

# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy

By Regina V. Cates

# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy



Several years before “road rage” became a popular description for the behavior of those who express themselves in this manner, I had an especially memorable encounter. I noticed a car speeding up behind me on the interstate. I was in the center lane, and the lanes on either side of me were empty. In no time, the car was upon me. The driver began honking. After a few seconds he moved his car into the left lane, came alongside me, and made a rude gesture with his hand. Then he sped up, got in front of me, and slowed down. Irritated by his offensive behavior, I honked and returned the hand gesture. Then he moved back into the left lane, came alongside me, and flipped me the bird again, with more anger. I got scared. Fear for my safety caused me to seek a quick end to the exchange.

Moving into the right lane, I took the first exit. He followed. I pulled into a parking lot, found an open space in front of a small store, and rushed inside. He got out of his car and trailed me. I moved rapidly to the back and hid behind some tall shelves.

**“Ego-boxing is giving our power to the person whose negative behavior made us angry, defensive, or frustrated.”**

The store was filled with female customers. He stood out, and after a minute he left. Both relieved and furious, I wanted the police to haul him off, lock him up, and throw away the key. As I drove away, I was completely focused on the man’s actions — I didn’t once question my irresponsible behavior. For weeks I stayed angry at the man on the highway and justified stooping to his level of aggressive rudeness, even as experience proved time and again that doing so did not make me feel validated, happier, or proud. Intellectually, I knew reacting impulsively to people or the maddening situations I encountered did nothing to help me feel better or to change them. Actually, being angry made me feel worse.

I was waiting for others to transform into more responsible and courteous people before I stepped up. Still blaming and creating excuses, I had not yet accepted self-assessment as the way to identify behaviors I needed to change.

Then I learned a huge lesson: It’s my behavior that creates my life. If I want a life of happiness, I must create happiness. If I want a life of peace, I must

create peace. If I want to respect myself, I must create self-respect. Today I do my very best not to impulsively ego-react to other people’s negative behavior.

How other people choose to behave is a reflection of how they control, respect, and care for themselves. How I choose to behave is a reflection of how I control, respect, and care for me.

Ego-boxing is giving our power to the person whose negative behavior made us angry, defensive, or frustrated. We don’t like or respect ourselves when we give our power away. To remain in control of ourselves, we must use the filter of our heart.

It was late fall. I was in Texas visiting my parents when I suffered horribly from allergies. It got so bad I asked my dad to check the air conditioning filter. At over 90, he forgets things, so it had been almost a year since the filter had been changed. He took it out to find it was gross and completely clogged with brown, icky dust. As soon as he changed the filter, I was able to breathe more easily.

The behaviors of love that reside within your heart (patience, forgiveness, peace) serve just like a filter in an air conditioner. While an air conditioner filter traps the dust particles in your home, your heart traps the impulse to react to the bad behavior of others.

In my book, *Lead with Your Heart: Creating a Life of Love, Compassion and Purpose*, I share about a life-changing encounter I had with Dr. X. Finally taking charge of myself and my behavior was a turning point. Stepping up to behave responsibly when I was treated rudely resulted in owning my behavior. Taking charge of my actions allowed me to truly begin creating the happy and peaceful life I always wanted.

If you want to have the best life, I encourage you to concentrate on remaining aligned with the standard of heart-behavior you choose for yourself. Nothing good comes from stooping to the level of rude or arrogant behavior someone else chooses for him- or herself. Remember, the goal is to create your best life. To create your best life you must give the best of yourself to life. Unless you are in physical danger or being abused the

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best course of action is to walk away. Turn the other cheek and refuse to engage with people who don't care enough about themselves to be respectful and courteous.

Following are some powerful lessons I learned about why ego-boxing kept me unhappy. At the end is a workbook filled with questions I asked and answered for myself that will help you move past ego-boxing so you can stay calm, cool, and collected.

**List the ways you want to be treated by others:**

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**"Fighting fire with fire just gets you burned."**

I was walking across an intersection when the person in the car at the stop sign honked at me. I turned, thinking it was someone I knew. Prepared to wave, I stopped myself when I saw the stranger's face. Apparently he was angry with how slowly I was walking across the street. I was not walking slowly. I was not texting or talking on the phone, ambling along. With a limp, I can't really sprint like I used to. I was walking as fast as I could, but apparently not fast enough for him. I was shocked someone would honk at a pedestrian walking across the street, but it happened. And yes, at first I was angry with how rude and unkind his behavior was. But I took a deep

breath and did not engage. I refused to ego-box, no matter how much my ego was screaming at me to tell him off.

