

Unwitting Enablers -- How Much Damage are you Doing?

Parents are perhaps the most forgiving people in our lives. No matter what stupid thing we do, they seem to find it in their hearts to forgive us. Too often they forgive and ask nothing in return. Is that helping or hurting both?

You can apply this to spouses or friends but the results are the same. We all appreciate that a mother is by nature much more forgiving than a father. However, that is not always the case. When someone takes from you, whether it is money, time, or contentment, and is not required to replace it with something of equal value, you both lose. The offender will carry around that guilt for a long time if not forever. Although you forgave you will not truly forget. Requiring the person to pay back the money with interest regardless of how long it takes is actually therapy to you both. It is not about the money. You can give the money to a worthy charity if you don't need it. If they disrupt your home or your life, they must do something for you that will replace what they took. It is not a perfect formula and some guilt will remain, but it will dissipate with time because of the compensation given. If you come to an agreement as to what can be done to medicate the offense, everyone involved will benefit. To demand less is an injustice to all. The offending party can put this egregious act behind them if they did everything possible to balance the scales, and return what they took with interest. The offended party will have an appreciation for that act and their forgiveness will have more meaning.

For years people carry around the guilt of something they did against a family member or friend. Although they were "forgiven" they cannot forgive themselves because it cost them nothing for the forgiveness. It is like anything else in life that is "free"; it has less value than something you paid for dearly. To accept your culpability and be willing to do something to make it right is the first major step to maturity. Without some retribution, you will convince yourself that maybe what you did wasn't that serious. In your heart you know it was, and you should be doing something to replace what you took. In today's world to suggest or demand action is not always politically correct. The world has become full of excuses for bad behavior and no one is held accountable for

their bad actions. As a result the situation continues to get worse because there are no consequences.

This attitude prevails in our streets as you watch people who claim to be protesting, actually smashing cars, windows, and buildings. They steal items from a store and believe it is an acceptable part of “protesting”. They are looting and harming people and businesses, but because of the coddling they received from their families for their bad acts, the seriousness of their behavior seems to escape them. So long as it is being done for a “cause” their bad acts are rationalized into being acceptable. They are often not held accountable and go on to steal and plunder repeatedly. This mind set begins at home when they are not held accountable for minor or more serious infractions, because love and forgiveness get in the way of demanding responsible behavior. When you tell your child or friend that it’s “alright” instead of holding them accountable, you are planting the seeds to bad future behavior that is destructive to them and to our society. Every one of us must be responsible for our actions regardless of our age, physical or mental fitness, and taught that bad acts will not be tolerated and retribution is expected. To do less is to do damage that you may never undue.

Don’t be an unwitting enabler that ends up doing more damage than good to the offending parties. Begin early with the important lesson that in life our actions have consequences. Let their actions be good and may the consequences be ones they can admire. Isn’t it time you got started?