

# DESTROY YOUR ENEMY

Every man has a nemesis – his own Lex Luthor. Here's how  
to destroy him (no matter how strong he is)

BY PAUL MCNALLY

# FACING YOUR NEMESIS



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## TURN ON THE DIGITAL VOICE

recorder and put it on the table between us. "How I would have loved that as a spy," says Kevin Woods, poking the recorder with a similar-sized finger. "We had to keep changing tapes, which isn't easy when you're spying," he says and laughs.

Woods worked in the Eighties for the apartheid government as a double agent. He gathered intelligence against the ANC

by posing as Robert Mugabe's right-hand man (the ANC and Mugabe were allies) and fed the information back home to the South African government. Woods was eventually caught for his double-cross and Mugabe sentenced him to death.

He did five years on death row naked and a further 14 years in jail (despite Mandela requesting his pardon in 1994). Arbitrarily, he was released in 2006 with a few hours to prepare. Every day of his jail sentence he seethed with hate for Mugabe, his archrival. He focused most of his energy on the man who had sentenced him to (what appeared to be at the time) a life in jail.

But Woods wasn't a blameless bystander in the war – while working as a spy he killed innocents. That didn't influence his jail time, but it gave him demons to deal with. The operation he was caught on involved detonating a van (killing one innocent driver) after it drove into a compound (injuring three ANC operatives). He doesn't dwell on the past, he concedes that he was at war and insists that his intelligence gathering saved many South Africans, black and white.

With steady eyes he says that his only regret in life is that he got caught. And with a rub of his bald head, that he didn't kill Mugabe in the early Eighties when the apartheid government asked him to.

Woods had Mugabe as a nemesis for 19 years; the hate bubbled inside him. But you don't need to be incarcerated as a spy to have a lifelong enemy. You don't need to be Superman to have a Lex Luthor. You probably hold a burning flame of hate for someone you knew at school, the guy who nicked your promotion, the teacher who squashed you, the girl who cheated on you, the boss who used you. You may fantasise about the many ways you can destroy your enemy, but the only way to defeat him or her is to let it go. Superman (if he wasn't super) would have stomach cancer from the hate and bile he has churning around for his enemies.

On these pages, we help you to relinquish your nemesis. Experts tell you how to rid yourself of the envy, hate and distrust you

harbour for a sworn enemy, and we show you how to come out of it all a stronger man. But how do you forgive? How do you exorcise the hate? For many, it might be easier not to change, but the destructive unresolved anger will wreck all of your relationships. Time to break out the kryptonite.

## GOOD VERSUS EVIL

"No one is good all the time and no one is bad all the time," says Woods. "Most of us in that business have blood on our hands. We were all bad guys," he says. The answer is not to box people into either of these distinct categories. When you have an enemy it polarises the world into good and evil, black and white.

"It's a problem to use labels. There are greys in the world. By saying someone is evil you are saying that you don't have to deal with them," says Lindiwe Mkhondo, a psychologist in private practice who previously worked for the Trauma Clinic at the Centre For the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. Once a man is "evil" we're saying we can't do anything about it and we lose the nuances of why they changed into who they are. "You stop understanding people, get depressed and teach yourself not to care if they live or die," says Mkhondo.

To stop the hate early, we need to know what our triggers for anger are and build up our awareness. If you don't, you'll be reacting and feeling stressed out constantly. Know exactly what they are and (most crucially)

## YOU MAY FANTASISE ABOUT DESTROYING YOUR ENEMY – BUT THE ONLY WAY TO DEFEAT HIM OR HER IS TO LET IT GO

express it. If you don't voice it these anger triggers and unsaid words become frozen as hate. Over time, this charge of anger acts as a pilot light; you have memories of some past grievance your enemy has inflicted upon you, and once you access that memory, you pour gas on the anger and reignite it.