On another occasion, while standing waiting for the bus, I watched two men walking toward me. Both were looking down texting. As they got closer, one of them started to drift more and more in my direction. He kept looking down, texting. There was a lot of traffic on the street, so I could not step off the sidewalk. Sure enough, he bumped into me while I was standing still. He looked up and angrily said, "Hey, watch where you are going."

There was a time I would have called these strangers on their rude, unconscious behavior, telling them in great detail where they could improve. But over the course of life, never once did a single one of the disrespectful, discourteous people I called on their behavior ever own up to their actions.

People who are discourteous, selfish, and judgmental are being controlled by an egocentric, self-centered agenda. Ego's reactive tendency is to shoot the messenger.

We know we're at fault, but our ego will not allow us to admit it. So we irresponsibly project blame onto those who are inconvenienced by our self-centered and impolite behavior. And ego will certainly not listen to anyone who has the audacity to tell us how badly we're behaving. There is no way ego allows us to hear anything negative about ourselves. There is no way ego will admit to being in the wrong, especially when we are at fault.

I completely understand. There was a time I irresponsibly shot the messenger too.

One of the most powerful actions of self-love is that of assuming responsibility for our behavior and how it can negatively impact other people. Another is accepting that unless we are in physical danger, calling other people on their inconsiderate and selfish behavior is inviting an ego-boxing match, and possibly something much worse. Anyone who thinks it is okay to treat others badly is not ready or able to hear what we have to say.

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This is the major downside of stooping to the level of someone's negative behavior with the idea you have to defend your pride or point out their bad actions to teach them a lesson. In relationships (remember, all interactions are relationships) it is not possible to fight fire with fire and not get burned. Sorry, but prideful, defensive ego will justify all sorts of behavior and rationalize all types of reasons you should ego-box with rude, self-centered, and arrogant people. The truth is, we cannot reason with unreasonable people. We do not get respect from those who are disrespectful. We do not receive politeness from those who are impolite. We do not get rational conversation or thinking from those who are irrational.

**"If we ego-react in negative and rude ways to defend our ego's pride, then we've just slipped into jerk mode ourselves."**

It is easy for ego to point the finger of blame in another person's direction, especially when the one pointing the finger is guilty. It is easy for ego to demand that people who behave rudely, or who inconvenience us, or who treat us badly, need to own up to what they have done. Yes, there are people who think nothing of how their actions negatively impact others. But we have to be honest with ourselves about ourselves.

If we ego-react in negative and rude ways to defend our ego's pride, then we've just slipped into jerk mode ourselves. We can't continue to point the finger of blame with "he started it" when we have chosen to participate and keep the blame-and-aggression train going. That makes us just as guilty as if we had been the one to be rude, arrogant, unkind, and self-centered first. "He started it" does not make our reacting with negative actions the right thing to do. In fact, jumping into an ego-boxing match causes us to stew in our own juices. We get angry with ourselves for letting someone's bad behavior push us off balance.

For many years, I stayed angry with people who treated me offensively or who were aggressive with me. One day I realized that some people think it is okay to behave like jerks. They are

irrational and angry. People carelessly do stupid, rude things. We'll get inconvenienced and upset. But a major "aha" for those of us who actually want peaceful lives, and the real reason for our frustration and upset, is that we stoop to their irresponsible level. Unless we are in immediate physical danger, ego-boxing is basing our conduct on how other people behave. We will be disappointed in ourselves. Why? Because we know we're behaving badly. That does not make us happy, even when ego justifies its actions as waking the rude person up to how badly he or she is behaving.

Sorry to disappoint but no, we're not that powerful. Our being rude back just throws more gas on the fire.

Refusing to ego-box does not mean we're weak. I know many of us lose heart by believing if we do not aggressively protect ourselves, other people will take advantage, abuse us, or view us as weak. This may seem true to those who view power as having control over people or things. But true power comes from within.

I believe inside most people are good. I believe each of us can make the intentional choice to lead with the honorable values of our heart by refusing to ego-box.

What you invest in life you get back. When you are accountable, kind, and calm, your life flows easily. Conversely, when you are irresponsible, cruel, and impatient, your life grinds to a halt. Self-centeredness separates you from other people. Rudeness and arrogance gets you labeled an ass. Egotistical actions take you out of the constructive flow in which relationships work best.

