



A Proven Technique To Neutralize Draining Emotional Reactions

[blog transformation](#)



Do you notice that you sometimes feel tired or fatigued but are not sure why? Maybe you can have a restful sleep and still wake up having a sense that your energy is not quite there. Maybe you notice yourself being reactive, having a short fuse and feeling unclear about what decisions to make? Maybe you say things to friends, family or people online that you later regret or didn't truly mean. Much of this can have a lot to do with how we're feeling emotionally on a regular basis. Emotions that are happening are just a touch outside our conscious awareness.

Let's just do a very quick check-in to see what I mean. If you stop and take a moment right now to ask "How am I feeling?" What do you notice? Are you feeling good? Energized? Do you have a background tension? Are you a bit stressed? Annoyed? Are you relaxed and calm? Are you perhaps relaxed yet feeling blah? When we do these check-ins we bring awareness to how we might be feeling. This is something we typically don't do that often and thus are simply not consciously aware of how we feel. If we were a bit more consciously aware of how we felt, we'd have a greater understanding of what we could do to feel better as we know where we're at.

Energy Loss

This is important because one of the greatest unrecognized sources of prolonged stress, fatigue and physical wear and tear on our bodies comes from living our day to day lives in a state where we consciously or subconsciously experience what we might call 'draining emotions.' These are emotions like worry, fear, anger, resentment, or sadness etc.

For each of us, we're likely going to experience these emotions at some point in life, and this is normal. Typically when we experience these emotions, we're getting an insight into ourselves. Since what triggers these emotions can often be subjective, we can learn something about our current selves by paying attention to these emotions. For example, someone might cut us off while we're driving on the freeway. On one hand, one person might react aggressively and become very angry, while another might simply see it as a mistake on the part of the other driver and move on with their day.

Why some of us react and others don't typically comes down to our past and the state of our nervous system, or perhaps at times the story we're telling ourselves about why that person cut you off. Perhaps they take it personally, perhaps they see it as an attack in some way – who knows? You. Only you know, and you can get closer to knowing what that is so you don't harbour that draining emotion for the rest of the day, and even remove the trigger to begin with so you don't necessarily have to go down that angry road every time something small like this happens.

I want to be clear here, we're not looking to avoid emotions, never experience them, or suppress them, we're looking to gain awareness around why they come, know how to process them, and ultimately have the choice over what gets us bothered and what might be better to simply let go. There is a difference between momentarily feeling an emotion like this, and letting it become a 'background state' of being that slowly begins to shape our attitude towards unhealthy and draining tendencies.

We can likely go on all day about where we should 'honor' some emotions in some situations or stand up for ourselves in others – I'll let you decide that within yourself for each situation, but what the focus here in this piece is to simply look at how we can neutralize an emotional experience so we can stop it from draining all our energy and gain greater clarity on why it might be happening.

The exercise below is geared towards improving our self awareness around situations and how we feel, so we can learn to self-regulate emotions at any time, as well as turn off triggers that might not really be the greatest to have to begin with.

Remember, we're going to stick with a situation where we are cut off in traffic, but you can use these steps for anything. Maybe you realize you are fearful about a situation. Maybe you notice ongoing worry about something that's happening or may happen – whatever it may be, the steps can be applied.

A Quick 3 Minute Exercise

We'll go through the steps, this might seem long at first but it's actually very short once you get the hang of it. This method is based on decades of scientific research involving the heart and the benefits of creating coherence through good heart rate variability. You can learn more about that here under the section "[Coherence & Optimal Function.](#)"

1. The first step is becoming aware of the fact you're having an emotional experience. What we're doing here is by reading this we're setting up a bit of an increased self awareness in our minds that can help us remember to check in when we next have an emotional reaction to something. Perhaps the car cuts us off while driving, and we react, but then shortly after we remember that we want to have a closer look at that emotional reaction and perhaps choose a different response instead of going down an energy draining rabbit hole. So the first thing we want to do is become aware that the experience is happening.
2. The next step is accepting the experience that's happening. What this means is, if the person in front of us cuts us off while driving and we get angry and realize we're angry, bring to your awareness that this is OK. We're not looking to create a judgement about what happened or what we're experiencing, instead, we simply want to see it for what it is, an experience that happened and we're now aware of and sitting as an observer of it. What this does is it empowers us to be able to look a little more closely at what we're feeling and why. After we become aware, take note of the emotion you're experiencing and name it. Is it anger? Is it worry? Is it fear?

As a small kicker to this, just imagine that the intention here is to turn down the intensity of the emotion so we can go in and take a look at what's going on in the same way that a firefighter will spray water onto a burning house to stop the fire and cool it enough to go in and assess what the source of that fire was.

3. Next we're going to take a moment and place our hand or a couple fingers over the areas of our chest, around where your heart is, and use the placement of your hand as something to focus on. With your eyes open, take some comfortable yet slightly deeper breaths. Feel your breath moving in and out of the area of your heart (where your hand is). To do this, don't worry too much about how perfect the breathing is or whether it's exactly going in and out of your heart area, just sit with a gentle focus that your breath is moving in and out of the area of your heart. Our goal here is to bring awareness to the physical heart and begin to influence its rhythms ever so slightly. Breathe into your heart for about 30 seconds.

4. Next we want to continue our heart focused breathing while also imagining the feeling of calm or ease enter into our bodies. Spend the next 2 minutes or so breathing in the feeling of calm or ease into your heart with comfortable breaths. Notice the calm and ease that come over your mind and body. What this stage does is it show us that we have the ability to produce our own emotional regulation by creating a physiological state that is more synchronized and favorable for introspection and clarity.

After step 4 you should feel a lot more neutral in your feeling, but it may be possible you're still annoyed or upset about the situation, this is great and in many ways the point of the exercise. Remember the firefighter analogy.

If it's a really small situation, this awareness might already help us choose to simply let it go. If it's a larger situation, this exercise helps us reduce the intensity so we can gain a bit more clarity about what's going on and stop us from simply circling the experience over and over again in our minds, potentially increasing our anger and draining our energy.

Now as a final step, you can take a moment to just assess, what is the story you have been telling yourself about the situation? What might be a more effective way to approach or think about the situation? In the case of getting cut off in the car, was it really personal? If so, how do you know? If it was a mistake, is anger helping you or just providing an undesirable experience? If you had the freedom, would you choose anger at the other driver or to just let it go and maintain better health?

The point here is that with awareness we get clearer on who we are and how we function. This inevitably gives us a choice in how we choose to react.

Note: My new course on building and maintaining a healthy nervous system will be launching early September 2023. A well regulated nervous system is the foundation for presence, well-being, sensemaking, intuition and more. To be notified of the course release, be sure to sign up to our email list below.

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