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**Response Ability©**

Linda McDonald-REACH Resources

Let me introduce you to Aftoguck, my own personal gremlin. He is mine and this is how he looks to me and for reasons unknown, my gremlin is male. Aftoguck has been with me since day one and truly enjoys taking an active role in my life. I wouldn't mind that so much if he also had my best interests at heart, but he doesn't. Aftoguck cares about one thing only, making my life miserable. Rick Carson coined the phrase Gremlin-Taming and Taming Your Gremlin<sup>2</sup> some 20 years ago and writes "We are not our thoughts, beliefs, bodies or personalities. We are soul, spirit, and prana, re, chi, ki, God, true love, life "2 or whatever language you use to identify your universal and cosmic connection, your true essence. He also says "your ability to respond to life is known as your *response ability*".<sup>2</sup> The challenge comes due to the presence of those vicious, naughty little bullies, our gremlins, waiting for any opportunity to impair our *response ability*.

I learned of the gremlin some years ago and have worked whole heartedly on finding ways to manage his presence in my life so I can respond to life in a way that works well for me. I acknowledge myself for learning about my gremlin and finding ways to manage his impact. However, despite observing him in action, acknowledging his presence and successfully using various means and methods to keep my 'true essence' in the role of *response ability*, he is a crafty little devil. "He is the source of our negative thoughts. He uses our less-than-positive experiences and our fears to taunt us into worrying about the future."<sup>2</sup> My gremlin is always working to find new ways to sabotage my growth and set me back. Little does know that his efforts also create new opportunities to learn. The biggest learning, he will always be with me and I know the best defense is to accept his existence and remain fully present, conscious and connected with universal spirit. Doing this allows me to be an observer of myself in all that I do and when I am observing myself it is not difficult to discern when my responses originate from my 'true essence' versus my companion, Aftoguck. That discernment allows me then to choose. I know I want to respond to life's challenges in a way that honors who I truly am. I do not want to honor the agenda of my Gremlin. When I respond from his force and influence, it never works

for me and I always feel dissatisfied, frustrated and bad. When I respond from my life force, my 'true essence', I know I am in alignment with spirit and it always feels right and good.

Most of us know that the first step in managing the influence of your gremlin is to simply acknowledge its presence. This step alone can open up the possibility to choose to believe or not believe and to knowing what action to take. When I coach a new client, I am amazed at how loud and forceful the gremlin is and how much of my client's life is directed by the beliefs conjured up through it. I hear statements such as; 'I know this sounds crazy, but....', 'Nothing's going to change, really.' 'Maybe that will work for you, but I can't do it.' 'You know this spiritual stuff is nice, but we're talking about the REAL world here.' And, my favorite 'I feel guilty spending the time and money on myself like this. I should (blah, blah, blah)....' And an interesting side effect of my client's gremlin being so present is that my own gremlin wants desperately to be noticed. I can visualize him behaving like the overeager Horshak from the 70's TV show, Welcome Back Kotter, with hand raised high, leaping about and yelling ooh, ooh, ooh, pick me, pick me. But I must reply to him, 'No, no I am creating a safe and sacred space here full of authentic listening and innocence and oneness with spirit. Please settle down and go to sleep.'

Because the gremlin is 100% vested in Not Being Coached,<sup>1</sup> I know we will discuss the gremlin concept early in the coaching process and I will help my client determine whether or not the gremlin is present so that action can be taken to create clarity for moving forward. This is called Presence The Gremlin<sup>1</sup> and I will likely need to utilize it periodically in ongoing coaching sessions.

For some, it may be helpful to explore managing the gremlin more fully. Some questions I ask are: What kinds of messages do you hear from your gremlin? What is the tone of the message? Does your gremlin engage in any name-calling or labeling? Does your gremlin tell you what you can and cannot do? Does your gremlin tell you how you should or should not behave? Through questions such as these, my client can development a more intimate and thorough knowing of his/her gremlin and make it easier to notice when it is speaking up and trying to control. I next ask my client to create responses to the messages received that will work for him/her. Clients create requests, demands, and mantras and often will do them in a way that adds humor. 'Thank you for you input. Please leave now.' or 'Out, out, ye demons of stupidity', for example.

Going deeper we might explore myths about the gremlin and fears that support gremlin activity. Myths are beliefs we have about expectations and about ourselves such as 'I don't deserve to be happy', 'I'm suppose to be able to handle all of this by myself' and 'Something in my head is telling me I can't do this, so it must be true'. Fears to be explored include fear of: rejection; humiliation; failure and success, just to name a few. The gremlin loves it when our unfounded fears are activated. He will take that train all the way to the station and then forget to put on the breaks. OW!

Another great tool is *Question Thinking*.<sup>3</sup> A lot of our gremlin messages promote blaming or being a victim with why and when questions such as 'Why is this always happening to me?' or 'When will I ever get what I want?' "Why is he always doing that?" 'When are you ever going to learn?' 'When I lose this weight, then I can be successful at (dating, work, making friends, etc.).' With these thoughts we are taking the *Judger Path*<sup>3</sup> of automatic reactions, blame focus and win-

lose relating. By switching to *Learner Questions*<sup>3</sup> (what & how), we can make thoughtful choices that are solution focused and create win-win relating. ‘What can I learn?’ ‘What am I responsible for?’ ‘How can I look at this differently?’ ‘What are my choices?’ ‘What is the other person thinking, feeling, needing and wanting?’ It is through these kinds of questions that we take the *Learner Path*<sup>3</sup> and open up the possibilities.

Ultimately, helping my clients discover and embrace their true essence, core values, life purpose and vision will create the foundation, the solid ground upon which to challenge the gremlin and allow them to learn to “be” in the doing. From here he/she can choose right action, try on new behaviors and learn *response ability*. This is the true source of empowerment over the gremlin’s naughty ways.

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### References:



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