We are alive for the relationships we establish with other people. Meaningful lives come from creating and nurturing good interactions with others. But it is important to remember, it is only possible for you to be one half of the association you have with another person. But in the relationship you have with yourself, you are the entire union, and your goal is to be whole.

You become whole by choosing to create a life of positive meaning. Once that decision is made, you strive to live each day pursuing the goal.



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**"It's okay to get angry,  
but never okay to be abusive."**

No matter how fulfilling your life, there will be times when you get angry. You are going to get frustrated, disappointed, be inconvenienced, or experience pain as a result of other people's behavior.

When someone disappoints us, like breaking a promise the person made, we get angry. When someone leaves us alone in relationship, we are going to get angry. When someone steals, from us, betrays us, or blames us for their behavior, we're going to get angry.

When you disappoint yourself, you are going to get angry. When you behave in hurtful ways, you are going to get angry with yourself. When you cannot forgive yourself, you are going to get angry with yourself.

It is healthy to acknowledge your anger. It is not healthy to suppress anger or to take it out on other people, animals, or yourself. Taking anger out on yourself and others only grows your resentment and lengthens the distance between you and your responsible and caring heart.

Repression of emotions is a major cause of addictions, abuse, depression, and disease in our culture. In many families, emotions are either repressed or expressed in abusive ways.

As children and young adults too, we're often told being angry is bad and we should just move on. When I got angry, I was punished or shamed into repressing my emotions. I felt rejected, unheard, and my emotions discounted. Too often I'd express that I was angry, sad, fearful, or disappointed, only to be told, "Oh no, you're not feeling that." As a child I learned to mistrust my own perceptions and repress what I felt.

The rage my father often expressed taught me it was okay to express my anger by raging. His abuse of alcohol taught me to turn to substances to deal with the anger that I was repressing. If we do not express anger in healthy ways, we tend to turn that anger inward. Often the turned-in rage expresses itself as physical

abuse. We cut ourselves, we abuse ourselves with substances, we spend without responsibility, smoke, do drugs, behave recklessly, feel entitled to behave as we please and not assume responsibility for our actions.

I smoked cigarettes for 22 years. I spent over two decades harming myself rather than having the courage to express what I was so desperately keeping bottled up inside me. After a back surgery that left me with a limp, I ate without awareness or responsibility and gained over 50 pounds. Again, I was attempting to stuff my bottled-up pain by abusing myself. And so frustrated with my abusive childhood, I spent money irresponsibly, putting on a good show to the outside world that I was okay and happy. Inside I was miserable. I lived in fear of never being able to pay off the debt. There was also a time I abused prescription drugs and alcohol. I did not care about the risks and thought dying would be the answer to my messed up life.

Beneath the self-abuse was anger. So many years of not being able to express myself, not setting boundaries, feeling resentful and blaming others for my life, left me with huge holes in my heart. Anger quickly moved in. Anger set up residence, and soon the anger turned to rage.

I'd be rude, non-communicative, and project my weaknesses onto others. I was psychologically abusive. I'd scream, tell people how useless and stupid they were, and walk around with an air of superiority. The entire time, I was taking my anger out on others because I was not dealing with the causes of my pain. We get angry when we feel powerless. We feel frustrated not being able to control or change other people. We feel disappointed when people betray our trust, or gossip about us, or do not do what we think they should do when we think they should do it.

Anger stems from feeling disapproved of, cornered, or bullied. Anger arises when we feel cheated out of something we feel entitled to. We get upset when we feel others do not hear us, or speak to us with disdain, or when we feel unseen. Anger is a gut reaction to ineffective communication, not feeling understood, feeling taken advantage of, being abused, and not being

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able to express ourselves.

I did not have to go back and unravel each of the lousy things that happened to me in my past to finally release the anger I carried for so long. I could not go back and change the past.

I could not get people to go back and change how they treated me. It was not possible for the babysitter and physician to wave a magic wand and presto, the sexual molestation would be erased like it never happened.

To release my anger over the past, I had to accept that the only power I had in the present was over me. That meant I had to get my act together by getting my behavior together. When I forgave the babysitter, I let go of the resentment I'd carried for 30 years about how he should have known better, done better, apologized. When I forgave the physician, I dropped the resentment and rage I'd carried for three decades that he was a professional in a position of trust and power. Of course he abused that position, but his abusing me was not my fault. I was a teenager without power to say no.

