

## - Medical awareness

# Intense, negative emotions can give you a heart attack

Philippine Daily Inquirer · 21 Aug 2018 · C2 · RAFAEL CASTILLO, M.D.

The other weekend, I gained another insight on forgiveness and emotional wellness, which are key to good health and happiness.



Richard “Rich” Tamayo and I were invited to be part of the faculty of a professional development program jointly conducted by the Indonesian Medical Association, PT Darya-Varia Laboratoria Tbk of Indonesia, and FAME Leaders’ Academy.

Rich, who’s based in Manila and is a member of the faculty of FAME, has been a sought-after motivational speaker for the last 30 years, and has given seminars on emotional wellness and personal development in Canada, the United States and the Philippines.

Although the workshop was on how to become a high-impact speaker and lecturer, he stressed that positivity is important before one can exude the passion which makes presentations dynamic and engaging.

If one has been nurturing resentment, anger, grudges and thoughts of revenge toward someone, then it’s difficult to radiate that genuine, positive emotion onstage when one is already making a presentation.

**Burned**

“It’s like gripping tightly a smoldering piece of stone, looking for the person who had hurt you, wanting to throw that stone to the person once you see him or her,” explained Rich.

“Meanwhile, you don’t realize you’re the one getting burnt by the stone.”

He cited an example of someone who had been holding a grudge on someone who went abroad. The unforgiving person felt so miserable for the time that her friend-turned-foe was abroad, that while the friend was having a good time, she was wallowing in anger in the Philippines. It turned out to be a simple misunderstanding.

I know a patient who had a similar predicament. She believed in the intrigues being spread by some officemates, and she nurtured a grudge against a colleague without asking him if the gossip was true. The patient kept everything to herself and took two trips to the emergency room in two weeks for severe anxiety manifested as palpitations (fast heartbeat), elevated blood pressure and ulcer-like symptoms with nausea and vomiting.

**Psychosomatic**

When all laboratory workups turned out unremarkable, we asked if there might be a stressful event causing her physical symptoms. Stress-related symptoms are called psychosomatic be-

cause they are usually caused by thoughts (psyche), and usually spill over to the body (somatic).

She finally told us of her problem in the office. We advised her to arrange a dialogue with her colleague to clarify everything. She did, and when she came back for follow-up, she said that although there was some truth to the gossip, it was exaggerated by the officemates who told her, and her reaction was likewise exaggerated. Now she just laughs it off when she recalls that experience.

But some people may not be fortunate enough to get over the unfounded cause of stress. Some may have a fatal heart attack or stroke, and don't live to learn from their mistake.

In fact, even relatively young women can be prone to emotion-related medical illnesses, including heart failure. In Japan, they diagnose it as takotsubu cardiomyopathy, reported in young women who develop symptoms of heart attack and heart failure due to intense emotions.

### Acceptance

Things will not always go the way we want them to, and people —including family and friends —will not always be as sympathetic, considerate and concerned as we expect them to be. We just have to learn to accept everything as it comes, be forgiving and remain positive.

The best way to express positivity is not only to forgive, but to continue loving and wishing those who hurt us well.

However, forgiveness does not mean condoning the act of other people or turning a blind eye to serious misdeeds. There should still be accountability, and the offender or guilty person should be made to pay as dictated by our laws.

### Forgiveness

Forgiveness is to liberate the offended individual from the ill effects caused by an unforgiving heart. "Being unforgiving and wanting revenge is like being imprisoned with the unforgiving person holding the key to the prison cell," said Rich, "unwittingly keeping himself imprisoned by nurturing the resentment and burning desire to revenge!"

When we forgive, let go of all our negative emotions and move on, we're the ones benefiting with improved health (mental and physical), less stress hormones in the body (cortisol, adrenaline), stronger immune system, better sleep, healthier relationships and lower risk for heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer.

We'll also be more productive at work and enjoy higher self-esteem. Those who cannot get over ill feelings generally have a low self-esteem. The longer they harbor negative and destructive thoughts, the lower their self-esteem becomes.

We should avoid these individuals with seriously negative tendencies because it's contagious and more deadly than any virus once we get infected. We should pray for persons we know who might have unwittingly locked themselves in a prison of negativity. Give them some wise counsel if given the chance, but "debrief" yourself quickly after talking to them so you can wash off any negativity you may have absorbed from them. If you wish to attend the seminars and workshops of Rich Tamayo and the FAME Leaders' Academy, call 09178600950 or 09435219540.