

Healing Hatred

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Many people get overwhelmed by anger because their emotions are entangled with abstract thoughts. Their anger becomes hatred of someone or something and finally turns to self-hatred. I have been conducting a practice to heal hate. This way of healing is successful when my clients can relive the realities of childhood.

CHILDREN'S THINKING

Each time adults use abstract thinking, there is less reality in their thinking, and finally none. They become trapped into rationalizing actions driven by emotions. Childhood realistic thinking can protect and disentangle rational thought from emotion. We can use emotions to clean out and tune up the body. Humans have survived when emotions have been guided by reality.

Children undergo their deepest mental development during the first 6 years of their life. At birth, a child's brain cells have the capacity to wire cells together. At about 1 year, the child has more neural connections ready to wire the brain than at any other time of life.

Children inherit, through their genes, empty connections between their cells. They are like blank lines on which they will write their experiences of reality. They have 6 years to use as many of these connections as they can. They are establishing the deep lasting structures, which will support their realistic thinking for the rest of their lives.

At age 7, people begin to learn abstract thinking in school. It is a linear, one-dimensional language of cause and effect. Rules begin to control children's lives, rather than holistic reality. Unused connections disappear rapidly over the next 10 years, until they reach age 16. At that time, they will have about the same number of brain cell connections that they will have for the rest of their lives. These are the important years, years when children think realistically.

For practical purposes, realistic thinking begins at birth. The medium of education at this time is emotions. Infants respond to and initiate the emotions of love from their mother, unless the mother feels only hate, in which case the infant's emotion is hate.

The child can become calm and centered in reality or become unstable in emotions of hatred. In the first case, the child becomes more involved in reality. The resonance of moving light and colors harmonizes into pictures of reality. Touch becomes more than emotion. It becomes real. Sound condenses into patterns of reality. The child's world can be meaningfully expressed in structures of sight, sound, and touch.

Emotions such as anger and rage can find full expression within deep structures of holistic reality, but the emotion disappears after a few minutes. Abstract thinking is not yet available to make anger and rage into an addiction.

Infants imitate adults' expressions. At 1 year, they know perfectly well the spoken sound of "horse," even though they cannot say it yet. They love peek-a-boo and baby talk; as adults' voices rise to a higher tone, infants know the adults are talking to them and for them.

Children wire their brains by discriminating realities, such as the smell of their mother from the smell of other people. Experiments have shown that a picture of a familiar face from early childhood will cause one unique brain cell to make connections with many other cells. By 4 months, they know whom to trust and whom to fear. Also they know the reality of care, as opposed to neglect. Before they acquire language, they communicate with gestures—when an object is too far away, when milk is coming. These are the realities of their lives.

In their teens people seem to have given up the world of reality for the adult world of reason and abstract cause and effect. Sometimes they act realistically even though thinking the opposite in abstractions. Rationally teens decide to give up hate, but they do not give it up. Where is their free will, their freedom of choice? Their lives are turned upside down. But what if there is a will of reality that is stronger than rational abstract will—a will of hardly noticed vibrations, rhythms, and patterns of thought. Childhood reality is on the teenagers' side. It can heal hatred even though they do not realize it is happening.

Remember that the rhythms, tones, and patterns of realistic thoughts are the human reality. The body is animal. Emotions are not part of human reality. They are animal self. When one can disentangle oneself from emotion, one is ready to heal hatred.

“I AM A DOG”

My healing hate practice began 20 years ago, with a client who was flirting with hatred of the United States. She found her thinking sometimes got confused and ineffective when hatred overwhelmed her. I can see her gray eyes as dams tangled with hatred. This may have been the key I was looking for.

When her anger tangled with reason, its feeling shape often became a hot, transparent bubble enclosing her. She pushed on the fluid surfaces but remained a prisoner of her hate.

We did a meditation in which anger was its own reality. There was no target for the anger. She moved this anger up her spine from a center in her groin where blood began to pound; then to her abdomen which tensed up; then to her chest as breathing quickened and deepened, and her neck swelled; and then her head began to throb with blood flow and her eyes glistened with sharper focus. She acknowledged the emotional high of the anger and let it slowly absorb her body. Finally, it became so powerful that she let it out the top of her head. I told her I could see what must be a tongue of fire flickering over her head, and she laughed, feeling some liberation. She had not rationalized the anger onto someone else. It was just a simple reality of her body. I said,

When a dog is angry the emotion lasts at best for 6 min, then the dog gets over it and goes about his business. The pure emotion of anger that you feel is the same as the dog's. You are both animals. Do you realize that by concentrating on physical reality you have delivered an anger that is a celebration of yourself rather than being caused by an abstract person?

