

# Healing Hatred

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Dr. Wayne Frederick, president of Howard University (an HBCU) and an oncological surgeon, spends his entire life working with patients and students whose lives are negatively affected by a concept he calls "weathering." A life filled with difficulties can cause adverse effects on health. If you live in ward 3 in Washington D.C., which is financially comfortable and 95 percent white, you will live an average of 87 years, he said in a recent interview. If you live in wards 7-8, which are 95 percent African American, poor and just a few miles away from ward 3, the life expectancy of an African American male is only 67-68 years.

While many factors lead to this, the constant fight that is part of a disadvantaged life shortens lifespan. While the pandemic is baring the belly on this concept, with the majority of COVID-19 fatalities emerging from lower-income and minority communities, weathering happens to many of us and is not limited to race, economics or location. It is also not limited to external variables.

## Anger and the Burden of Weathering

Former First Lady Michelle Obama, in her book *Becoming*, talks about her paternal grandfather she called Dandy. His life trajectory curve bent down by cultural and legal oppressions. While his children all became professionals, one attending Harvard University as a graduate student, his career dreams were squelched and his astute intellect underutilized professionally because Jim Crow legislation smothered his options.

Throughout her childhood, Michelle saw Dandy holding court in his home, but doing so with a continual, and understandable, outpouring of anger.

Anger is an emotion that contributes to the burden of weathering. Bearing a grudge, holding resentment, being unable to forgive - these are all expressions that connote the turmoil involved in anger that festers. What happens to anger that is continually fueled by new difficulties or that remains stubbornly inside of you? It does not dissipate or dissolve. As shared by Michelle in her memoir, it grabbed hold of her grandfather. The body constantly tries to detoxify itself, to throw anger off with harsh words, expressions of vindictiveness, abuse of loved ones, self-sabotaging behavior and, ultimately, the stench of hatred.

## The Power of Hatred

Hatred comes from a primal aspect of human nature; the same place loneliness comes from. "Loneliness is an aversive signal, much like thirst, hunger or pain," says John Cacioppo, a psychologist from the University of Chicago. It's not just an emotion; it's one of the body's language tools. Loneliness is a feeling the body uses to say what it needs to ensure survival. So is hatred.

Our species has lived in tribes for most of our existence. If you were surrounded by the tribe, you were safer. Someone had your back. You were less likely to be attacked by strangers and to die alone. Survival instinct designed loneliness to feel so bad that you would do whatever had to be done to make sure you didn't feel it. It inspired you to surround yourself with "safe people."

But when surrounded by enemies, you needed a feeling strong enough to motivate you to kill in order to keep your own life. That is *hatred*.

Nelson Mandela became famous for not feeling or acting upon hatred in a situation that absolutely justified his doing so. Martin Luther King Junior built the 1960s civil rights movement on Mahatma Ghandi's anti-hatred, non-violence methodologies. These men had the power to go against animal nature, to rise above "understandable" feelings of hatred, and the whole world recognized their achievements. People do this every day. *Hatred can be overcome*.

### Barriers to Healing Hatred

Unfortunately, aspects of our current national dialogue support unbridled expressions of anger and the strengthening of identity through hatred. When children are fed beliefs that hatred of the "other" people, those of different religions, ideologies, ages or colors, is moral, healthy and justified, how can we as practitioners combat that for the sake of our patients' and society's well-being and health?

Being able to define who was in your tribe and who wasn't kept you alive. But who is in your patient's tribe now? Who is "we" and who is "them"?

In cultures that are not successful at processing anger/hatred effectively, those in which liver *chi* struggles against gravity as sap pushes up the trunk of its tree, what can we do to help our patients heal shameful, yet increasingly socially acceptable hatred?

### Support the Wood Element

Hatred is the result of many factors, including weathering. Research also shows that trauma from past generations gets passed down genetically and expresses itself in the person on the treatment table before you. Drugs that effect the wood element, such as sugar, marijuana, alcohol and coffee, are being instinctively used to disperse *chi* stagnation and its symptoms, including hatred. But these self-medication efforts are done in such unsophisticated ways and with explosive quantities that cause them to backfire, creating overstimulating/sedating side effects.

In addition, the pandemic has created global uncertainty, the enemy of the wood element. The liver / gallbladder must have a plan. It is the engine behind our organizational capacity; the key to our understanding of structure, method and differentiation. If there is no plan, no clear channels for sap to push upward, outward and into the tiniest leaves, the tree will die.

How can we help patients cope when the globe is struggling to make a plan that will feed, house and keep its inhabitants working, paid and alive?

We can always support the wood element. If its *chi* is stuck, hot, cold, full, empty, or swirling in a *bi* syndrome, we can support the body into gentle movement. Movement urges anger/hatred to flow out through appropriate expressions. It allows common sense and "lovingkindness" to find its way to the surface of thought and behavior.

Movement urges intuition to remind us when we are safe, when we are not and to note the difference. Is a wood element-supportive acupuncture or herbal treatment only a tiny step for a hate-filled patient? Yes. If administered repeatedly, could it make a substantial difference in their world view and rage, even if they are not aware that you are addressing this issue? Yes. The nervous system wishes to unwind, to utilize its parasympathetic nature. You can help that happen.

Healing Hatred: Let Our Medicine Inspire

We spend more money medically during the last year of life than on prevention over a lifetime. What would it do for our GDP and the satisfaction level of society as a whole if more money were put to illness prevention?, Dr. Frederick asks. That is another thing we can do. We can prevent illness. We can dissipate toxic stillness, stubbornness and hatred, and we can remind the body that hatred has a very specific purpose: survival against life-threatening attack. And as harsh as the weathering may be, the gentleness of this medicine inspires, without the need for conversation or intellect; the sweet softness of life's innocence to express itself.

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