



Emotional Rest

I was tired. But it wasn't physical. Instead of tired muscles, this felt like tired emotions. Yes, I was actually tired of feeling. My feelers were flattened. My emoters were on empty. (If I can emote, then certainly, I must have emoters somewhere...)

During the recent holiday season, there were a great many opportunities to feel and I took advantage of most of them. Right after that I taught a week-long intensive in Aikido and Energy Development. These are topics about which I am most passionate. After a "feeling-full" holiday, I proceeded to pour my heart into teaching. Afterwards, I experienced myself as being a few quarts low in the feeling department.

What amazed me was not that I felt this way, but that I was so surprised that I did. *Upon reflection, I realized that I have many tried and true strategies for dealing with a fatigued body or a tired mind. However, I hadn't actually given much thought to how to navigate my way through tired emoters.* What to do?

EMOTIONAL REST

My first thought was to get emotional rest. Hmmmm. How exactly does one take a break from feeling? Do I actually need to do that? When I've worked out hard and my legs are sore and tired, this doesn't mean that I have to stop walking. However, it is a good idea to refrain from running or otherwise working them hard for a few days. In order to rest my emotions, I needed to keep myself from entering a territory or an activity where I knew that I would feel strongly. It didn't seem to matter whether the feelings were positive or negative; the key was to feel gently and quietly while I was recovering. Evidently I am designed for this; when I'm emotionally spent, I often find myself in a detached and slightly numb state. Historically, when in this state, I judged myself for not being fully present. These days my sense is that my system, in its wisdom, has gently guided me to a state of down-regulated emotion. What a good idea to go with this state for a few days and allow myself to deeply rest emotionally.

As I contemplated emotional rest, I also considered what might happen if I didn't rest my feeling parts. With my body, if I override my natural sanity and throw my tired body back into strenuous activity, I know that I run the risk of exhaustion, injury, chronic depletion, etc. Emotionally, long-term exhaustion and chronic depletion inevitably lead down the path to depression, dissociation, illness, and so forth.

EMOTIONAL NOURISHMENT

People talk about soul food, but not about heart food. Here's a good inquiry: "What nourishes my heart?" The first answer that surfaced was "anything that makes me feel good." However, I hit a bit of a problem with this one. In an effort to rest and self-nourish, I indulged in watching a favorite movie. However, as soon as I fed my feelings, they started to feel good. The more I fed them, the stronger my feelings became. It was a surreal kind of anti-rest; the antidote was re-enforcing my emotional fatigue! So, I stopped watching and settled on a quiet meal, an activity that was pleasant and nourishing, but not as stimulating as a favorite movie. This was more along the line of giving wholesome, bland food to someone who has an upset stomach; the person needs to eat, but it's a good idea to back off on the intense spices. A similar strategy seemed to work with my tired emotions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SPACE

The whole restorative process was set in motion as a result of simply acknowledging that my fatigue was primarily emotional. This level of clarity helped me organize around changing my behavior for a time so that I could support a stressed and tired aspect of myself. The clear result was the creation of space and time within that week for my emotional self. I changed my priorities to allow my emotions to rest and be nourished.

RECOVERY TIME

How long does it take to recover emotionally? Impossible to say with certainty, but again I look to the physical body for an example. After a vigorous racquetball game, it might take me a day or two to feel like my body has recovered. However, if I had just run a marathon, then it certainly would take much longer to recover. *More intense emotional experiences demand longer recovery time.* After allowing myself some emotional rest, I was once again able to experience my emotions in a more robust and natural way.

Wishing you emotional rest and nourishment,

Doug

P.S. One final thought has to do with the relationship between recovery and age. In all things physical I recovered much more quickly in my youth. Emotionally, that's not the case. *I'm far more emotionally mature and sophisticated now in middle age than I was as a teenager. Because I am more skilled and resourced, my emotional recovery time is much better now than when I was younger.* Apparently, some things actually do improve with age. Hooray! -- D

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