She realized that emotion could clean her body out, tune it up. As we talked about the problem in the following weeks, it became clear that anger was actually very good for her body.

Several weeks passed. We tried again. This time there was not a rationalized hatred of the United States, but pure, wonderfully cleansing, animal anger. She could feel the difference between her emotions and her abstract thinking. She felt a sense of liberation.

She said, “Wonderful, I’m a dog.” She was ready to use her emotions in a positive, creative way.

She was beginning to know the difference between hatred and cleansing anger. In a few months, she would manage to tune up her anger so that she was in charge, naturally balanced between physical anger and practical reality—keeping her rational thoughts at bay when she felt emotion.

Abstract thinking cannot disentangle itself from emotions. Think about when you are angry at someone. The emotion of anger does not last very long. You notice your anger is disappearing. What is happening? You are a dog. You need constant

stimulation to keep the high of anger going. So you begin to rationalize your anger. “He should not have deliberately put me down in front of everyone.” Now your anger returns, and you begin the cycle of rationalizing to produce more emotional highs again ... and again ... and again. Many people reside in such bubbles of hate for the rest of their lives.

HATRED CAN RUN THROUGH EVERYONE'S HEART

The possibility of self-hate resides in the heart of every human being. How can we control anger and hatred in ourselves? There are many ways. Here is my approach.

1. Identify emotions, childhood thinking, and abstract thinking.
2. Learn to enjoy the physical benefits of pure anger.
3. Move to social situations portrayed in the theater.
4. Try nonhate techniques in religion and Asian martial arts.
5. Identify the “enemy” technique of creating hatred of others to solidify political power.
6. Feel the self-confidence to try new ways to control anger leading to rage and hatred.

One can conquer and control self-hate with practical, realistic thought. It will give one the mental fuel needed to tune up and power one's thinking. One cannot merely tell someone not to hate. That is useless abstraction. Abstractions are like rules. They are not reality. Abstract thinking makes human society possible, but it also makes addiction to hatred possible. People can avoid the addiction when they learn to separate the ways they think.

My problem with this first step has been the daily practice of generating the pure emotion of anger without reference to anyone else. It is difficult to control anger when one is already tangled up in hatred.

If one has been exercising the pure emotion of anger daily, one is ready for the next step. A daughter of mine, who is an actress and teacher, told me about the theater art of anger and hate. First, an actor imagines the “character” whom he is supposed to hate and why he is going to hate him. The “character” is not the actor playing him. The performer is hating the character he has imagined. He really and freely hates the “character.” When the play is over the beneficial effect of the emotion fades away in a moment and, bingo, there is no one to hate. The character was not the actor. The actor has just enjoyed emotion without hate. He is invigorated from the animal anger, and he is centered in peace.

The next time you are angry with someone, pretend that he is a character in a play. Later your emotion of anger will quietly die away instead of hardening into hate.

There are a number of Asian sports, such as Karate, which demand that one has no ill will for his opponent. If the practitioner fears and hates him, he will lose his rhythm and his edge.

Politics provides a nice example. A politician thinks he must unify a following by accusing an opponent of misdeeds that will cause the politician's followers to unite in hatred against his opponent. The opponent will do the same. Both will have caused useless hate. Can the country survive in the present day through hate in politics? It does not work.

If people choose to heal hatred in themselves, they can do it. Each person must make an individual choice and a commitment. In the last 30 years, the United States has moved from southern states with a racist bias to a tolerable society. This happened because individuals chose not to hate. It takes one person at a time.

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AUTHOR NOTE

R. Patton Howell was born on May 23, 1921, and passed away on May 16, 2005. Dr. Howell was an Eagle Scout, a graduate of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, and later in life earned a doctorate in psychophysiology from the Saybrook Institute. He had been a United Press Staff Correspondent, a teacher, and president of a consulting firm specializing in international affairs. At the time of his death, Dr. Howell was serving as founder and president of the Dallas Discussion Group. He was founder and past president of PEN Texas and the Isthmus Institute, as well as a trustee of the Saybrook Institute, the Isthmus Institute, and director of the Western Human Science Foundation. He wrote *Beyond Literacy: The Second Gutenberg Revolution* (W. W. Norton, New York, 1990), earning the Benjamin Franklin Award for best nonfiction literature in 1991. Dr. Howell had written or edited 11 books, including *War's End* (W.W. Norton, New York, 1989) and *Locked In To Life* (Tea Road Press, 2002). He also served as Nominator for the Nobel Prize Committee for Literature in 2001.

Methods: A Journal for Human Science was sustained by Dr. Howell's steadfast vision and unwavering support from its inception in 1986 to its merger with *The Humanistic Psychologist* in 2003.