"The healing can happen through therapy and it usually works better this way because often, in the outside world, time has elapsed," says Shelton Kartun, founder of The Anger and Stress Management Centre of South Africa. The person who you hate is different now (or has forgotten). They've moved on. Trying to resolve conflict many years down the line usually doesn't work. You're angry for something that happened when you were

12; now you're 34 and your nemesis is in his sixties. "For you to raise the issue now, you're not really going to connect," says Kartun.

There are only two ways to discharge. The first approach is to talk and resolve it. Communicate with the person involved, a therapist or a mate. The next way is to talk to yourself: tell yourself that you overreacted. These solutions sound simple, but are easier said than done. When (and if) it finally gets articulated, your nemesis could be in denial. "If you blame someone for doing wrong then they are going to get defensive. Even if they know that it's true. You need to approach it as if you're simply raising awareness of what's happened," says Mkhondo. "They still might deny it, which is easier for them, because that means they don't have to analyse what they've done."

Some people might not be aware that their actions are triggering hate in you. They caused your anger, and might be wholly responsible, but are oblivious to your turmoil. Either way, if this anger remains unresolved, it can eventually redefine your identity. "It's an addiction, because it becomes your new identity. You lose yourself," says Mkhondo. People become hateful and this sabotages future relationships. An example: a man with numerous negative experiences with women hears something condescending from a woman. It churns up memories and turns old hate towards a new, relatively innocent, subject. Unless you get a dialogue of what's happening inside you, you won't understand yourself and will continue to repeat the pattern, destroying relationships, forever.

## CHANGE NOW. PLEASE

"I was nothing but a useless, womanising drunkard and also a spy," says Woods. "As for that old story of being brainwashed, I knew what I was doing. I thought about it and I did it," he admits. Of course, that's what he says now, but he's changed. And building on relationships demands that we change. "The root of destroying your nemesis lies in analysing yourself and reflecting upon how you interact with other people," says Mkhondo.

A friend crosses the line to become an enemy due to a betrayal. "We trust people because we love them. When we feel betrayed it drags down our self-esteem and we're left with feelings of shame," says Mkhondo. "From then on, we're on guard and don't feel safe with people." If someone makes a mistake then a betrayed person hates them with a passion. If they are 10 minutes late then you hit the roof and are upset for days. They become another person who can't be trusted.

# FACING YOUR NEMESIS



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For Woods, the betrayal was when Mugabe sentenced him to death. “I would focus on him on death row and I knew that he was causing it. I would focus on him only; direct my hate at him,” says Woods. Saying you’re sorry and accepting apologies is the backbone of destroying your nemesis. “I struggle to forgive,” says Woods. “But I have managed to do it a few times in my life and it’s a huge relief. Nelson Mandela forgave me. I spent all those years trying to kill him and his people. And when I met him: we sat there like best friends. That was a big moment. But it’s not easy for me. I have to work on it. I tell people to forgive, but it’s easier said than done.”

To forgive, it helps to feel the other person’s pain for having done wrong. “Being aware of someone’s sense of guilt can make it easier to repair the relationship,” says Mkhondo. “But often you don’t get an apology. Perhaps the person is now dead. It can help to write a letter even if you don’t post it.” The first step in forgiving, is to empathize. By putting yourself in someone else’s shoes, you make the situation lighter. “You have to let go of the bitterness. Until that point they are the other in your life that you don’t want to deal with,” she says.

When you are angry, you are holding onto something that has yet to be articulated. You hold on to this anger by making the other person feel terrible, thinking: “If I am nasty and evil towards you and affect

your life then I can get back control and that’s good.” But while you’re awake at night full of hate, the other person is fast asleep.

“It’s thought that when you forgive then it’s a sign of weakness. That by letting go of the grudge you’re giving up your power and control,” says Mkhondo. What people miss is that forgiving another person really gives you power because you’re freeing them. It is a rarefied kind of vengeance. You are saying that you’re not going to sink to this level of depravity.

