

Gathering Energy

DO YOU HAVE BIG PLANS FOR SUMMER AND BEYOND? THEN MAKE CERTAIN YOU HAVE THE DRIVE TO CARRY THEM OUT. LEARN HOW TO REHARNESS LOST AND LEAKING ENERGY.

By CAT THOMPSON

Summer is on its way, and you've probably got big plans for the long days ahead. Perhaps you're going to train for a kayak trip, take a class or set a new personal best. Everything seems promising right now: Plants are coming up, leaves are filling out, the sunlight is lasting longer. Spring delivers boundless drive, making it feel as though it might be entirely possible to achieve all of our desires and dreams. And it is — especially if you manage to harness all your personal energy.

If the mere mention of big projects and ambitions makes you feel drained, on the other hand, it may be that you aren't in full command of as much of your own energy as you'd like. Often, people leak and lose energy to outlets of which they are barely aware. When this happens, they feel more tired, more scattered and less determined and hopeful than they otherwise would. As a result, they may begin to dial down their expectations, trim their dreams and settle for less.

WHERE DOES IT GO?

It's helpful to think of personal energy as being like water in a pipe: It flows. And, like water, it can leak. Bad habits and poor boundaries can redirect the flow of energy, sending it off in useless directions so there's only a dribble left for you.

Energy leaks and losses are easy to spot when you know what to look for, and in some situations a quick patch is all that is needed to repair the damage. But the first order of business, in all cases, is diagnosing the problem. Start with a look at some of the most common energy leaks:

1) Repressing Emotion

When a feeling comes up and you don't express it, you are repressing it. And keeping the lid on an emotion demands an astonishing amount of energy.

The natural course of a feeling is to move. It needs to move in order to be expressed; it must be expressed in some way in order to provide understanding; and then, once understood, it can contribute to one's personal wisdom and power.

By halting this natural process, we put pressure on our internal emotional structure, like water puts pressure on a dam. Such pressure can eventually cause damage. Not only will it require more and more effort for us to hold the feelings down and put on a "happy face," but over time, the emotion in question may begin to appear covertly — we may find ourselves short-tempered or hurtful without even knowing why.

The best way to repair this kind of leak is to honestly express how you feel. Express your feelings in private, either by writing them down or just yelling them into the air. This often proves more effective than expressing them publicly — and it can be far less fraught with social complexities.

Once you express your feelings, the pressure will be off and the leak will mend. Suddenly, you will have more constructive energy and insights for other things.

2) Putting Others Before Self

When we habitually put the needs and desires of others above our own, we risk blocking our own energy. Whether we express it, or even consciously realize it, putting everyone else first all the time creates resentment. The ignored parts of ourselves do not feel valued or heard. You can imagine an unheard internal dialogue sounding something like, "Why does everyone else get to have what they desire and I don't?" When such resentment exists, the resources of your full self will not be available and you may find yourself out of energy — emotionally, physically and financially.

But aren't we supposed to put others first? After all, it is imprinted on us at an early age that we should never appear selfish. There's a perception in our society that putting others' needs before our own buys us some kind of ticket to righteousness and makes us a better person. Sorry, folks, but it doesn't work that way. →