I think I'd always been angry with myself because I thought there must have been something I could have done. No, there was not. Accepting the truth of what happened and that I was without power to stop it allowed me to leave the past in the past.

It is healthy to acknowledge our upset, frustration, and disappointment. It is never healthy to take our anger out on ourselves or others in the form of physical, emotional, verbal, or psychological abuse. That is never love and is not appropriate, no matter what excuses we come up with, no matter how much we try to blame our spouse, child, pet, mother, etc.

Yes, other people's behavior can be horrible. Yes, it is okay to get angry, but use healthy ways to express your anger.

Recently I raised my voice in conversation with a young man who would not stop talking long enough for me to speak. I was attempting to change an airline reservation, and he repeated the same things over and over, without once allowing me to finish a sentence. He kept

interrupting, did not answer any of my questions, and then tried to overcharge me for the reservation change.

I listened attentively each time he spoke. I waited patiently for an opening. Yet without fail, each time I began to speak he interrupted me. This went on for 15 minutes. Finally I said in a strong voice, "Sir, I certainly am glad our conversation is being recorded, because when dealing with the public, you need to learn to listen so you can help your customers. I also sincerely hope you still have a job after we are done." I am certain he did not hear me say this either, since he was still talking over me.

**"Yes, other people's behavior can be horrible. Yes, it is okay to get angry, but use healthy ways to express your anger."**

Yes, I was angry and frustrated. There are moments in life when we must assert ourselves. However, on those occasions when it becomes necessary to firmly set boundaries with those who are rude and uncooperative, our goal is to remain kind and courteous. So I was very polite when I said, "Sir, I am hanging up now."

People often behave in ways that are frustrating and downright stupid. We cannot control how other people behave. We can only control how we respond to other people's behavior. I could have been rude back. In fact, there were many times in life when I did fight fire with fire. But the times I got angry and chose to ego-box with someone who was treating me as the young man did, I felt horrible about myself afterward.

Even when I was continuing to justify my bad behavior as defending myself or helping other people see how badly they were behaving, I still ended up feeling disappointed in myself. A lack of self-respect about my behavior led to my being angry with myself for stooping to their level of inappropriate and rude behavior.

When you get angry, do something to let it out. Don't keep it bottled up inside you.

Healthy expression of feelings gets the angry, hurt, or scared energy out of your body without





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## "Courtesy, always the right thing to do."

I believe one of our most attractive and endearing traits is our capacity for courtesy. There are countless ways we're great as a species, but being considerate of one another is and always will be right up there at the very top of the list. I want to address how important it is to your happiness, peace, feelings of self-worth, and respect that you treat others politely. Even when they are not polite to you.

One day I was the only person waiting in line at a coffee shop when a man entered the store, ignored me, and went right up to the counter. I said, "Sir, the line starts over here." He looked at me and said, "You can wait. I am in a hurry," and placed his order.

In the past, I would have continued the discussion or wanted management to intervene, attempting to get him to own his rude behavior. But I've learned the benefit of behaving differently than the awareness that created the situation. I did not say anything else.

There may be some people who think I am weak or a pushover, but quite the opposite is true. People who do not care how their behavior negatively impacts others are not in control of themselves. They may think they are, or that they have gotten away with something, but sooner or later, negative behavior always comes back. At least that is how the behavior karma thing worked for me, because at one time I was far from in control of myself.

Today I can honestly say I am the strong one each time I remain polite when someone is rude, because in the moments when I am tested and I choose not to ego-box, I have power over the only person I can ever control or change: ME.

One of the best things we do for ourselves is replace the habit of impulsively ego-boxing with a new habit of remaining in control of ourselves. And I can tell you with complete honesty, being in control of ourselves is addictive, in a very powerful way.

Self-control is a corner stone of self-respect. The man in the coffee shop who cut in front of me does not have respect for others. That means he does not respect himself. He may feel he is

better than other people, entitled to behave as he pleases; or he allows his self-centered rationalization to justify and excuse his discourteous behavior. His behavior was arrogant and entitled. But arrogance and entitlement are not reasons someone is respected. Arrogance is motivated by a lack of healthy self-esteem. Insecure people feel it necessary to strut about like a showy peacock, as my grandmother used to say. Insecurity, in my experience, comes from a lack of self-control and self-respect.

