

Frustration or You Can't Always Get What You Want But You Can Be Cool With It.

Annoyed, frustrated, mad—this family of feelings is a territory of stress. This article gives you a simple tool to help you diffuse the annoyance, frustration or anger reaction and turn it into a more productive response. Over time people who have used this tool have reported becoming less frustrated, gaining clarity and making productive choices sooner. Physically, this translates into less headaches, tension and stress.

The Cupped Hands Gesture Tool:

- Step 1: Wake up in the moment and identify the feeling. “I am frustrated.”
- Step 2: Take one hand and make a cup gesture in front of you. That hand holds the current reality or situation like “The tire is flat.” Say the current reality as simply as you can.
- Step 3: Do the same gesture in the other hand and fill it with what you wish was true like “I wish the tire wasn’t flat.”
- Step 4: Clarify—I am frustrated because I wish the tire wasn’t flat. The flat tire isn’t what is making me frustrated. Frustration is the feeling of my wishing for a different reality than the one that is. (If you don’t quite see it like this or find yourself saying, “But...” see the [In-depth](#) section below.)
- Step 5: Make a choice based on the current unpleasant but actual reality.

In time you may notice you have more choices when you aren’t blaming the tire, the situation or another person for your reaction. As you use the cupped hands gesture to remind you of the mechanics of your frustration or anger, you’ll begin to get clarity sooner. You won’t even need all the thinking, just the gesture will remind you to explore accepting the unpleasant reality versus continuing to fight reality. “Yes, the tire is flat. I will miss the ferry. Now what? Fix the flat. Look for a camp ground. Take ferry tomorrow.” (This is a true story. It was fantastic not to get bent out of shape because the current reality wasn’t what I wished it was. The day wasn’t ruined. It was different.)

Why the Gesture:

In my teaching I am using gestures as shorthand for complex ideas with excellent results. Initially, a person needs to clarify and understand an issue or problem. That is what LearningMethods™ does brilliantly. Applying the clarity is what people do on their own. It is what makes real change. People used to find it hard to remember the new clarity in the heat of a moment. The gesture approach seems to help people apply a new complex idea in the moment they need it. It is a powerful tool for changing habitual reactions and embodying a new way of seeing reality.

Mechanics of Frustration or Revealing Your Perspective-Step 4

If Step 4 is unclear to you, I invite you to deconstruct frustration. Choose a simple situation when you are frustrated. Take apart the elements of the situation. Don’t believe what I am saying. See if you can tell what the elements of frustration are. Does it break

down into:

Here's reality.

Here's my wish.

I want my wish to be reality or for reality to match my wish. Note what this idea feels like.

If you stop wishing reality to be different than it is, does your sensation change? Put another way: If you accept the unpleasant fact of the current reality does your response change. "This is reality. I don't like it. It is as it is at this moment." Insisting reality should be your wish, not what it actually is, equals frustration. Accepting the unpleasant fact isn't joyous, but it does let you stop fighting reality so you can deal with reality as it is. It allows you to stop blaming, kicking or shouting...

At the moment of frustration your perspective is wanting reality to be what you wish it was. Your response is to your perspective or idea, not to reality. On your own it can be challenging to see your perspective. Your perspective often feels like truth; perspective is hard to see. Your thoughts and ideas seem like reality. Can you see a thought or idea as just that? "This is my thought, my idea, my perspective, my framework, my filter, (there are many words for this)." It is like deboning a fish, you make a little separation between you and your thinking in a moment of emotion. You begin to see that emotion is the sensation of your thought—it is one coordination of your being. Your chemistry, your structure, your thinking, your feeling is all one coordination. For convenience we divide ourselves up into mind, body, emotion, but we are not divided in our functioning. This is the heart of LearningMethods™ which is NOT about having any particular state of being. It is just the opposite. It is about letting yourself have any reaction and learning from it. You learn to understand your reaction, you understand yourself, how you work and how you are navigating the world. You don't have to improve your reaction, just understand it. Improvement or change happens from understanding.

This article is not advocating never getting angry or frustrated. Reactions are the way your system is designed to show you HOW YOU ARE SEEING THE WORLD. They are essential for navigating life. If you don't like how you are feeling or in other words, the sensation of your perspective, find out what your perspective is. Usually when there is an unpleasant sensation the problem isn't in the reality it is in the perspective you have; this is hopeful because perspectives are easier to change than reality.

At the VoiceCare workshops this summer the cupping gesture became a kind of wake-up game. We used it to help each other. When someone sang and it didn't come out the way they wished and they got frustrated, someone else would do gesture with one hand and say "Reality"; gesture with the other and say, "Wish". The annoyed person would laugh and say, "Oh yeah! I'm wishing." Suddenly he was with reality and simply sang again or made an observation that could help with the next time.

Dysfunctional Workplaces:

One of the most common locations for frustration is in dysfunctional workplaces. Using LearningMethods I've worked with many people to navigate such situations. In essence the work helps you stay as healthy and functioning as you can even in challenging situations. The cupped hand gesture is only one step, there are certainly other tools for other stresses.