

Taming Your Gremlin

Our gremlin traps us into forming habits for leading life. Habits for responding to feelings and habits for responding to people. Feelings fall into four basic categories: anger, sadness, joy, and sexual feeling. When one of these feelings is conjured up, your response may be a habitual one based on a belief rooted in the past. For example, if you learned at a young age that expressing joy is immature; your habit may be to block joy. The same may be true if you equate anger with hurtful, sadness with weakness, and sex with sin. It can be very difficult to become aware of your habits, you're too close to them. It is almost as if you **are** your habits. To begin the process we want to "simply notice" them. Start to be more aware of your body and how it reacts to certain situations. For example, your physical response to anger may be to shorten your breathing or you may rant and rave, eat, drink. Please don't judge your responses to your feelings, we just want to "simply notice" them.

The following experiment may help you to get a handle on some or your beliefs about your feelings. Remember to simply notice your physical responses as you answer these questions.

1. A time I felt angry at another human being was _____
2. At that time I chose to _____
3. As I remember that experience now I feel _____
4. If I had allowed my anger to be reflected in my body and in my voice in a manner that was totally uncensored, I imagine I would have _____
5. The angriest that I ever recall seeing anybody be was _____
6. When I witnessed him or her being that angry, I felt _____
7. When my mother was angry, she tended to _____
8. When my father was angry, he tended to _____
9. It seems to me that I automatically associate anger with (circle all that apply): power, good, bad, productivity, masculinity, pain, aliveness, excitement, darkness, creativity, harm....add your own responses _____

Your gremlin will not like this sort of activity at all. She wants you to continue to act out of habit. Look over your answers and see if you might be able to discover some areas that your gremlin may be lurking. Now, I would like you to answer the questions again and replace anger with sadness, and then with joy, and then with sexual feeling. I must emphasize the purpose of this exercise is not to imply that you need to change anything about your reactions to feelings, **simply notice** them. The key here is to learn to operate out of **choice** rather than out of habit.

Tips for Taming

- Gremlin terms are Can't, Should, Must, Ought...replace those with Won't, Will, Choose to, Choose not to.
- Need vs Want: When you hear yourself saying or thinking the word "need", pay attention. Yes, we need food, water, air, shelter (the new "boyfriend jeans" by AG...sorry, couldn't resist) but most of what you imagine you need, you simply want. Someone, sometime, started the rumour that telling a loved one that we need them is a compliment. But, would you not rather hear "I really love you and I want to be with you?" (might be a good tip to remember for Valentines Day)
- You don't deserve it/him/fun/etc: Your gremlin will try to convince you that you are unworthy of what you want. She will make you feel undeserving, afraid, or guilty. Simply remember, guilt serves not one positive purpose. Think of it as an IOU. Either tear it up or ask yourself whom it is you owe and what it is you owe them. Decide what act you need to perform to allow yourself to tear up your IOU and then act as quickly as possible. This will scare the crap out of your gremlin.
- The desire to be right: Simply said "Would you rather be right or happy?"

Gremlin taming is a complex business and we've really just scratched the surface. Please don't hesitate to email me at kristine@theurbanrack.com if you have any questions about this stuff. Remember, you can render your gremlin entirely impotent if you will:

- SIMPLY NOTICE
- CHOOSE (rather than act out of habit)
- KNOW THIS IS AN ON-GOING ADVENTURE
(there is no finish line when taming your gremlin)