

Inward Outward Upward

*If afflictions refine some, they consume others.
(Thomas Fuller)*

The majority of people handle stress related difficulties in two naturally instinctive ways. Many deal with anxiety by internalizing their emotions. But there are risks associated with inner venting because bottling negative or harmful emotions will not make them disappear. Warehousing an unconstructive disposition will only transform it into some other trouble. This is a common cause of depression in men and women. Depression has been defined by some as anger turned inward. Inward disturbances adversely affect our emotional well-being and can even affect us physically and that is why many today are imploding; falling apart from the inside out.

Another way we deal with problems is by directing our agitations outwardly and spewing on others—usually those closest to us. A host of professionals feel that venting our feelings outward is better than bottling them inside. But the danger in venting externally is learning how to set proper boundaries for the expression of our sentiments. Many explode and let out their frustrations in ways that adds to the aggravation. They lash out, hurt others and destroy their ability to develop meaningful relationships. A relatively new concept in today's time that is related to spewing anger is road rage. We become as pleasant to embrace as a cactus if we develop a touchy and irritable character by erupting on others.

We must not implode or explode—spew or stew from the pressures of life. The best way to deal with our emotions is to turn them upward. Charles Woodson writes, “The important and decisive factor in life is not what happens to us, but the attitude we take toward what happens. Circumstances and situations may color life, but by the grace of God, we have been given the power to choose what that color shall be. The effect that misfortunes . . . and sorrows have upon life is determined by the way in which we meet them.” Every negative can be transformed into a positive by venting upward. Pour out that which is inside to God. “The gem cannot be polished without friction,” says the old Chinese Proverb, “nor humanity perfected without trials.” God delights in mercy and will consume the agony of our pain in the power of His presence. If we give expression to our pain without directing it towards God it will fester.

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