Respect is earned. We respect people whose consistent actions earn our trust and admiration. The same is true of self-respect. We earn self-respect by treating others with respect. And, while it is not easy, self-respect comes from doing everything within our power to remain polite, even when someone is rude.

One day I was standing alone at the bus stop when a woman carrying a Bible came up to me, pointed at my Romancing Your Soul shoulder bag, and said, "You're a witch. That's the devil's work. Only if Jesus is your lord will you be saved." I smiled at her and respectfully stayed silent. She turned and walked away.

This was not the first time I have been judged based on someone's religious beliefs. I have been shoved, condemned on Facebook, and cursed in the name of someone's God.

The God of my belief is love. Regardless of how I am treated or what I am accused of, I will continue to do my very best to express as love — kindness, non-judgment, patience, respect, openness, forgiveness, etc. For me, being love is what the God of my belief desires that each of us strive for.

It's easy to be polite and courteous when other people are behaving the same way. It's not easy to stay polite when we're being verbally abused. It becomes a challenge of self-control when someone is impolite or behaves in a self-centered and rude way. It's a challenge to control ourselves, to force ourselves to remain silent, to allow the harsh words or actions to roll off. However, it becomes easier to do when we refuse to allow someone else to set the standard for how we behave.

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**"Ego-first or heart-first is our choice."**

Ego-first or heart-first is our choice. Our ego, the part of us where personal importance and the need to be right originate, will tell us we have to defend ourselves. Ego screams that we have to set other people straight by letting them know how badly they are behaving. Ego will attempt to convince us that if we just fight fire with fire and return the same negative action, others will somehow wake up to how badly they are behaving.

When we get angry, we stop thinking rationally. Our mind goes on a journey, listing all of the reasons why it is okay to be rude to someone who is rude, impolite to someone who is impolite, condescending to the arrogant. That will show them and teach them a big fat lesson. The problem with this line of ego-created rationalization is that we cannot reason with unreasonable people. It is a waste of our time and energy. They have stopped listening. They will defend their right to behave as they please, because they are not capable of accepting responsibility for their actions. They are blind to the way their negative and emotionally isolating reality is created by their negative behavior.

We cannot reach agreements with people who are disagreeable. It is a waste of our time and energy. We cannot share the same reality with someone who is living in his or her own fantasy world. It is a waste of time and energy. Focusing on controlling ourselves is where our energy and time are best invested.

Being courteous is being powerful. It says we respect ourselves. When we respect ourselves we treat others respectfully, regardless of how they treat us.

There was a time I would have reacted, to say something. I now focus on taking a deep breath and work hard to control myself. I do my very best not to impulsively ego-react to someone's negative behavior.

It's not easy to stay calm, cool, and collected under pressure. It's so easy to fall into the trap

of wanting to up the bad behavior ante. Our mind screams at us to return fire.

Disrespect does not build respect. Anger does not produce rational conversation. Blame does not grow personal accountability. Respect, logical communication, and responsibility are values held by people of admirable character. These are learned, practiced, and chosen to be part of someone's everyday standard of behavior.

Yes, we can be the example of what true strength of character looks like. Yes, we can rise above the sea of self-centeredness to think about others. Yes, we can let the stupid, careless, and impudent behavior of others rolloff us.

Consistently living this way is a choice. A polite and self-controlled lifestyle happens after we stop focusing on what other people need to change. We begin concentrating completely on staying aligned with our values. We concentrate on remaining courteous because it is always the right thing to do.

**List what values are most important to you:**

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## "Let go of the idea, 'people should do better!'"

When I was a teenager, I stole twenty dollars out of my dad's wallet. I knew in my head it was wrong, but my thoughts justified my getting away with it. My dad would not miss the money. Knowing it was wrong in my head did not cause an immediate change in my behavior. I continued to rationalize my bad behavior until one day, I was hit by the truth: Knowing better with our heart or soul is a completely different matter than knowing in our head.

One of the fundamental reasons we ego-box with others is we think they should know better, and therefore do better. By letting them have a piece of our mind, we think we're going to teach them to do better. Not in my experience. We cannot ego-box with others and expect them to throw their arms around us, kiss our cheek, and admit they are acting like a jerk. Would you?

