

Emotional Pacemaker

By Karel Murray

Receiving unsettling news about your career or family isn't the easiest thing to handle. Your face may flame with the quick rush of blood to your head while a roaring sound reaches a crescendo between your ears. It's so loud, it's hard to hear or think straight. And times like these, everyone expects you to be strong and act like a reasonable adult. A perfectly normal reaction from others, but I find that it impedes my ability to think clearly.

It's just so difficult to be mature. I know I'm not the only one that has periodically envied the screaming toddler, writhing on the floor in the grocery aisle, demanding the treat they know they deserve. A mature adult just doesn't do that. At least that's what society and my mother taught me...

Persevere

 March on

 Tough it out

 Forgive and forget

 Turn the other cheek

 Keep your head down

 Keep your head held high

 Let it roll off your shoulder

 Don't be too smart for your
 own good

The list seems endless. What if we want to make a fuss? How can we release our anxiety and physical reaction to emotionally charged situations appropriately?

I watched an employee progress through the stages of a nervous breakdown as she tried to balance her career and a crumbling family life. Her face seemed to dissolve and begin to resemble the horrified look so famously captured on the painting "The Scream". She perceived she had no where to turn, so she disappeared into the dark tunnel of psychosis. The process of standing by, trying to get her to accept medical assistance and failing miserably left me feeling like a boiling cauldron of volcanic acid... ready to erupt at my inability to effectively assist her.

It's the lack of control that unsettled me. I've learned through the hard knocks of life that there are a slew of situations that we can't control. A few of these include:

- The professionalism of our co-workers
- Reckless attitudes of the teenager
- Insidious diseases that rack a loved one's body
- The speed and sobriety of the "other" driver
- The chance meeting of a person who changes your life when least expected
- A grade school teacher's attitude towards recess or dodge ball
- Gravity
- Delaying indefinitely the normal process of aging

The hardest lesson I've had to learn is that all I can do is take responsibility for my own emotions, reactions, and be accountable for how I act and react to these situations. That's maturity for you. I have options. It's as simple as that. What I choose to do will have an effect on future events.

My mother has a new pacemaker. Her heart function, erratic and tenuous, required the device in order to control the severe fluctuations of her heart beat. My stomach flipped when I heard the news. However, listening to the hope and positive reaction of my mother to her impending surgery calmed me. Her main concern was that her family not worry, but instead, be prepared for any possible outcome of the surgery, be it positive or negative. Quite simply, she conveyed that worrying won't necessarily change the outcome, so why do it?

Laughingly, she indicated that she would rant and rave about her situation, but that would only create havoc with her heart. The potential negative consequence of harm to her body became her emotional pace maker.

Ahhhh.

If I want to scream and kick my feet in the grocery isle, I can. However, I need to be prepared for the consequences of my actions. If I want to be completely negative about my mother's medical condition, I can. But... my attitude will impact others and possibly create a situation worse than the one that already exists.

Over the years I've understood a fundamental formula: Action = Reaction and Consequence.

As a result, I've learned wisdom, restraint, and joy. I guess that is what makes me the adult I am. And that is something I should be grateful for.

Discover where your own emotional strength and inner courage reside and turn it on to full power. Evaluate each difficult situation, absorb the good and the bad news, and discover your own emotional strength and inner courage. Turn on your emotional pacemaker to full power and thrive. It's the best any of us can do.

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