



I'm able to see that taking it less personally has helped me reframe



By Eve Menezes Cunningham



When I drafted this, there was a part of me that wanted to curl up into a ball, unable to deal with the repeat of a situation I thought I'd never have to deal with again.

This part felt far from resourceful. Instead, I felt scared, small and afraid.

I was aware that there's more to me than this and I can access my resources but I almost didn't want to. And then I remembered how much I grew from the last situation. How I became more resilient than I believed I could ever be.

Watching an interview with Essex gardening pioneer Beth Chatto helped me start reframing it. She talked about it being *fun* to turn what could be a problem into an advantage. Fun!

Chatto is credited with transforming the way we garden by working with what is and finding plants that will thrive in the conditions of your particular garden.

So obvious. I mean, why would anyone attempt to impose their will on nature? And yet that was exactly what I was doing with my situation. Expending an enormous amount of energy wishing I could control something that is out of my control.

How might it be with my situation if instead of sighing 'thank you Universe for yet another lesson to learn', I were to actually mean it? To meditate on

what this lesson means for me today? To recognise how although it's triggering in some ways, it also shows how far I've come in others? Spoiler alert: much more resourceful than my efforts to resist had been.

I'm aware that something might pull me back into the helplessness I felt later on today but, so far, this reframing is helping me take things less personally.

Adopting the Chatto approach, while taking practical steps to resolve the unpleasant situation, I'm also doing my best to see it as an opportunity to develop even more resilience.

It's forcing me to assert myself more strongly, to deal with the painful feelings that brings up for me and to continue to have my own back. It's also giving me practice at reaching out to others for support (something I couldn't do when younger and still hate doing).

When you mentally scan your whole life, especially for things that make you go 'Grrr', what stands out? We live in a time where 'positive thinking' is almost tyrannical. We feel *guilty* when we have genuine human emotions and reactions that we (or others) judge to be negative. If you allow yourself, just for a few minutes, to deal with what is, how does that feel? As queen of affirmations Louise Hay says, to clean house, you have to be able to see the dirt. It's not about denial.

Have you ever dealt with this kind of issue in the past? With hindsight being 20/20, what did you learn from that previous situation? How did it make you stronger / wiser / whatever?

Can you future pace and imagine Future You looking back at today's you – with compassion, curiosity, support and kindness – helping you reframe today's situation?

For those times where it's too soon to reframe but you can simply acknowledge that something old has emerged for healing with this recurrent issue, how might you better support yourself through it?

Do you need to fight on this second? Might a chat with a loved one help you access your resourcefulness? Maybe a hot bath or a trip to your favourite woods or gallery? What do you need to boost you to the point where you, like Chatto, can see obstacles as opportunities to get playful and creative? As fun!

Coming back to this draft a week later, I'm able to see that taking it less personally has helped me reframe. I'm taking all the necessary practical steps. But I'm no longer wondering why this kind of thing keeps happening to me. I'm attempting to channel my inner Angelina Jolie in Tomb Raider where, no matter the obstacle, she simply smiled a little as if to say, 'Bring it on. This will be fun.' ●