for example... I'm a big Twitter addict and I have a policy that if something is upsetting then I'm not gonna retweet it, I'm not going to draw people's attention to it. So, you know, sometimes I'll see something on Twitter. Let's say it's a petition to stop animal cruelty, and often those petitions are accompanied by really upsetting photos of animals being badly tweeted. I will sign that petition. I won't retweet it and say, 'Everyone should sign this,' or 'Look at this petition, you might want to sign it,' because if it's got a photograph of something awful happening to a lovely cute animal, I don't want people to see that on their Twitter timelines because I've put it there. So that is just a choice I've made. I don't want to draw people's attention to horrible things.

That could be the wrong decision I've made. You know, I would like it if lots of people signed that petition and by not retweeting it I'm not giving them the opportunity to. But I just know how I feel when someone retweets into my timeline something that really upsets me. And I don't want to give anyone else that experience, so an Indirect Failure of Reciprocity Grudge might be that Maureen, who I follow on Twitter, is retweeting lots of petitions accompanied by really upsetting photos. That's an Indirect Failure of Reciprocity Grudge that I could have about Maureen.

So, she's not directly treating me in a worse way than I'm treating her, because she's not even aware of what I'm doing. She doesn't even know about my policy. But I have nevertheless got that policy, and I'm being considerate to Maureen by not retweeting upsetting things, and she's not being considerate in

the same way to me, even though she doesn't realise that there's this potential in our Twitter relationship for either reciprocity or the lack of it.

So, that is the value that you hold dear: reciprocity, in the case of my story. Our grudge stories will also contain new opinions or new thoughts formed since the grudge-sparking incident took place about the grudgee. Now, I'm gonna be using this word a lot. Your grudgee is the person about whom you hold your grudge. So, this new opinion might be really, really simple. It doesn't at all have to be, 'Maureen did this and therefore she's an absolute git of the first order.' The new opinion or the new thought might be, 'Maureen behaved in this way on that one occasion, which means that I now think differently about her in the following way.'

So, to use the Twitter example I've just given. I will think something as simple as, 'Maureen obviously thinks that it's fine and maybe even right and necessary to constantly tweet upsetting things that are going to upset or annoy people who follow her on Twitter.' That doesn't mean that I like her less. It doesn't mean I think she's a worse person than me. In this particular instance, I actually really don't know. Maybe I'm failing in some kind of moral duty by never tweeting anything that will make anybody's day a bit worse or upsetting or annoying.

So, it feels relevant to me to remember that Maureen doesn't have that policy, and, you know, particularly if she regularly posts things online which upset me, then I will have that new thought, 'Maureen regularly posts things online that upset me,' and I will have a new behaviour. Maybe I will mute Maureen on Twitter. Maybe I will unfollow her. Maybe I'll unfriend her on Facebook.

So. You've got your grudge-sparking incident. You've got the story, which is your grudge. The lesson you learn from it, the value that's reinforced by remembering the story, the changed thought, the changed behaviour. Now we come to the feelings. A good grudge or a great grudge shouldn't contain any negative feelings: anger, bitterness, rage, hate, any of those things. We might feel any or all of these things when the initial incident happens and even for a while afterwards.

Sometimes, you can be angry with someone for years. That usually suggests that you've either tried to repress that anger or you've not had any kind of justice as you see it, but feelings can last however long. But those feelings should be in a different compartment. They are *not* our grudge. A grudge doesn't have to have those feelings as part of it. I've had grudges where I've

had my grudge story and I've had some feelings, but as long as you don't think that those two things are inextricable and the same thing and all bound up together, then that's fine. Your feelings are your feelings. You have every right to feel them. A feeling can't ever be wrong. And no one can ever tell you you shouldn't be feeling that. People *do* tell us this all the time. But there's no point in telling someone they shouldn't feel the feelings that they're feeling, because *[laughs]*, you know, it's not gonna make those feelings go away.

As I've already said, the opposite approach is what deals with negative feelings more efficiently. Welcome them in, accept that they're there, and they'll pass when they're ready. Yes, those feelings might be there, but they're not part of our grudge.