## YOU’RE AWAKE AND FULL OF HATE WHILE THEY ARE FAST ASLEEP

### FOUND HIM

I found my nemesis down at the local pub. He’s not a friend, nor my father, he hasn’t wronged me and, frankly, I don’t really know him. So, what has he done? He’s in his late twenties and left his family to shack up with a friend of mine. She brings him to the pub and now he’s everyone’s best mate. What’s amazing is how repulsed I am. I get on my high horse about him leaving his kid (I’m childless and in no position to pass judgement), while similar digres-

sions are usually laughed off.

But I figured out why this bloke was my enemy (and possibly several others) when I realised that every kid at one point has wondered if his father would rather be at the pub than with his family. Since I’m approaching an age of possible fatherhood and still anticipating plenty more pub time, it’s become a sore point. Here, next to me in the pub, is a man who has made that choice – and he didn’t choose his family.

Staring at this guy as he tries to make small talk over a pint, I see hopelessness in becoming an older man. Wouldn’t I rather be in the pub too? Well, yes, because I am. But I don’t want to be this guy, with a crying kid left with a crying wife. Most telling is how I pull apart his character. How I try to distance myself. How I want to consider him weak and different. I don’t want to uncover any similarities we might have. I don’t want to hear his side of the story. People hate what they fear they’ll become. In order to cope with what we fear we act it out exactly. By letting your animosity towards an archrival fester, you can slide into becoming what you hate. You become immersed in it and by trying to cope you end up perpetuating it.

Just being closer to this guy (or staying mad at him) is increasing the odds that my life will go down the drain. The worst part of it all, is that my nemesis has no idea and it’s entirely my problem. What I need to do



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is let him go.

"If you have person A and person B and B does something to A," Kartun illustrates, "then A has a charge of anger. But it's A who has to do the work to get rid of it. The charge belongs to A. A has a problem with B, not the other way around. And so A has to do the work." We all own our anger. What's upsetting A could be his values, upbringing or baggage, but it's not B's problem.

I'm not going to be too hard on myself though – we live in a blame culture. It starts at school when we avoid trouble by blaming a classmate, and doesn't stop. We get into the habit of blaming people and events: it's because of this bad winter/my boss/it's everyone else's fault. It's easier to blame people because then we don't need to develop ourselves further. We can tell everyone that it was all his/her fault, instead of saying I have a part to play, or I take responsibility.

"Some people don't want to get over anything. For example, they go from doctor to doctor and never get better. Those that succeed are those that really want to get better," says Kartun. By going from doctor to doctor you aren't allowing anyone else to influence you. It's the same for letting go of your enemy

– that involves influence. "Anyone who doesn't let go of the past will not move cleanly into the future. There will always be ways to pull back or be miserable, and never connect

## IT IS A HUMAN TRAIT TO BEAR A GRUDGE. IT IS ALSO HUMAN TO SEEK REVENGE

with other people," adds Kartun.

Some people are so used to being angry they don't know how to act any other way. They are afraid if they open up and really look at the other person as a human being they'll be lost. It is a human trait to bear a grudge. It is also human to seek revenge.

For Woods (who was vengeful for years), it almost destroyed him. "When I was on death row I regretted not killing Mugabe in 1983," says Woods. One of the main games people play is tit for tat, a destructive cycle that can hurt many. "It amplifies until you

become cold and callous and destroy yourself. Talk to oncologists about revenge cycles and how it brings about stomach cancer. Because they get eaten up alive by the other person – if the other person has moved on, then they can't stand it," says Kartun.

This is when you need to consider cutting someone off. "To some extent it would be unresolved but it allows someone to release the past as well," says Kartun. If contact winds you up and it's easier to say "I don't want you as a part of my life", then do it. It's about your health, both mental and physical, so sever the ties.

On release from prison, that's what Woods did. Now he's calm and hate-free, and believes he is better for it. When I asked Woods if he thought Mandela's forgiveness was genuine, he replied, "If it wasn't then what did he do it for? What did I have to give him? He had my respect and a handshake. It wasn't like he was going to get a gain (politically or otherwise). If anything he was risking an outcry by associating himself with me." **MH**

The Kevin Woods Story is available at *Exclusive Books* for R269.

