

UNITED WISDOM

Another person’s hurt after my boundary

Relationships and Intimacy

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Epigraph

> *“It is not suffering, but injury.”*

Joseph Butler, Fifteen Sermons, sermon VIII. A fragment of his discussion of settled resentment’s object. This is a historical moral distinction, rather than a criterion for permitting another’s feelings.

What this article is about

In a fictional scene, Tanya ends an evening conversation with her mother. Both must get up early, but Galina wants to tell one more story. Tanya says she will not continue the call after ten and is willing to speak another day. Her mother replies that she now gets in her daughter’s way. Afterwards, Tanya looks at the phone: she apparently spoke about time, yet the message became about her mother’s place in her life. She wants to call back immediately and talk as long as necessary for the hurt to disappear.

A close person’s hurt can be real and important without becoming the final answer about my participation. Sometimes it follows a broken promise or harshness that deserves examination. Sometimes pain arises from differing wishes and expectations. This article avoids reducing everything to one verdict: I am guilty because another hurts, or the other is wrong because I named a boundary. Between these assessments remain particular words, accepted obligations, available actions, and the possibility of hearing someone without cancelling my own choice.

I. A feeling and a demand are different parts of a message

Galina may genuinely feel that the conversation ended too soon. That describes her experience rather than proving Tanya must continue the call. If the mother says she is lonely, the daughter can hear loneliness. If she adds that her daughter must therefore answer every evening until midnight, a separate proposal about communication appears. Attention to the first does not imply automatic agreement with the second. Declaring the experience false is unnecessary to retain the distinction.

Tanya’s response may also be complicated. She wants to sleep, remain a caring daughter, and have her mother recognise the deadline as reasonable. These wishes need not coincide in one

action. She can end the call and feel sad about her mother’s dissatisfaction. She can offer another time if it is genuinely available. Neither option guarantees inner rightness. Deciding a conversation’s duration does not require first obtaining complete emotional agreement from both people.

Another’s feeling does not always describe the event accurately. Someone may hear rejection in a statement about time, or may hear actual harshness the speaker overlooked. A useful first movement therefore concerns the episode rather than an assessment of personality. What was said? What answer was expected? Was continuation promised? Examination does not cancel the experience. It helps avoid making intensity the only way to establish what happened between people.

Nor must I become the judge of another’s hurt. Tanya need not decide whether her mother may feel exactly that disappointed. She can examine her own words and participation. Galina can seek ways of dealing with her experience, choose support, or choose a time to speak. Decisions in closeness are connected, but do not become one shared inner state. A daughter gains no complete control over her mother’s feelings even when she deeply wants to help.

II. What was said and what was heard

If contact is safe and both want to speak, a misunderstanding can be clarified later. Tanya says the limit concerned evening time. Galina explains that she heard a loss of interest in her. This need not be a dispute between two versions where one must disappear. Painful reception can be acknowledged and the message’s subject repeated. That does not require asserting that the daughter rejected her mother if she made no such decision.

Acknowledging an experience needs distinguishing from accepting an accusation. Saying I understand your disappointment need not mean agreeing that I acted cruelly. If I recognise cruelty in my action, I can name it specifically. If I currently see differing expectations, that can also be communicated. Acknowledgement need not become a sophisticated technique concealing a wish to calm someone quickly. Listening is possible without promising the desired outcome.

Uncertainty may lie in the limit itself. Tanya may have said she no longer wanted these conversations when she meant late calls. Her mother could then reasonably hear a broader refusal. Clarifying the scope is more useful than requiring her to guess a good intention. The daughter can acknowledge that her wording was too broad. This corrects information rather than creating an obligation to accept the previous duration of every evening conversation afterwards.

Sometimes the message was clear and the desired result remains unavailable. Galina understood the deadline and disagrees with it. Further explanation may change nothing. The

daughter can decline endless repetition; the mother need not enjoy the new arrangement. The difference can remain open. Clarity does not always produce reconciliation; sometimes it only allows both to plan without attributing agreement that does not exist. This is a small but observable result of conversation.

III. An unwelcome consequence and a moral wrong

In sermon VIII, Butler distinguishes harm or pain from injustice in his analysis of anger and settled resentment. His reasoning belongs to Christian moral philosophy rather than contemporary diagnosis. Its limited relevance is a question: which action is considered wrong? The comparison does not imply that pain without demonstrated injustice is unreal, or require a philosophical verdict before someone can describe their experience.

When I refuse to lend an object, another may be inconvenienced. When I first promise it, allow a plan to be built around it, and then disappear silently, the history differs. Hurt may be present in both; the feeling's name does not distinguish the events. The accepted agreement, notice, and available correction need examination. Declining new participation and breaching accepted participation should not be defended with the same sentence about freedom.

