

Relationship Matters

Understanding the Emotional System

Thoughts from Last Week

While Living Life from Inside Your Hula-Hoop this Past Week, did any Thought, Truth or Principle Stick in your Brain from Any Class We Have Had Together?

Did Anything Cause You to See Your Life and Your Relationships Differently? Did Anything “Make a Difference for You in Your Life?”

Were You Able to Break Up Any of Your Normal Patterns? Your Contribution to a Pattern? Were You Able to Trust and Show Courage while in “Darkness?”

Therapists and “Data”

Three umpires are sitting around over a beer and one says, “There’s balls and there’s strikes and I call ‘em the way they are.” Another says, “There’s balls and there’s strikes and I call ‘em the way I see ‘em.” The Third says, “There’s balls and there’s strikes and they ain’t nothin’ until I call ‘em.”

W.T. Anderson, *Reality isn’t What It Used to Be*

A Thoughtful Question #1

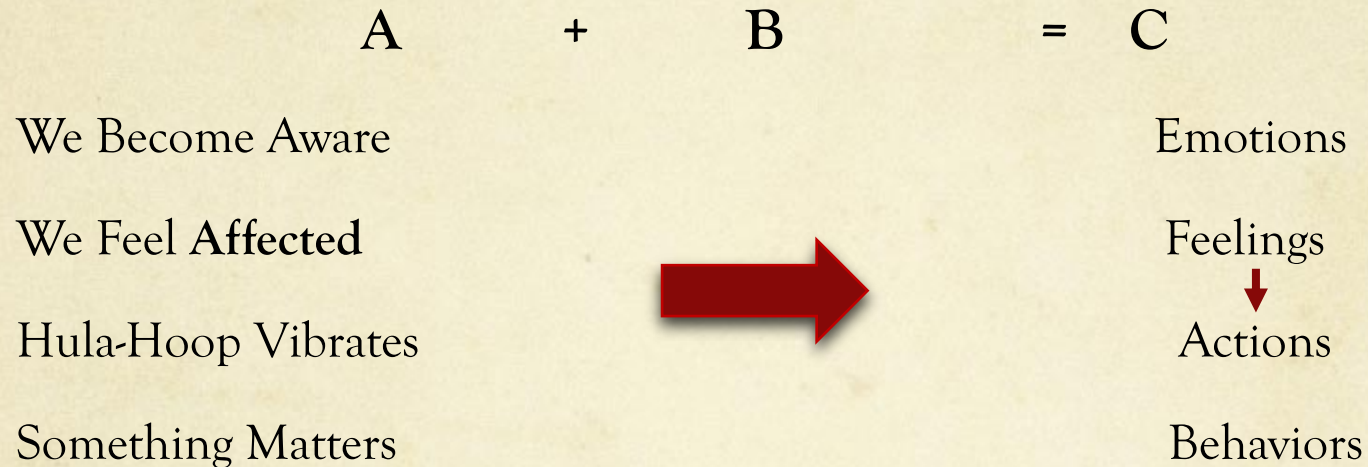
Can You Trust Your Emotions?

Yes?

No?

Sometimes?

The A,B,C's of Emotions



We Naturally Think that “A” Causes “C.”

We say, “You Made Me So Angry!”

What Determines What?

What do you “See?” What Determines “Data?”

“It is wrong to assume that theories [Interpretations] are based [solely] on observation. The opposite is the case. The theory [we already hold] determines what we are able to observe.”

Albert Einstein

(1926 Conversation in Heisenberg)

Epictetus: The Stoic, 55 A.D.

The appearance of things to the mind is the standard of every action to man.

In a word, neither death, nor exile, nor pain, nor anything of this kind is the real cause of our doing or not doing any action, but our inward opinions and principles.


What disturbs men's minds is not events but their judgments on events. What distresses him is not the event, for that does not distress another, but his judgment on the event.

Epictetus the Stoic

Practice then from the start to say to every harsh impression, "You are an impression, and not at all the thing you appear to be." Then examine it and test it by these rules you have, and firstly, and chiefly, by this: whether the impression has to do with the things that are up to us, or those that are not; and if it has to do with the things that are not up to us, be ready to reply, "It is nothing to me."

