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Are Other People Annoying You?

By Brooke Loening

I asked a friend of mine recently about what he thought the real reason was behind the fact that people get irritated with other people so much. He said, "because everyone is irritable and everyone is irritating." I thought this was so funny that I had to include it in this article. While it is humorous, there is a bit of truth to it.

The fact is that certain things in other people do bother us, even to the point of complete frustration! Think about the things that bug you in the people around you. Your brother in law is self-centered and everything seems to circle back to him. Your friend is very controlling and everything has to go according to her plan or there is a meltdown. A coworker has money issues and you find that to be extremely annoying. Your mother is always guilt tripping you and it makes you feel angry.

You probably experience this in your life, and you will continue to do so. However, with some awareness about what is causing the reaction inside of you, you may find that you are less vulnerable to these reactions.

So why do other people bother us at all? You know the expression "it takes one to know one," or, "everyone is a mirror?" It is true that whatever irritates you in other people must be inside of yourself first. I am not talking about someone who is constantly tapping his fingers on the dashboard or the table- that can actually be just plain annoying. But, if there is a trait, quality or action in someone else, which pushes your buttons on a deeper level, you probably struggle with exactly the same issue and don't like it in you either.

You may argue that these are THEIR issues and not yours, but save yourself from being judgmental and take out the mirror because you are really looking at yourself! As we have learned in previous articles, anything that is in our subconscious that we are not aware of, will ultimately be triggered by an outside source, many times by other people. When that trigger is pulled, you think certain thoughts, feel different emotions, and react the same way over and over. At this time you are actually "projecting" your own issues away from yourself onto other people as you see them acting out in a similar way.

The biggest problem with our tendency to project our issues onto those around us is that it actually keeps the core issue alive in us. I have one client who gets totally annoyed by one of her brothers because he is frequently acting put out and annoyed when she calls or asks for something. No coincidence that this is the way she acts many times with her friends and siblings. She just did not see it until it was pointed out to her. If this were not a trait that she possessed herself, her brother's apparent

irritation would not push so many buttons in her. By being consumed with irritation with her brother, she takes all the attention away from her own problem. In this way, her own ego is then declared innocent of all flaws because the issues have nothing to do with her- it's him....

Even if your instinct is to change these undesirable qualities in other people, you will hit a brick wall. You can't change other people, only they can change themselves. The best way to change someone else's behavior is to lead by example. If they like what they see, they may be inspired by you and decide to make a change on their own based on how you live.

How can you start to take ownership of you own undesirable qualities instead of projecting them out to make it someone else's character flaw? The first step is to think about three different things in other people that irritate you. Write those things down one at a time and below each one identify two things that you do which others could see as being a similarly annoying quality. This is your work. If you don't like it in others, then you don't like it in yourself either.

The next step is to commit to one small action for each that would represent a reversal of this trait in the future. How can you be less controlling in the future? What can you do to be more at ease with money the next time you need to pay for something? How can you be thinking more about others in a situation where you might just be out for yourself?

It is possible to get to a point where, when someone else "bugs" you, you can immediately look within for the source. At first, this may be difficult to digest, but once you get the hang of it, you will resist turning your own tension outward and do some work on yourself instead. This is a very powerful personal growth tool, and it's free of charge. As long as you are around other people, raw material for growth will always be provided for you!

An affirmation that might help goes like this, "when someone else irritates me, I look inside myself for what I can change and improve, and that benefits everyone."

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