

## When You Want to Get Rid of an Enemy

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Few people understand the commitment that goes into having an enemy, or even to holding a grudge. This explains. Find the home site of author Bill Allin at <http://billallin.com>

One of the most time-consuming things is to have an enemy.

- E.B. White, writer (1899-1985)

Having an enemy requires a similar amount of time to having a spouse. The commitment must be the same as well. The amount of emotional energy consumed in maintaining the enmity may be even greater than that required for having a loving spousal relationship.

A person who maintains another as an enemy is Obsessive-Compulsive (OC). It makes no sense logically to expend so much energy on someone from whom you get little in return. It's like having a hobby you can't tear yourself away from, a hobby that is destructive rather than constructive.

Having an enemy is selfish and self-centred. While the OC enemy holder believes the focus is on the other person, the reverse is usually undefined. The person who maintains an enemy seeks to satisfy a dark internal need of his or her own making.

The enemy maker may be delusional. Often the perceived enemy has no knowledge of how devoted the other is to hatred of him. Nor does he care. The expenditure of energy on the enmity is almost always one way. It is not exchanged mutually, as love is.

Having an enemy is a more advanced form of holding a grudge, which is equally draining emotionally and produces nothing positive. Holding a grudge is a more polite way of saying you have an enemy.

A person who has an enemy (real or perceived) is so committed to the relationship that he or she has little time or emotional energy to devote to a positive relationship with another person. The enemy relationship takes all the emotional energy a person has.

Having an enemy is like bullying yourself. You have no one to blame for your own hurt but yourself.

Breaking off an enemy relationship is easier than breaking off a relationship based on love. To stop having an enemy, you simply refuse to acknowledge any longer that the other person is an enemy. If an enemy is real rather than perceived, most of the time what the enemy wants more than anything else is to cause fear, worry and emotional exhaustion to the other person. A real enemy relationship is another form of bullying. As with any bullying, you can't be intimidated unless you allow yourself to be intimidated. You have a choice.

Ending an enemy relationship may be easy because it requires making a decision to "end it," but the emotional commitment that is lost may be as hard as losing a loved one.

Does this sound as if love and hatred of an enemy have much in common? They do. They both require emotional commitment, devotion, even fidelity. No one can have a good relationship with an enemy if the other person could up and find someone else to be enemies with at any moment.

Is love, then, also Obsessive-Compulsive? In some ways, yes. Romantic love that grows into a more lasting friendship is healthy, whereas romantic love that does not get beyond the romance stage is doomed to failure. Romance is self satisfying, whereas friendship is more about satisfying the needs of the other person. Romance is selfish, as is having an enemy. But if it evolves into a healthy friendship, it has long term benefits for both. On the other hand, having an enemy has no benefits over the long term.

Each of us can choose to accept another as an enemy or to reject the possibility and ignore the other as much as possible. The love-hate relationships of childhood and adolescent friends testifies to how awkward it can be to establish a healthy relationship instead of an unhealthy one.

Most of us opt for the healthy kind.

Bill Allin

***Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems***, a guidebook for parents and teachers who want to give children the skills they need to have healthy relationships with others instead of allowing the trial-and-error method teach life lessons the hard way.

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