When people are cut off from the emotional responsibility of their heart, ego takes over, with endless justifications and rationalizations for negative, thoughtless, and self-centered behavior. It takes sensitive awareness to remain connected to and responsible for the way our actions impact other people and all life. The way we distinguish when people have awakened emotionally is when we see they are no longer blind to their impact on others. They begin seeing themselves in other people and other forms of life, and caring for them.

While growing up, a friend of mine was used as a punching bag by his father. He was the daily target of misplaced rage, disappointment, and feelings of inadequacy. Today my friend is a loving, peaceful, and thoughtful father. He chose to break the cycle of abuse by assuming responsibility for dealing with his emotional wounds, in order not to take his baggage out on himself, other people, or living things.

My friend knew better because he made the deliberate choice not to be like his father. He realized no amount of fighting back or screaming at his father had ever changed the man or gotten him to own up to his negative and physically abusive behavior. The only option my friend had was to do better, because he knew better.

When people know better on an emotional level, they do better. Which means, until people assume responsibility for the way their actions negatively impact others, they will continue to rationalize their bad behavior. Believing other people should have known better, and therefore should have done better, is a fantasy. No matter what anyone else chooses to do, you can choose to let go of the fantasy.

Knowing better with our head and knowing better with our heart, so we actually do better, are two different things. Over the course of my life, I've done many things I am not proud of. I knew stealing the twenty dollars out of my dad's wallet was wrong, but I did it anyway. Then one day I woke up emotionally by putting myself in my dad's position. I questioned how it would feel to have money stolen from me. Asking "how would it would feel?" connected me to a new level of awareness. It made me realize I am personally responsible for the consequences of my actions.

For me, stealing is a big issue, and wrong. For some people, stealing is wrong but still thought of as acceptable behavior.

So yes, those who abuse others comprehend, intellectually, their unsuitable behavior. But no, they do not realize it with emotional consciousness. If they did, it would enable the sensitivity of their heart to overrule the rationalizations of their egocentric mind and control their behavior.

I was around age eleven when a sixteen-year old male babysitter molested me. He said, "I'll cut your tits off if you ever tell anyone what I am doing." I was terrified. Since he was the son of one of our neighbors, I was forced to see him often. I felt completely powerless. I had to keep the secret, unable to expose him or ask for protection.

When I was seventeen, a physician casually ordered his nurse to leave the room so he could molest me in private. He justified his actions as being part of the examination. But I knew he was touching me inappropriately.

These are two examples of times I've been

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deeply hurt or betrayed by the actions of others. For years I held onto the pain of being let down, ridiculed, bullied, slandered, persecuted, and abused. A continuous loop of negative memories played in my mind, keeping me shackled to a suitcase of blame and resentment for unjust mistreatment. Each day I grew angrier and more self-destructive from holding on to what I thought the people who hurt me should have done differently.

**"It made me realize I am personally responsible for the consequences of my actions."**

I grew angrier and more self-destructive from holding on to what I thought the people who hurt me should have done differently. Refusing to let go of the fantasy of what could have been was like endlessly tearing a scab off a wound, preventing it from ever healing. I was unhappy and misguided, wandering aimlessly through life without the ability to focus on much else other than the growing list of ways I had been victimized. Perpetuating an angry-victim persona caused me to spiral downward into a state of constant annoyance, blame, and lack of self-respect.

Frustrated and feeling like a prisoner of the past, I finally sought help. I got other people's advice. I went to a counselor. I attended support groups. I looked outside myself for years for the answer to how to heal. Yet no matter who or what I brought in to help, no matter how good the advice, I did not achieve the release I wanted until one day, like a bucket of ice water thrown in my face, the truth opened my eyes. To heal, I had to intentionally choose to move away from the past by no longer expecting people to know better.

The "aha" moment necessary for me to begin healing was accepting the lack of understanding on the part of the people who hurt me. They did not know better with the sensitivity of their heart. No matter what happened to me back then, or what may have happened yesterday in an encounter with a rude driver, I was the one choosing to relive the negative event in the present. I was choosing to keep the hurt and resentment alive by assuming people who

behave rudely, self-centeredly, and in hurtful ways should know better.

Those who mistreat others are oblivious to the pain they inflict. Even if the person who cut us off in traffic and then flipped us the bird were to emotionally wake up, assume responsibility for his actions, and beg our forgiveness, the past would still remain unchanged. What is done is done.

The act of understanding we cannot change the past allows us to wrap our heart around the truth: We are the only one capable of changing our present circumstances. To have the best rest of our life, we must take our power back by releasing the idea "people should have known better."