(This is called, "De-Construction")

The A, B, C's of Emotions

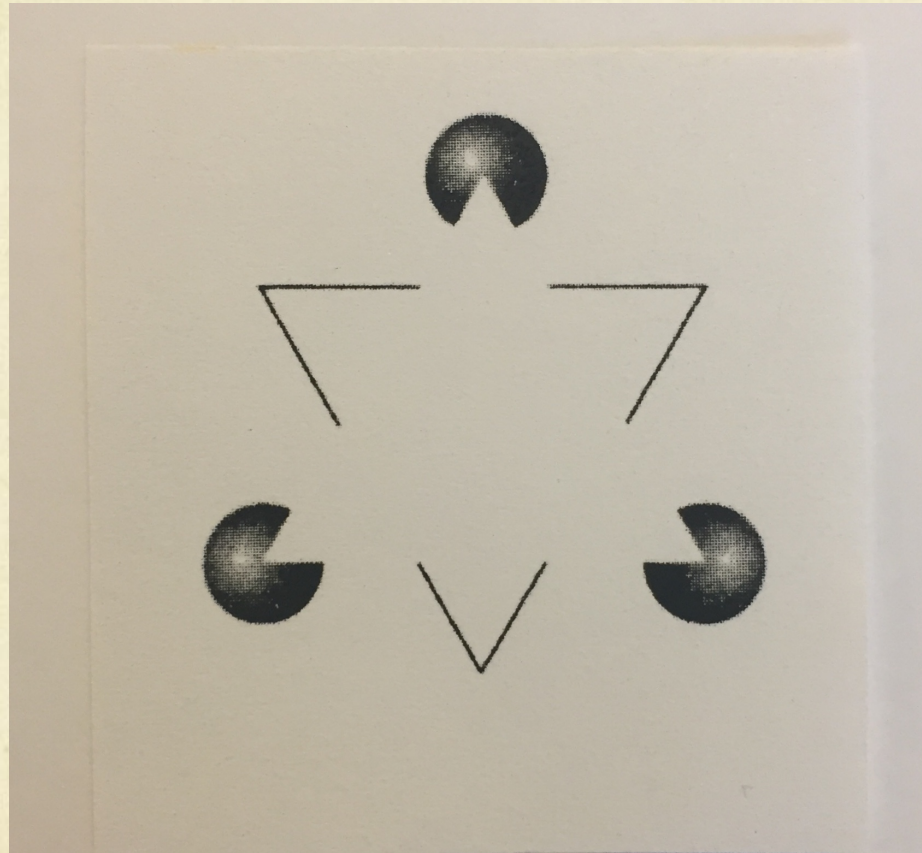
A	+	B	=	C
We Become Aware		Our Belief		Consequences
We Feel Affected		Our Interpretation		Emotions
Hula-Hoop Vibrates		Our Perception		Feelings
Something Matters		Our Glasses		
		Assigned Meaning		Actions
		Story We Tell Ourselves		Behaviors

The Brain Constructs and Simulates

1. The Brain takes in Data from the Senses. It “Sees” or “Hears” Something. “Sensations” are Experienced.
2. The Brain seeks to Make Sense of this Present Data by Drawing upon a Data Bank of Past Learned Experiences to Give Possible Meaning to the Present.
3. The Brain Selects a Past Learned Experience (an Attractor – a Concept) and Links it to the New Present Experience (Constructs and Simulates) so as to Understand (Interpret, Give Meaning to) the New Present Experience.

The Process is called, “Simulation.”

The Brain Constructs and Simulates



The Brain Constructs and Simulates

1. What we See, Hear, Touch, Taste, Smell and Feel are Simulations of the world, Constructed by our Brain, not “Reactions” to the world (both external and internal).
2. Simulations are our Brain’s Best Guess as to what’s happening in the World and in our Body.
3. Every waking moment, our Brain uses Learned Concepts (Attractors) to Simulate our External and Internal world. Without these, we are Experientially Blind.
4. Physical Sensations in our body have no Meaning until our Brain assigns a Meaning to them! This includes our Emotions. Our Brains Construct Our Emotions.

The Brain Constructs and Simulates

The Advantage:

The Brain's use of Learned Concepts enables us to move through life with speed and quickness. It is a Google Search engine, quickly completing the sentences we type.

The Disadvantage:

The Brain's use of Learned Concepts mean that past experiences misinform (blur) the present and new experiences in the present misinform (blur) the past.

