



Creation versus Reaction

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The first teaching that I got was the statement, "act, don't react". Of course, this is very good advice. If you react then you are being controlled by the other person. You are not behaving as if you are in charge of yourself, you are letting the words and actions of others decide who you will be and how you will respond. In short, you are in fact allowing yourself to be victimised. When you choose to act you are making the choice as to how you will respond to the other person. You are deciding for yourself how you want to be in the situation.

This is an important learning for everyone. You don't want to get caught up in the drama and chaos of other people and you don't want them to pull your strings. You want to choose the best way to respond to their words and actions.

Recently I came across another quote which takes the "act" component a bit further.

"In every single moment of your life your choice is always the same. To move into reaction or creation." ~ Neale Donald Walsch.

I particularly like this quote because as human beings our highest level of functioning is to be creators. We don't just have to act, we can create what it is we want in most situations. Create means we use our imagination, our problem solving skills, our social understanding, our emotional intelligence, all the higher brain functions, to think about the best outcome we would like from the situation and make it happen. To create a response in such a way that it leads to what we want to happen. It is to decide what we want to have happen, and make it happen.

To create means to bring something into existence. This is not the easiest thing to do, and especially not on the spur of the moment. So how does this work in practice. It is easy to respond. You can respond without even using the cortex of the brain. Knee-jerk reactions are such responses. Unless you are running away from a life-threatening situation, those are not usually the best responses. If you are going to create, then you need to stop and think before you respond. And you can use these three steps to help you.

1. Firstly, think about what all the possibilities are as to how this could end.
2. Think about what the best possible outcome is. What do you want to have happen?
3. Then ask yourself who do I need to be and what do I need to do, to achieve this outcome.

Like everything, if you are not used to doing this, it is going to take time to learn to be good at it. Some people already do this. Not only will such thinking enable you to achieve an outcome you want, it is good for humans to think broadly and consider a variety of possible outcomes before they act. The more you do this, the better your life is going to work for you. People who just react without any thought quite often are people whose lives are quite a mess. They say and do things that get them into trouble that can often be difficult to get out of.

So, let's take an example. Suppose your boss is furious with you and shouts at you because you delivered a piece of work that was done incorrectly.

To react would be to give a knee-jerk response which depending on your personality could be shout at him, to become submissive, to cry, or a number of other responses.

To create means you are 1) firstly going to think what are the possible outcomes I can create? These could be: Get him to understand my point of view. Get him to see that I really tried my best. Get him to see that I am committed to doing great work, I just didn't know how to do it this time. Get him to see that it is not necessary to shout at me, he can explain it calmly and I will take his feedback seriously. Get him to see that this is not how I usually work, and this was a once-off as I was not feeling well. Get him to see that I handle feedback well and will take his feedback and apply it.
2) Secondly you are going to think about what outcome you want.
3) Thirdly you will decide, given the outcome you choose, what you will say and how you will act.

Below are some examples where you can apply the three steps to creating a response you want.

- You are a mother and your kids are tired and irritable and screaming at one another. What outcome do you want to create?
- Your colleague is slow in forwarding information on to you and you are going to miss a deadline. What outcome do you want to create?
- Your spouse has forgotten your anniversary. What outcome do you want to create?
- The company you work for is going through bad times and is talking about letting people go. What outcome do you want to create?
- You are stuck in traffic due to an accident on the highway and are going to be late for an important client meeting. What outcome do you want to create?

When you become good at thinking about what you can create in a situation rather than reacting to it, you will experience a much higher quality of life and much more success. You will gain respect, you are more likely to achieve your goals, and you will find life goes a lot more easily for you. In short, you will be a victor not a victim.