Equally, an unwelcome outcome does not automatically establish wrongdoing. A mother may lose an evening opportunity to tell a story when Tanya ends the call. That is a loss of a desired moment. It does not yet mean her daughter cannot state available time. Galina may prefer a long conversation and Tanya a short one. Their difference becomes a practical question if both want to discuss it. It need not become a search for one person guilty of different wishes existing.

The distinction also applies to me. If another's refusal hurts me, my experience deserves attention, but supplies no ready obligation for them either. I can establish what was promised, what changed, and what options remain. Reciprocity requires no identical reaction. It means considering particular participation on both sides without making stronger pain an automatic advantage in deciding a shared question. This is the article's editorial position, rather than a measured law of emotions.

IV. Correct my part without cancelling the whole decision

Tanya may remember irritably saying her mother was complaining about nonsense again before ending the call. That sentence concerns her manner of addressing her mother and can be acknowledged separately. An apology can name the particular harshness without promising conversation at any hour. Correction need not become a conditional exchange: I will apologise only after you recognise my right to end the call. The two questions need not be resolved in one bargain.

If conversation that particular evening was promised, the promise needs examination. The daughter may have forgotten or agreed too quickly. She can say she cannot continue now and, if willing and able, offer a definite alternative time. Two hours tomorrow need not be promised as self-punishment. Correction should be manageable and concern the actually accepted part. Otherwise, removing today's hurt creates the next unmanageable obligation.

Sometimes an apology is accepted only together with withdrawal of a limit. Galina may say she will believe sincerity if her daughter restores the old arrangement. Tanya can acknowledge her own words and decline that condition. Sincerity is not established through one prescribed act. The daughter can also check whether she uses an apology to demand an immediate end to hurt. Correcting my part and controlling another's pace of recovery are different tasks.

Correction benefits from specificity. I acknowledge a harsh word; clarify the time; return a promised possession. A sweeping "everything is wrong with me" says little about the next action. "You always get offended" likewise explains little of yesterday's event. One clear acknowledgement may sometimes suffice for my responsibility even while tension remains. This guarantees no reconciliation and excludes no further questions if a genuinely significant new aspect emerges.

V. Avoid answering pain with hostility

In Matthew 5:43–48, love is not restricted to those who reciprocate it. This is a religious requirement in Jesus' teaching, rather than a rule of immediate access to someone after every conflict. A limited ethical comparison concerns declining to make another an enemy because of an unpleasant response. It imposes no requirement to forgive, restore closeness, or continue dangerous contact. Mother and daughter are not declared enemies to illustrate the verses.

Her mother's hurt may irritate Tanya. It seems that every personal wish now needs defence. She can notice irritation without voicing a humiliating judgement of Galina. This requires no finding that the response is convenient. I can end conversation without proving another unworthy of further attention. I can retain a limit without making it punishment for disappointment. These are possible directions of choice, rather than a promise of flawless gentleness after every difficult message.

Hostility may take a quiet form. I do not insult someone, but deliberately leave them uncertain so they feel what I felt. Perhaps I need a pause; if possible, that can be stated. If silence is chosen chiefly as a lesson, my limit changes meaning. Intention cannot be tested by reducing a pause's duration to one number. It is more useful to ask what task I am addressing and what I can actually communicate safely.

I need not maintain every discussion merely to avoid hostility. If the other insults, threatens, or uses dangerous dependence, contact needs separate consideration. A shared practice is unnecessary to prove goodwill. Available safe support can be sought without testing another's response for an ideal conversation. A respectful direction in my action assumes no safe or considerate response from the other; the article makes no such promise.

VI. Time for a feeling is not a deadline for my surrender

Galina may remain unsettled the next morning. Tanya need not regard that as proof of a wrong decision. The article sets no deadline for accepting a new communication arrangement. The daughter can give her mother time without promising a return to old calls after a sufficiently long period of hurt. The mother may not know when she will feel better either. Available participation and desired emotional state remain distinct several days later.

The reverse expectation is also problematic: I clearly stated a boundary, so another must immediately stop showing disappointment. That attempts to restrict their experience rather than the call. A particular manner of communication can be requested, such as avoiding repeated argument during work hours. A decisive tone cannot ensure disappearance of hurt. Another can choose a pause, separate support, or less closeness; my expectations also prescribe no obligatory speed of acceptance.

When conversation returns, it helps to establish what is new. The mother may identify a shared promise her daughter overlooked for the first time. She may suggest another hour, or repeat disagreement without new information. These messages can receive different answers without assessing her entire personality. Clarification of an agreement deserves attention; a repeated assessment need not always prompt a new defence. I can identify what I am willing to discuss now without pretending all hurt is fully understood.

