

Grant Us Peace

Kathy Ann Ward, M.A, LPC, CSAC

Respond not react. It is what we are encouraged to do to cope effectively with relationship conflict. The desire is to respond calmly, with a clear mind. Instead, there are those times we react in anger, followed by regret. So what is the secret to managing emotions during conflict?

Emotions 101

Some feelings (primary) are “hardwired” while other emotions (secondary) are created. Primary emotions tend to be short lived, while secondary feelings, which are reactions to primary emotions, involve our thoughts and beliefs about what happened. It is the secondary feelings that tend to linger and cause the most discomfort. However, they are also the kind that we can learn to regulate.

First think about a recent conflict you had at home or at work. Then consider the factors involved in any emotional reaction and apply them to your situation.

These include:

1. Vulnerabilities: Being tired, hungry or reacting to previous stressors.
2. Prompting Triggers: What is setting off negative reactions?
3. Thoughts and beliefs: Words that came to mind about what is happening.
4. Body Sensations: How the body is reacting to emotions?
5. Emotional Vocabulary: Naming and communicating inner experiences.
6. Behaviors and Actions: Acting on emotional urges.

Self-awareness

During relationship conflict, our emotional reactions happen in an instant, often without our awareness. However, we can increase our awareness and make changes during any of the above steps. For example, the next time you are faced with a strong feeling during conflict, pause, and redirect your attention to yourself. Breathe slowly. Begin to examine **any** of the above areas.

1. What could be making me vulnerable to negative reactions right now? Am I hungry or tired? Am I upset about something else?
2. What is causing my current distress? What exactly am I annoyed/frustrated/irritated about?
3. What thoughts am I having? Are the thoughts critical, assumptions, or judgments?
4. How can I calm my body?
5. What words describe my inner experience? “I feel angry, hurt, afraid, etc.”
6. What action will make the situation better?

With increased awareness, we can choose to take care of the body’s needs, recognize our triggers, challenge our thoughts, relax the body, and make choices that get the desired outcomes.

John 14:27: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

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P.O. Box 1676, Appleton, WI 54912 (920) 720-8920

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