

## From Auto-Response to “Response” Ability

*Empower yourself by choosing your reaction to life's triggers.*

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*Somehow you get triggered and before you know it.....and then you think, 'next time I'm going to.....' Next time comes and with it that same ol' reaction despite your intention to 'do it' differently.*

**You can learn to choose how you react when triggered and eventually you will no longer consider it a trigger at all.**

Have you ever heard that little voice inside your head telling you what you should or shouldn't do, think or feel? Has that same voice called you names like idiot, loser, lazy, bad or stupid? Do you hear yourself be labeled as a hopeless procrastinator, bad parent or 'the one who can never do anything right'? These are a sampling of inner critic messages. The one delivering these nasty messages might be referred to as the **gremlin**, a shadow creature rising from the child in us who has been wounded by negativity, criticism and unrealistic demands and expectations.

We can use the gremlin metaphor as a way to manage these self-defeating thoughts that can arise without warning. *Rick Carson coined the phrase, Gremlin some 20 years ago and has written a great book, Taming Your Gremlin that I recommend if you would like to learn more and try his self-development exercises.*

The “Gremlin” prefers to keep us in a state of dis-ease, worry, doubt and fear. It uses our inner critic messages as the source of our negative thoughts. It tries desperately to hang onto false or inaccurate thoughts and beliefs too distract us from being our true selves. ‘Your true self can be described through the qualities that define what you value most in life.’ These qualities reflect one’s essence and the foundation for allowing you to experience ease and satisfaction. In this state of ease and satisfaction one tends to respond to challenges, triggers and not-so-positive experiences more effectively or with *response ability*.

THE CHALLENGE: the presence of those vicious, naughty little bullies, our gremlins, waiting for any opportunity to impair our *response ability*’.

My gremlin is always working to find new ways to sabotage my growth and set me back. Little does he know that his efforts also create new opportunities to learn? I know he will always be with me and my best defense is to accept his existence and remain fully present, conscious and connected to my true self. 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 those inner critic messages. 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 who I am and it always feels right and good.

**You know you are in Auto-Response when:**

- You react through your default mode
- You feel defensive, criticized or judged
- You begin to judge and criticize others
- You have trouble remembering what you have said or done & you feel bad
- You are listening to inner critic messages
- Your behavior is based in false beliefs

**You know you are in “Response” Ability when:**

- You react through conscious choice
- You feel curious
- You hear yourself asking questions from a place of innocence
- You feel good about how you responded

- You are listening to your inner supporter
- You notice you question old beliefs

### **How do you begin to react by choice and assume a position of “Response” Ability?**

#### Get to know your gremlin and the inner critic messages unique to you

- What kinds of inner critic 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?
- Consider these questions to development a more intimate and thorough knowing of your gremlin and make it easier to notice when it is speaking up and trying to control.

#### Create responses to the inner critic messages that will allow you to shut them out or reframe them.

- Make requests, demands, and come up with a mantra. Don't hesitate to use humor if you like. Examples: “Thank you for you input. Please leave now.” or ‘Out, out, ye demons of stupidity’.

#### Explore your myths and fears (they 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*.

- 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>2</sup> of automatic reactions, blame focus and win-lose relating.
- Switch to *Learner Questions*<sup>2</sup> (what & how), 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>2</sup> and open up the possibilities.

#### Map the Root Causes of Behaviors

- We can learn to pay attention to something like fear, doubt, worry, anxiety, hurt with a completely neutral attitude of curiosity, even fascination. We sit still and simply watch sensations arise in the body.

#### **The Response Process**

1. Sensation arises in the body
  2. Thoughts attach to the sensations
  3. Emotions attach to the thoughts
  4. Beliefs attach to the emotions
  5. Behaviors attach to the beliefs
- The Sensation may present as tension, pain, fatigue, shakes, shivers, temperature change, etc.
  - The Thought originates from true self or
  - From the gremlin/inner critic.
  - Emotion results such as bad, good, frustrated, angry, hurt, happy, grateful, excited, fear, anxiety, joy, etc.

- Beliefs are formed or validated such as; Now I know.....I can always/never.....From now on, this is how it will be....It's always been this way.....There is always something new to learn.....Things never/always change....
- And with the belief comes behavior such as: Get grouchy, defensive, allusive, open, creative, energized, Take back old "comfort" habits, Take action Seek information, validation, support, guidance, resources, etc.

Resource for this exercise: *Suffering is Optional*, Cheri Huber, [www.keepitsimplebooks.com](http://www.keepitsimplebooks.com), 2000

### Know yourself

What are your core values? You have unique gifts, talents and strengths. How are you sharing those with the people in your life? When you become solid in your being-ness, all of the doing in life gets easy. From here you 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.

### **References**

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