

GENEROUS HOLIDAY CHALLENGE

For a holly jolly Christmas!



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HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU?

Have you ever been in the middle of sharing a great time with someone, feeling so close and connected, sharing your heart openly, and suddenly, things changed? That one you were feeling so close to, feeling like you really belonged with, and were enjoying a memorable time with, lashed out at you? Suddenly you felt hurt, and rejected. The connection was broken.

You were left feeling misunderstood and heartbroken. Maybe you even found yourself in the middle of an argument you didn't know how to get out of. The disappointment was so overwhelming you wished you'd never opened up your heart. I have. I'm sad to say, I've even been the one who broke the connection.

During the holiday season, with expectations high, we can be especially vulnerable to this kind of painful disappointment. And so can the people around us. The holiday season, with all of its Christmas cheer and happy wishes, doesn't make us immune to conflict and the strong uncomfortable emotions that come with it.



BELIEVE IN GENEROSITY

A glance at what's possible.

How can you be sure you and your loved ones enjoy a holly jolly holiday season with a minimum of painful misunderstanding, uncomfortable conflict and disconnection?

Grant the most generous interpretation possible to the intentions, words, and actions of others.

Give more patience, charity, and mercy than is strictly necessary, usual, or expected.

Commit right now that you will believe others have good intentions. Do NOT be stingy, suspicious or hardhearted in your judgments of others intentions, words or actions, no matter how convinced you are that you KNOW what they meant.

When you're in that moment when something has changed, and you feel the disconnection, ask yourself, what is the most generous assumption I can make in this situation?

Transform the conflict into connection by refusing to belittle or demean. Refuse to return insult for injury. Remain courteous. My rude behavior always leads to disastrous results. Stay polite. Courtesy, respect, and civility are the best tools for repair and transformation.



YOU DESERVE GENEROSITY

Be generous with yourself.

Listen with the desire to learn something more about the other person's perspective. Be curious. Be present in the other person's world by pushing the pause button on that tendency to think of what to say in response to what you're hearing.

Really listen to the words. Notice the feelings you're seeing expressed. Don't worry if you're not good at identifying the feelings you're seeing. Most people struggle with this one. The important part is to notice the presence of strong emotion and be gentle.

Now, extend this same generosity to yourself.

Be present without sacrificing your own well-being. If you need to step away from the fray to calm your own jangled nerves, do it. If you don't know what to say try this, "I need to take a break because I want to be at my best for this conversation."

Avoid blaming or shaming yourself for your part in the situation. We protect ourselves from the feelings of shame by becoming defensive, numb, and unsympathetic. Our brains create stories that exaggerate our fears and insecurities in an attempt to defend ourselves from what it perceives as danger. We become afraid to reach out. We can end up cut off from other people, lonely. Loneliness is a sign that we need connection. It takes courage to reach out when we're hurting. Be courageous.



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Connection is the way back.

“But Deborah, I don’t feel like connecting. I don’t care what he has to say! Why should I have to listen? I’m tired of listening. I’m tired of being the one who’s working hard to stay respectful. I deserve some respect!”

Yes, you do! You deserve to be treated with care, and compassion, and civility. You make sense to me.

Still, I’m asking you to be courageous because fear keeps us lonely and divided. Clinging to our pain makes us bitter and resentful. It isn’t helping us. Clinging to our pain keeps us trapped.

Connection is the way out.

The pain of disconnection hurts. Fear, isolation, and disconnection can become a way of life. Fear takes root and fuels anger and blame. We turn on one another and become fractured, distant and driven by our insecurities.

We must find our way back to one another or fear wins.

Connection whispers, “You’re not alone. I see you. I hear you. I understand. I care.”



THE CHALLENGE

Live and love generously!

I DARE YOU...

Addressing our pain with love and compassion takes less energy than fighting it. You can do it. The holidays are about sharing in a collective spirit of joy and connection. This joy can be healing. It can also be painful at times. To get all the best out of the season we must stay courageous and present in the struggle. Feel the pain and commit to seeking connection.

What I'm asking is, in this month when we're celebrating so many things ... including the gift of giving without the thought of return ... will you take a moment to extend the most generous interpretation possible to yourself, to someone you love, someone you like or even someone you may not even know today and every day for the remainder of December?

I guarantee your charity will impact your day, your attitude and maybe even theirs.

Will you join me?

Go and connect courageously!

Deborah Woods NCC

