

Battling with Symptoms Or Changing the Frameworks?

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The easiest thing in the world is to get into a fight with *symptoms*. We all do it. We all do it constantly. And no wonder--symptoms make our lives miserable. So it's easy to get into a state where we *hate* the symptoms and go into battle with the symptoms. We fight with our negative feelings, we fight with our habitual patterns that hold us in gridlock, we fight with our imperfections and flaws. And fighting symptoms would be a productive way to handle things if we were not systems, mind-body systems, neuro-semantic systems with levels and layers of thoughts and feelings.

Systems? Neuro-Semantics?

Yes, we have many interactive parts within our mind-body-emotion system and it is our systemic nature that makes "fighting symptoms" unsuccessful.

So what's the problem?

The problem is that when we fight the symptoms we fight our own internal mind-body communication system. Symptoms are not bad things. They are indicators or communications from the system that something is out-of-balance, needs adjustment, or is in pain. Symptoms are like the indicators of gauges and warnings lights in the panel of your car. Suppose you get into a battle with them every time you got a message that you need to add oil, or that a door is not shut, or that the radiator is over-heating?

Symptoms indicate the possibility of a problem, but is not the problem itself even though we can make it a problem. As communication about the health, vitality, and wellness of the system, they indicate the condition of the system. That's why mere symptom management only deals with the *symptoms* of problems and not with the real problem. This radically differs from identifying and transforming the frameworks that create the problem from which the symptoms comes.

Would you like some examples?

Relationships:

Symptom Management is trying to fix or stop the headache, the yelling, the anger, the frustration, the sense of being misunderstood and misrepresented, the disloyalty, etc.

Changing the Framework is identifying the frames of mind that govern the relationship and that deals with what the individuals are trying to do and what they want from relating.

Stuttering:

Symptom Management is feeling bad about stuttering and trying hard to not stutter and anticipating in fear what it will mean if one does stutter again, and hating the non-fluency and wishing to be more perfect and flawless in fluency.

Changing the Frameworks means identify the frames that punctuate a piece of speech as non-fluency and classifying it as stuttering that creates the problem and identifying the frames of mind a person would have to employ to not create that reality.

Emotional Intelligence and Management:

Symptom Management is feeling ashamed of one's sadness and fearing that being sad makes one a pessimist and hating that and being angry at not being able to command the negative emotions to just go away.

Changing the Framework means recognizing that sadness is just a human emotion that indicates something of value feels violated or lost, accepting that, coming to terms with the loss and then creating a new meaningful goal that gives a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

To the degree that we are engaged in *symptom management* we focus our energies on the results that occurs when our frame of mind interacts as we experience some thing or someone. Focusing on symptoms means that we're dealing with peripheral issues and not the foundational or over-arching issues. Merely trying to deal with the symptoms yet with little or no results, in fact, has caused many practitioners and theoreticians of various fields to draw a hasty and ill-formed conclusion. Namely,

The problem is insolvable, it is just the way things are, it is inevitably, it is permanent, at best we can only management it. It cannot be cured.

Many (but not all) working in the field of drug and alcohol addiction drew this conclusion in trying to get the so-called "alcoholics" to stop drinking. They ordered them to stop and that didn't work. They coaxed and gently persuaded them and yet they continued to drink. They got them to make decisions to stop or to drink only moderately, they linked pain to the drinking, and they did many other things without success. The symptom of over-drinking and binging led to more symptoms, namely, not being able to "consciously" force themselves to stop.

It's the same with fear and anxiety states. Most people find the mental and emotional as well as the physiological *symptoms* of fear and anxiety as very unpleasant. Most of us want the symptoms to stop. So we focus on the heart racing and then think that we're going crazy, that we're out-of-control, and we feel stupid, inadequate, then we feel ashamed, guilty, and then we feel really anxious and so the systems spirals out of control as we hyper-ventilate and worry about dying, etc.

It's the same with arguing with a loved one about a misunderstanding. It begins innocently enough. We just want to make the other understand our point. Of course, the other also just wants to make us understand. Soon, we're feeling even more misunderstood and so we begin defending ourselves and as our state shifts to feeling threatened and attacked, angry words come which escalates things so that it is a "fight."

What do all of these "problems" have in common?

We are focusing on symptoms and trying to control the symptoms without looking at the over-arching frameworks that create them. That's why we cannot solve these problems at the same level of thought that created them. Our *dislike of the symptom* will only generate more dislike, anger, fear, frustration, stress, upset, etc. and as these expressions go round and round the system, they get worse each time. They degenerate. The system spirals downward in a vicious way as we turn the symptom into a problem!

Systemic Problems for Systemic People

So what is a person with a neuro-semantic systemic nature to do?

This is the beauty and power of recognizing the levels of the mind and that the mind does not only go out in a linear fashion to think, but also goes in circles. We think, reason, and feel *in circles*. After we have our first thought, "I don't like that symptom..." we frequently make things a lot worse for ourselves, by our second thought. "That means I'm inadequate." Then our third thought complicates matters even more, "I am so ashamed of this; I have to try hard to not do this!" So we focus on not doing the behavior and any sign of it brings forth more anger, then depression, then self-contempt, etc.

This describes the structure of the problem. The meta-levels of states and responses reflect back onto itself to create the higher frames that put us at odds with ourselves and the world. At the center of the problem is our *judgment and non-acceptance* of the symptom. We then spiral round and round with more judgment, anger, rejection, denial, stress, and the like. Our attitude toward what was a communication signal, the symptom, has misdirected us.

