

10 Ways to stop taking everything so personally!

There is an epidemic spreading across the world. And I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but we're all carriers of the disease. It's called *Offend-initis*, a skin condition whereby the thickness of our skin melts away to the point where everything offends us. Symptoms may include: hurt feelings, indignation, irritability, disappointment, grumpiness and an all-around allergic reaction to anyone who says or does something we don't like.

Fortunately, there is a cure.

But, before the healing begins, we need to start by acknowledging that there's a problem in the first place. For many of us, we don't even know we're walking around with this virus, but it's there alright, destroying all the *peace of mind cells* we have in our body. Being offended doesn't just hurt our feelings, it compromises our whole "happiness immune system."

So, go ahead, you can say it. It's only three words: *I get offended.*

And don't worry. You're not alone. We all do.

Today, we are here to talk about how to become healthier as individuals, and then, as leaders, how to recognize, address, and help others handle Offend-itis in a healthy and Godly way.

1. Talk yourself out of being offended!

Psalm 119:165 (KJV) " **Great peace have they which love the law: and nothing shall offend them.**"

In the heat of the moment, try asking yourself these 3 questions: "Why am I getting so bent out of shape for? Does this really matter? What is the big deal?" Reason with yourself. "Did he really mean it the way I was just about to take it? Is she truly, actually trying to hurt me? What were they really trying to say?" Remind yourself that the other person has a right to their opinion, just as much as you do! The truth is, the reason we usually feel offended is because of the meaning WE attach to what was said or done. "That means he really doesn't care! "She is saying I am no good!" " I knew he didn't really love me!" "She wouldn't say that if she was..."

Sound familiar? So, simply RE-FRAME it. Talk yourself out of the offense by telling yourself: "This person is simply stating their opinion, listen to how interesting it is! I find it fascinating that someone could have such opinions that are almost the opposite of mine!" You will be happier as you learn to talk yourself out of being offended, and you begin to adopt a more "Sticks and stones may break my bones" mentality towards others.

2. Put yourself in the “Offender’s” shoes.

If you can slide your feet into their flip flops for a minute, you can learn to see things from the offender’s perspective. And then, just maybe, you will see that you too played a role in the drama. And perhaps you will also come to see that the offender had no such intentions of offending.

3. Assume a Benevolent Motive Unless Proven Otherwise

Assume the person in question has noble intent. Maybe the language was clumsy, maybe even ill-advised, but assume a good heart. That should take the sting out of the bite and put some happiness back in your day. So don’t hold on to the words people use to get at the thing they are trying to express. Hear the idea and ignore the clumsiness of the expression.

4. Practice Detachment

James 4:7 (NIV) **“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”**

Many people are easily offended because they can’t emotionally differentiate between their thoughts and their inner sense of self. When identities are too closely tied to one’s opinions, and those opinions are then disagreed with, many feel like they, themselves, have been rejected, the core of who they are have been shoved away, pushed to a corner and crushed. This, of course, hurts, but is highly inaccurate. To overcome hypersensitivity, realize that your opinions are not you. And certainly, any given opinion or set of opinions are not the whole of who you are. To the degree you can detach your ideas from your identity, you will live a happy, fulfilling life with little opportunity to feel offended. The solution to offenses is that we must fully die to “self”. We must become totally immersed in the identity and person of Jesus Christ, dying to self and allowing Christ to live THROUGH us. This is the same principle of James’ teaching when he said, “submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” This is saying, in order to resist the devil, submit “SELF” to God, and the devil will flee from you. The old “self” nature is what Satan uses to hinder us. If we live according to the flesh, Satan will continue to be able to oppress us with offenses, upset emotions, hurt feelings, not to mention many of the other problems. We can’t stop offensive things from coming to us, but we can eliminate what offenses feed on: SELF

5. Learn Humility

Colossians 3:12 (NIV) **“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”**

If you hear that you may have offended someone, stop and think about if something you said or did could have construed as offensive. If so, take it a step further and go apologize for the

words/action. Humility is the friend of inner peace and equanimity. And peace and equanimity are the friends of happiness.

6. Love Truth more than being right

If the truth, whoever possesses it, is more valued than the perception that you are the one who knew it first, then opposition to your thoughts and beliefs will be inoffensive no matter how offensive the other person is trying to be. You are not emotionally attached to your position. You only hunger after truth. So opposition to your point of view offers no grounds for offense. You simply want to know the truth, even if you are not the person who got it right.

7. Overcome Self-Centeredness

The It's-All-About-Me mentality is fertile soil for being frequently offended. Every word out of every mouth, every action or inaction, all that is done or undone, all motives and intentions become a reflection on you. That is a HUGE burden to carry. If everything is reduced to how it affects you, if you reside at the center of everything, no wonder you are so frequently offended! Move away from the center of everyone else's life. You likely aren't really there anyway. Nor should you be, in most cases. Allow most of life to be indifferent to you. My bad mood isn't about you. Your mom's neglect isn't even about you either. It's about her! This way, less in life will offend you and happiness will be much less fleeting too. Besides, they're entitled to their opinion. So let them have it ... cheerfully!

8. Reserve Judgement

Matthew 7:3-5 (NIV) **“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”**

Finish the discussion. Let the talk continue to its natural end. So often we jump to conclusions, assume an ill intent, create meaning to a word that then hurts and offends. Resist that urge and delay judgment until the conversation has run its course. You just may find there is no offense to be had by the time you get to the end. Amen!

9. Accept Imperfection

If you expect others to act and speak a certain way, or assume others will be as kind or compassionate as you, if you're bothered when they don't rise to the level of your expectation, you will almost ALWAYS be offended or on the verge of it. Instead, allow people to be human. We all have our own sense of wierd, quirk, and personality and character flaws. So do you!

Yours just may be different than theirs. So just let it be, shrug and let it slide off your back. Don't hold on to the imperfections of others so tightly that you strangle yourself in the process! Release! Let go! Breathe. Relax.

Part of accepting others' imperfections is also learning to forgive them their past mistakes (so the current problem isn't blown out of proportion as an extension of a previous problem unresolved) and create a sort of Forgiveness Default Setting in your heart that you automatically go to when confronted with offensive language or behavior.

Remember, people are imperfect. You are imperfect. Life is imperfect. And that's OK! When you can accept their imperfection (and your own!), you will be well on your way to a life of more emotional stability and happiness.

10. Accept Yourself

Learn and grow and improve, of course. But accept where you are along that path. You could hardly be anywhere else, given circumstances, after all. So accept yourself deep inside. Validate your inner being. See yourself as more than your behavior. You are also your potential.

You are of God, after all. None of us live up to expectations. But accept that too, not as an excuse to stop the moral climb, but as an understanding that where you are is fine for now, at this moment. Move from there, but right now, here, you are complete.

This self-acceptance will de-claw others' ability to offend you. It won't hurt because your validation doesn't come from their opinions about you. It comes from within ... or from above. People who are internally fragile – no matter how "tough" their exterior – break most easily at the wrong or misplaced word or deed.

So grow your inner self. Become self-accepting. And life will be a more consistently happy place to live.