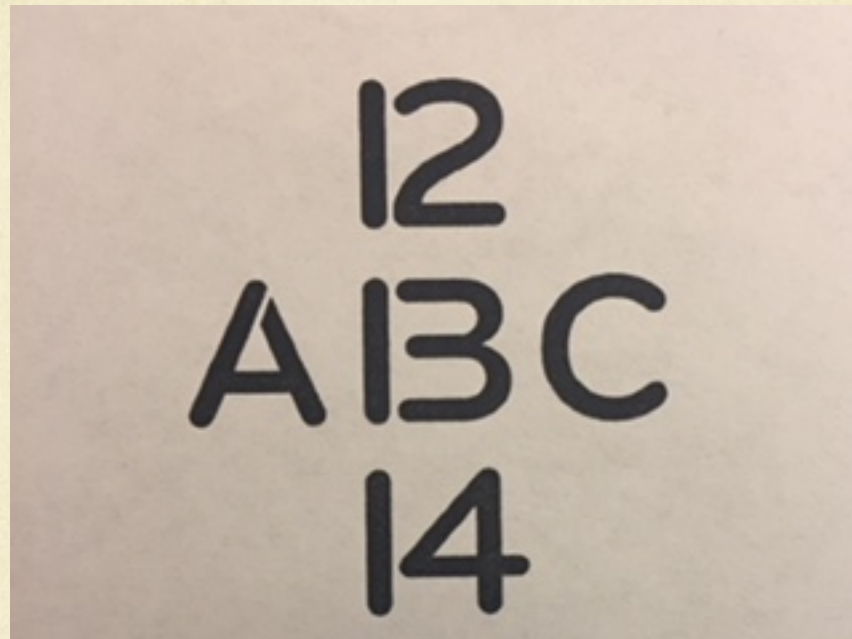
The Brain Constructs and Simulates

Due to how the Brain learns, we are predisposed to be more aware of what we have already seen, hear anew what we have heard most often, think what we have always thought, and feel what we have mostly felt.

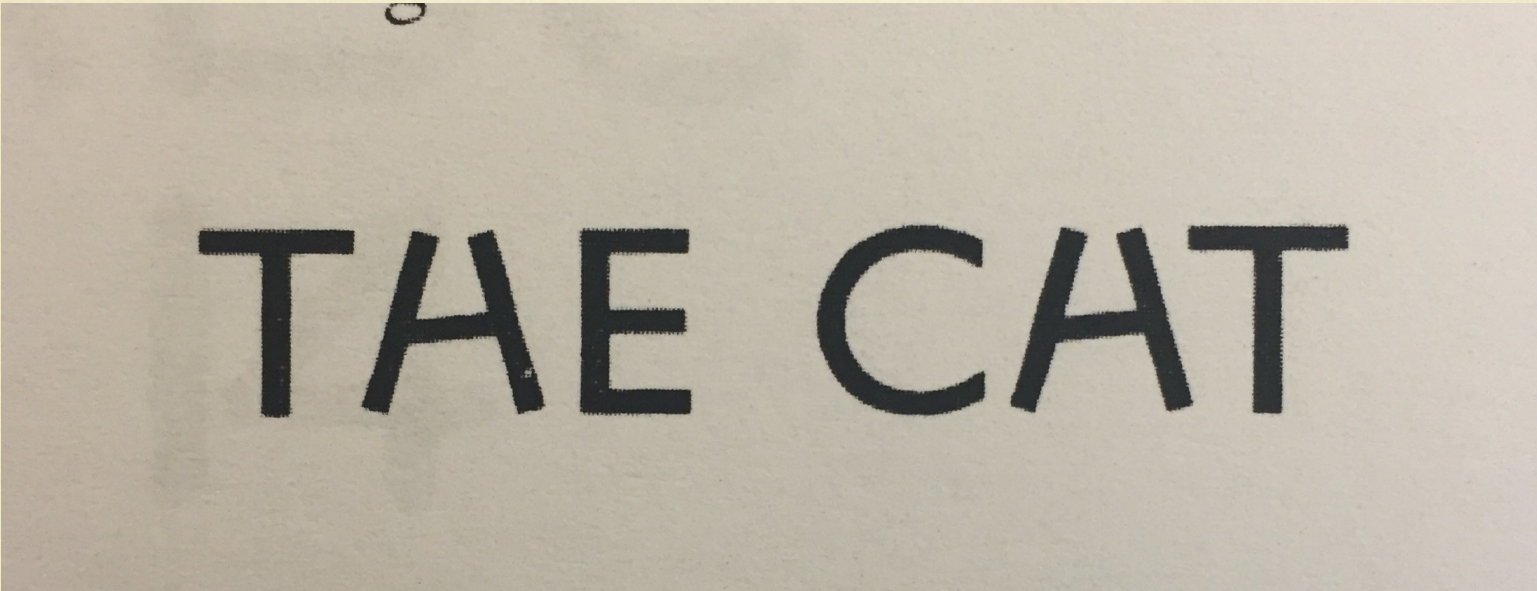
The *sine qua non* of a neural network is its penchant for strengthening neuronal patterns directly in proportion to their use. The more often we think, feel or imagine a thing, the more probable it is that our mind will revisit its prior stopping point.

