Take Control of Your Emotional Health
Part Four.



What Does It Mean to be Emotionally Reactive?

Create a mental picture yourself, imagine being out on a nice stroll. It's a beautiful evening and the sunset is revealing lovely blue and pink hues. Then, all the sudden, while passing a neighbor's yard, an enormous dog comes storming up to the fence, running back and forth and barking aggressively. This is what it is like when being emotionally reactive.

People are flooded with feelings and emotions all day long. And for some of us, when we see something, we really dislike or goes against our personal values, we react somewhat aggressively. It's an unconscious delivery and already in motion and often before we even have a chance to get control.

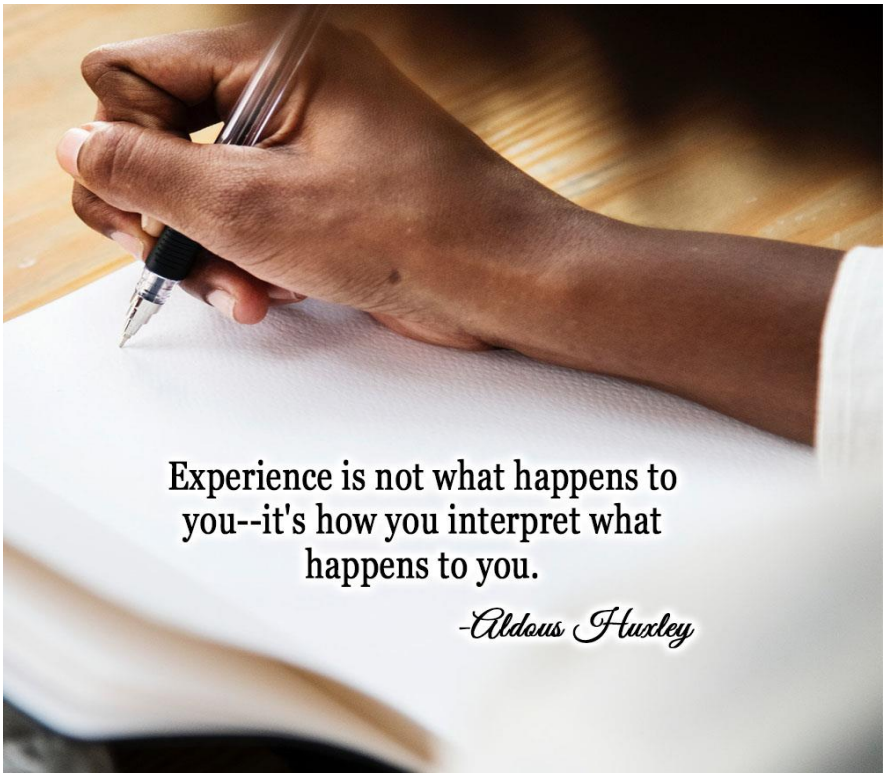
This type of reaction inevitably causes much more strife than it's worth. Being held captive to our emotions is akin to a slippery slope, and is not just limited to issues such as road rage and controversial conversations.

Emotionally reactive people oftentimes have outbursts with their loved ones, friends or work colleagues. It certainly doesn't elicit intelligence. In fact, it's a terrible weakness and unhealthy for mind, body and spirit.



Techniques to Control an Emotionally Reactive Response

It is never easy to gain control and become master your emotions, but it is certainly worth the effort. Being emotionally reactive is a real hindrance to basic communication skills. For example, in today's world, it can be incredibly hard to interpret the meaning and tone behind texts and emails.