However, a good grudge should make us feel something. It should make us feel empowered, wiser, sometimes entertained if there's a sort of funny or absurd aspect, but most of all what our grudges should make us feel is that the sparking incident matters. And this is the problem with saying to yourself or to someone else, 'You shouldn't hold a grudge, holding grudges is bad.'

You've probably all heard that quote, actually. It's been... This quote is everywhere. It's on every Pinterest board, it's all over the internet... 'Holding grudges is as pointless as drinking poison and then waiting for your enemy to die.' The idea is, you know, it only harms you; it doesn't harm the object of your grudge, or your grudgee, as I would say. And that quote has been attributed to just about everyone: Nelson Mandela, various random vicars, I've seen it attributed to lots of people. And when people say that, and advise us not to hold grudges and say, 'Don't have negative feelings, you know, be forgiving, move on,' they genuinely believe that they're giving us good advice and that they want what's best for us. But the problem with it is that if you're the person who's got the grudge or the negative feeling – if you're the person who's been offended, upset, or wounded by the grudge-sparking incident – if someone then comes along and says, 'Don't feel angry, don't feel sad, move on, forgive, don't hold grudges,' that cannot help but give you the message of *What happened to you doesn't really matter.*

And it's easy to see why this is how we often take that kind of comment, when you compare it to similar analogous situations. So, you know, if I said, for example, to anyone I knew – if I said, 'Something really weird happened to me when I went to a big department store yesterday. I got together fourteen items of clothing that I wanted to buy. I took them to the counter. I paid £500 for all the clothes that I was buying, and the cashier took my £500 and then just

didn't give me the clothes. What should I do?' I'm pretty sure that everyone I told that story to would say, 'You should demand your clothes or your money back. That's just not right. They can't take that money from you and not give you the clothes that you handed it over in order to get.'

And so, when someone treats us badly or upsets us, betrays us, lets us down – all the grudge-worthy things people can do – part of the reason that we have our grudge-creating instinct is because something inside us is saying, 'This matters. This is not okay. It's not okay that I was treated in this way.' And so, when you also are simultaneously saying to yourself, 'But I shouldn't hold a grudge. But I should forgive. But I should move on,' what you're doing there is you're invalidating your sense that you deserve better treatment and that the thing that happened to you is not okay.

Not consciously. You're not doing it to give yourself an extra hard time. You're doing it because we've all been trained and brainwashed from an early age to think that we shouldn't hold grudges. But actually, if we were to just say to ourselves, 'You know, what happened to me is not okay and I'm gonna hold a grudge about it because I want to remember. I want to formally acknowledge that it's not okay that this happened.'

When other people come along and say, 'Oh, you should forgive him – I mean, don't hold a grudge, move on, forgive. It's just too negative and corrosive to hold a grudge,' very often that sounds to the person who has the grudge – the person who's been wronged – it sounds as if the person giving them that advice is siding with the person they're upset about. And, you know, often that's not the intention, but that is always it comes across. If you say to your friend, 'I was walking down the road and Bill walked up to me, and he bashed me over the head with a hammer, really hard, and then he said, "ha!" and walked away,' you want your friend to acknowledge that this is not okay. You ideally, usually, want your friend to say, 'God, how utterly unreasonable. What a bastard. I'm not gonna be walking near Bill in future.'

If instead they say, 'Oh, but you know, Bill's got really bad sinusitis at the moment. Don't be too hard on him. He probably meant well. I think you should forgive him and move on,' that is going to sound to you as if that person is taking Bill's side against you. And more importantly, it's gonna sound as if they're taking the side of the offense against you.

So, for that reason, having a grudge and allowing yourself to have that grudge and celebrating it and writing out the story and classifying it and grading it –

the formal process of creating that grudge and welcoming it into your life – is a way of saying, ‘This matters that this has happened. This matters to me and it matters in the world, and now there is an actual object to commemorate its importance.’ Now, it’s an abstract object. It’s just your grudge. But in my book, I explain that what I’m advocating as a method of grudge-processing actually involves writing down your grudge as a story.