It Interprets According to Context, Just Like the Meaning of a Word is nothing apart from its Context.

The Brain Constructs and Simulates

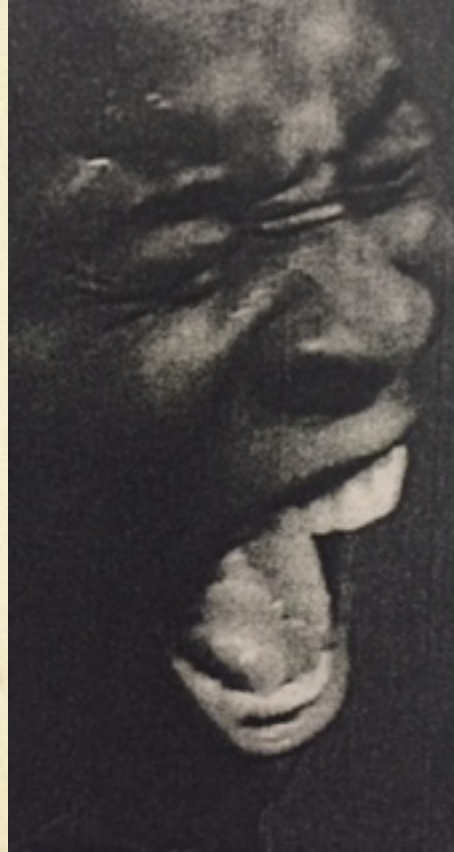


The Brain Constructs and Simulates



THE CAT

The Brain Constructs and Simulates



The Brain Constructs and Simulates



The Brain Constructs and Simulates

1. An Emotion (a Feeling) is our Brain's best, speedy Construction/Interpretation/Creation of our body sensations, in relation to what is happening around us. Our Brain draws from previously learned Emotional Categories to Interpret the Present.
2. Our Brain Interprets in relationship to Perceived Context. Our body sensations in one Context produce an Emotion relative to that Perceived Context. The same body sensations in another Context, can produce completely different Emotions!

The Brain Constructs and Simulates

3. Emotions are not “Triggered.” They are “Active Constructions,” drawn from a Data Bank, of which We are Active Participants in that Construction! Our Brains are “Predicting” and “Forecasting,” Interpreting the Event Contextually and then Choosing a Concept.
4. The more we Link a Sensation in our Body with an Emotional Concept, the Stronger the Neuropathway and the Quicker the Brain will Link to that Emotional Concept (Attractor)! The More You Feel it, the More You Will Feel it.

“Cause” versus “Construct”

Events Do Not “Cause” or “Create” What’s Inside Each of Us.

Events Stimulate, Evoke, and Expose What is Already Inside Each of Us. Every Person’s Brain Creates Meaning. Every Person’s Brain “Fills the Gap” and Creates Meaning by Pinging back and Selecting its most Similar Concept.

We Can Learn a Great Deal About Ourselves (less about Reality) by Whatever Emotions We May Experience.

Changing Your Emotions

Achieving Emotional Flexibility

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Emotional Flexibility

1. Remember: Every Emotion that We Experience is Directly Linked to a Concept, an Interpretation, a Meaning that We Make. Strive to Understand Your Personal Interpretation!

Example: The Emotion we Label, “Anger.”

Results from a Blocked Goal or the Difference Between
“What Should Be” and “What Actually Is.”

