One of the most common factors that lead to a lot of the problematic behaviors that our consumers display is their lack of their ability to tolerate frustration. Combined with the fact that they have poor emotional control, a lack of problem-solving skills, poor communication, poor cognition, and of the deficits; poor frustration-tolerance leads to quick negative reactions when things do not go their way. I have chosen two of my favorite articles from the internet to share a closer look into how frustration tolerance plays an important role in our consumers’ behaviors—and ours. I hope you find it informative— Jason Hoffrogge, Training Director

Things must be the way I want them to be - otherwise life will be intolerable.

From: http://www.rational.org.nz/public/BeliefsQuestionnaire/index2.htm

We all want life to be organized according to our preferences. This surely makes sense! What then is the problem? Unfortunately, we often go beyond just wanting - we believe that things must be our way. This reflects a human tendency called 'low frustration-tolerance'.

I suspect that this tendency is one of the most common, underlying causes of distress in human beings. Paradoxically, it seems to be the one of which people are most unconscious! A concept developed by psychologist Albert Ellis, low frustration-tolerance (LFT) arises from believing that frustration is unbearable and therefore must be avoided at all costs.

What is low frustration-tolerance?

Low frustration-tolerance (LFT) is caused by catastrophising about being frustrated and demanding that it not happen. It is based on beliefs like:

- ‘The world owes me contentment and happiness.’
- ‘Things should be as I want them to be, and I can’t stand it when they are not.’
- ‘It is intolerable to be frustrated, so I must avoid it at all costs.’
- ‘Other people should not do things that frustrate me.’

LFT is closely related to low discomfort-tolerance (LDT), which arises from catastrophising about discomfort (including the discomfort of negative emotions), with an internal demand that it be avoided. The two types are similar and closely related. Frustration is uncomfortable, and discomfort is frustrating. Often one expression is used to refer to both types.

Low frustration-tolerance arises from demands that things be as we want, usually coupled with awfulising and discomfort-intolerance when this does not happen.

The problem with low frustration-tolerance

Low frustration-tolerance creates distress in many ways:

- Anxiety results when people believe that they should or must get what they want (and not get what they don’t want), and that it is awful and unbearable (rather than merely inconvenient or disadvantageous) when things don’t happen as they ‘must’.
- Short-range enjoyment, a common human tendency, is the seeking of immediate pleasure or avoidance of pain, at the cost of long-term stress. Examples include such things as alcohol, drug and food abuse; watching television at the expense of exercising; practicing unsafe sex; or overspending to avoid feeling deprived.
- Addictive tendencies. Low frustration-tolerance is a key factor in the development of addictions. To resist the impulse of the moment and go without is ‘too frustrating’. It seems easier to give in to the urge to misuse alcohol, take drugs, gamble, or exercise obsessively.
• Negativity and complaining. Low frustration-tolerance may cause you to become distressed over small hindrances and setbacks, overconcerned with unfairness, and prone to make comparisons between your own and others’ circumstances. Negativity tends to alienate others, with the loss of their support.

• Anger. LFT leads to hostile anger when someone does something you dislike, or fails to give you what you want.

The alternative: high frustration-tolerance

High frustration-tolerance means accepting the reality of frustration and keeping its badness in perspective.

To accept frustration is to acknowledge that, while you may dislike it, there is no Law of the Universe says you ‘should’ be exempt from it (though you may prefer to be). You expect to experience appropriate negative emotions like annoyance and disappointment. But you avoid exaggerating these emotions (by telling yourself you can’t stand them) into depression, hostile anger, hurt, or self-pity.

Changing what you tell yourself about frustration

See the list of typical frustration-intolerance thoughts below. Alongside each is a more realistic alternative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frustration-intolerance</th>
<th>Realistic Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is awful and intolerable to be frustrated from having things the way I want.</td>
<td>If I tell myself that frustration is awful, I’ll only set myself up to get anxious when I think it’s coming - and bitter and twisted when it does happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t stand it when people don’t act as they should.</td>
<td>I don’t like it, but I can survive it - and survive better when I don’t lose my cool over it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My circumstances have to be right for life to be tolerable.</td>
<td>It is disappointing when things aren’t the way I’d like them to be, but it is not awful — and I can stand less than the ideal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I can’t stand being frustrated, I must avoid it at all costs.</td>
<td>Total avoidance would mean a very restricted life. Though I don’t like frustration, I can tolerate it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to raise your tolerance for frustration

• Know when you are engaging in LFT behavior. Keep a log of such behavior for several weeks or longer. Watch for things like overusing drugs or alcohol, compulsive gambling, shopping, exercising, or binging on food, losing your temper.

