

## **Blocked, stuck or procrastinating? – The way in, is the way out**

So, feeling blocked or stuck, or finding yourself procrastinating about...

writing your book, screenplay, poetry...  
taking next steps toward career development or career change...  
having a crucial conversation with a colleague, spouse, partner, or friend....  
taking out your art supplies or exercise equipment and getting started...  
cleaning and organizing your space...  
taking a next step toward growing your professional, personal or spiritual life...  
acting on your ideas...  
completing your project...

### **Understanding the dynamic of blocks**

Action blocks are never about the mind or lack of willpower. Blocks are "felt-sensations" of being unable to perform. With every block, there is a felt sense in the body that accompanies the block – something related to one's physiological self - the breath, heart rate, muscles, tendons, ligaments, posture, emotions, feeling states like anxiety, fear, or anger, or sensations like tension, tightness, pain, sweating, heat or cold, etc.

### **Parts of me**

Observe yourself from 25 miles out and see how you feel as you say, "I see there is a *part of me* that is being resistant, that doesn't want to do what needs doing. There is some part of me that needs attention in some way, in addition to the part that wants to act. What would it be like if I had a conversation with that part of me that's resistant, blocked or stuck?"

### **How does this work?**

To work effectively with blocks, we work with two parts of "me": one part that wants to act and one part that doesn't. Through "focusing" we contact and listen with empathy and compassion to the resistant part.

In the focusing process, *you* are the part of you that wants to perform the action and your intention is to relate to that part of you which doesn't. Three states will arise:

First, see how you are "feeling" about being blocked or stuck" - e.g., "I'm sad," "I'm pissed off," "I'm afraid..." When you say what you're feeling, you have *totally* identified with your feeling. The reality is you are more than your sadness but have chosen to identify with that part of yourself and consider that part to be your whole self. In truth, "A part of me is sad (or angry, etc) and another part of me is uncomfortable and impatient with that."

Then, notice where you are "dissociating" from a part of yourself – when you attempt to deny or withdraw from your feeling. If you are sad, angry or afraid and you choose to deny your feeling, you are dissociating from a part of (the real/whole) you that you are not recognizing. You may be sad and not recognize it. You may not feel it or, you may be aware of it and reject, deny or despise it.

When blocked or stuck, most often identification and dissociation go together. For example, if you experience both fear and excitement, and identify with the fear ("I'm afraid"), you'll probably dissociate from the excitement. However, when you stop identifying totally with your fear (by acknowledging that, "part of me is afraid") you can create the inner space and capacity to feel the excitement (...and another

part of me is excited"). In this place, you can "be with" both parts. This is the "middle position" that supports the process of moving forward.

### **Middle position**

The middle position allows you to be with "something I feel" – "a part of me feels this way," along with other parts and feelings. The middle position can allow anything because you're not overwhelmed or in denial. You are present to your truth of how you are feeling right now and see that you are more than all of these parts.

Typically, when we're blocked, we identify with the part that wants to act and in denial of the part that doesn't. The middle position, our True Self, our Whole Self, allows us to be OK with, and compassionate with, whatever part needs compassion.

So, we no longer get caught up in the self-defeating dynamic of, for example, "I want to paint! I really want to paint! I don't know why I don't paint!" – where we are identified only with the "*I want*" part of me and unaware of the part of me that doesn't – the resisting part that has complete control and blocks the action.

### **The practice**

To work with your blocks, get a felt sense (not an idea, a thought, a story, a mental notion) of the part of you that *doesn't* want to act by sensing your physical and emotional body. Bring this part of you into your conscious awareness. As you do this, you cannot "crowd out" the "I want to..." part. Both parts are now in middle position.

For example, after getting in touch with the part that "doesn't want," you might arrive at an awareness such as, "I've been telling myself that I am blocked about looking for a new job. And I see there's a part of me that doesn't want to look for a new job." "That part is probably afraid and depressed..." NOTE: without moving into your body, the process WILL NOT WORK.

Then make contact with the "blocking part" of you, in your body. Notice what you sense, for example, in your legs and feet, how they're feeling, then your arms and hands, feel your feet on the floor and your butt in your chair...then move inward into your belly area, your abdomen, your chest, throat, shoulders and neck...just be and notice what you're sensing and feeling – not thinking.

