

My Quest

By Daniel Labbe

Today's Meditation - I used to be so easily frustrated by other people. When someone broke a commitment, acted immaturity, was disrespectful, or was just plain senseless, I would become angry. People pissed me off, to say it bluntly. When I came to prison, and I didn't have the numbing effects of drugs and alcohol to soothe away the unwelcome feelings it was like entering an active war-zone. I felt assaulted on an almost continuous ~~basis~~ basis. Nearly everyone pissed me off, and it made ~~my~~ life unbearable.

For years I saw it as "their problem." These guys are immature, ignorant, disrespectful, and negative. I would think "We have nothing in common." Such a view made it very easy for me to ~~become~~ feel justified in my way of seeing ~~these~~ things.

But being "right" (as I believed I was at the time) didn't feel good. In fact, such a view became unsustainable. It was just too stressful, but what could I do? This is an environment where ~~the~~ people act in extremely dysfunctional ways nearly all the time. People here are often disrespectful. They are often behaving in negative or immature ways. This is just a plain fact of prison that I cannot change, yet I could no longer sustain "life as usual." Something had to change.

What about you? Are you often frustrated by people in your life - neighbors, coworkers, drivers on the road? What about family or lovers? For many of us the people in our lives can seem to be a major source of frustration.

So what do we do about it? The answer that

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Worked for me was the antithesis of what I had believed for years. I realized that my level of frustration with People was proportionate to ~~my dependency on them~~ my level of dependency (or co-dependency). Here's what I mean. I had a need for People to act in certain ways. I was looking toward others to fulfill certain internal needs that I had - my need for acceptance, cooperation, approval, friendship, my need for them to fulfill my expectations and so on. When People failed to fulfill these needs I became frustrated.

You may be thinking, "I don't look to others to fulfill my needs." But if that was true we wouldn't be so easily frustrated by other People's idiosyncrasies. People can't "fail" us or disappoint us if we aren't looking for them to fulfill a need of ours. Think about it, if we didn't perceive it as a "need" than their failure to fulfill it wouldn't ~~bother~~ bother us so much. The frustration is more a product of our dependency than it is of the other Person's actions (or inactions).

Okay, yes, we all do depend on each other, for a healthy fulfilling life. But it is when this dependency turns into a need that it becomes a problem.

Here are some examples: In order for John to have a "good day" at work he needs his co-workers to treat him well and he needs his boss to be impressed by his work. Or in order ^{for} Jane to feel loved she needs her Partner to ~~profess~~ profess his love continuously and to agree ~~with~~ with her every opinion. In order for Mike to ~~enjoy~~ enjoy his day he needs everything to run smoothly.

In the book The Celestine Prophecy the author

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Puts forth the idea that most people interact with others out of the desire to fulfill some need - to get energy of some kind or another from them - and that if we want to be healthy, happy individuals we need to find a way to fulfill our deepest needs on our own. To feel "complete" totally within ourselves rather than needing others to live up to our wishes in order to feel complete. Once this happens we are free to love others, free to enjoy relationships, rather than needing them. We can love our partner in total freedom rather than out of need. We know that we are complete on our own, the relationship is great, but we don't need it for our sense of self-worth and happiness. What freedom! People are now just people - no big deal.

This extends to all of our relationships. If we can become our own source (or use our Higher Power as our source) ~~for~~ love, security, power, approval, and so on, we no longer need to fulfill these through our relationships with others. Now we are free to enjoy these from people if they are able to provide them, if not that's okay because we are already complete on our own. At this stage the "frustrating" antics of other people lose their potency to affect us.

So if you find that the people in your life are causing you a lot of frustration, try asking yourself "What need am I looking to fulfill in my relationship with this person? How can I become my own source to fulfill this need? Why do I need this person to act in such and such a way? Why does it bother me so much?"

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You just may find that you yourself can be ~~the~~ your own source of love, acceptance, approval, and admiration, thus making you complete and free to love and enjoy life!

Current Events - I just completed the training for facilitators for AUP (Alternatives to Violence Program), and I'll be co-facilitating the Speaking Without Fear course come July 11th. The Mindful Living group is going well. This week we will be working on CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) skills. CBT has proven to be an extremely successful form of therapy. It helps people gain emotional stability while putting events in a healthier, more realistic perspective. In order to be successful with CBT a person needs to be mindful of his (or her) thinking process. It's actually pretty cool stuff.

One of the Mental Health clinicians here loaned ~~me~~ me a book to help me become a more effective group facilitator. It's called, Processing The Experience: Strategies to Enhance and Generalize Learning. It's very insightful. Right now I'm reading about how to create a state of disequilibrium in a person to facilitate a learning process. This whole prison experience is one big disequilibrium. My mind is constantly readjusting and refining thoughts in order to create some sense of balance.

One thing that happened recently is my relationship with my therapist has changed. I will no longer be seeing her as often. It's difficult because she was the one "live" relationship I had that was positive. What I mean is, most of my positive relationships are via mail. My mom comes

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once every 4-6 weeks, other than that. My therapist was someone I really enjoyed seeing and talking to. I was able to be my true self with her. In the Prison environment it is very difficult to not put on a "persona", like a protective mask. Without such a mask your softer, more vulnerable parts would be assaulted on a near continuous basis. So, losing this relationship will be difficult. I'm trying to focus on my experience in the moment rather than on thoughts concerning this issue. The thoughts fuel unproductive emotions. The experience of the present moment keeps me grounded. It would be easy to just let go and give into the Prison mentality so stuff like this won't hurt so much, but then I'd lose those parts of myself that I cherish most - not worth it. I'd rather experience the pain.

All right, watch for my next posting in about a week. I'm posting my prospectus for LifeQuest. I'm trying now to figure out a way to find the e-mail addresses for local philanthropic foundations, people that are interested in ~~that~~ the sort of thing LifeQuest is all about. If you have any suggestions, let me know.

'Till next time, Happy Questing!

Today's Quote - "Things do not change, people change."
Henry David Thoreau

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