• The technique of exposure is an important way to increase your tolerance. Make a list of things to which you typically overreact - situations, events, risks and so on. Commit yourself to face at least one of these each day. Instead of trying to get away from the frustration as you normally would, stay with the frustration until it diminishes of its own accord. You might, for instance, go without desserts for a while, have two beers instead of four, leave the children's toys on the floor, or the like.

• Another useful technique is rational self-analysis. Analyze your frustration - while you are feeling it, if possible, otherwise, as soon as possible afterwards.

• Other techniques you may find helpful are rational cards, the catastrophe scale, and reframing.
Low Frustration Tolerance Breeds Anger

Vijai P. Sharma, Ph.D – From http://www.mindpub.com/art129.htm

Here is a recipe from the "Book of Stewing." The meat for the recipe is, "I must be accepted and appreciated by everyone for everything I do." Mix it with the batter of, "You must always support me and put me above everyone and everything else. Spoil me without expecting anything from me in return." Sprinkle it with a seasoning of, "All circumstances must be exactly the way I want them and if they are not, my life is terrible, you're terrible, and this place is terrible." These three ingredients, when mixed, will automatically turn on the "pressure cooker." Stew and seethe it all day long. Note that stewing and seething will be often accompanied by "internal fire-works" that will heat the produce to a "raging" temperature: A kitchen where this recipe is cooked drives everyone away except the Chef. Later, the heat gets unbearable even for the Chef.

The name of this recipe is "Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT)." People who use this recipe as their staple diet stay mad with themselves, others, and the world: Why? Because, no one can always be accepted or appreciated. No one can always agree with us or approve everything we do. Circumstances don't always favor us. Events do turn out to be opposite of what we anticipate, at one time or the other. I don't know if it's the same case with you, but in my case, the Universe always forgets to consult me about my preferences.

We don't have to like everything that happens to us, but we can accept it. Looking at the big picture helps us to accept a lot of things that are difficult to swallow or hard to digest. We don't achieve big successes unless we fail a few times, muscles can't be strengthened if we do not exercise them against resistance, and we don't heal without experiencing the pain. "To heal it, you have to feel it."

Quick and frequent anger often results from LFT. A person with LFT doesn't tolerate anything blocking the path of his or her desire; thus the thought, "I should(or must) get what I want." If that doesn't happen, LFT person can't stand himself or herself. Such an inflexible demand leads to another equally inflexible and irrational one, "You should(or must) give me what I want." If people don't, LFT person can't stand them. When the path of LFT person meets even a little resistance, the fuse goes off immediately and automatically. Understanding the big picture raises our frustration tolerance.

LFT people justify their angry outbursts. Their misconceptions about the function of anger are as follows:

1. "I have every right to be angry." Check your assumption very carefully. What will happen if everyone decides to exercise their "right" at the same time? Can you imagine the amount of dirt that will fly in the sky from all the erupting volcanoes all at the same time?

2. "It's good to take it off my chest. I shouldn't hold it in" Careful! If your anger gets out of control, you might end up feeling worse, upset the person who bore the brunt of your anger, and add more "knots" and "tangles" to the problem.

3. "I should let them know exactly how I feel." Okay, but how do you let them know? Without any tact or diplomacy, just plain let them have it? If others sense you are hostile to them, they try to protect themselves and tune you out. Overcoming their hurt and nursing their wounds may occupy them totally. If you express your feelings by hurling insults and profanities at other people, they don't want to know or care how you feel. Remember, when people know you care about them, they care about knowing how you feel. When angry, and acting as if you don't care, the only thing they learn about you is that you are destructive and don't care about the person you are hurting.

4. "If I don't scream and yell, I won't be heard. Loud doesn't get heard here, so I will speak louder" The fact is that people begin to stop listening once the other person yells, snarls, or tries to win by the lung power. Instead of listening, he or she may start overshouting and retaliating.
5. "You made me angry and now you have to pay for it. I have to punish you." Punishment and revenge are parts of destructive anger. They don't have a place in constructive anger. Punishment and revenge create a negative chain effect of more pain, more anger, more punishment and revenge. Whatever goes around, comes around. If one sows belladonna (a poisonous plant), at the next harvest one reaps nothing else but belladonna.

To maintain satisfactory relationships at home and work, raise your frustration tolerance. LFT can take the joy out of any relationship, no matter how deep and forgiving that relationship is. Anger is not just about hurting and destroying, it can be about creating. Create a change in the conditions that cause anger. Change yourself. Use the energy that anger creates for a positive change rather than "attacking" the other person. Where there is "rage," let there be "annoyance." Annoyance, you can make use of. Rage, you can only regret.