



How to Overcome the Pain of Frustration



Feeling frustrated? Want to get rid of it? Here are eight steps for finding true and lasting inner peace no matter what is going on around you and who is causing it.

Step 1: Identify what makes you frustrated.

Some people can deal with the very same problem and never get frustrated. So why is it irritating you? Take a look at the true cause of anger. Your anger is coming from: Look at yourself! Here are some very common sources of frustration:

- I feel frustrated whenever someone doesn't change fast enough to suit me.
- I want others to improve in order to make my life more pleasant.

Step 2: Realize your frustration is a sin.

When we're frustrated, our attitude is not very loving, is it? 1 Cor. 13:4-7 describes our behavior when we are living in love.

When we love, we do not hang onto hurts, because love is not self-seeking. Frustration occurs because we insist that our pain will only go away when the other person shows us they are truly sorry for what they have done.

Love is patient. Frustration is short tempered.

Love doesn't take offense when others do something offensive. Frustration is a defense against the offense.

Love doesn't insist on having its own way. Frustration is the emotional act of insisting that somebody else must do something to bring justice to the situations in which we have been unfairly treated.

We like to point the finger at other people, because it's easier than admitting the sin of our unloving reaction. To overcome this, ask Jesus to help you see them as he sees them: through his loving eyes.

See the offender as weighed down by bags of garbage (the abuse that's been inflicted on them, the rejection and misunderstanding and poor role modeling, etc.) Then look past the garbage to see the real person underneath.

Step 3: Repent. Turn away from the feeling of frustration.

To repent means to change your mind. Choose to accept people the way they are even though you don't like everything about them. What if they never improve? Could you still accept them that way? If they do begin to change, is it only that they don't change fast enough? What if their lack of improvement or slow growth causes more problems? If you try to repent under your own will-power, you won't get very far. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you supernatural help.

Repentance also means forgiving yourself for getting frustrated and forgiving those who make you feel frustrated. Jesus said we have to be ready and willing to forgive continually and repeatedly ("seventy times seven times"), and frustration usually only happens when we are continually and repeatedly offended.

Even after deciding to repent and forgive, the feeling of frustration usually remains. Why? To discover the answer, we move into:

Step 4: Recognize that your desire for people to change is another sin.

Love means seeing the good in others while not holding their sins against them. Because we do love them, we want to see them become free of the damage that their sins are doing to them. For their own sake, we hope they'll change, but then we get angry when they don't. To overcome this frustration, we need to stop looking at their lack of growth. But how?

Step 5: Learn what is the root of your desire for the other person to change.

Usually, the root is fear. We're afraid of getting hurt again and so we conclude: "I should be upset with them for not changing." This gets translated to: "I must hurt that person now because he might hurt me in the future." And so we hurt them by being frustrated with them. They don't even have to know we're frustrated; anger feels like we're getting some sort of revenge.

In other words, fear leads to disapproval of others, and disapproval is not love. We're offering *conditional* love: "If you change, then I will be happy and loving with you."

They need our acceptance. To give this to them, we need to get in touch with God's love. When we love them with *his* unconditional love, they experience his healing touch.

Step 6: Discover the true source of happiness.

Our happiness does not depend on others and how they treat us. Our happiness depends on our relationship with God. God is our true source of joy and inner peace and a calm, non-frustrated spirit.

We're happy because we're partnered with God, making a difference in someone's life. We're happy because God will never do anything to hurt us. All other sources of joy only last short time.

But knowing this is not enough. The next time a problem occurs, we're unhappy and frustrated again.

Step 7: Kill off the illusions about happiness.

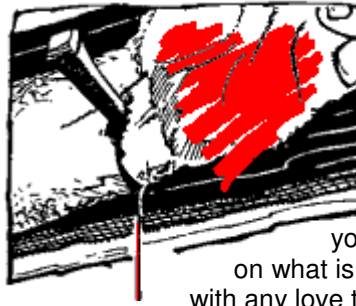
We need to become a sign of the true, loving, healing presence of Jesus. Read Phil. 3:17-21, which tells us why many choose to live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Get your eyes off the people who hurt you and look at your own relationship with God, who is love — God, whom you rejected when you gave to others your anger and frustration instead of love.

How are you being an enemy of the cross? By rejecting your own crucifixion. People who hurt you are trying to crucify you; they are nailing you to their belief system, their sinfulness. And when you're frustrated, you're fighting the cross. Jesus showed, by example, that going to the cross for others is good! But how can it be good for you to be nailed to someone else's unloving behavior?

In John 12:24-26, Jesus explains that a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die to produce fruit. Your desire for the unloving person to love you must be nailed and killed, and with that you will be killing the source of your

frustrations. Then, you will finally experience the new growth of peace and joy.



Jesus said that by hanging onto our lives, we lose our selves. By hanging onto your life of frustration, you lose what you want most: In your desire for the unloving person to love you the way you want to be loved, you focus on what is hurting you and you lose touch with any love that that person is giving you.

To serve Jesus, we must follow him. Where did he go? To the cross! But we've been living in the illusion that happiness comes from protecting ourselves from crucifixion. To find true happiness, we must allow ourselves to be joined to Christ's crucifixion. It doesn't make sense at first, but Jesus showed us that it makes perfect sense from the perspective of love. Thus he said: Stop fighting and offering no resistance (see Matt. 5:39-41).

Our flesh-nature says, "I don't want to do this! Let this cup pass from me!" Our spirit-nature, when united to Jesus, says: "If they can't give me love, I must let them crucify my desire to receive love from them."

St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "I am the wheat of Christ, ground by the teeth of beasts to become pure bread." By letting people grind us into the ground, we become sacrament for them (the Bread of Christ), a sign of the true, loving, and healing presence of Jesus.

8. Follow Jesus to the cross in order to reach the resurrection.

To truly love others, we embrace them despite their sins. Jesus, in order to take our sins to the cross, embraced us while we were still laden with bags and bags of garbage. Embracing the bearer of garbage is truly following Jesus all the way to the cross — all the way through the cross to the resurrection!

The other person might not change, but you will. You will find inner peace and joy no matter how much you suffer. You will no longer be damaged by the hurts inflicted upon you. You will discover the joy of ministry, i.e., putting your sufferings to good use.

You will no longer have any reason to feel frustrated!