The Antagonist

I thought I knew how to talk to people; it turns out that I'm not as good at that as I believed. I guess just because I'm good with words in one medium doesn't mean that that will translate into another medium. I think that I'm saying one thing, in plain language, getting my point across in the most succinct way (most of the time) when I guess I'm not being clear enough, or I'm giving information that clashes with something I said immediately prior.

This is why writing is the best method for me. Inside my head all the ideas and phrases are banging around, bouncing off the walls like text on a screensaver. There's some kind of misfire that happens as the words leave my brain and travel out of my mouth. I don't know how to fix it, but I'd like to. I want to, so I stop pissing people off by not saying "the right thing." I don't know why the translation gets lost. It could have saved me from some uncomfortable situations with people I'm close with, especially considering those situations resulted in us not being close afterwards.

And I'm not trying to sound pitiful, or avoid taking accountability for my behavior and responses from a bruised ego, but I still do feel like *my* wrongs are more egregious than the other person's. Like the other person can act any which way, but the second I reciprocate on even a similar scale, I'm the one getting denigrated. And I believe that has to do with projections and expectations people have of me. Which confuses me, considering that I try my best to not project my shit onto others (doesn't always work, hence my responses out of a bruised ego) or to expect too much of them. But is that a cynical mindset? To have low expectations of people, so when or if they let me down it won't be as grievous because I would not have placed many expectations on how they would act or react.

Either way. I'm bringing it back to myself, looking objectively at my own shit. Yes, I can be passive aggressive. I own that, it would be naive of me to deny it. It's pretty obvious when it happens. Yes, I bottle shit up and then let it out all at once, but to be fair, that usually doesn't happen around anyone else, where that person is on the receiving end. I'm usually alone, throwing shit at walls, or punching my car radio so hard I almost break my hand (unfortunate and slightly embarrassing true story.)

Okay, let's reiterate. I can be passive aggressive, yes. Why do I have trouble airing grievances, no matter at what level, like even if it's a small frustration? Taking external factors out of the situation (aka other people), what is it? I… fear backlash from the desire to have my needs met? I fear… wasting my time in anticipation of whatever the issue surrounding my grievance is not getting solved, and it just continuing, so why waste my breath and energy trying to change it? (But I can't see the future). But I have to keep in mind that being momentarily uncomfortable, even if it's a long, *very* long, sustained moment, to (hopefully) resolve a situation may often be better than, say, causing a rift in a close relationship. But then it also does depend on other factors in the relationship.

Though in being honest, I also have to acknowledge that in this situation, I really am the antagonist. There's a dichotomy here, though, in that two things are true at once: I'm the antagonist (once again), but the other party isn't completely blameless, either. But in trying to mature, I'll focus less on what I perceive to be someone else's errors, and highlight where I feel I've personally erred.

I was looking for an excuse to ice things. I feel bad about that because it's not the first time I've wanted to end a close relationship even though nothing grievous has been done to me (recently, but that's a very long and separate conversation). It makes me feel guilty, and like I expect my relationships to be transactional; like if I don't feel like you're upholding your end of the bargain, then I get notions to bounce. The relationship is just not serving me anymore, and that doesn't *have* to be a negative thing, but the broader social connotation says that it is.

I feel like I'm outgrowing the connection, but we are also taught that family connections are forever (especially in my community), and those rules supersede anything else that might cloud the relationship. It's like that concept of maintaining toxic family connections *just because* they are family. What's happening here isn't toxic (anymore), it's something else, a combination of things that I no longer want to spend the energy parsing through anymore.

So… what, then? Love and support and "family" connection aren't enough for me? Having someone in my corner "looking out for my best interests at heart" is not enough? I'm really struggling with how selfish and how much like an asshole this makes me look, versus standing firm in my boundaries, and how I will ice you if you continually disrespect and ignore them.

Like, when it's good, it's fine, but when there's a conflict, a disagreement, then it's so fucking dramatic, and *not only* on my part, and I'm tired of dealing with it. The drama gets dialed up so quickly and so far that, to me, it eclipses the good parts of the relationship. And I'm not looking for sycophants, or cronies. I don't need to be coddled and agreed with in every decision I make or feeling I have. But there are certain things that are important to me, things that I need to have respected and not infringed upon. I don't want to be pressed when I've repeatedly expressed that it's one area of my life where I just won't budge, and pressing will not make me change my mind about it. I also don't want to be accused of being passive aggressive about it, even though I bring up the way it bothers me each time it happens, addressing the issue, which is the textbook opposite of passive aggressive, no? Where are the parameters established between setting boundaries for yourself and being unbudging or selfish?

And why have I been continuing to hang around all this time if my heart is really, truly not in it? For convenience, I guess. Because I had nothing better to do, or no one else better to do it with. I'm a creature of habit, and I see clearer than ever how that gets me stuck in situations I don't want to remain in. But that sounds… really mean. Like, that's shitty, immature behavior. That's not what a real friend does. So if I want to keep being honest, I have to admit that I've not been a good friend. And this isn't the first instance in which I haven't been a good friend. And that sucks, and it stings. But I know it doesn't define me as a person because I've maintained successful friendships and close relationships before. And because I have two best friends now

(and still), and I've never had a conflict with them. Like, not even petty arguments. Simple disagreements, sure, and that's human, but it's remained entirely unproblematic since we met years ago. And for that, I'm eternally grateful, because I know my history threatens to, and sometimes does, repeat itself.

Just lonely in an isolated environment, aching for community, I guess at whatever cost. The cost of digging myself further into a hole that will pain others, in addition to me, to climb out of. As much as my ego wants to make sure both sides are taking accountability (because I truly don't believe I'm the only one 100% in the wrong, there's a spectrum), in my search for objectivity I can't ignore the fact that I'm kinda the problem right now. So… okay. I admit: I'm the problem right now. So I'm removing myself from the equation completely.

Questions to consider if you've also found that you are or have been The Antagonist:

1. What will I need to grow from this?
2. Is "this" something I truly feel the need to grow from for personal reasons, or because it's bothering somebody else?
3. How do I separate myself from my ego's need to be right, and reconcile the way it scorches others when I feel backed into a corner?