

THE WAY TO UN-DO YOUR FRUSTRATION

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Jaws tighten, teeth gnash and guts churn. The mind races, marshaling its arguments, its justifications, we lash out with harsh words or we stifle it down and seethe silently which makes us sick.

Frustration, anger, rage.

There are many ways that we, as a culture, “deal” with these powerful emotions, ways that usually result in us either hurting others or ourselves, and so the energy of these emotions is never actually processed and transformed effectively into what it really is – energy. *Lifeforce.*

Why? Why is it so hard for us to really understand and harness this energy?

For 300,000 years or more we evolved as a species under conditions that could not be more different than the ones we live in today. We hunted and gathered and roamed the world. The threats we faced were real and aggression, when it was needed to protect ourselves or others, could be channeled into smashing that saber-toothed tiger, or the invading human, over the head with our club. Simple. Now we live much “safer” lives. We have technology, we have civilization. But are we really safer?

The steady rise in the different ways that our bodies have found to make us sick seems to suggest otherwise. The rules and norms of polite society has made it unacceptable to bash people over the head, yet we still occasionally feel threatened just as we did 100,000 years ago. Only now, instead of actual threats that are in front of our face we usually have more persistent and subtle forms of aggravation to deal with.

Pollution and environmental degradation. Stressful deadlines and non-stop schedules. Hard, unyielding surfaces surround us and disconnection from all that is green, nourishing and soft in the world has become the norm. Not only these, but also the stresses and frustrations and power-trips of the people around us that also are marinating in this toxic stew we call society. As a culture we value persistence and hard-headedness, practicality and no-nonsense achievement, the ability to push through and shove down “emotional weakness”. But at what cost?

When we live in a world that is by its very nature hard and unyielding, when we are disconnected from the subtle and soft, our insides also become hard and unyielding and we become disconnected from what is soft and subtle within ourselves.

We ignore the messages of our body until it makes us sick and then we take a pill to try and “make it better”.

There's got to be a better way.

Today I want to talk about how to actually transform, and not just “deal with”, the emotions and energy of frustration, anger and rage, which sometimes are a response to actual threat, but more often are the result of the body being ignored while marinating in a toxic stress-stew. The pickle that we've gotten into is that, in order to function as a society, we really *can't* go around bashing everything that annoys us over the head. Yet holding it in, taking a deep breath, “sending love and light” to the frustration – all of this will simply repress that energy and make us sick in some way. So what's the answer?

Healthy Aggression.

This is tricky work and when I work one-on-one with my clients I need to use all my tools to carefully guide them through understanding and transforming their rage... but it's tricky because it's so powerful. We've been told so often and in so many ways (especially if we are survivors of trauma) that it's either not okay, or not safe, to express these emotions. So a lot of the time, at the moment this energy is cresting to its peak, there comes an equally strong, habitual shut-down response in order to stifle it. It takes time and patience and skill to process this stuff in a powerful and effective way, to uncouple the rage from the shame and grief that so often are layered together with it like an emotional onion, and so I can only offer so much in the way of advice to the masses, but something is better than nothing.

It *is* possible for you to start practicing a couple things on your own that can start to change and redirect the habitual pathways of unhealthy externalization (lashing out,

temper tantrums, road rage) and internalization (suppression, depression, sickness) that have become the norm.

Here are two tools for you to try out on your own:

1. Be the animal you are: Like it or not we are mammals. Human animals. Yes we have a big 'ol neocortex that lets us do all sorts of wonderful things that set us apart from the rest of the animal kingdom, but that big 'ol neocortex is also what totally screws us up as it enables the stifling of our instinctive responses. One way to tap into the real power of aggression is to learn from our simpler, and much wiser, animal friends. Try this the next time you are feeling frustrated or angry....Notice your upper lip and encourage it to lift up a little bit. Don't force it, just help it along. If you are an angry mammal your lip WILL want to raise in a snarl, guaranteed, but if you force it to happen all at once (in contradiction to a lifetime of being polite and unconsciously stifling this response) you will be missing the organic urge that is most important. Just play with it. Lift one part of your upper lip a little bit and see if a snarl wants to naturally emerge, notice how when that happens your eyes will also get involved – they will narrow and tighten (an evolutionary response to enable clear focus on the threat). Really allow and feel that fundamental expression of anger that wants to happen in your face. Let out a little sound. Don't plan it, just see what sound wants to emerge from your throat when you have your facial muscles mobilized in this way. Feel your face and hear the sound. Feel the energy that is rising in you.

2. Snap frustration's little neck: Fundamentally, anger is a self-protective response. It's the emotional part of the life force mobilization that surges through the whole organism so that it can defend itself. It wants to hurt and kill. No way around it, the energy of self-protection wants to annihilate that which is

threatening it or it's young ones (think of a mama bear protecting it's cubs from a predator). Now, that unreasonable deadline that your short-tempered boss just hurled at you can't be killed, and you really shouldn't kill your boss either – not helpful. But that doesn't mean that you can't channel the energy that wants to attack in a useful way.

Try this – find a towel or a jacket or something that you can roll up into a thickness about the same as your wrist or forearm – thin enough that you can get a really good grip, but thick enough that your hands have to work a bit to grasp it. Grab that roll with your palms facing down so that you are holding onto it like you would the handlebars of a bike. Now, let all that frustration, all that anger, all that ENERGY into your hands.

SQUEEZE! TWIST! MORE!

Squeeze and twist that towel as if it were a neck you were trying to snap. It's ok – it's just a towel, you're not going to hurt its feelings.

Do this in conjunction with snarl and letting out some sound. REALLY do it. Commit all that frustration to the task as if your life depended on it. Cause it kinda does.

These two simple exercise are simple and powerfully effective ways to transform frustration and anger. They also can potentially break a dam that's been holding back helplessness and grief so make sure that you are in a place that is safe when you do them.

The KEY to these practices working for you is that you feel the ENERGY!!

The emotions that have had you fuming are simply the surface presentation of a huge biological urge, and the energy that is in that urge, once it's given a healthy channel to flow through so that it can be expressed, becomes something wonderful. It becomes vitality, creativity, focus and drive. When it's left unexpressed and stifled it becomes depression, rage, hatred, anxiety and illness.

Take the power back for yourself. Real power. Take responsibility for the anger within you, take ownership of your own frustrated life energy and allow it to transform through expression and action and you will heal a little bit of the rage and hatred that has been ruling this world for so long.

Your body knows how to do this, you just need to be willing.