

Ep #39: How to Release Fight Energy



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With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

Hello my friends. Welcome to episode 39. So today, I want to talk to you about managing all of this fight and anger energy I think we are all feeling and experiencing. June has been one hell of a month, right? And 2020 has been one hell of a year.

So I think we're all feeling the effects of all of that. And so I think it's worth a discussion, talking about how do we manage ourselves when we are constantly impacted by traumatic language, traumatic images, and everybody is so unhappy and just fighting with each other online.

So I think it's really important that we address how to manage all of this anger, frustration, grief that we're feeling as it relates to the media, social media, and just other people. We are so polarized right now and I just see so much anger, hostility, and fighting that is happening.

And so I think when everybody is fighting, we always have to come back to center. We have to come back to who we are and address what is important for us, what is our message, and what are we trying to accomplish with that message.

And so it takes a little bit of taking a step back and doing a little bit of a self-evaluation. When you're in a polarizing world filled with polarizing point of views, you have to pick a side, and you can only pick a side if you've done

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some introspection, if you have educated yourself, and you understand where you stand.

Because otherwise, you're just going to be this raw, emotional being who jumps into any fight they are invited to. And that will drain the fuck out of you. Fighting all the time is an energy drain. There's a lot of negativity and we have to manage how much negativity we are taking in because this is some of the basis of just self-care, and no, this is not a self-care episode. I want to be really clear about that.

But we have to be really mindful as humans how much negativity we are taking in and how much negativity we are putting out. And what's interesting is that I think we have more blind spots around how much negativity we are putting out than how much negativity we are taking in.

But both are blind spots for us as humans. Because when we get into fight mode, we are just in reactive mode. We're just reacting based on emotion, based on the moment, and base what we think is important to say at that time.

So we need to think through how much we're taking in and how much we're putting out. So I'm going to break this down into two parts and I'm just going to address the two big players in this thing.

So current day, when I'm recording this it's the end of June 2020 and so as a culture, we are in fight mode. We are pissed. We're sick of being home, we're sick of feeling anxious about everything from our jobs to our kids, and we're fucking sick of racial inequality and we want change to happen.

And so we have got to manage all of that fight energy properly, or it hurts others or it can hurt ourselves. And so I'm going to talk about media first. So the problem with media is you have to manage how much time you are spending getting sucked into story after story after story, or video after video after video.

All of that negativity really hurts your mental health, and it actually can create a vicarious trauma response. I've actually had to process a lot of

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vicarious trauma with teens specifically because they are on social media so much and they are just watching and reading without a filter. They're young, they don't understand how the media works.

And so they're getting inundated with all of these images and these messages that are above their age level in a lot of ways. And so having to process through some of the effects of vicarious trauma, but this is true for adults too.

So we have to keep in mind, your brain has a negativity bias because it is designed to help you survive and stay safe. The media is able to tap in, like if you've ever noticed, like you start reading one story, and then you read another story, and before you know it, half the day is gone because you've read so many negative stories because your brain almost gets addicted to it.

It's not addiction in the truest form, but I mean, maybe. But you're like, well if that happened, what else happened, and then what else happened? Our brain is like, I need to know everything. I need to know everything because I need to feel safe in the world.

And there's this idea, the more knowledge we know, the safer we can be, but it's actually the opposite. What ends up happening is you just keep reading story after story after story, you're going to start feeling so anxious, angry, and depressed and out of control that you can't impact any of these things, you collapse, and then you're not helpful to anyone.

So remember, your brain is always searching for danger, so when you read or watch a news story that communicates danger or unsafety, our brains lock into it because we unconsciously start thinking about what we need to do to protect ourselves. And then that starts an anxiety cycle where we feel like we need to know everything that's going on so we can take appropriate action.

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But what it actually does is it makes us collapse and hypervigilant. It's draining. And so our bodies and our brains cannot live in that much hyperarousal. It's draining.

And so it ends up working against you because then you don't have the energy to actually take action for the causes you care about. You don't have the energy to be there for your family or your friends because all of this energy has now gone into reading negative stories.

