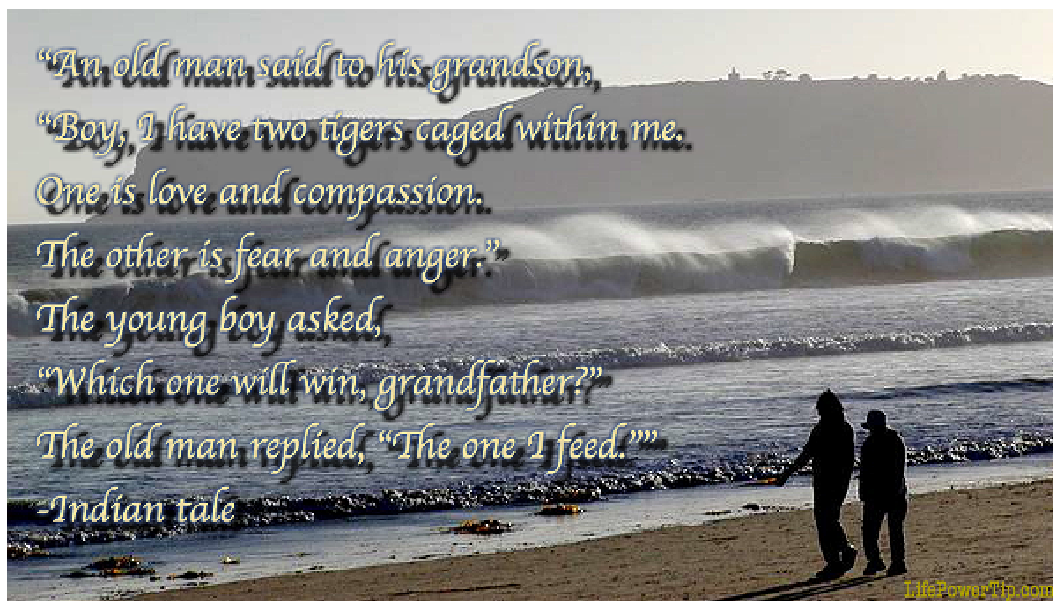


## Two Caged Tigers



*An old man said to his grandson, "Boy, I have two tigers caged within me. One is love and compassion. The other is fear and anger." The young boy asked, "Which one will win, grandfather?" The old man replied, "The one I feed." -Indian tale*

When we're in an intimate relationship, we can be continually surprised. Some surprises are for the better - candle light dinner, your partner doubled their income this year, spur-of-the-moment romantic getaways, and the inspired moments of being whisked away to the bedroom. It makes us tingle when we think about those precious things our loved ones do for us.

Then, there are those "other" surprises: Surprise! I'm mad at you. Surprise! Why don't you ever listen

to me? Surprise! The high monthly credit card bill. Surprise! I'm tired, had a long day, and the house is a mess. Didn't you do anything today? It's easy to get caught up in the "other surprises" that are fueled with anger and fear, forgetting the love and compassion the relationship is built upon. How does that happen? How do anger and fear seem to be unruly and how can love and compassion remain caged? The ancient Indian Tale about the two caged tigers points to the answer.

There are two tigers caged within. One of the tigers carries a destructive nature that's ready to pounce on the weak. This tiger is powerful and vibrant. It offers a direct path to getting what we want, whether that's a position of power or needing to be right. We know this tiger is destructive. If left out of the cage for too long, the tiger can ruin relationships and rule our life with fear.

The other tiger is the merciful one. This tiger is meek and mild, seeing things through the eyes love and compassion. This tiger roams gracefully, bringing communities together, giving from the heart and willingly receiving love. A symbiotic relationship of giving and receiving is the merciful tiger's main goal. This tiger is our friend and partners with us to give a fulfilling life.

The problem is *not* that we cannot choose which tiger to unleash; the *real problem* is that we cannot tame the destructive tiger. We've tried in the past by neglecting the tiger, chaining the tiger to the

cage and stuffing the tiger in the basement. We don't give the tiger any food, water, or love. We hope that if we ignore the destructive tiger and forget about it, eventually it will come to its senses and be under our control.

