

A Guide to Finding Calm & Being Less Frustrated

One of the most common sources of difficulty for most of us is frustration – we can get frustrated with the smallest things, throughout the day.

And yet, becoming aware of how often we're frustrated doesn't quite solve the problem. Someone pointing out that you're frustrated only makes you *more* irritated.

How can we let go of our frustrations, and find calm?

How can we bring ourselves to peace when our emotions have been triggered?

The answer doesn't lie in the external — we can't make things around us less frustrating. We might fruitlessly hope for things like:

- People to behave the way we want them to (with consideration for us)
- Things to go the way we'd like
- Our homes or workplaces to be orderly, calm, and pleasant
- Quiet when we want quiet
- Being more disciplined with what we plan to stick to
- People to put things back where they should go
- World leaders to behave the way we want them to
- Traffic to be better, or drivers to be less rude

And so on. As you might guess, it's not possible to make all of these things come true. We can't control other people, world events, even ourselves much of the time. Things just won't go the way we'd like.

And when things don't go the way we'd like ... we get frustrated. We can't solve the problem by trying to fix the external situation.

The answer has to come from within.

Starting to Change the Inner Response

I know, when someone else is being rude, it's frustrating to think that we have to be the ones to change our response. Why can't they just change the way they act? Well, we already know how that goes — we *can't get them to change*, so we'll just be frustrated.

So again, we have to accept the fact that the solution to our frustration lies only within.

If you're up for inner change, then starts with this process:

- Notice what our habitual response is (the Pattern) to frustrating external situations (the Trigger).
- Notice what Result we get from the Pattern. For example, if the Pattern is to be frustrated and resentful by saying things to ourselves like, “Why do they have to be like that?” ... then the Result might be unhappiness, stress, a worsening of our relationship. It might be anger and lashing out at someone. It might be withdrawing from the person and spinning around a resentful story in our heads in private.

So there’s a Trigger (external situation that we don’t like) and a Pattern (our habitual response to the Trigger), and then a Result from the Pattern (frustration, unhappiness, lashing out, worse relationship).

Now ask yourself: Do you want to continue to get this result? Is it a desirable result? Is the Pattern helpful to you?

If it’s not a helpful Pattern, you can start to create a new one.

Creating a New Pattern

What Pattern would be more helpful to you?

You might consider one like this: “This (person/situation) isn’t what I want. I wonder if I can open up to it and be curious about it? I wonder if there’s a way to be grateful for this moment I’ve been given? I wonder if I can find a way to love this moment, in all its entirety.”

This Pattern might be more helpful. Try it and see. If not, create your own Pattern.

Then start to ingrain the Pattern, replacing the old one. It takes practice, so don’t expect to be perfect at it (at all).

Here’s how to practice with the new Pattern:

- Notice when you start down the old Pattern with one of your usual Triggers (something you don’t like, someone behaving badly, you aren’t living up to your own expectations, etc.).
- Interrupt the old Pattern and don’t let yourself stay on it, even if you only notice after it already started. For example, a minute into your old Pattern, you notice ... interrupt yourself now. Say, “That’s not helpful, I’m not going to waste my time on that anymore.”
- Insert your new Pattern instead. Say the words you planned out (like the ones I suggested above), and try to really adopt that attitude. Don’t worry if you’re not good at it at first — just try to open up to it.

- See what Result you get with this new Pattern. Give it a few tries before you judge the Results (maybe 10-15 tries).

If the Result is better, then maybe continue to practice this. If not, make a new Pattern and try that.

This takes practice. It takes remembering, so put up reminder notes anywhere you can, and forgive yourself if you forget.

Be patient with yourself, and see this as a loving act for yourself. See it as a way to reduce your frustration and unhappiness, and to find peace and calm instead. What a beautiful thing to do for yourself, and the ones you love!

Zen Productivity: Last Chance at L.A. & San Diego Workshops

Hey my friends, I have a few spots left in my Los Angeles and San Diego workshops this weekend and next.

I would love to have you come and work with me.

Zen Productivity Workshops

We'll work on the main obstacle to finding focus and simplicity, to reducing procrastination, to finding calm and mindfulness and overcoming stress. It'll be awesome, come play with me!