

The Grace Card

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I wasn't planning on writing this article. I had another article planned for this month; another "rah-rah-rah-quit-doing-the-stupid-things-in-your-life-and-then-maybe-you'll-actually-get-results" article. I was about half way done writing that article last night, and then I had to stop so I could get ready for church. I normally don't go to church on Saturday evening, but I had been invited to stay after for a film viewing that was being held. The sermon was okay, they've definitely preached better, but the two-and-a-half hours I spent there after the service are what changed this month's feature article. The film shown was *The Grace Card*, a movie about two cops in Memphis and how they teach each other about the meaning of love, life, and forgiveness during their time as patrol partners. It is a powerful film that I highly recommend, and one that really got me thinking.

There is so much negative energy in this world today, it is no wonder society is chronically ill. People walk around mad and scared day after day and allow feelings of anger, hatred, and sorrow to feast on their soul for years upon end. You flip on the news and all that is seen are either horror stories or tales of superficial happiness. True, consistent happiness is such a rarity that when others around us are able to find it for a moment, we often times bring them back down to our level with our words and actions. All of these thoughts and emotions fester within us and we are unable to grant each other forgiveness, much less grant ourselves forgiveness.

One of my favorite lines from the film last night was, "I promise to pray for you every day, to ask for forgiveness, grant you the same, and to be your friend forever." What a powerful concept this is. Imagine the impact that could be made in the world if this were applied to our daily lives. We have all made mistakes. We have all wronged others. We have all done awful, stupid, terrible things that make us nauseous to think about. But, what if we were forgiven? More importantly, what if we forgave those who had done the same to us? What if we forgave ourselves for our bonehead mistakes and all of the negative self-talk?

A negative mindset and a heavy heart create a negative energy emitted from your body. Without going too far out into left field with this idea, consider this: you know when you read a text message from somebody and they're pissed off. It's kind of like those screaming envelopes in *Harry Potter*; you just get a pissed-off vibe when you read the message. All of this negative energy affects everything around us, from the food we eat to the plants and animals; every single thing that has a life force is impacted by these thoughts. And as our habitats rot around us, our souls rot from within.

Every day we live our lives holding grudges against some and trying to be in the good graces of others. On top of that, we judge ourselves so critically that it can paralyze any action of self-improvement that we attempt. Enough is enough. It is time we start forgiving each other, start forgiving ourselves, and start asking others for forgiveness for what has been done.

There is science out there that says five minutes of negative thoughts leads to over two hours of hormonal imbalances. This type of stress is slowly killing all of us, undoubtedly leading to chronic disease and illness. I have heard before that you cannot get health from a sick animal. By the same token, we as individuals cannot become healthy if our environment and those around us are sick. We must stop this outflow of negative energy at the source, ourselves, by doing what we have refused to do up to this point—forgive.

I promise to pray for you every day, to ask for forgiveness, grant you the same, and to be your friend forever. Here's to faith, strength, and passion.

Get big or die tryin'.

Charlie Cates
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Charlie Cates is a strength and conditioning specialist and the owner of Self Made® (<http://selfmadefitness.com/>) in Chicago, IL. He has worked with competitive and everyday athletes of all ages and ability levels, from 9-year-old kids to NFL MVP's. He can be reached via e-mail at charlie@selfmadefitness.com.

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