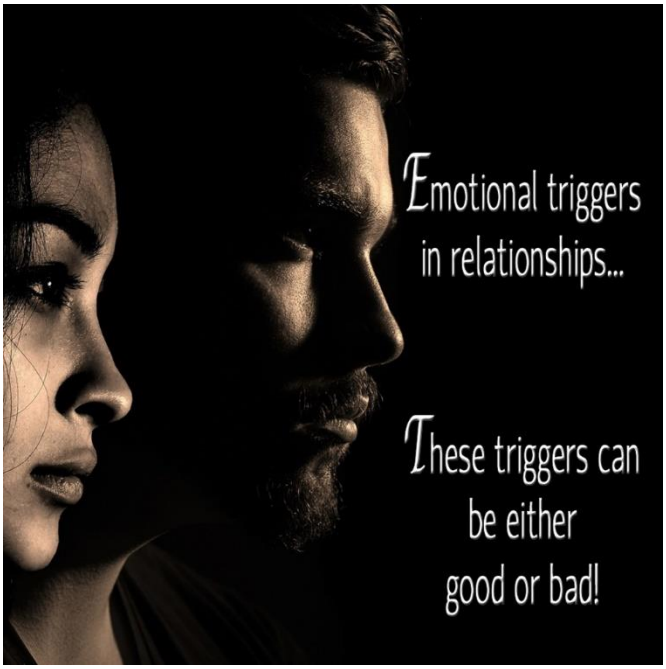
The following techniques are helpful in gaining emotional control and learning to practice proactivity, rather than reactivity.

Inquire, Don't Accuse

In normal circumstances, when an emotionally reactive response is about to take place, there is an unintentional misunderstanding, or one simply feels attacked. Before the reaction try being mindful, ask questions and seek clarification. Be curious about the true meaning or intention of the circumstance. Assuming you already know the answers is dangerous territory. So, don't be afraid to ask and get clarity. It could save face and prevent personal regret and an apology later.

Remember, It's <u>Not Always About YOU!</u>

Taking things personally is an emotional trigger for many people. This is usually centered around low self-esteem and ego battling another for control.
Before any type of reaction, take long deep breaths and count to 10 then decide if this is really about you or is it the other person is dumping their own emotional baggage. We will all experience a 'bad day' at some point and it is worth remembering that other people do as well. Those bad days can result in bitterness and hell-raising outbursts.



