

Liking that which is hard to like

By Ruth Ostrow

THERE are several things I dislike doing. Chores annoy me. The endless processing of dockets for tax, driving around like a taxi driver, washing up, paying bills, all feel like a waste of precious time. But the worst task is feeding my beloved cats.

Being a fish-a-tarian (or veg-aquarian, as it is now called), I am loath to handle meat, let alone lumps of smelly roo. With mouth turned down, and nose blocked, I cut up pieces of bloodied flesh, fill the cat bowl, and try not to think too hard about it.

So much do I dislike and procrastinate around certain tasks that I've had to give myself a challenge. The challenge has been to "reframe". This is a common personal development term that refers to an opportunity to take something unpleasant, sad or disempowering and reframe it so you can find the benefits in it.

It took me a long time to write a list of positives around cat food, but the truth is I love looking after animals; it fills me with a sense of nourishment. Often the menial tasks we do can be quite meditative. The repetitive ones, such as chopping and mopping, take us away from all the other intellect-based things we do each day, including worry. Other chores can leave us with a sense of being clean and organised.

The method of reframe is a powerful tool when applied to more serious situations such as arguments and disappointments. Someone in a workshop I attended had just broken up with his lover. When forced to reframe loneliness, he found a host of positives including independence and freedom. In the break-up he got to learn about his destructive patterns around love, which he vowed never to repeat.

The hardest task for most people is reframing death and illness, as we all struggle with positive ways to view loss. But I've witnessed people discussing the intimacy and powerful love that burgeoned during intense periods of sadness. Illness often awakens people to deep appreciation, and a profound gratitude for the small things that are gifted to us in the moment. In grief we can feel truly alive.

Reframing is a difficult practice but, like gratitude, it's a powerful tool towards spiritual growth and healing. As one wise adage goes: "Everything that happens is my teacher. I just have to sit at my own feet and learn."

www.ruthostrow.com

© Ruth Ostrow

First published in The Weekend Australian SAT 24 FEB 2007