Unless people are actively working to heal from their past pain, they unconsciously pass their injury onto others. We must remember, those people are clueless about how to change themselves to better their lives. So we must be the one who chooses to become more awake and aware. We are the one who takes responsibility for ourselves, our past, and our wounds, because it is by healing the holes within our heart that we become whole.

We have to be the one who ends the wounded dynamic from which we came. Each of us must look within to find the source of our pain. Each of us must make the decision to heal. Healing our issues is all about the actions we take to release the resentment that came from wanting someone, or some situation, to be different than it was.

***If you are currently in an abusive situation, you must set a boundary with those people who hurt you. You must choose to respect yourself and walk away, if necessary. No matter how your heart might long for the other person to know better, they will not have a clue about their negative behavior until they choose to look at themselves with the honesty of their own heart.***

***Whether it is dealing with past abuse, or someone who stole from you, release your***





# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy **Workbook**

1. Describe a situation with a stranger where you ego-boxed (stooped to another's level of negative behavior). Describe in detail who the person was, what he or she did, when it happened, where it happened, and why you reacted as you did.

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2. Recall why your ego thought it would be a good idea to engage in the first place.

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3. Did ego-boxing get the stranger to admit his or her bad behavior? Did it accomplish positive change in the other person?

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4. Describe how your body felt during the ego-boxing match. Did your blood pressure rise? Did you sweat? Did you feel light-headed?

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# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy **Workbook**

5. What emotions came up? Anger? Fear? Resentment? Blame? Injustice? Frustration?

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6. Describe how it would have felt if you'd chosen NOT to engage in the first place.

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7. Make a list of the occasions when your actions would have been considered ego-boxing if you had reacted to the negative behavior of others.

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8. Make a list of a few encounters when it would be appropriate to respond to the negative behavior of others. Beside each, list a behavior of love (patience, forgiveness, understanding, cooperation, etc.) that would bring a higher level of awareness to the situation.

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# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy **Workbook**

9. Do you fear being seen as weak? Why?

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10. If so, where does that fear originate?

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11. Describe a situation when someone was rude and you chose to walk away. How did that make you feel?

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12. When you get caught in traffic, are you patient and peaceful? Or do you have a hard time staying in control of yourself by accepting inconvenient situations for what they are?

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# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy **Workbook**

13. What image brings you a feeling of peace? Your child, a pet, a beautiful place in the outdoors?

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14. Make a “to do” list of the events (traffic jams, long line at the post office, etc.) where you will no longer allow yourself to get stressed or frustrated.

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15. Make a list of family members and friends you love. Do you work hard to stay patient and kind with them? List ways you can improve on how you treat them.

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16. Describe how your health will improve by refusing to get caught up in the daily stresses you encounter with rude and discourteous people.

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# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy **Workbook**

17. Explain the emotional benefits of walking away proud of yourself, rather than stooping to ego-boxing.

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18. How long do you honestly want to live?

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19. List 3 ways you can change your behavior so you create a life that is as anxiety free as possible.

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20. How do you currently release pent-up anger and resentment? List ways can you improve on releasing pent up emotion in positive ways.

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# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy **Workbook**

21. Do you sweep hard situations and negative relationship issues under the rug, hoping they will go away? Or do you address what needs to be addressed?

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22. Describe how you are in touch with your emotions.

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23. List how you are a polite person (showing good manners toward others, as in behavior, speech).

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24. Do you drive aggressively or are you courteous?

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# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy **Workbook**

25. List the ways you want to be treated by others. Do you treat others in these ways?

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26. Describe how you feel self-assured.

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27. Describe how you are a compassionate and cooperative person.

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28. Do you take time to weigh situations before you respond? Or are you impulsively reactive?

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# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy **Workbook**

29. Describe how you want to be remembered in the hearts of those you encounter every day?

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30. Explain how you want to remember yourself when you leave an encounter with the people you meet each day.

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31. Describe someone you know who you consider to be an ass.

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32. What about that person makes you label him or her an ass?

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# Why Ego-Boxing Keeps You Unhappy **Workbook**

**33. Have you ever behaved like an ass?**

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**34. How does it feel to be rude?**

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**35. Describe how you will allow the irritations of uncontrollable situations and rude people to roll off you.**

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**36. What do you feel needs to change about you so you no longer ego-box with others?**

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