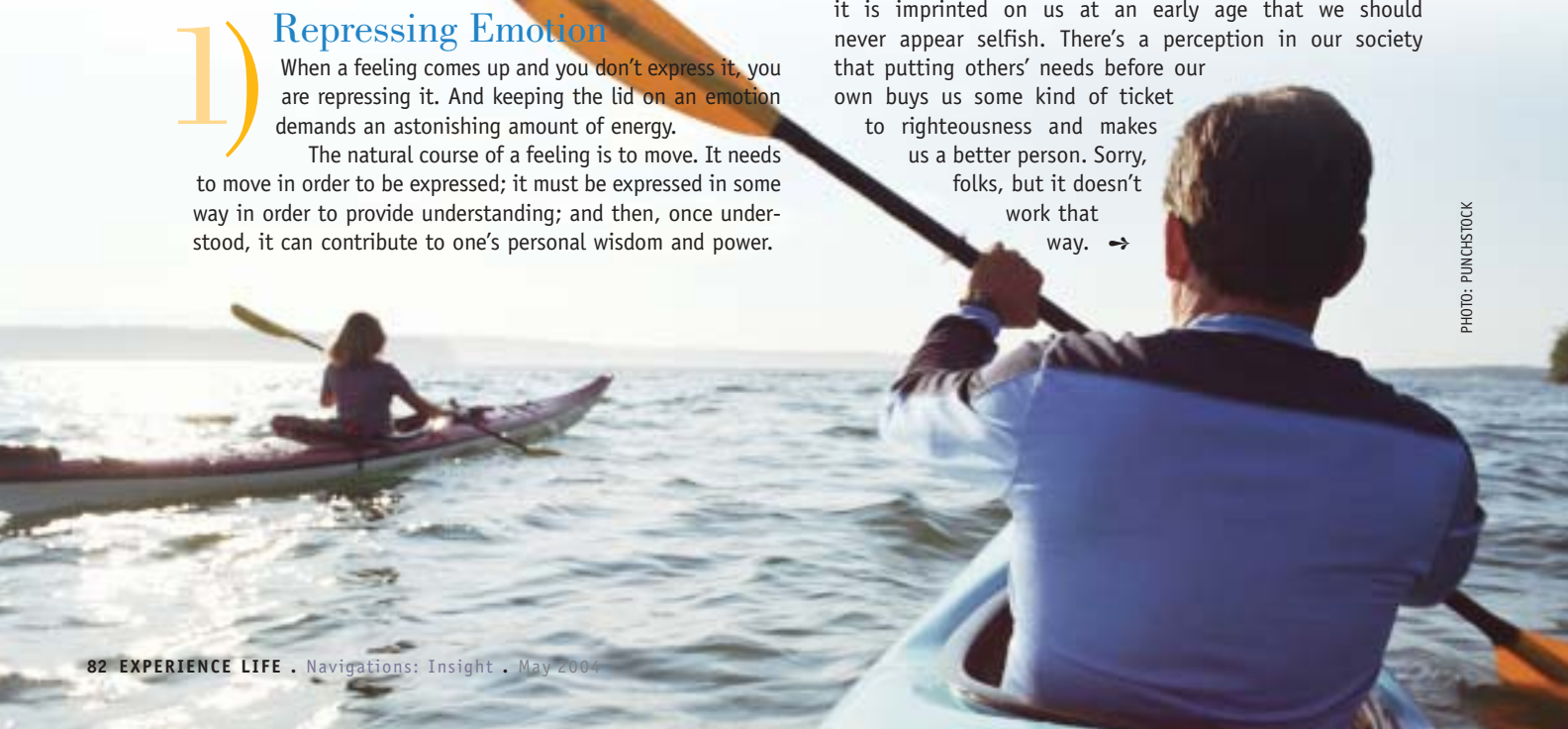


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To really know what your life purpose is, and to give the gifts you are meant to give, you have to take responsibility for your own needs and desires. When you are truly happy and satisfied, you will find that you can be far more authentically charitable than a martyr who has given away too much, and who is a seething bundle of resentment as a result. To repair this type of leak, learn to say no to others' requests until you have the resources to fulfill your own essential needs and desires.

3) Choosing to Be Unconscious

People avoid wrestling with important issues in their lives in many ways. Often these issues are central to who we are: Failing to understand them stunts us and holds us back. Keeping our distance from them costs us vast amounts of energy. Two very common methods of avoidance are: 1) habitual resistance and; 2) substance abuse.

Most of us have patterns of resistance we set up as children or teens. Resisting gave us a way to assert ourselves as we learned to be independent and explore new territory. When we reach adulthood, however, this pattern of resistance can become a trap. When we resist something, we may refuse to examine it. That lack of understanding costs us dearly as we strive for personal growth and success.

Another way of remaining unconscious about an aspect of your life is to numb yourself to it or attempt to escape it. Common numbing behaviors include abusing drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and food. Escapist behaviors include television viewing, shopping and computer surfing.

Indulging yourself occasionally in such behaviors is no cause for alarm, but if you repeatedly use a behavior to make yourself feel better when life is hard, you are leaking energy. To fix these kinds of leaks, be honest with yourself about what you are resisting or escaping, why, and take steps to change your actions.

4) Procrastinating

Taking on responsibilities and then ignoring them or putting them off costs you a lot of energy. Responsibilities such as balancing your checkbook, repotting the plants and folding the laundry should be given a slot in your time structure that allows for them to be done happily and well.

You may think you are giving yourself a needed break when you avoid these chores and errands, but you are actually losing energy. The maw that opens between responsibilities and actions is a swift and steady drain on personal energy.

If you have more maintenance than you can realistically handle, it may be time to make a list and see what can go, what can be delegated or hired out, and what is important for you to keep up yourself. You may also need to examine why you are giving away available time to other pursuits and not admitting that these things exist or deserve to be done.

5) Breaking Your Word

Using language consciously is an act of empowerment — when we say something, we are broadcasting to the world that we are willing to commit to an action or idea. But when you use language casually, with no intention of following through, you drain away a significant portion of your energy (for more on this, see “Walking Your Talk” in the March 2004 *Experience Life*).

I often observe people who insist on being given credit for what they say, rather than for what they do, and most of the time their actions do not match their words. Very often, these same people lack personal power and energy. That's because so much of their energy leaks out in the gaps between their statements and actual deeds.

To resolve this leak, be committed to what you speak, or don't speak about it at all. Keep your word to yourself and others. Ask yourself before you speak: What I am releasing into the world? Am I fully committed to this? If you aren't certain, keep it to yourself until you have that confidence.

CASHING IN YOUR CHIPS

I've described emotional energy as being like water, but you might also find it useful to think about your personal energy as a collection of poker chips. If your chips are spread around, lost or involved in games you're not really watching, you won't have enough chips for an important, high-stakes game.

Whether you see your energy units as chips or drips, the challenge is the same: To make sure you're conscious of — and in full charge of — your valuable energetic resources.

See where your energy is going, and start pulling back the units that aren't serving your highest choices or doing much good. You'll find you have a much larger “pot” to play with, and a much better shot at achieving the most lively and current dreams in your midst. ●



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Instant Energy

THE PSYCHIC PLUMBER'S GUIDE to finding and fixing personal energy leaks:

Look at where your actions and words don't match. Either change what you are saying or make sure your statements are followed up by appropriate actions.

Stop faking! If there is a part of your life that is miserable and unhappy, do something about it! The energy that you release will surprise you.

Be conscious. If you're busy running around and doing things for everyone else all the time, you may have lost touch with your true needs and desires, which can be a wellspring of personal energy. Set aside time — even short moments — when you can write down an idea or feeling or say a prayer. Get clear about what fuels real forward motion in your life and what just keeps your wheels spinning.

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