Even though we might lock the destructive tiger away, it's still consuming our attention. We cannot give enough time and attention to the tiger who is merciful, loving, and compassionate because the thought of the destructive tiger breaking out and being destructive, still exists.

One moment we're enjoying a nice cup of tea with the loving and compassionate tiger then, in the next, we find ourself attending to and punishing our destructive tiger. We know in our heart that both tigers cannot be together in the same room.

### **Which tiger will win?**

The one that wins, whether it's fear and anger or love and compassion, depends on where we focus our attention.

Energy flows where attentions goes. Splitting our attention between two tigers doesn't work. *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."* The reality is that we disapprove of the fear and anger, and *want* to encourage love and compassion. Hating, neglecting, and punishing

the destructive tiger to get rid of it is fueling resistance with resistance. The destructive tiger or “mammon” grows. What needs to happen if you want to serve love and compassion in your relationships are two things:

1. Love and accept the angry, destructive tiger within us.
2. Focus our attention on becoming more loving and compassionate.

Both of those help us to go beyond fear, anger, or any destructive patterns within us, and to operate with love.

## **Love and Accept the Destructive Tiger**

Huh? Are you kidding me? Why would we accept and love a destructive tiger that has caused so much pain and fear in our relationships? We do this because, what fear and anger really want is to be loved and embraced. For example, many families have one child who pushes the sanity and well-being of the parents. The “rebel child” of those families may not be mean by nature, nonetheless he/she rebels, disobeys the rules and rarely wants to listen. So what are the parents to do? Keep punishing the child, restrict his or her’s liberties and “make them” respect the parents, right? All that does is keep driving the child away from personal connection. Feeding fear with fear only manifests more fear and further dysfunction.

What “bad” children want is to be loved and embraced. They want to be seen for who they are and their uniqueness in the world, they lack clarity on how to express themselves in a positive way. The more we push our values and beliefs on the child, the further away from love and compassion we both go.

To create better functioning, intimate relationships based in love requires us to accept and embrace the negative, dysfunctional, energies of anger and fear. Awareness of, and paying attention to, our feelings, noticing the moments when we’re in a place of anger or fear, is the first step to having our attention serve love and compassion. Allow yourself to drink in the anger and fear by becoming one with it. No need to do anything with it right now. Only notice and pay attention to the visceral feelings in the body, observing how anger and fear play out.

Allow space for these apparently negative emotions to exist. We don’t have to create space because if anger and fear exist, the space is already there holding those feelings.

Your job is to notice the space. With the noticing and embodiment of space, the charge around anger, fear, or any other “destructive tiger” will be released. The ability to choose whether anger and/or fear is appropriate and resourceful for the moment becomes visible. If those energies are not

appropriate, we can drop anger and fear and choose something else, such as love.

## **Choosing Love and Compassion**

When we allow space for anger, fear, and any other negative feeling to exist, they transcend themselves and transmute into love and compassion. With space and awareness comes choice. We can redirect our attention to what we really want in that moment: Love and compassion. A simple reminder can point us in the direction of love and compassion in any moment: "Is love available in this moment?" That pointer is not meant to be answered. Simply, when asked, it opens up your heart to receive what it's thirsting for i.e. love, compassion, peace, unity.

Try it next time a heated argument comes up. First, be aware of any negative energy, such as anger, manifesting within. Silently ask the question, "Is love available in this moment?" Be still. Be silent. Pay attention to the aliveness of your inner body and heart. Rather than acting out anger, other choices become visible. Maybe being angry is not appropriate, so you drop it. Maybe compassionate anger is what's needed in certain situations. Maybe what's needed is our presence and the opening of our heart.

We all carry within us, two caged tigers. One tiger has the potential to be destructive and resonates with anger and fear. The other tiger has the potential to fill us with love and compassion.

The tiger that we let loose depends on where we place our conscious attention. Energy flows where attention goes. If our attention is consumed by neglecting and pushing away negativity, fear, and anger, we become and manifest those qualities. When those negative qualities arise and we love and accept them, we're fueling life with love and compassion. New dimensions open up and the choice of responding with love and compassion, in any chosen moment, becomes available. Ask often, "Is love available in this moment?"

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