

How to Take Yourself Lightly by Marlene and Bob Neufeld

On our wall, we have a plaque which reads “Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.” In our coaching/psychotherapy, we frequently meet clients who are caught in the seriousness of their situations. They have become polarized and are seeing their situations from the position of “either-or”. This doesn’t give them space to maneuver, their creativity is blocked and their struggles have a life or death quality to them.

We listen to their struggles and ultimately look for ways to loosen the grip that this seriousness has on their situation. Einstein said that you can’t solve a problem from the state in which it occurs, so we encourage clients to change their state of being or energetic connection to an issue before they get into problem solving.

One of our basic principles that often assists clients to loosen the grip is the 80/20 rule; i.e. in any conflict approximately 80% of our reactions are based in our own history. We are experiencing the present moment through the lens of our background (our 80%). We need to eventually deal with the current issue (20%). However, partners can’t hear the current issue through the additional charge of their partner’s historical material as well as being caught up in their own history (their own 80%).

Recently, a client contacted us saying “what do I do now that I am seeing how much I am projecting onto my partner?” We replied; “You are doing the first step; recognizing your story-telling when it's happening. The next step might be to not take it so seriously. If you don’t give it a lot of energy it will pass. You ask how can you work with feeling alone and scared and angry. Feeling alone and scared and angry is part of the human condition as is feeling sad and happy and sexual. I have found that becoming mindful and just noticing what is without judgment is useful. One moment I’m scared and then I may feel angry and then maybe sad and then maybe I feel joy and so life continues.”

We also told her to make it bigger or magnify it. We can’t usually talk ourselves out of something or make it go away, but frequently we can exaggerate it slightly and that will loosen the grip. Secondly we invited her to turn her issue into creative expression.

Here are some ideas about magnifying what is going on and/or turning it into creative expression until you begin to take it lightly.

1. Imagine you are actually about to enter into a courtroom to 'make the case' against your partner. How have they wronged you? In what ways have you been maligned and misunderstood? Play with turning up the heat on your case until it begins to make you smile instead of frown.
2. Turn it into a comic strip.
3. Make your complaint into a country and western song and sing it with a twang.
4. Get markers and scribble on a piece of paper.
5. Get some playdo, modeling clay or silly putty and make an image of the issue.
6. Drop the words and use gibberish to express yourself.
7. Express yourself through movement as in modern dance.

8. Hold your tongue between your thumb and forefinger as you talk about the issue.
9. Sculpt your issue in the air in front of you with your hands and then change it into something else.
10. Accept what is going on the same way you accept what day it is:
Say today is _____ (and fill in the blank) and I feel _____ (fill in the blank). For example, today is Monday and I feel scared..... or today is Monday and my shoulders are tight and I feel angry.

Anything that will break the pattern of how you usually try to solve the issue will help you to loosen the grip of it. Recently a client went onto his computer and typed out his complaints rather than trying to get his partner to listen. In the past, they had frequently gotten into struggles with him trying to control her. This time he was able to express himself without focusing on her. He reported that later when he went back to read what he had written it didn't seem so heavy. Giving her more space allowed her to initiate a conversation and reveal some important things to him.

Marlene & Bob Neufeld practice body-centered Coaching and Psychotherapy. They are a couple who help couples learn life-changing skills and create closer, more loving relationships with one another. For more information call 613-594-9248 or see www.marleneandbob.com.