An Emotion Linked to “Truth” and “Justice”

Emotional Flexibility

2. Expand Your Emotional Concept Library in Your Brain.

Expand Your Emotional Color Palette. Give Your Brain More Options to Choose From in Different Situations. Learn New Words for Emotions. Keep Track of Your Positive Experiences Each Day. Negative Rumination Becomes Easier and Easier for Your Brain to Re-Create.

Cultivate the Experiences You Want to Construct Again in the Future. Every Experience You Construct becomes an Investment. Invest Wisely! Practice Does Not Make Perfect. Practice Makes Permanent!

Emotional Flexibility

1. Observe and Describe the Event Prompting the Emotion, i.e. the Trigger. Describe. Do Not Interpret.
2. Identify the Interpretations of the Event that Prompted the Emotion, i.e. the “Belief” Factor. What Meaning Did Your Brain Make of the Situation?
3. Observe and Describe the Actual Experience, including the Physical Sensation of the Emotion. What did your Body Feel?
4. Observe and Describe the Expressive Behaviors associated with the Emotion. What did you Do When you Experienced the Emotion?
5. Observe and Describe the After-effects of the Emotion on Your Functioning.

Managing Emotions

What to Do and What Not to Do

How We “Use” Emotions

1. When We Experience an Emotion, Our Automatic Assumption is that Something External is the “Cause” of the Emotion.

“What YOU Did (or Didn’t Do) or Said (or Didn’t Say)
Caused Me to Feel this Way!”

2. Naturally, When Viewed this Way, “Fault and Blame” are Assigned to the External Stimulus.

“It’s Your Fault I Feel this Way! You are to Blame!”

How We “Use” Emotions

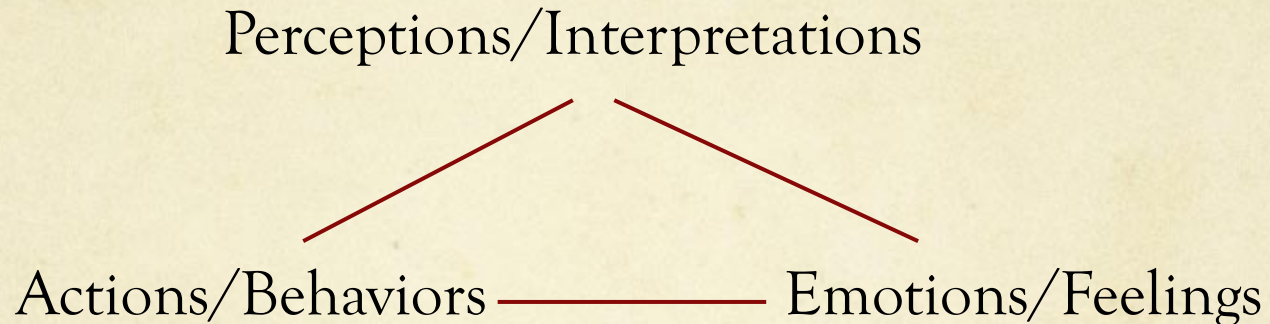
3. We then Absolve Ourselves of any Personal Responsibility because We are Blaming the Stimulus.
4. The Emotion that We are Experiencing then Becomes Our Self-Justifying Motivation for Doing Something, i.e. Our Actions and Behaviors.

“I have a Right to Act the Way I’m Acting Because You Made Me Feel the Way I Feel!”

How We “Use” Emotions

5. We Create a Self-Serving, Self-Justifying Story, Exonerating Ourselves of Any Personal Responsibility. This Story is not About Facts or Truth, but About a Goal or Purpose We Have and Choose to Construct.
6. Thoughts, Emotions and Actions then Reify Each Other, Reinforcing and Solidifying a “Reality” We Create!

How We “Use” Emotions



Each of These Strengthen Each Other and Create a Self-Serving, Unexamined, Closed-System

“My Way of Perceiving and Interpreting is the Right Way!”

How We “Use” Emotions

7. We then Use Our Emotions to Take Front and Center Stage in the Story We Wish to Tell, for an End Goal We Wish to Justify. What We Feel and Experience Now Becomes the Focus! Emotions now Drive Our Behaviors!

“I’m Just Telling You What I Feel!”

8. We Share Our Emotions to Influence, Correct and Change Others! We Want Others to Take Personal Responsibility for Our Emotions, i.e. What We are Experiencing!

