

## Marilyn taps away clutter, procrastination and 'I can't do it'

by Annie O'Grady

Marilyn had a good job, a house, a car, friends, pets – and a shameful secret. Every room of her house was permanently cluttered up with papers, books, and other things out of place.

Before any (rare) visitors were due, she would hurriedly scoop up the clutter in one room and put it in another, telling herself she would clear away later. Somehow, 'later' never arrived. And the bigger the mess, the more paralysed she became to do anything about it.

Marilyn lived in this way for a couple of years. One day, picking her way along the central passage of her home among piles of papers, she came to a stop and shuddered. Something was seriously wrong. She realised she simply could not bring herself to clear up, or to have someone come in and help her do it.

She worried that she might be on her way to being a member of the packrat brigade. She had read about old people living among so many piles of saved newspapers throughout their homes, that when they became ill, rescuers had to fight their way in.

This wakeup shook her so much that, bewildered and overwhelmed, she came to me for help for her state of mind. She had previously learned basic EFT but had forgotten about it. She told me, 'I used to be quite neat. I can't understand this, but it's seriously getting me down.'

Was Marilyn's clutter problem a lack of willpower? Or a late version of teenage rebellion? No.

EFT Master Lindsay Kenny writes, 'Clutter is often triggered by an event or a series of events that left the victim feeling traumatised, fearful and powerless. Hanging on to *things* gives some people a sense of commanding or controlling at least a portion of their lives.'

I asked her to list any traumas she had suffered. She told me of several physical accidents, plus having had to leave a country that she loved to settle in Australia, her father's death, a painful split with her brother, and several broken primary relationships.

As we talked, other more urgent problems came to light. Marilyn's work load was steadily rising, her energy was so low that her busy daily life was feeling like a struggle, and a thyroid problem made her anxious. She complained, 'Ten years ago I could do four things at once, I had heaps of energy.'

While EFT does not diagnose, her condition appeared obviously to be an unrecognised mild depression, perhaps burnout, of which clutter was a symptom.

Then she 'just happened to mention' another problem. On top of her daily practical tasks as a biologist, which she loved, she was expected to create 30 technical reports within a timeframe. These required her to summarise research, some of which was new to her. She had felt so daunted that although more than half the allotted time had elapsed, she hadn't begun. Failure in this could threaten her job.

As this was the most pressing difficulty, we began tapping about it, first with the protocol for overwhelm: tapping silent rounds of the Sequence until she felt calmer. I recommended this daily, perhaps while she was spending four hours a day driving to and from her workplace.

When I asked her what happened in her body when she thought of the reports she needed to write, she said she felt 'caged', and her whole body tensed. 'I hate study,' she burst out.

'What does this body sensation remind you of?' I asked. It reminded her of her five years of intense study to gain her Master's degree, while holding down a day job as well, with overtime. In those last years she had averaged only four hours sleep a night.

*Even though I feel caged and tense when I think of writing reports, I accept and love myself deeply and completely.*

*Even though I hated and loathed those years with all that study, and I never want to do anything like that again, I love myself anyway.*

*Even though I loathe study, and why shouldn't I, I'm now bringing healing to this.*

Reminder: *Study makes me tense and I hate it.*

Marilyn's SUDS started at 10, went to 14 as she remembered more about being trapped in that grind, then went back to 10.

We continued the gentle, fast, basic EFT process. Her body relaxed, she started to look brighter, and her intensity dropped. But she still loathed study. She said, 'Thinking about those reports, I feel overwhelmed by the information I'll have to deal with,' she said. 'And "study" is connected with lots of horrible experiences at Uni, and constant fears that I would fail. My back feels sore, I feel slightly sick.'

*Even though my back is sore and I feel sick at the thought of having to write those reports, I accept myself.*

After her SUDS reached zero she said she felt a little more hopeful. I asked her what else got in the way of her doing the reports at home. 'It's easy to make interruptions, like thinking I should try and tidy the room,' she said. 'But part of me feels really reluctant to work at home. Home is for relaxing. I shouldn't be working when I'm at home.'

We took this opinion as a personal rule she would like to waive in this instance. She agreed that, logically, at home she became her own boss, choosing when and where she would

work, and that felt better than being a victim of overwork. We sketched out a time frame, requiring her to start tackling the reports the next night. But although that made good sense, she doubted she would break through her reluctance barrier.

*Even though I can't be responsible for being my own boss at home because I shouldn't bring work home with me, I am ready to let this go.*

*Even though working at home reminds me of the grind of studying for my Masters degree at night after work for five years, and that was so horrible I never want to go there again, I accept myself and I'm willing to change and have a whole new deal.*

*Even though I shouldn't bring work home with me, maybe it could be safe now to be my own boss and organise my own working hours at home.*

Reminder: *I don't want to do work at home.*

Marilyn's body was now feeling easier, but the reports still loomed threateningly. *Even though I still think that project's too hard for me, I love and accept myself anyway.* We kept on tapping away her fears and doubts, and reinforcing how good she would feel when the job was done. We uncovered and released a lot of anger at that Masters system: 'I once had to do 14 stupid exams in two weeks, on stuff that anyone could look up in a book!' *Even though I hate that unfair Masters system, I'm OK.*

Finally I saw a new gleam in her eye. 'Hey, I feel lighter,' she said, 'Would you believe I'm actually looking forward to doing reports tomorrow night?'

She was now relieved – and vitalised. She said, 'When I was twenty I used to feel curious and excited every day, about "What's life going to bring today?" Life was an adventure! Just now I felt that again, briefly! That's where I want to be.'

Ten days later, Marilyn rang me to report on the clutter issue. 'My family came over yesterday, and everything was up off the floor!

'I'm so far ahead of where I have been. It's just terrific. I feel more like I used to, when I could just rip through jobs. This is certainly working!'

And her next day's email: 'Even better! I have been working on the hardest of the reports, and it just seems simple. I am dumbfounded. Going through the research was straightforward, I could pick out useful stuff easily. And it was no stress. Yay...'

She even had a health bonus: 'Last night in bed I counted my heartbeat, and it had improved! The only thing different is EFT.'

Marilyn is continuing her sessions for a while, because she really wants to get back more of that youthful zest. She knows that we need to neutralise core events: traumas, and a list of unresolved emotional situations. But she's no longer worried about clutter taking over, because now she can clear up.

In my view, EFT -- for its effectiveness, accessibility and vast range of applications -- is one of the wonders of the modern world.

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