



Healthy Habit #4: Care About Your Impact Practice

Many of us have the fantasy that once we find “The One” we’ll never again be disappointed in love. However, the truth is that all relationships—even healthy, happy ones, go through periods of estrangement and mis-attunement. What make these rifts temporary bumps in the road rather than chasms that never truly heal, has to do with how much one authentically cares about the negative impact their wrong and/or unconscious behavior has had on another, and the willingness to make amends to repair the rupture.

Many try to make things right by taking a psychological approach--explaining why they did what they did in the hopes that if the harmed party understood the “why” of the situation, that somehow the air will be cleared. Yet these psychologically-based repair attempts often do not relieve the toxic residue of festering resentment and/or the compounded mistrust that can build over time.

And while most of us understand the value of saying I'm sorry when it's clear we're wrong, it's the heartfelt acknowledgement of impact and the genuine effort to make amends that restores wholehearted trust and wellbeing to the relational field.

Personal Practice: In Healthy Habit #4, you're invited to practice caring about your impact on others more deeply.

To do so, you're invited to try to understand troubled situations between yourself and others from their perspective. Letting your heart be touched by their experience, acknowledging the impact your actions and choices have had upon them and striving to make an amends that can restore wholeness and trust to the relational field.

1. **Think of a person who has an unresolved issue with you that you'd like to be closer to.** Think of someone you'd like to have a deeper connection with who has a festering resentment toward you or has put distance between you because they are holding something against you.
2. **Close your eyes & Imagine This Person in Front of You & Invite Her to Share.** Using your imagination, invite this person to freely share her upset and feelings with you. Without negating, minimizing or dismissing her concerns, simply listen to her complaints, imagining that she were able to pour her heart out about everything she believes you did to hurt and disappointed her. Listen outside of whether or not you meant to hurt her. Listen beyond whether you agree with what she is saying. Listen outside of what you think she did to you that prompted you to behave the way you did. Instead, listen only for the impact your actions and choices had upon her with a soft and tender heart, whether or not you intended to hurt her in the way(s) that was hurt.
3. **Mirror Back the Impact Your Behavior Had Upon Her.** Again, using your imagination, allow yourself to share with her your understanding of the impact your choices and actions have had upon her. Again, you do not need to agree with her (for example, you may think she is "over-reacting"), or you may not have intended to hurt her (for example, "that wasn't at all what I was trying to say!").

Simply mirror back to her, her experience of what happened between you (for example, “I can see that you were devastated when I cancelled our date for the third time.”)

4. **Consider the Amends You Could Now Make.** Once more, use your imagination to consider what action you could take that might restore wellbeing trust between yourself and this person (for example, a promise to never do something like that ever again to anyone, the willingness to give something back that you took, or an offer to pay for damages done) and make the commitment to take this action as an attempt to make amends for the impact your choices and actions have had upon her.

Actually put into motion the amends that came to you in the practice and see what (if anything) shifts between yourself and this person. You may also wish to have this conversation in person in an attempt to repair the rift between you.

Reflection Questions

Healthy Habit #4: Care About Your Impact Self-Inquiry

Journal on the following:

1. Ask yourself, “Who has been holding something against me that I can sense is covertly festering in the field between us?” (For example, “I can sense that my husband is angry with me even though he is not saying so.”)
2. Ask yourself, “When I put myself in his shoes, what can I see about the impact my choices and actions have had upon him?” (For example, “I know it upset him when I decided to buy that dining room set without asking him first. Even though I saw it on Craigs List and I had to act fast in order to get it, my hasty actions caused him to feel disrespected and unimportant, as though his taste in furniture doesn’t even matter to me.”)
3. Ask yourself, “What amends can I make that could restore greater levels of wellbeing and trust to the relationship between us?” (For example, “I see that it’s important to include my husband in those decisions that impact us both. I am going to make a promise to him that even if I find the best bargain in the world, that unless we both give it a thumbs up, I will pass on it. And I’m also going to give him the option of selling the set even though I love it. I’d rather see him be happy than to have something in our home that makes him feel disrespected and unimportant.”)
4. Ask yourself, “What will I need to give up to be willing to make this amends? (For example, “I’ll have to give up getting what I want when I want it in order to be willing to include him in decisions that impact us both.”)