Sometimes a short break in conversation helps separate haste from decision, but it is no universal therapeutic procedure. A pause may be welcome, unpleasant, or practically unavailable. If a shared task exists, necessary information can be considered separately from the personal dispute when safe and possible. Silence does not automatically become wise because it is called a pause. Its subject and cost need attention just as those of continued conversation do.

VII. Forgiveness, protection, and continuation of relationships

In Quran 42:40–43, praise of forgiveness appears beside consideration of responding to injustice. This is a religious context, rather than a ready procedure for family disputes or a universal legal instruction. The comparison recalls that forgiveness is more complex than demanding immediate removal of all hurt. The article's further distinctions between forgiveness, access, and participation are editorial; they assign no single interpretation to every believer or prescription of reconciliation to the reader.

Forgiveness can name different decisions for different people. One stops seeking punishment; another is willing to speak again; a third considers discussing only a necessary shared task. The article sets no theological definition for everyone. In particular relationships, what is proposed benefits from being named. Saying I want no hostility need not promise a return to nighttime calls. If another is unwilling to continue contact, the word "forgiveness" does not obtain their agreement for me either.

Absence of reconciliation requires no opposing punishment. Tanya can live with her mother's continuing hurt without telling relatives how unreasonable she is. She may seek support concerning her experience and available options. Galina's private pain need not become public evidence of her daughter's rightness. Confidential details can be protected without prohibiting help-seeking, especially when few options are available.

If harm was actually caused, forgiveness should not be used to cancel correction. The mother may forgive a harsh word while the call arrangement still needs clarification. The daughter may forgive an unpleasant reply while retaining limited participation. Both may decline to use the word "forgiveness" altogether. Naming an event, one's part, and a limit on communication may suffice for the next available step. A large spiritual formula need not precede every small household agreement.

VIII. Sympathy and pressure to concede

Not every expression of hurt should be called control. Galina may describe pain without intending to secure a nighttime conversation. She may seek an explanation of new distance or express loss of familiar time. Her words deserve separate listening when available. An unpleasant message does not establish hidden intent. Equally, proof of intention is unnecessary to notice a particular demand: keep calling, or I will arrange consequences you fear.

Pressure can be described through action. Someone threatens to disclose confidential information, remove needed access, organise harassment, or cause harm. This differs from reporting sadness. No diagnosis is needed to decline shared experimentation in such

circumstances. Assessment of available safety and suitable support takes priority. The article gives no universal legal or emergency procedures; actual circumstances do not fit one calm sentence for everyone.

In a less dangerous situation, a condition may be emotional: if you love me, you must speak as long as I need. The relationship can be distinguished from the proposed arrangement. Tanya can care about her mother while declining late calls. Galina may find that care insufficient. The daughter need not prove love with every available minute. Equally, describing her own care does not remove the mother's ability to assess whether the proposed relationship suits her. Agreement from both cannot be created through a unilateral definition.

Sympathy does not always mean a new action. Pain can be heard without resources for further conversation today. Another day can be offered if wanted. Someone can say they do not yet know how the arrangement should continue. Support that cannot be provided should not be promised merely to relieve tension. Honest limits may disappoint; they still describe available help more accurately than a sweeping promise of constant presence followed by disappearance.

IX. New supports are not assigned as punishment

Galina may have other people, activities, and ways to spend an evening. Tanya can support exploration by choice without declaring that her mother must become independent by next week. Other possibilities are not always readily available. Loneliness need not be treated as personal failure, or gratitude demanded for adjusting to an imposed new arrangement. A daughter can participate in one particular small step if willing; changing calls does not make her the sole designer of her mother's life.

An offer also needs examining for its own limit. I am willing to choose a convenient time together or help with an available means of communication. I do not promise to find every conversation partner, fill each evening, or guarantee absence of sadness. If help seeks to prove that my refusal cost nobody anything, the task can expand endlessly. A new arrangement has a cost. It can be seen and manageable participation discussed without making absence of any cost a required condition for deciding.

A close person need not accept a proposed substitute. Galina may want conversation specifically with her daughter rather than an acquaintance. That wish can be understood without fulfilling it at every moment. Another person is not a spare part for quickly closing an emotional need. An option can be offered with freedom to decline. If rejected, the daughter need not restart the search until finding the first appealing solution; her own availability remains a separate question.

Tanya’s support also matters. She may need conversation after an unpleasant call, rest, or clarification of promises. Independently enduring any amount of tension is unnecessary to prove maturity. Support may clarify the situation rather than merely confirm that her mother is wrong. A whole message archive need not be passed on to name her difficulty. The way she seeks help remains voluntary and considers privacy, safety, and actually available possibilities.

