

Life... I need my caffeine

Situation:

I went to make a pot of coffee and all I could find was decaffeinated. Yuck!

Symptoms:

I was thinking: "This is really stupid. What's the harm in having real coffee? My wife is taking this too far, much too far. Mary's on a health kick and she thinks I ought to be too. I'm a grown man and I can take care of myself. I live in this house too and I'm entitled to have what I want. It's bad enough that we were mixing ½ regular with ½ decaf for the last two weeks."

Solution:

The first thing I thought of was OE – Outer Environment. The fact that there wasn't "real" coffee in the house, and my wife both are things outside of me. I can't control them – I can control my thoughts about them. Me being and staying upset about this isn't going to make a pot of regular coffee appear on the spot, so I better to do something else.

It's been hard for me to label things trivialities. Having caffeine is important to me. But I also know that it's not good for me. So this one incident is a triviality compared to my mental health. It's not worth me getting riled up about. Caffeine is a want – not a need. My health, my mental health and my physical health have to come first if I ever want to get over my sleep difficulties.

I know why Mary didn't buy any more regular coffee. I watched the video explaining that caffeine is a stimulant and can interfere with sleep. I cut down gradually like my doctor told me to over the last few weeks, and to be honest it has helped me get to sleep better. And I've seen things on TV too that tell people to avoid caffeine in all kinds of other conditions. So wanting caffeine is average, and not being able to have it is average too.

In the past:

I would have fumed about this to my Mother when she came to visit. I would have complained to friends that Mary was taking over my life again. It would have been another "injustice."

Instead of thinking that the Mary was actually doing something good for me, I would have convinced myself it was something bad. Reviewing my mental list of injustices and my caffeine consumption would have both contributed to my lack of sleep.

Trying to control everybody else was a bad habit of mine in the past. It didn't get me anywhere – not in my personal life or my work life. My physical health has been shaky for more years than I'd care to mention. Now I'm finding out that it had a whole lot to do with my mental health, my mental attitude.

So many times in my life people would tell me that I needed an attitude adjustment. One of my doctors even told me that “I shouldn’t sweat the small stuff” but he couldn’t tell me just how I was supposed to do that.

Going through the Taking Charge class finally explained that my attitude was made up of my thoughts, and most important that I can control my thoughts. I may not be able to control what comes to my mind, but I can reject or replace the thoughts when I know they’re not healthy for me. And it taught me to view each irritation and frustration as a separate “small” event, instead of letting them all pile up.

Come to think of it, swapping thoughts is a little like swapping foods. I can trade secure realistic thoughts for my insecure, unrealistic controlling thoughts just like I can trade decaf for regular.

