

FRUSTRATION IS UNREALIZED EXPECTATIONS

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Recently a friend described frustration as “unrealized expectations.” This simple explanation spurred me to think. Frustration causes stress. We become frustrated about things beyond our control, and get caught up in a cycle of living that is negative, limiting, and unproductive.

In learning to cope, first become *aware* of what “frustrates” us. Too often we go through life “unconsciously” – continuously acting and reacting without thinking. Frustration can stem from something as simple as the traffic or a broken piece of equipment. And it can be as deep and complex as our personal lack of perfectionism, criticism, and disappointments - or the failures or shortcomings of others. If we are unaware, life can easily become one big frustration and disappointment after another!

How do we stop the cycle? As always, the key to change is awareness. Become aware of your feelings and the prevalent signs of frustration: *physical* signs (clenched muscles and jaws, achy muscles, tension, rapid heartbeat, and high blood pressure), *emotional* signs (tearfulness, anger, irritability, emotional “yo-yoing”), *behavioral* signs (isolation, acting out in anger, arguing, lethargy, or erratic behaviors), and *cognitive* signs (negative thoughts, unusual sarcasm, and thoughts of persecution, imperfection, and criticism).

Name the feelings. Labeling the feelings helps us understand them and communicate. It tends to decrease their power over us. It’s much more effective to say, “I’m angry,” or “This is really frustrating,” than to act out with loud voices and physical violence.

Ask these questions. “Do I have any control over this?” (If it involves another person’s actions, the likely answer is “no.”) “What am I afraid of?” (Behind most negative or hurtful feelings is fear.) “Will my dreams not be realized?” (Remember – frustration stems from unrealized dreams and expectations). “What does it mean about me personally?” (Am I a failure???) “What’s the worst thing that will happen?” The ultimate question may be, “Is this right, realistic, or responsible?” “Getting Real” is imperative. No one gets everything they want in life.

Realistically, there are things we *CAN* change. “Just do it!” There are things we *CAN’T* change, “Accept it!” and there are things we can change *OUR THOUGHTS* about. “Reframe it!”

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