And you need to be really careful. So you need to set a timer, you need to watch how many stories you're reading. But most importantly, you need to consider the media sources that you are following. You have to keep in mind that these stories are written and designed to get you hooked that way. They want you sucked into the media.

Media is a business at the end of the day and they want you to stay reading. They want you to keep doing this. They don't care if it's unhealthy for you. They just want you to read or they just want you to watch. So you have to also do your own research and be educated on the quality media sources.

Because actually, not every story that is printed or viewed is actually true or accurate. And so you need to be aware where are you getting your news from. Because if you accidentally go down the rabbit hole of news companies or newscasters that aren't telling the truth, then you're traumatizing yourself for no reason.

We want to be educated and aware of the truth and data of what's actually happening. So maybe do some research ahead of time and pick a couple of media sources that you feel are reliable, that align with your views, and then you don't have to waste so much time in putting boundaries around that, putting limits around that.

It's like, okay, well I only read from these three news sources and I only spend a half hour a day doing so would be an example of putting some boundaries around that. Because don't mishear me. You need to be

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informed of what's going on right now. You need to be informed of what's happening in the world so you can make educated decisions and take a stand that is appropriate for you.

But don't blindly trust every media story. We need to be aware that behind every media story is a human. It's a human with a viewpoint, a human with a bias, and a human who is working for a company with an agenda. And so being a journalist is like being a job, just like anything else. And every profession has good and bad journalists.

Every profession has good and bad doctors. Every profession has good and bad therapists. It's just a universal concept. Every profession has great people and not so great people, and it takes you being an educated consumer to figure out what aligns with your truth and what do you think is accurate and honest.

So again, pick your media outlets ahead of time, put a timer on it, and then decide what you want to put your energy into and what you do not. And so I know for me, I focused on supporting the anti-racist movement in June and supporting Black Lives Matter.

I stayed focused on listening, supporting, learning, unlearning, amplifying Black voices on Instagram, and it's a small token and we have a long way to go, but it's a start. But I didn't take anything else on. I stayed singularly focused on an issue that I felt was important so I wouldn't completely burn out.

And I feel changing America to be anti-racist is critically important. That aligns with my values. So I encourage you to assess within yourself to focus on one area, educate yourself, and support it. Because being everything to everyone never works. It's not possible.

So we are designed to be human, which means we can only take on so much. We are not designed to be like the gods. We have limits. And honestly, the more you know your limits, the more power you have. It's a

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very interesting thing. Because a lot of us think if we just deny our limits, then we'll have more power, and it doesn't work that way.

Alright, so that is part of how much you are taking in. Because a lot of us are spending an enormous amount of time online, in the news, and focusing on those kinds of things. So the second part of this is you need to watch the kind of fights that you're getting into.

How many arguments, who they're with, and what they're over. So as we've been talking about, we are in a polarizing time, and it's an election year so everything's turned up a notch. So be aware that everybody is on a side. I mean, I'm seeing - people are fighting over wearing masks, politics, human rights.

Honestly, you name it. I'm not surprised that people don't start arguing over dogs. If there's something to argue about, people are going to argue about it. And all that negative energy hurts you. You need to pick a cause and take constructive action, not frivolous fighting just because you're angry and frustrated and you want to unload on someone. That's not helpful, healthy for you, it's not healthy for other people.

And at the root of it, we're all just frustrated and angry at how the world is right now. In February of 2020, earlier this year, many of us were still living under this idea that we were safe and in control of our lives. And by the time March 2020 came around, we all realized that was bullshit and an illusion and a grief process started taking place.

Collective trauma started happening as we started to live in a world that was deeply impacted by COVID-19. And so the problem with COVID-19 is it's a virus, which makes it invisible to us. We cannot see it. Unless you actually know a name and a face of someone who is sick, it's very difficult for us to make a virus, this invisible thing real, unless we psych ourselves out about it.