And the great thing is that we can be empowered, not only by our own grudges but by other people’s. Now, I spoke a bit in the last episode of this podcast about how films, songs, books... you know, all these things, all these cultural products are full of grudges. If you share your grudge stories in whatever way, particularly in a work of art, well then other people can benefit and learn from it too.

And so, I’m gonna finish this episode with two poems which just happen to be written by my two favourite living poets. So, this one is by Wendy Cope, and it’s called ‘A Song of Hate’. Now, this is a great example of something that seems as though... from the title, certainly, it seems as though it might be quite negative, but it’s actually really empowering. And it will make you cheer for all the people who’ve ever been treated badly by their bosses. And the dedication of the poem is: ‘For all victims of work-place bullying, and the people who love them.’

*I know a man who’s good and kind and has done nothing wrong,  
And those who persecute him are the subject of my song.*

*They picked on him, and made his life a misery until  
He couldn’t take another day. The doctor says he’s ill.*

*They did this to him. That is why I call them loathsome, base,  
Obnoxious, underhand, malicious, shabby, a disgrace.*

*I’d like to put them in a bag and drown them, but I can’t.  
I’d like to riddle all of them with bullets, but I shan’t.*

*I’m going to explode if I just sit around and hate them.  
There’s nothing for it but to write a poem to berate them.*

*Mrs Nasty. Mr Nasty. Dr Nasty Boss,  
Who could make all this go away but doesn’t give a toss:*

*I cannot name you now, but I have everything on file,  
So future generations can find out that you were vile.*

*Here is your memorial. As long as I am read,  
What will survive of you is merely this: I wished you dead.*

I love that poem, and I think it's really, really interesting, because, you know, it's absolutely celebrating and announcing those negative feelings, and as a result it is the opposite of a negative poem. Anyone who's ever been bullied, both in the workplace or anywhere – anyone who's ever been too scared to stand up for themselves – anyone who's ever desperately wanted the person who persecuted them to be punished and it didn't happen ... All of those people are gonna read or hear that poem and think, 'Yes. This poem is sticking up for me. This poem makes me feel better. It makes me feel empowered. It makes me feel that what happened to me and people like me really matters.'

And I think that poem can provide solace to a lot of people. So, earlier, I talked about how you should never allow your grudges to harm others. You should never go round and smack their cat in the face, or throw a custard pie at them, or swear at them. That's an example of a grudge being harmful. This poem is not an example of a grudge being harmful, because it will comfort lots of people. It will make lots of people feel heard and valued who might previously not have felt that, and the people who it's about – well, there's nothing in it to say that it's about them. It's all anonymous. There's nothing in it that could, you know, tell anyone what specific relationship or situation that applied to. So, the good of that poem massively outweighs any potential harm. So, I think that is a brilliant way to use your grudge to entertain and inspire other people.

Now, here's another of my favourite poems, by my other favourite living poet, whose name is Nic Aubury. And this poem is called 'RSVP'. And I'm not going to tell you what it's about until I've read it, because you will see what it's about. But it really made me think very differently about a common situation that I previously hadn't thought about.

*It seems that you like me enough that you'd ask me  
To buy you a coffee machine,  
Some porcelainware, a patio chair,  
Or a Villeroy & Boch figurine;  
Enough that you'd ask for a Waterford vase  
Or a full set of white, cotton bedding,  
But not quite enough that you'd actually like me*

*To come to the whole of your wedding.*

I just cracked up when I first read that poem. I thought it was so brilliant, because it's about that experience most of us have had where you get sent a wedding list by your friends, along with an invitation saying, you know, 'You are invited to the evening reception but not the ceremony, the meal...' You know, so that's obviously a much more trivial and funny sort of grudge. It's not a grudge with any serious negative suffering behind it. But it made me think differently about wedding lists, wedding invitations... and certainly since discovering that poem, which I immediately memorised and learned by heart, I've thought much more carefully every time I've received an invitation to a wedding or a wedding list of presents that people hope to be bought.

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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](mailto: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 sugar-coating versus positive thinking. See you then.