

Lesson 1: Emotional Detriggering

Reading

Every interaction and every thought we've ever had comes with an emotional residue that stays with us – consciously or unconsciously. These experiences make up who we are and they are to be treasured, but the residue is... residual. These built-up leftovers form invisible emotional triggers lying in wait to be tripped in the future. This is how personal trauma can trigger us at professionally, even when we try to suppress it.

*Emotional triggers cause us to unconsciously respond to others or situations
in ways that are at a minimum unhelpful – and at most, damaging –
to the situation, ourselves and the others involved.*

Sometimes this emotional trigger is useful for a time – to protect us from something or someone specific – but eventually we don't need it any more. Yet often we don't know how to let it go.

*Let go of that which you no longer need so you can
direct your energy at using and acquiring what you need now!*

This release process is a personal one. You'll have a clue that the trigger is "gone" when you feel less emotionally vulnerable to unconscious emotional reactions, and you'll *know* it's gone when someone trips the trigger and it doesn't go off. Instead you're able to respond in ways that are clear-minded and clear-hearted.

This process never ends because you can only release what you're ready to let go of right now. More will be ready to go later, once this one you're dealing with now is gone.

The goal is not to let go of everything at once, but to let go of what is no longer serving you *in this moment* – and to integrate the practice of release into your life habitually so that it causes less stress and brings you more joy, more often.

Emotional Freedom

One of the foundational aspects of our personal power is emotional freedom, specifically, our freedom to experience the world, our business, careers, others and ourselves *as they are and as we are*, free of the litany of conscious and unconscious fears, judgments and thoughts that often form a distorting haze around our self-perception and our interactions with others. When we go about our life surrounded by these distortions we are vulnerable to being triggered unconsciously

by others who say and do things that ignite something in our distortion field. Before you know it, we're reacting unconsciously, with emotions that are obscuring what's really going on and making it difficult, if not impossible, to be a positive, leading force in the interaction.

When you're reacting to the distortions of things going on around you, you'll easily attribute incorrect motivations to people or--even if you're correct--allowing others to shift you out of your own power to make them feel more powerful.

If you're not reacting to reality when you're triggered then what are you reacting to? You're reacting to your own fear and imaginings. And in reacting to these shadows created by the situation, instead of reacting to the situation itself, you lose power in that situation. You lose the ability to react to what is *actually* happening.

Each of us is unique and we each carry different distortions and triggers around. These trigger points often "light up" in some situations, with some people, and not with others, making it confusing to figure out what is really "the issue". You'll know you're lit up when you feel emotionally "punched in the stomach" or mentally muddled about how to respond. There is one root cause behind this kind of reaction. Fear. And fear often masquerades as anxiety.

The core opposite of Fear is Freedom. Fear lies beneath anger and guilt and it causes you to limit your freedom of choice. Because you feel afraid you self-censor and withhold your power unnecessarily. It causes you to become too attached to the things keeping you in fear. Fear is often unconscious, creating reactions that you were trained to have even before you had memories. Opening yourself to the fear can make you feel helpless and further sap your power, if you don't do it in a structured and safe environment.

*We're all so well trained in our fears
that most of us don't even know what it feels like not to have them.*

Freedom is not fearlessness; it is non-judgment and non-attachment. Freedom from fear feels like being in a neutral place where all responses are possible and it just a matter of choosing how you want to react.

Freedom means seeing what is for what it is before deciding how to treat it.

This does not mean that you can't express opinions, reactions, attachments or judgments; it simply means that such reactions are not automatic, kneejerk and unconscious. They are considered, thoughtful, conscious and generated from a place of non-judgment and non-attachment.

The Out-of-Power Dynamic

Emotional distortions and triggers-in-waiting shift us out of our personal power because we can never be sure what we're really reacting to, whether it's real or perceived and whether we're weighing the facts realistically.

Often we can't tell if our reactions are appropriate to the situation – until after we've expressed them, often this is too late! Sometimes we question ourselves and act with unnecessary hesitation. Other times we overreact and cause others to question our judgment and discernment. Often we have regrets at our reactions after we come to see things more clearly.

Non-Judgment

Judging a thing inhibits your power to see it and understand it.

Our brains categorize and label things automatically and naturally. It's part of what makes we humans capable of consciousness. It's a good skill, but it can limit you unless you learn to manage it. Naming and labeling have great power to shove things into buckets where your trained--unconscious--reactions to things can take over. This means that putting good/bad and right/wrong labels on things can blind you from seeing important information. It is best not to label anything in judgment until you are sure you understand all dimensions of the situation, including the impact that such labels will have--on you and on others.

