

21 Ways To Turn Ill Will to Good Will

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Introduction

Ill will creates negative, vicious cycles. But that means that good will can create positive cycles. Plus good will cultivates wholesome qualities in you.

Avoiding ill will does not mean passivity, allowing yourself or others to be exploited, staying silent in the face of injustice, etc. There is plenty of room for speaking truth to power and effective action without succumbing to ill will. Think of Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, or the Dalai Lama as examples. In fact, with a clear mind and a peaceful heart, your actions are likely to be more effective.

How to prevent or transform ill will

1. Be mindful of the priming, the preconditions for ill will. Try to defuse them early: get rest, have a meal, get support, talk things out, distract yourself, etc.
2. Practice non-contention to undermine the heat that creates ill will. Don't argue unless you have to.
3. Inspect the underlying trigger, such as a sense of threat. Look at it realistically. Was something actually an "injury" to you? Be skeptical of your justifications.
4. Be careful about attributing intent to others. We are often just a bit player in their drama; they are not targeting us personally. Look for the good intentions beneath the action that made you feel mistreated. Look for the good in others.
5. Put what happened in perspective. The effects of most wrongs fade with time. They're also part of a larger whole, most of which is usually fine.
6. Cultivate positive qualities like kindness, compassion, empathy, and calm. Nourish your own good will.
7. Practice generosity. Much ill will comes when we feel taken from, or not given to, or on the receiving end of another person's bad moment. Instead, consider letting the person have what they took: their victory, their bit of money or time, etc. Let them have their bad moment. Make a gift of forbearance, patience, and no cause to fear you.

8. Investigate ill will. Take a day, a week, a month - and really examine the least bit of ill will during that time. See what causes it . . . and what its effects are.
9. Regard ill will as an affliction upon yourself. It hurts you more than anyone.
10. Settle into awareness, observing the ill will but not identified with it, watching it arise and disappear like any other experience.
11. Accept the wound. Experience the feelings of it. Do not presume that life is not supposed to be wounding, Accept the unpleasant fact that people will mistreat you.
12. Do not cling to what you want instead of what you got.
13. Let go of the view that things are supposed to be a certain way. Challenge the belief that things should work out, that the world is perfectible.
14. Relax the sense of self, that it was "I" or "me" who was affronted, wounded.
15. Do religious or philosophical practices that cultivate love and goodness.
16. Resolve to meet mistreatment with lovingkindness. No matter what. Consider the saying: *In this world, hate has never dispelled hate. Only love dispels hate.*
17. Cultivate positive emotion, like happiness, contentment, or peacefulness. Positive feelings calm the body, quiet the mind, buffer against the impact of stressful events, and foster supportive relationships -- which reduce ill will.
18. Communicate. Speak (skillfully) for yourself, regardless of what the outcome may be. If appropriate, name your experience to release it; feel it as you speak it.
Try to address the situation with openness and empathy for the other person.
Then you'll be freer and calmer to be more skillful.
19. Have faith that they will pay their own price one day for what they've done, and you don't have to be the justice system.
20. Realize that some people will not get the lesson no matter how much you try. So why burden yourself with trying to teach them? Further, many people will never actually experience your ill will - such as politicians. So why carry it toward them?

21. Forgiveness. This doesn't mean changing your view that wrongs were done. But it does mean letting go of the emotional charge around feeling wronged. The greatest beneficiary of forgiveness is usually yourself.