And so a lot of us are feeling unconsciously terrorized by this invisible monster. It's completely changed our lives. And I think there's a lot of

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unconscious sadness, loneliness, helplessness, and some of us are aware of some of it, and we're unaware of the rest of it.

And so it creates a fight response. All of us want this to change. We want COVID to be over. And so I think we took a chance at that in May and June, and now we're paying the consequences for that. At the time I'm recording this, the numbers are extremely high in a lot of states.

And so I think we're all coming to acceptance and reality that COVID's real, it's in the world, and we've had to adjust. And this is why fighting with people isn't the right way to go. The right way to go is to address the underlying pain and emotions you are having, and I know that's a super therapist-y thing to say, but it is true.

We are being called to social distance, we're not able to do the things that we used to do. We need emotional closeness. We need to be united more than anything right now. So far, all we feel is divisiveness. We are collective on opposite ends of every issue, over everything, I mean, right down to wearing masks. It's wild.

Everybody is just at odds with each other and our power is in being united. That is where we come together and respect differences and honor each other as humans. Now, I know that sounds idealistic because if you look around or just scroll media for a minute, that seems like a pipe dream at this point because everyone is so unhappy with each other.

But we have to manage how much we are fighting with people because not every fight is worth your time or energy. So this goes back to what I was saying before about being singularly focused. You have to pick an issue or a topic that feels important to you. Educate yourself about that. Surround yourself with other people that share your viewpoint so you can build each other up.

And only pick the fights that are going to have a constructive outcome. Tearing each other apart doesn't have a constructive outcome. It's just a

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way for your body to release all of this fight energy, but there are other ways to release fight energy.

We can exercise, we can process it in therapy, and we can do things with it that make it constructive, so that this fight energy isn't destroying ourselves and it's not destroying our relationships around us. At this point in time, we need our relationships more than ever.

COVID-19 is the thing that made us feel like we were becoming isolated and alone and we couldn't have fun anymore or be with the people that we love. We can't even hug half the people in our lives because we're afraid of getting them sick.

And so now is the time more than ever that if you're feeling overwhelmed and anxious and angry and sad that you process that in therapy and get to the root of that so you can be a good friend, you can be good to the cause. You can support people and suppler yourself.

Don't get caught up that every fight is your calling. It's not. That's a lot of negative energy for you and it's a lot of negative energy for other people. I know this opinion is probably really unpopular and if you have fight energy in your body while you're listening to this podcast, this podcast will probably piss you off even more because I've given you no tools to just be enraged.

In fact, I'm doing the opposite. I'm telling you to pause. I'm telling you to reflect, I'm telling you to step back and maybe process in therapy, process with friends. What is the root emotion that's coming up for you and how do we offer that root support so that we can show up in the world and for ourselves in productive, healthy ways?

So we can be a contributor to some sense of control. And I use that word very lightly, but part of why people are so triggered right now is everything feels so fucking out of control. Everybody is angry, everybody is mad, everybody is reactive. Nothing feels like it's under control.

And it's an election year, and for us in America, election years are notoriously chaotic, and we've got other elements of chaos. We've got a

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worldwide pandemic that is completely adding to that. So we need to take responsibility of what is ours, what belongs to us, and how we want to impact the world and other people.

If you really listen to my words, it's actually a message of power. Really a message of power, of internal power. Because when we support our internal world, it makes us more effective in the outside world.

Alright my friends, I hope you found this episode to be helpful. And if you notice strong emotions coming up for you when you were listening to this, you're feeling anxiety, triggered, maybe really angry, take it as information that something in your internal world needs support.

There's no shame and blame in getting mental health support in your local state of residence. It is probably the best thing that you can do for yourself, so I highly encourage you in your local state of residence to find a therapist that you click with, that you gel with, that you like.

As we talked about other professions, you're not going to click with every single therapist out there. Therapists are people. Find a human you connect with who has the skills and the abilities to help you with your particular set of issues.

Alright my friend, and if you want to get on my email list to know when the next episode drops, you can do that on my website at nicolesymcox.com. I look forward to seeing you next time.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Mental Health Remix. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to nicolesymcox.com.

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