

“It is impossible to share opposing thoughts.” — A Course In Miracles®

THE SIXTH PRINCIPLE: Judge Not, Profit More

The Forgiveness Illusion

Think of the benefits to your business of being free of the inner critic that tells us, *It's your fault, you could have done better, your company will never make it, you're not good enough*, blaa blaa blaa, ad nauseum? What if I told you there is nothing to forgive, that sin is but error, that innocence is our natural state? What target does our condemnation have, if forgiveness is not even necessary? Consider the words from an ancient Sufi poet at the beginning of this Principle: the verse is a continuum of self-forgiveness. Our greatest need to forgive lies in our own lack of self-worth.

If I am not listening to that inner voice of gloom, which comes from my ego, then I can hear the still, small voice beneath which reminds me, “We are God’s creation, whose essence is love and whose destiny is fashioned by Divine design.” This is the power of unconditional love, which is so hard for us to grant ourselves. We cannot have peace if we hold on to guilt. Sin and guilt originate from beliefs taught to us by others. They are a condition of the mind. So is our acceptance of our innocence. Guilt debilitates; forgiveness will set us free.

If we do not fully accept our own innocence, we will never be able to look upon another and see the light in them. We are constantly judging one another as being either right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful or ugly—all are within the perception of the beholder. I would often judge our competitors as being “the bad guys,” who were doing business in

unfair, unethical, and dishonorable ways. When I looked at myself, I realized that the things I judged them about the most were the very things that I could be accused of doing myself, to some extent. It is always like that. We are a mirror of that which we condemn.

Our Greatest Teachers

We often learn the most from our adversaries. I have been in many new group situations throughout my life in which the people I first mentally criticized became good friends and the ones from whom I learned the most.

Our greatest detractors are often those for whom we should be the most thankful. I have been married and divorced twice. I experienced one business partnership break-up that ended in the courts. I was angry and resentful toward those former partners of marriage and business, until I realized how much they had actually contributed to who I am. Now I bless them, knowing how much they remain a part of me.

You may never want to see those thorns that left you sore again. You do not have to. Just bring them to mind. For example, consider my business partner, with whom I cleaned my first major building complex. If I never see or hear from him again, that will be just wonderful. He's a real, "Crazymaker." That is a term Julia Cameron coined in *The Artist's Way*. Here is her definition of a Crazymaker:

"Crazymakers are those personalities that create storm centers. They are often charismatic, frequently charming, highly inventive, and powerfully persuasive.

Crazymakers break deals and destroy schedules.

Crazymakers expect special treatment.

Crazymakers discount your reality.

Crazymakers spend your time and money.

Crazymakers triangulate those they deal with.

Crazymakers are expert blamers.

Crazymakers create dramas – but seldom where they belong.

*Crazymakers hate schedules – except their own.
Crazymakers hate order.”*

My marriage partners and a business associate fall into this category. My first wife, Mary, and I had a tumultuous ten-year marriage, which was a love/hate affair. Even so, I never cherished another relationship as deeply. Although we divorced over half-a-century ago and she passed away when she was 46, our time together continues to have an immense impact on my life. She lives on through my daughter Sandy who inherited all her humor, charm, and beauty. Mary as a lover, great cook, and devoted companion had no equal. We came together when I was twenty-one years old. She had two small children who I helped to raise. This was a tremendous responsibility at such a young age, but it helped fashion who I am today. Even though Mary's body is no longer alive, she comes to me in my dreams often and there, we make love again.

I have not seen my second wife since 1996. Although our relationship is not something that I want to re-experience, she was a great teacher for me. The animation, charisma, and charm she possessed remain for me a constant reminder of the power of the word and personality, especially when I am preparing to speak. She was a dedicated scientist, a woman of great humor, a wonderful storyteller, and contemplator of the things that matter. She introduced me to Al Anon, which was a stepping stone to my current spiritual path. I often remember the advice she gave to me; to “act charming” when I look like an idiot. I remembered that advice at my stepdaughter's wedding as I wore a rented tuxedo several sizes too small for me.

A business acquaintance, whom I met before starting Adams and Adams, showed me the flip side of good business practices. She had been in the cleaning business for over twenty-five years, building a multi-million dollar enterprise. She was a “do-it-now” type of

person whose perseverance and persistence were both a boon to and a blemish on our relationship. She exemplified the saying, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” The tougher things got, the harder she worked. She would never ever give up, which made her an adversary to avoid. The flip side of good business technique came from her nickname as “One Rag Annie.” She had a habit of using the same cleaning rag for everything. She would dust off the desk then clean the ashtrays with it (we still had smoke-filled offices back then). After that, she would wipe down the sinks in the bathroom and the toilets then go into the next section of offices using the same dirty rag. Yuck! When I think of values, ethics and quality of performance, I often wonder how many people really know the type of cleaning their janitorial company is providing. I was determined that Adams and Adams Building Services would be the antitheses of such carelessness.

Although these three people are no longer in my life and the relationship we had together is not one that I would want to relive, I am still grateful for the lessons I have learned from them. They were my “Crazymakers” but the real truth is that we are all that crazy and self-destructive. We are someone else’s “Crazymaker.” Just ask your son or daughter if that is not so.