Then invite the part of you that doesn't want to act to come into your awareness in your body. You might say, for example, "I want to know you better, please come in." And wait. Waiting is crucial. See what your experience is. For many the experience could be one of tightness in the chest, perhaps shallow breathing, fear in the belly or chest, etc. If you feel nothing, imaging yourself actually doing the action and then see what your experience is. This commonly brings up the "felt-sense."

When you experience this part in your body acknowledge it, say hello to that place, so it knows you know it's there. Then describe it, all the felt-sense qualities and characteristics. What words and descriptors feel right in describing that part? Then see if you feel OK being with this part of you and this experience. A next step is to see how this part feels from *its* perspective or point of view. The "being with" and empathy for this "part" are key, along with the acknowledging and describing" steps so this part can feel safe to begin to communicate.

Then, ask and allow this part to speak. Keep sensing your body and focusing on the felt-sense of your experience. Remain compassionate and empathic; don't agree with or resist, defend against or argue with this part of you. Be open, allowing and objective, observing what it has to tell you.

Whenever your felt-sense has something to say e.g., "I've been protecting you from rejection" acknowledge what it has to say. For example, "I hear that you've been protecting me from rejection." And continue to hear what it has to tell you. Continue the process of asking it what it has to say, and listen.

## **Patterns**

As we listen, we will be able to discriminate among three common patterns of resistance that blocks follow: protection, rebellion and wanting something else:

*Protection* - from some real or perceived scary outcome (often related to childhood experiences where there was a scary outcome of some type – e.g., verbal abuse, criticism, etc.). Acknowledge the feelings and point of view of this blocking part. Check to see if it feels heard and understood. Listen. Ask "Is there more?" And, take your time! Usually, when heard, the part changes. There is no need for a philosophical conversation, or mediation or negotiation with the part. These just interfere.

*Rebellion* - a refuser, an inner "no" - a part that feels like it has been passed over, ignored or bullied. It doesn't want to be forced, like an "inner teenager." Rather than protecting, it is rejecting the fact that it has to do anything. Again, acknowledge it, welcome it, listen, ask, "Is there more?", take your time and be with your felt-sense. This part requires respect and understanding from *its* point of view. Compassion for both parts is important. This is NOT a mental, either/or tug of war. The rebellious part has experienced a breach of trust from *you*, where historically you dishonored or discounted yourself in some manner. This part does not like the way it's being asked to do something and needs healing. Rebuilding your inner trust takes time. Be patient and gentle and allow it permission to take all the time it needs to feel safe.

*Wanting something else* – this part feels the action is taking the person in the wrong direction, away from the positive direction it desires , e.g., studying a major in school while one does not like the life one is preparing for. Spending time feeling and listening to this part, for example, can allow one to reach a happy medium.

In all of these patterns, one should never take sides, regardless of how one feels about the "positive" part and the energy it carries. Both parts are important. It's important not to identify with either part. Be sure all parts are fully acknowledged and heard. Don't make any decision prematurely.

In the process, whatever arises is supposed to arise. There are no preconceptions of what "should" happen or what one should hear. That's "head stuff."

## **It's all good**

Whatever arises in us has a place in our emotional and spiritual maturation. In this case, that part of us that is blocking, needs to be seen, acknowledged, heard and understood so that we can free it to change. When it's free to change, we are free to change, and take action.

## **So, some questions for self-reflection are:**

- Are you currently feeling blocked? How so?
- How do you normally react to being blocked? Blame, shame, guilt...?
- What does the "I can" part of you say?
- What does the "I can't" part of you say?
- Is the blocked part protective, rebelling or wanting something else? How do you know?
- Do you recall experiencing being blocked when you were young? How so? How did your parents or primary caregivers respond when you felt blocked?
- Can you envision a world where you work through your blocks and take action whenever you want?

*"What is split off, not felt, remains the same. When it is felt, it changes...If there is in you something bad, sick, or unsound, let it inwardly be and breathe. That's the only way it can evolve and change into the form it needs."* Eugene Gendlin

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