

Anger and *Self* Image

For a long while I struggled with forgiving a former friend. Memories of that friend were always so painful that I began to see even our good times together as bad. I had difficulty trying to focus on the real problem. Then one day I began to see that I had reveled in the image of myself that I had while around this person. I was important. I was someone worth knowing. I was someone worth remembering with cards and token gift. I was a sister in all but blood. Then something happened and I felt abandoned.

I recently had a dream of confronting the person to ask why this break up had taken place. In my dream she was surrounded/shielded by new friends. I tried to explain to the newcomers all the wonderful things that had made our relationship so good. It fell on deaf ears and I awoke to find myself sobbing.

It wasn't until later that I realized my concept of self had been damaged. I had allowed myself to think that I was no longer worthy for some unfathomable reason. Finally, I had to sit down and say that I had not changed but that her perception of me had changed and that there was nothing I could do about it. There was no act on my part that had prompted this attitude of hers. For her, the truth was a particular way and I must respect her ability to choose what is right for her.

Maybe years down the road she may see things differently, but life must go on for me, so I can't sit in anger and wait for her explanation. If I respect her right to learn her lessons in her own time, then I must forgive her for the imagined damage to my self image.

Then I began to think back on many things in life both big and little that had angered or hurt me.

There was a long list of hurts with injuries to my feelings of worth:

My father who did not pay child support - "Don't you understand that you had a part in my being here and I am worthy of a decent life."

My Aunt and Uncle who never remembered my birthday - "Don't they know that I am here?"

The boss who failed to notice my hard work - "Didn't I do a great job, and aren't my efforts worthy of recognition?"

The guy who cut me off on the road - "Look, man, I am entitled to a place on this road too."

People who treat me like a moron - "Gee, I have brains too, and I may already know what you know, or I may just learn at a different rate."

These people really hadn't hurt me. It was my perception of self that **I** had allowed to waver. As a child maybe I was too young to realize that but I see it now. How many times had I told a child who was upset about some name calling that just because the person had said it did not make it true. I had even given them the example that if I called them purple, that would not make them purple. I had not thought to apply that same concept to other situations. That guy who cut me off can only get me to think that I am unworthy to be on the road if I let myself think that way. I know I am worthy of being on the road and his mind was temporarily elsewhere when the incident happened. I didn't

need recognition from my boss to know that I was achieving what I had been placed in the position to achieve.

I need to work on that image of self and not allow it to be so swayed by the actions or lack of action by others. Maybe at times, I temporarily warranted the negative attitudes of others, but hey, that was yesterday and I'm a better person now for having seen the error of my ways. Now I realize that I really wasn't hurt by these other people but by my own search for external examples of my value. I have worth and you can't take that away from me because I know in my heart that I have great value.