

EveryDay Matters: Mental Housecleaning: Unblocking Energy

When we consider the energy we have available for the tasks we want to complete, it often seems that the list of things we feel we need to accomplish is far greater than the energy at hand.

Energy is an interesting resource. We usually find plenty of energy for tasks which we enjoy. For things that we dislike or feel inadequate to accomplish (there will always be such tasks), we seem to find less energy. In actuality, however, equal energy is available for all tasks.

Well then, what is going on here? The perception of available energy has to do with the meaning we attach to a task. We 'pre-load' certain tasks with a negative emotional content which makes them seem more bulky, more weighty than they really are. That emotional content is called resistance. The amount of emotional content/resistance we assign to a given task determines the degree to which we impede access to our own energy flow.

One way to find more energy is to uncover the current meaning, good, bad, or neutral, that we assign to things. An interesting way to do that is to make three lists:

1. **What Feeds My Energy** (what gives back to me at least equally if not more than what I put into it)
2. **What Drains My Energy** (what seems to wear me out even if I do it for just a short period of time)
3. The third list has two columns: **What Do I Avoid?** **Why?**

It would be useful to carry around these lists for a few days, jotting down responsibilities and tasks as they occur to us. When we run out of things to add to the individual lists, we can begin to ferret out just exactly how we feel about each item. The key is to discover the meanings we attach to the activities on each list. We will probably find that:

- The items on the **Feeds** list are items to which we attach no *negative* emotional content; we are not blocking our own energy flow; in fact, energy is so readily available that we may even be renewed by these activities.
- The items on the **Drains** list usually are full of the '*I shoulds*' – these items block more energy than they access. We will also begin to recognize that resistance comes in different size packages.
- The items on the **Avoid** list are areas where we likely feel '*not up to the task at hand*'. It is not uncommon that in order to side-step the possibility of failure, we may be using even more energy to avoid a task than the actual task requires. There is usually some heavy duty resistance going on here. Some items probably do need to be avoided but there will always be some which we must face.

Here are two questions which will help us identify and/or recognize the meaning which we give an item:

- How do I feel about this activity?
- Is this valid in light of who I am today?

When we have identified the meaning we assign to each item on our lists, we can take another look at those lists. Sometimes we find that the meaning we attach to an activity is no longer valid. Sometimes we find that the activity *itself* no longer holds a valid claim on our lives. We can ask:

- Does this activity/meaning serve who I am today?
 - If not, what is the real truth for me today?
 - What might be another way to think about this item?
- If I truly need to keep doing this task
 - What might better serve me as a reason to continue this activity?
 - Is there another way I could handle this item that better serves who I am today?
 - What assistance do I need to ask for in order to do a reasonable job with the item?

Having done some fresh thinking about how we spend our time, we can now consider whether redistributing any items to different lists makes sense, or whether it makes better sense to delete an item.

- When it comes to the **Avoid** items, can any be moved to the **Feeds** list (meaning, at least they no longer *drain* energy)? Do any belong on the **Drains** list, and how can we make them as palatable as possible?
- With regard to the **Drains** list, how can we responsibly minimize our time doing those things? Ultimately, it might be an interesting thing to consider each item individually to determine in what order they belong on our list, if at all!
- With regard to the **Feeds** list, how can we increase our exposure to those things which truly do feed our energy? And while we are at it, what else might feed our energy?

This little review can be a very productive exercise to undertake periodically. It might useful to consider seasonal mental housecleaning to free up energy flow. Wouldn't it feel terrific to get so good at this that we have minimal energy obstructions?