X. Closeness may find another rhythm

A few days later, Tanya proposes a short conversation before nine. Galina agrees but still sounds cold. The daughter can notice this without requiring an immediate return of former warmth. The new agreement concerns time rather than disappearance of hurt. If conversation takes place at the stated hour, that is a small fact of the new arrangement. It proves no healing of the relationship and requires no pretence that earlier pain was insignificant. One shared step can remain limited.

The mother may refuse as well. Tanya need not enlarge the offer until obtaining her desired agreement. She can leave another conversation possible if wanted, or state her next available hour. Galina chooses whether it suits her. Scheduling should not become a hidden lesson: let her feel what it is like to do without me. Limiting time and wishing to punish through loneliness are different actions even when both outwardly involve fewer calls.

Sometimes a new rhythm fails to form. Contact becomes less frequent or differently arranged; neither arrives at a shared assessment of the earlier conversation. Preservation of previous closeness cannot be promised after every boundary. Accuracy can be sought, one’s part corrected, and shared responsibility considered. A pause or separate form of participation can be chosen when available. No happy ending is required. Such openness allows a real person who need not become a convenient character in my practice.

Another’s hurt calls for attention to events rather than one predetermined response. I can hear pain, examine a promise, correct harshness, and retain an available limit. I can reconsider with new facts without making every strong reaction a reason to surrender. I can admit that I do not know how closeness can continue now. These possibilities are more modest than a promise never to hurt anyone. They may at least help avoid purchasing disappearance of hurt with participation I no longer accept.

What this means in practice

If you want to try, choose one small, safe episode where someone felt disappointed after your limit. Avoid threats, violence, dangerous dependence, or necessary support that cannot simply end. Participation is voluntary: you can skip the practice, stop, or decline contact. This is an editorial clarification exercise rather than validated therapy, a diagnosis of hurt, or a guaranteed path to reconciliation.

Spend five minutes dividing a note into three brief parts: what you actually communicated, what the other reported about their experience, and what was promised before the conversation. Do not record guesses about hidden intention as facts. Identify one detail you can check: time, the limit's subject, your own harsh word, or previously accepted participation. With few facts, leave the question open. A final moral judgement of both people is unnecessary.

Then choose whether an available action is needed. You can clarify the limit's scope, acknowledge particular harshness, offer another manageable hour, or leave a pause. Each remains a choice. If you write, avoid promising that hurt will disappear or demanding forgiveness as payment for an explanation. If contact is unsafe, shared conversation is no part of the task; personal clarification or suitable safe support may be more available.

After one step, note only what became clearer about your participation. Avoid judging success by warmth of the immediate answer. A missed promise may emerge; differing wishes may be confirmed; uncertainty may remain. One brief entry is enough. In Tanya's scene, the result is a precise subject of the late call and an honestly chosen time, rather than proof that her mother will never again feel unwanted.

Key quotation

> *"Harm, distinct from injury."*

Joseph Butler, sermon VIII, in his concluding distinction between sudden anger and settled resentment. Here injury concerns moral wrong, rather than bodily trauma. The fragment gives no instruction to devalue an unpleasant experience.

Connections between traditions

Butler offers a Christian moral analysis of anger. Matthew 5:43–48 extends love beyond reciprocity. Quran 42:40–43 considers forgiveness together with responding to injustice. The limited comparison keeps responsibility, feeling, and further participation distinguishable. It establishes no unity of every interpretation, clinical effectiveness of the practice, compulsory forgiveness, or restoration of dangerous relationships.

Sources

Joseph Butler. Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel, Sermon VIII. Cambridge: Hilliard and Brown; Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins, 1827, as identified by Project Canterbury. Transcribed by LeRoy Dagg in 2002 and reproduced in 2005 with permission of Bishop Payne Library. Sermon VIII itself was read in full, rather than the entire collection. Quotations come from the paragraphs on settled resentment's object and the concluding distinction between kinds of anger; the webpage gives no printed page numbers. Permission to the host is not treated as our general permission to reuse.

Matthew 5:43–48, King James Version, BibleGateway. The specified verses were read; separate theological commentaries were not studied.

Quran 42:40–43, Quran.com, Dr. Mustafa Khattab, The Clear Quran. The specified verses and displayed 42:30–43 context were read; full tafsir was not read and the precise printed English translation edition was not established. Russian exposition is editorial paraphrase.

Tags

hurt, boundaries, refusal, feelings, responsibility, relationships, closeness, parents, adult children, conversation, expectations, promise, harshness, apology, correction, choice, consent, participation, pause, sympathy, forgiveness, reconciliation, safety, privacy, support, Butler, Christianity, Islam, practice, United Wisdom

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