

# Letting Go of Betrayals of Trust

*Resilience*

What are you like at forgiving others and getting over hurts? Some of us find this extremely hard to do. However, over time unresolved, painful emotions can come at a major cost.

Most of the hurts that we have are misunderstandings where we have jumped to the wrong conclusion. Many of these upsets are easy to get over. We calm down, find a kinder way to explain another's behaviour and then find it easier to let go of any remaining hurt when the normal pattern of positive interactions resumes.

But there are also major hurts, betrayals of trust or a long history of hurtful interactions that are much harder to let go of. Sometimes the change required is leaving a miserable relationship or workplace. This is particularly the case when the hurt or betrayal is very significant, the stressful dynamic is affecting our health and we have exhausted all reasonable attempts to influence change.

Of course it helps when the other person has taken responsibility for their part, genuinely apologised and made amends through their actions. Sadly, this is not as common as it should be.

**Don't waste your time in anger, regrets, worries and grudges. Life is too short to be unhappy.**

**Roy T. Bennett**

However, if we allow our feelings to determine all our responses, we will tend to make a bad situation worse, perhaps acting hurtfully ourselves or giving up on a relationship too early. Whether we choose to work at a difficult relationship or distance ourselves from it, there is still the challenge of what we do with those feelings of hurt, pain or betrayal. There is an old saying that when we hold onto grudges, it is a bit like drinking poison and expecting the other person to suffer.

There is a time to talk about how we are feeling. We are social beings and many of us need to express how we are feeling with a trusted confidant. But if we become stuck in this place, it can become a rehearsing of the hurt, a "twisting of the knife". We have to balance expressing how we are feeling with reminders to ourselves, such as "I want to let go of this".

As we are letting go, we have to appreciate that it may only take a small reminder of the hurt to trigger a strong response. This is normal. We are right to find kinder explanations when we can and access support when needed. Letting go of unwanted feelings does not always mean forgetting the hurt or betrayal. Nor does letting go always mean remaining in a hurtful dynamic. For those who choose to work at such a relationship, I often say it is like rebuilding trust, but this time with your eyes open.

Here I am talking about letting go of hurt, pain and betrayal to the point where our well-being returns and we can still live our life well. We need to decide that our own well-being is more important than our need to hold onto hurt.

## Key points

Letting go of hurt is healthy

Holding onto grudges isn't helpful

Most of the hurts we have are misunderstandings

If we allow our feelings to determine our responses we can make a bad situation worse

Whilst there is a time to talk about our feelings, talking about our hurt too much can rehearse the hurt

Letting go of unwanted feelings does not always mean forgetting

It is helpful to decide that our own well-being is more important than our hurt



**Ken Warren** BA, M Soc Sc, CSP

Ken is an expert on relationships and provides insights and practical advice on dealing with the challenges we face. Ken is a passionate cyclist who lives on the beautiful Sunshine Coast with his wife and two school age boys. He draws on the experience he has gained both as a counsellor and through his career working with a wide array of government, corporate and not for profit clients.