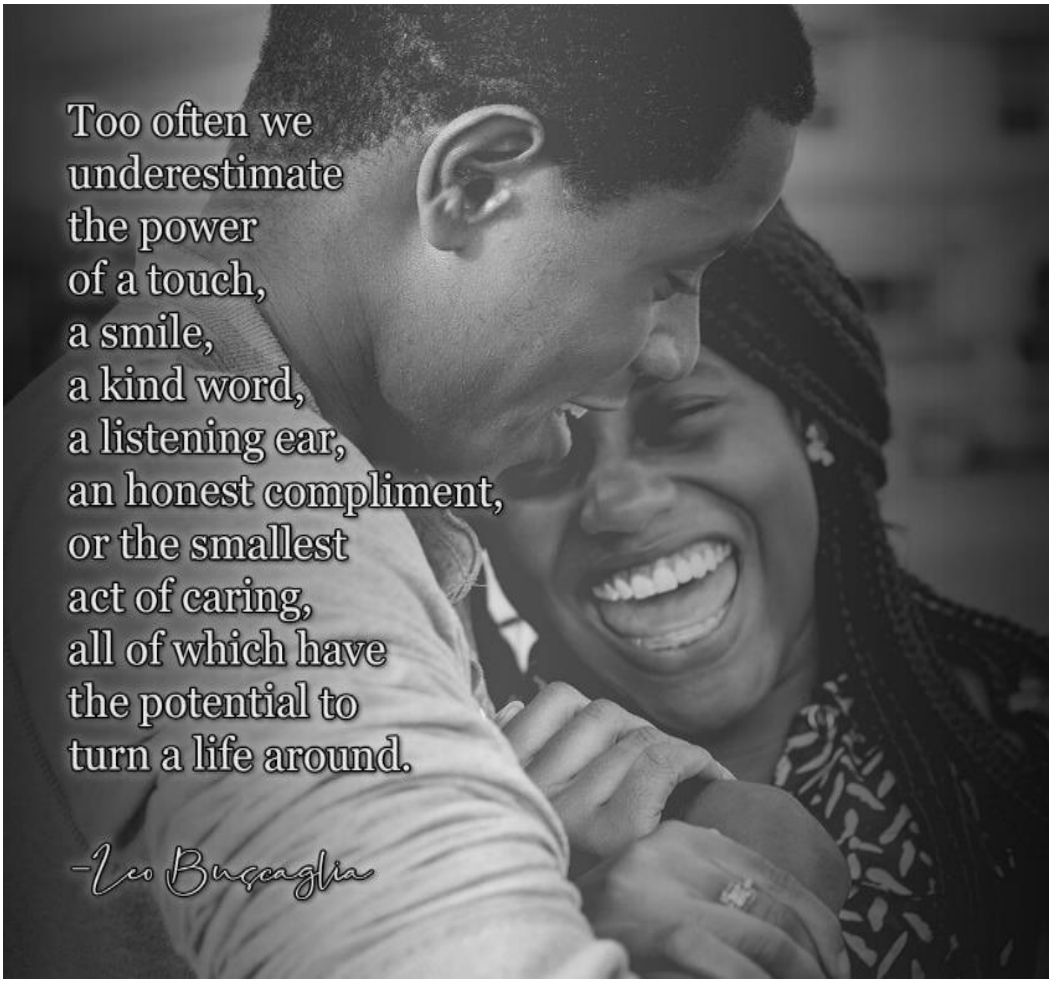
Loosen Up

When your mind is uptight, so is your body, it becomes tense and ready for the 'fight or flight' response. You can counteract this response by taking a few seconds to consciously relax your posture (including your facial expression) and subsequently lower your heart rate before responding. A lot of people, when feeling threatened, cross their arms and grit their teeth. Try some deep breathing exercises and/or visualize a calm and soothing place. This simple technique not only loosens up the body, but also gives the brain time to prepare an alternate response.

Validate the Other Person

Try to remember that by controlling your response, you can take the heat out of an argument or disagreement by using a process of validation. When heated discussions arise the easiest way to redirect another person, is to validate their stance. Use compassion and empathy to achieve a greater understanding of their perspective. We are unlikely to always agree with everyone else, so emotional confrontation is inevitable at some point.

Do refrain from immediately attacking their opinion or viewpoint. Instead take the time to thank someone for their input and use phrases like ***"I appreciate your theory"*** or ***"I love how passionate you are about this subject".*** It's generally nigh on impossible to argue with someone who agrees.



Is It Worth It?

When we are emotionally reactive, our thought processes are mostly illogical, we are simply not thinking clearly… just responding.
Consider the circumstance or person evoking this emotional turmoil.

- ***Is it really worth it?***
- ***Is this person worth it?***
- ***Is this so important?***
- ***Are the consequences worthwhile?***

Many times, overreacting is second nature and the repercussions aren't considered until it's too late. Losing control rarely outweighs clear thinking and deliberate responses.



Write it Out!

Another way of dealing with negative emotional responses is to write it down. Whether it's in a journal or just a piece of paper with a pros and cons list, it really doesn't matter. When the emotions are in black and white and reread, it becomes so much easier to identify and reframe an untoward response.

Before hastily replying to a text or email that has angered you, practice creating a draft text first - hit the 'backspace key' over and over again until you have formed the perfect measured reply. Whilst we are not in control of another's intentions; we are certainly in control of how we choose to interpret things and our responses.

Perhaps the best part of reframing responses and avoiding emotionally reactive retorts is in the change we initiate in others. When people are treated with respect and feel understood, their disposition is a much more pleasant experience than when they feel under attack.



We hope you have enjoyed this article on improving your Emotional Health. In Part Five, we will look at how you can control and overcome Emotional Sensitivity! In the meantime, I wish you every success on your life's journey!

Until Next Time / ... ***Jonathan.***