How We “Use” Emotions

9. When We Emotionally Invest in Our Own Story, Our Own Created Reality, Disconfirming Data (Logic, Facts, Other Perspectives) Will Not Penetrate!

Logic (facts) cannot Displace an Idea that was NOT Originally Placed there by Logic.

10. We are then Prone to Only “See” that Which Proves or Confirms What We Already “See.”

Confirmation Bias

An Altered Reality

“Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.’”

And the Serpent said to the woman, “You surely shall not die! For God knows in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

An Altered Reality

When the woman *saw* that the tree was 1) **good for food** and that it was 2) **a delight to the eyes** and that the tree was 3) **desirable to make one wise**, she took from its fruit and **ate**; and she **gave** also to her husband with her and he **ate**.

Genesis 3:1-6

What Happened? What Became “Altered?”

(Bonus Question #1: What “fruit” did she eat?)

(Bonus Question #2: In what context do we find these verbs in the N. Testament?)

Subjectivity & Objectivity

What Goes on Inside of Us, Influences How We “See”
and “Perceive” Things Outside of Us!

“Lust” and “Coveting” Distort Perception

11. The More We Emotionally Invest in Something, the
Less Objectivity We have.

Psalm 115 & 135

The Greater the Investment, the Less Objectivity.

Cognitive Dissonance

If a person voluntarily goes through a difficult or a painful experience *in order* to attain some goal or object, that goal or object becomes more attractive.

The greater the emotional investment, the greater the danger for personal “blindness,” i.e. one’s inability to “objectively perceive.”

Subjectivity & Objectivity

What Goes on Inside of Us, Influences How We “See”
and “Perceive” Things Outside of Us!

Self-Protection Distort Perception

**12. The More We have Been Hurt or Disappointed, the
More We May Tend to Distort Reality to Protect
Ourselves, Blame Others, and Justify Our Behaviors.**

The Greater the Self-Protection, the Less Objectivity.

A Principle to be Observed

Remember: A Person's Story (Narrative) is not about "Facts" or "Truth." Rather, these are "Half-Truths" organized and Connected to each other to Form a Explanatory, Self-Serving Narrative.

The "Cause" is not the Cause, unless We Make the "Cause" the Cause.

Manage Self Inside Your Hula-Hoop

When you Feel an Emotion, your Hula-Hoop Vibrates.

Sympathetic Resonance: Others will Vibrate.

Calm Yourself Inside Your Own Hula-Hoop.

Look Only Within Your Hula-Hoop (trusting in God) for the solution.

Challenge Your Perception of the Situation.

Control Your Behaviors. “Have” your Emotions, Without Your Emotions “Having” You.

Be Affected Without Becoming Infected.

Important Ideas

1. Your Identity and Your Emotions are not the Same Thing. You are Not Your Emotions.
2. Emotions are Usually Shared in order to Influence, Persuade and Change Others.
3. Emotions Inadvertently Confirm One's Preconceived Version of Reality. Emotions Validate One's Own Reality.

“I want to irresponsibly hold onto how I see something, have my emotions and shift the blame (and responsibility) to you! I want both and the right to complain about it!”

A Thoughtful Question #2

When is it “Right” to Share Your Emotions?

What is the Purpose of Sharing What You are Feeling and Experiencing with Your Spouse (or Someone Else)?

What Do You Want to Happen as a Result?

Responsible Sharing

Take Responsibility for Your Own Emotions.

Resist the Temptation to “Blame” Others for What You are
Feeling.

Share from Inside Your Hula-Hoop So as to be Known.

Your Emotions Will Tell A Lot About Your Own Life.

Share Your Life with Others without Taking Them
Emotionally Hostage!

The ABC's of Emotion

In order for a problem to be *the* problem, don't *you* become the problem.

In order for an issue to have a chance to become the issue, don't let your emotional response to the issue become the issue.

What's the real issue: You and your emotional responses to the issue? Or the issue?

What do *you want* the focus to be?

Are you trying to find a solution? Or do you simply *want* to make it “personal?”

The ABC's of Emotions

There is the “problem” and then again, there is our *response* to the problem.

We are each responsible for our response to the problem.

Our emotional response does not necessarily change “reality.” *If our emotional response does bring about change, we may have to continually have the emotional response in order to sustain the change that has been created.*