Thoughts and feelings have a powerful effect whether they are spoken or not. When you look at things from a place of non-judgment, instead of calling something "bad" you'd say it's "unhelpful or misaligned," and you'd call "good" things "helpful and aligned." Even when you don't apply the good/bad labels, out of politeness or political correctness, sometimes you still *think and feel* them, and in experiencing them you create the same emotional distortion as if you'd shouted it from the roof. Don't confuse hiding your feelings with having them. People are excellent subconscious judges of others' reactions and if you're feeling it, then it *is* impacting your interactions.

Although this may seem like a slight shift in vocabulary, the difference between "bad" and "unhelpful" can be the difference between labeling someone "bad" and creating an enemy (who acts accordingly) or calling someone "misaligned" and creating an ally (who didn't realize they were being "unhelpful" and adjusts to align with you).

In general, it's best to save good/bad and right/wrong labels to use in very limited circumstances and precisely because you want to create a specific reaction. While there is certainly a place for morality--and the labels that go with it--for the vast majority of human interaction we experience in our daily and business lives, these labels are... unhelpful.

Non-Attachment

*Attachment to the outcome of a situation puts your power at risk
in the event that your desired outcome is not reached.*

Emotional freedom also feels like being unattached to any specific outcome from a situation in order to retain your power in that situation. This is a tricky concept that even the most emotionally intelligent people have to work at constantly. Why? Because our brains are wired to attach to things from the moment we're born--first and foremost our parents, most of who were not free of fear, judgment or attachment either. The journey of human development is, in fact, the adventure of creating a series of attachments as we grow and become who we are going to be in adulthood.

However, emotional maturity becomes the journey of shedding attachments that no longer serve us, establishing new ones, using non-attachment to be open to the best solution and choosing our own thoughts and actions consciously.

InPower non-attachment is possible when you accept that many of the things that will determine the outcome are outside of your conscious control and that no matter what the outcome is, you will have choices--in your power--about how to react to it.

If you can participate in integrity, learning from the situation so that you emerge from the other side as a more complete, skilled and experienced leader, then regardless of what actually happens, you will have been successful at staying in your personal power.

You can often recognize looking backwards-- with "40/40 hindsight"--that this is the case in all kinds of situations. For example, how many times have you emerged from a personal "disaster" that seemed like a total failure and yet, after the fact, gave you the tools you used to create future successes? You can use 40/40 hindsight (i.e., retelling the story of failure as a story of success after the disaster has passed) to detach from the "failure" so you can get on with your life and use what you've learned. Cultivating an attitude on non-attachment just means that you develop and practice this perspective *before* the conclusion of the situation. *Non-attachment is developing "40/40 foresight" so that even when you can't see how it will end, you have faith that no matter what the result is, you'll be able to learn from it and move on.*

Non-Attachment is NOT Non-Caring

We can care about an outcome – and be committed to its success – and yet withhold from it the power over us to make us miserable. Part of this comes from having a personal concept of success for the outcome, which is not contingent on actions from the outside world.

For example, let's say you want badly to run a new project, but you know that someone else will decide who gets the project lead role. Making your definition of success contingent on your being selected makes you vulnerable to factors you don't fully understand or control like (a) who else steps up, (b) the decision-maker's beliefs about you and the project's needs – or (c) random things like the possibility that the decision-maker's boss owes someone a favor and gives them the role as a thank you.

You can care about the outcome, i.e., want the job, but be unattached to the outcome and protect yourself from emotional vulnerability by deciding that you will feel successful if you present yourself well in the process and gain the respect of the decision-maker(s). This is the kind of success you can take responsibility for, throw your energy towards accomplishing, and declare yourself successful if you achieve it, regardless of who gets the job. This kind of non-attachment will also help you get the job!

Set Your Intention

*My thoughts, conscious and unconscious, are my own;
They reflect non-judgment of reality and non-attachment to outcomes.*

Exercise: What Are Your Triggers?

Answer the questions below to become more aware of the specific individuals and situations that tend to trigger you. At the end of this exercise you'll choose one situation or person to practice Detriggering with this week. Turn this sheet over and use the back if you want to list out more.

PEOPLE: Make of the list of the people in your life you would prefer to avoid because they so frequently make you feel angry, anxious or vulnerable:

| Person | How They Make Me Feel |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>e.g., J Smith</i> | <i>He makes me anxious & I always say something stupid</i> |
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SITUATIONS: Make of the list of the most common situations in your life that make you feel angry, anxious or vulnerable:

| Situation | How It Makes Me Feel |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>e.g., Present to the board</i> | <i>I'm so afraid to screw up, I stammer & feel sick</i> |
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THIS WEEK'S FOCUS: Choose a person or situation above that you are facing in the next 3-4 days, which you will use to practice Detriggering. If you don't already have a suitable situation coming up, how can you create one that will allow you to learn this technique? Feel free to choose a timely event that is less upsetting but still challenging to you.

| Person/Situation | How It Makes Me Feel |
|------------------|----------------------|
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