Ask yourself whether your “Crazymakers” have not helped you, in some way, to become a better individual. Mine have. Think about those in your life against whom you hold a grudge. Then release yourself from the burden of resentment and anger you carry by forgiving them. Then begin a process of self-forgiveness and start to enjoy a feeling of liberation. “Not so easy?” Okay, don’t forgive them—bless them, as Pope John Paul did, as he faced his would-be assassin in his prison cell. The Pontiff knows that the power of forgiveness lies in releasing your heart to God by seeing the goodness in every human being.

The Power Of Defenselessness

To grant forgiveness or deny its reality starts with our own defenselessness, which is another principle contrary to the way of the world. This world dictates that attack begets attack, that we take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and that we mirror the actions and attitude of others.

In the world of Spirit, there is great power in defenselessness. Being defenseless does not mean that we are incapable of protecting ourselves. When Teddy Roosevelt said, “Speak softly and carry a big stick,” that meant, to me, that we should act with courtesy, kindness and firm resolve, while remaining strong and prepared for battle. Defenselessness means that we choose to see other people as either giving love or crying out for it, and to realize that we are not the real targets of their attack. Their target is within themselves. It seems the easiest thing to do is to react, to retaliate, which by implication is the path of least resistance. For most people it is harder to be more defenseless, which in actuality is the true path to least resistance because if we stay in the moment, free of fear, then we can break the cycle of attack.

Loving The SEIU

In 1994, the labor organization, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 531 had been mercilessly attacking us, accusing Adams and Adams of things with no basis in truth. Often their claims were utterly ridiculous. We never counter-attacked because that would have started the attack-attack cycle and taken us away from our focus of attending to the needs of our customers and members. We decided not to play by the rules of the world.

Rather we chose “The Law of Least Effort,” as Deepak Chopra would call it, remaining defenseless and true to our values and ethics, as we relinquished the need to defend our point of view. This does not mean we did not take legal action against the union, when necessary, but we did avoid daily confrontation.

Key West Window Washer

Kevin Brown, the SEIU organizer called me one day to remind me of “the growth opportunities” we could have by signing the union Master Agreement. This was an agreement whereby our company consented to turn over building complexes cleaned by four or more janitorial workers to the representation of the union. According to the agreement, we were to take a “positive” approach to the unionization of these buildings. It would not have mattered if members wanted to join or not. By standing up to intimidation, we were the only janitorial contractors in Hartford County that refused to sign. Kevin then indicated that if we did not sign, our business would perish. I told him this story:

I had taken my first six-week sabbatical from the business during the winter of 1994. I was so stressed out that I just wanted to get away and recharge my batteries. First stop was to Key West, Florida where I met a window washer on a pink bicycle. This well-built fellow was originally from Salem, New Jersey near my hometown of Pitman. We had graduated the same year from high school and shared stories about growing up in South Jersey and going to football games where our schools competed. Fred was thoroughly tanned and sported a trimmed, white beard and had silver hair to match. His working uniform was pink shorts, a white tank-top shirt and black sandals. He carried his entire window cleaning equipment on his bike and lived on a sailboat moored in the harbor. He looked relaxed and happy as he

explained to me that he worked about thirty hours a week in paradise, cleaning mostly store windows. Fred said he had tired of the cold up north and left the rat race to work down in the Keys where he made \$35,000 a-year *cash*.

“Now Kevin,” I said, “Picture me, the owner of a large contract cleaning company, down in Key West to de-stress, talking to a man who is under no pressure, has no union problems, and probably no bills to worry about. Kevin, if you destroy this company, I know exactly where I’m headed, so I don’t consider your remarks as a threat, but rather as an opportunity for a change of lifestyle.”

Kevin hung up, realizing that his strategy of attacking our company—my finest creation—in this fashion, was not going to work. His stimulus did not elicit the response he had expected. I did not meet his attack with attack, fear, or submission, but rather from a place of serenity and defenselessness.

Setting Yourself Free

I vividly remember a picture in the Winter 1999 issue of *Spirituality & Health Magazine*. It showed the backs of three Vietnam Veterans standing together with their arms around each other. Their faces were reflected in the black marble of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. One of them, an ex-prisoner of war, asked another, “Have you forgiven your captors yet?” The second one replied, “No, never!” And the other turned and said, “Then it seems like they still have us in prison, don’t they?”

Don’t walk around with your guard up. Let go, trust and live in the moment free of judgment and old grudges. Refuse to see yourself as a victim. Meet attack with non-judgment and love. These are three mighty ways in which you can seize the moment and become a

stronger leader, guide and competitor. By adopting a philosophy of forgiveness, businesses can realize more spirit, truth, and peace of mind in a world longing for a new corporate paradigm.

Next, you will discover that *by accepting responsibility for your life, you can resolve the shame and blame issues that are imprisoning your spirit.*

“Forgiveness is not an occasional act. It is a permanent attitude.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

*I am responsible for what I see.
I choose the feelings I experience, and I decide
Upon the goal I would achieve.
And everything that seems to happen to me
I ask for, and receive as I have asked.*

— A Course in Miracles® Text – Ch. 21, II, 3-5