The Counter-Intuitive Solution to Meta-Problems

That which will be the solution will change our frames. Of course, for the most part, this means that the solution will be the most counter-intuitive thing that we can imagine. It means that the solution will involve going in the very opposite direction that we have sent our thought, emotion, hope, and desires. That's why it seems "paradoxical." It is not paradoxical or contradictory. It is not "reverse psychology." Yet these are the words that we have come to use to describe the counter-intuitive nature of the solution.

What is the solution?

To *accept the symptom*. To fully welcome the symptom into awareness and to non-judgmentally notice it, become aware of it, to explore it, to understand it's positive intentions, to align with it, and to de-energize all of the negative frames and meanings given to it.

- It is for the alcoholic to *accept* the psycho-drinking and to explore those urges that moves him to drink. It is to ask, "What am I trying to do by drinking that has some positive value for me?" It is to be social, to be less self-conscious,

to forget some pain or humiliation, is it to be one of the guys, what value does it seek to obtain for me?

- It is for the over-eater to *accept* the psycho-eating and to explore the internal urges to eat and what psycho-pleasures the eating brings: comfort, love, fulfillment, reward, the good life, etc.
- It is for the one who stutters to *accept* the stuttering as just speech, just non-fluent speech and to explore what the hesitating is seeking to accomplish that's important and to flush out the fear and anxiety frames that has coached the person to become self-conscious about the speech.
- It is for the one who yells and argues and says "angry words" to *accept* the anger and frustration and the sense of threat and to welcome such and to wonder, really wonder, what does the person hope to accomplish by raising the voice or using hurtful words.

The symptom is not the *real problem*, it is but a symptom of the real problem. Nor is the problem the person--we are not inadequate or destined for staying stuck. We are just inside of a Frame Matrix. The *frames* that drives and governs us to interpret things in a certain way and to believe in certain things--that's the problem. Typically we raise our voice and yell because we don't want to be put in the wrong, because we want to be right, because we want to be respected, because we want to think that we are good persons, and to have others think the same. When we stutter, we want to be fluent and flawless and perfect, we want to be accepted and valued, we don't want to be inadequate or to embarrass ourselves, etc.

Good motives drive our behaviors, but the intentions are not able to succeed because of the frame that drives *how we go about the tasks*. Rejecting, hating, shaming, and guiltting ourselves for our anger only makes it worse. It does not enable us to be more calm, thoughtful, or respectful in sharing our anger. It turns our thoughts and feelings against ourselves. It's counter-intuitive that by accepting our anger, welcoming the knowledge of a sense of violation, and willing to explore our anger gives us more control over our anger.

It's similarly counter-intuitive that by accepting our non-fluency and even practicing it, exaggerating it and giving ourselves permission to be fallible human beings who sometimes care too much about what others things gives us more control and management over our speech productions. Then we relax, breathe easier, and de-energize all of the loaded semantic meanings that we give to non-fluency.

Getting to the Frameworks

Beliefs hold our feelings, actions, behaviors, thoughts, memories, and communication in place. You can't train yourself and incorporate response patterns into your physiology and neurology unless you believe certain things.

What do you have to believe about having a negative emotion, being flawed and fallible, not getting everybody's approval, etc.?

We solidify our symptoms by believing that they are inevitable and permanent. We drive them deeper into neurology when we believe that "they are just the way it is," or that "that's what *I am*." Identity beliefs especially solidify and install symptoms so that they have even more of a gridlock on us. That's why it's the identity statements, "I am..." "He is..." "They are..." can lock us into a toxic system.

It's the embedded frames of beliefs about beliefs all the way up the levels of the mind that actually control and govern our primary states. The frame Matrix supports the reality that we live in whether it is a Universe of Stuttering or Out-of-Control Anger or Pessimism or whatever. We have to move up to the belief systems of norms, rules, expectations, and cultural patterns to truly deal with the symptoms.

We first meet Neo in the Movie, The Matrix when the camera zooms in on his computer screen. A message is coming in, "Neo, Wake up! The Matrix has you!" So it is in our lives. The matrices of our frames have us. Waking up to the frames and the frames-within-frames of beliefs, values, identifications, decisions, etc. alerts us to the universe that we live in. Then we can Quality Control that Matrix to see if it really serves us well to enhance and empower our everyday lives.

Are you still fighting the symptoms and the symptoms seem to be growing to become Dragons in your mind?

Then stop. Embrace the Dragon ... plant a juicy kiss upon it and see what happens. More often than not the Dragon shrinks to a smaller size and may even shrivel up completely. Rejecting your symptoms turns your psychological energies of mind and emotion and physiology against yourself. Welcoming, embracing, and kissing your symptoms transforms them, slays them, alters them.

Getting to the over-arching frameworks that make up the higher frames of the mind means getting to the beliefs and the belief systems. The framework of problems and solutions exists at this level. Once we destabilize the old structure, then we can rise up in our mind to set new and empowering intentions, visions, values, identifications, expectations, pleasures, etc. Meta-magic awaits us at those higher levels because we can tap into the systemic mechanisms of change. We can find those leverage points in the system and by simply setting up some new policies, invite the system to self-organize around the new beliefs and ideas.

Welcome to meta-land.

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