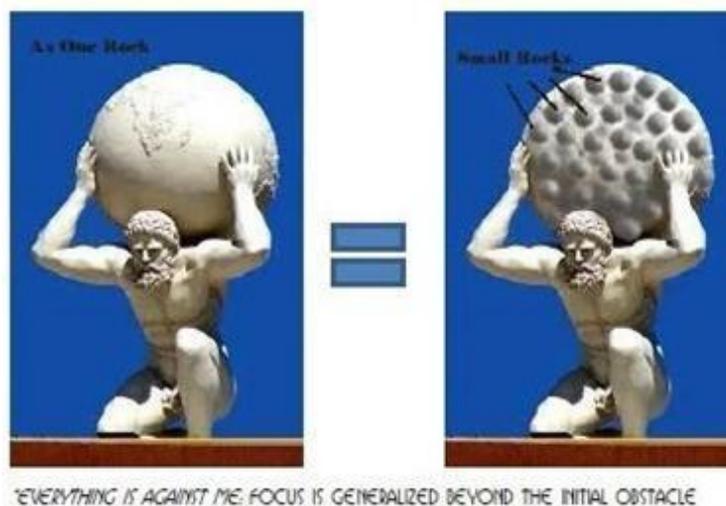


Managing Frustration



Let us face it. Everyone gets frustrated. It occurs to us when we fail a test, have a disappointment in a relationship, or when competing with another person through a difficult game. Frustration occurs to anyone who has a goal directed outcome thwarted with a belief that the one's ability to achieve the goal is within reach. Frustration often becomes embedded when the intended goal was repeatedly obstructed against expectations. It can even grow in intensity when other imagined goals for a successful outcome are also impeded, following close on the heels of a recent frustration. When numerous efforts to succeed are met with repeated failures, the feelings of frustration begins to mount. When we experience more frustration after already feeling frustrated, our frustrations tend to “piggy back” off each other.



This growing tension eventually ignites a fuse that evolves into feelings of anger and even rage. Anger is evidenced by a sudden intense eruption of emotion out of proportion to a seemingly minor infraction. Rage is similar to anger but with a few minor differences. In regards to intensity, rage is most often far more intense than anger. In addition, when anger is acted out it is often manifested on people or things related to the immediate frustration. This is like slamming a phone down after a frustrating phone call. Rage however, tends to act out on people or things beyond the object of their frustration. This is like the same frustrating phone call that results in broken dishes and holes in the wall.

FRUSTRATION

INTACT, ISOLATED OBSESSION

ANGER

DISRUPTED, TENSE, VENTING

RAGE

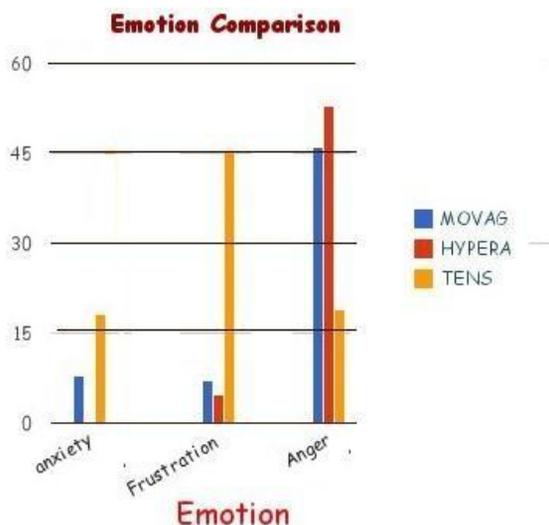
DESTRUCTIVE, CHAOS, DAMAGING UNRELATED TARGETS

Unchecked Frustration eventually progresses to Rage

Basis of Frustration

If you consider the diagram below you will see that Anxiety, Frustration and Anger share common components. In fact, when you consider the difference between both anxiety and frustration, the determinant that characterizes which emotion would be predominating is the amount of tension and energy (HyperA) that is invested into the expectation of influencing a desired outcome. The component of 'moving against' (MOVag) persons or things is not significantly different between anxiety and frustration.

A very interesting point is how the shift from frustration to anger is a reduction of tension in exchange for acting on a target. ('moving against'). It is reasonable to consider that the 'acting out' in anger does reduce the internal tension which would be otherwise held.



Expectation is a major component for emotions to increase in energy. The target directed energy is not apparent in Anxiety, but as we move from Anxiety toward Anger, we see the internal tension and 'target directed energy' become more elevated. This suggests that not having a clear expectation in the face of tension leaves us feeling anxious. But having a confidence in controlling an outcome, we are set up for Frustration and Anger. This process can be represented in a following formula as a useful tool.

$$\text{Frustration} = \frac{\text{Expectation}}{\text{Reality}}$$

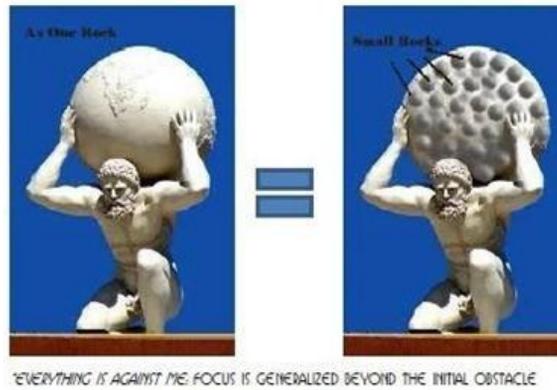
Let us consider how Frustration is fueled. This can occur when we have high Expectation of a given outcome without considering all the possible alternatives to our actions. The Reality of outcomes occur when we understand the many ways our plans can deviate from our directed activity. For example, we may be frustrated when we turn on a light switch and the light does not come on. But knowing the light bulb may be faulty or the lamp may not be plugged in will decrease our frustration. In other words, knowing how other outcomes can deviate from our efforts will serve to diminish our frustrations. When we are more familiar with the reality of the situation (aka. Knowing the scenario conditions that will not be successful), we experience less frustration.

When we plug into the formula provided, we learn that there are two ways to diminish Frustration.

- 1) Decrease Expectations*
- 2) Increase Reality*

When we meet frustrations in our life, we can be equipped to deal with such situations more effectively. We just need to ask a few questions. Learn to ask yourself, "Am I expecting more than what the situation deems?" (Expectation) and "Am I considering what other factors may play into the outcome?" (Reality). By accurately answering these questions, we stand a better chance to minimize our frustrations. I also need to mention that the very same formula works in situations where you feel anxious. Just replace 'Frustration' with 'Anxiety'.

Final Words on Frustration



Often when we feel we are getting more frustrated, growing into feelings of 'Anger', it is likely that we are experiencing a number of frustrations that seems overwhelming for us. In such cases, it is important to dissect the frustrations into the different contributing issues that make us feel overwhelmed. If you feel an overwhelming frustration, take some time out for yourself and write the issues on a sheet of paper. This will already help provide a sense of regaining your control when we realize that there are other contributions to this heavy burden. When we feel we are Atlas holding up a world of trouble, we can come to realize that it is just individual problems we are facing, which cause us to feel overwhelmed. Try it and let me know if you gained some benefit from this post. Here is to wishing you less frustrating days in life!

Greg