

Can You Really Let Go Of Your Huge Internal Struggle?

When I was in graduate school for psychology, we had a fellow student by the name of Allan who was running a successful clinical practice and had joined our program to improve his credentials. He had a remarkable track record of successful case histories.

One day, in a casual conversation during a classroom break, Cindy, a student, asked him what the single biggest reason people did not improve after counseling.

What he said made the three of us in this little huddle near the coffee machine pay attention.

"The single reason people do not change their lives for the better is not because they don't know what to do or how to do it to change," said Allan, speaking slowly, thoughtfully. "Clients reach a point when they have all the information that they need to change in an instant. However, they don't change because they think they're feelings about the situation they're dealing with is true."

"What do you mean?" asked Richard, who was listening in. "Aren't we in the business of teaching people how to express feelings? When you face your feelings, you begin the process of healing states of low self-esteem."

"Real life is more complex than what we learn here in school," said Allan. "Yes, repressing feelings and articulating them and raising self-esteem do effect positive change, but sometimes the feelings themselves are the problem."

"I'm not following you," confessed Richard, frowning.

"People often respond to their feelings, not their thoughts about the situation that is upsetting them. They never question these feelings. They assume their feelings are making an accurate statement about reality."

"You mean they mis-feel," I interjected, suddenly grasping his subtle point.

Allan smiled. "Yes, exactly. Just as you can mis-think something, or mis-perceive something, and later on, given more information, realize that you had jumped to the wrong conclusion or had fallen under some kind of optical illusion, like a mirage, for example, you can similarly mis-feel."

"So," said Cindy, "while people are open to correct their cognition about something, they don't even think to question their feelings about something."

"And," reflected Richard, "They are so completely locked into a huge internal struggle that goes on day after day, year after year, that they never doubt that what they feel is how things really are. Thus, their problem, whatever it is, becomes chronic."

Allan nodded. "Feelings are reactions to events. They are not necessarily true statements about events. They are interpretations. These feelings, over time, become hard-wired chemically into the nervous system so that a person can't look beyond them. It doesn't matter what you say to them, they are only listening to their feelings."

"How do they make the shift, then, to a more adaptable way of coping with their problems?" I asked.

"First," said Allan, "they have to become aware of what they're feeling. The feelings are so quick and so spontaneous that they are taken for granted and not even noticed. Someone in anger, for example, is fully aware of what irritates him, but may not even be aware that his feelings of anger are causing him to see something as irritating. He does not notice his anger-although, of course, it is obvious to everyone else. He is focused on the problem and not the sensations that arise within him to make him believe that he is confronting a problem."

"When you are able to watch your feelings, you begin to let go of your huge internal struggle," said Richard, fully in tune with Allan by this time. "You are able to transcend the emotion and see it for what it is-feelings that are controlling how you think."

"And when you grasp how your feelings are selecting your thoughts, you are able to choose new ways of interpreting your troubling experience," concluded Allan.

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About the Author

Saleem Rana got his masters in psychotherapy from California Lutheran University. His articles on the internet have inspired over ten thousand people from around the world. Discover how to create a remarkable life. Free information. <http://theempowersoul.com/enter.html> Copyright 2005 Saleem Rana. Please feel free to pass this article on to your friends, or use it in your ezine or newsletter. It's a shareware article.