

Transcend Emotional Triggers



We have all done it a million times! We overreact to random external events and cause ourselves enormous stress, and occasionally, big troubles as well. It happens so frequently we are often not even aware that we are doing it. We think it is normal! This is how it goes . . . we are cruising along having a good solid day, feeling sunny inside no matter what the weather is doing, and all of a sudden, *whaaamo*, something happens that does not match our picture of how we want our world to behave! Our attitude goes south immediately. We might even exclaim out loud, *Oh, _____, it's going to be one of those days!* It could be something small like spilling coffee on your shirt, or a rude driver on the commute to work, or a snarky comment from a co-worker. Whatever it is, big or small, in the moment we allow that event to *disturb us*, giving our power away to that person or circumstance. In the moment when we allow our attitude to emotions to escalate, we are actually jumping into victim-consciousness. The empowering question is—how long do we stay there? This brings me to one of my favorite quotes from Buddha, ***“Enlightenment is the practice of catching yourself off track faster than the time before.”***

I absolutely love that quote! That idea is exactly what this paper is all about. *Thank you Buddha!* I'd like to share with you how we can stop ourselves from flailing around in victim consciousness faster than the day before, and get off that blasted blame and fear train.

The Anatomy of an Emotional Trigger or Disturbance



It goes like this: Something happens that you don't like, makes you really mad, or deeply upsets you. → Your physical body gets tense and automatically starts spitting out fight or flight hormones (and we all know how powerful hormones can be), and a bundle of other autonomic stress responses ride along with all those hormones.

→→ Then, your emotional body gets in the game and starts remembering old stories of victimhood and the fear monster sets

in. →→→ Now your mental body spits up even more dramatic stories about the guy on the highway, or whatever is your favorite “woe is me, eminent disaster is near” story of the day! Then all the stories start to highjack your consciousness like a speeding runaway train. Fear and anger start to build. →→→→ And your spiritual body is now off-line and unavailable. When we are in fear, rage, or blame, we absolutely cannot feel the sublime connection to human or divine love! We feel very alone in our pain and the fear monster makes us do things we wouldn't otherwise do. **In other words, fear makes us stupid!**



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This all happens in a flash, and *whaaamo*, once again we are on a speeding runaway train of hormones, old stories, blame and fear. All these reactions have a powerful momentum that seems beyond our control. It is not! Don't believe it for a moment! We have the power to catch ourselves off track and jump out of the way of the speeding train of over-reactivity and fear.

With simple awareness and self-management tools, we can stop this habit and return our inner being to the lovely day we were having before the trigger event! We can do as Buddha instructs us; we can catch ourselves off track faster than the time before and get off that blame train to victimhood and the devastating momentum of fear.

Why Do I Do That?

Seemingly random triggers are actually a gift of healing, if only we can pay attention to them in the moment, as Buddha instructs. All disturbances are a symptom of a deeper wound or misperception held within the subconscious basement of our minds. Every disturbance is a cry for love from your own subconscious mind. For example, getting upset about the drivers on the highway may actually trigger a deeper fear that most humans have—the fear of not being able to control life and/or perhaps the fear of injury and death. The big ones! Simple awareness of the deeper causative belief or trauma can take us far down the road to releasing the habit of giving our power away to the day-to-day triggers that life offers.

No matter how well we plan our lives, no matter how much money we have saved and invested, no matter how hard we work or how much service we offer, no matter how well we take care of our bodies, we cannot change the basic nature of life. Everyone's life holds its own share of pain, loss, injury and illness, and sometimes—devastating traumas. Some of our life experience is beyond our control.

So What **CAN** We Control?

The only thing we can truly control and have immediate power over is our response to what life offers up to us. Again, I share one of my favorite quotes. This one is from Viktor Frankl, the survivor of four years in concentration camps during World War II. He survived and became a great behavioral psychiatrist, author and healer for humanity. His famous quote shows us where our true power lies.



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“ Between stimulus and response there is a space. **In that space is our power to choose our response.** In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

Victor Frankl

I share with you a short poem I devised to help me remember this remarkable teaching of Viktor Frankl:

*No matter what happens this day
No matter what life throws my way
In my peace, joy, and strength, I WILL stay!*

What About the Big Disturbances?

When talking about the gap between stimulus and response, I often hear people say, “Yeah, that’s fine, but what about the big things, what about the really awful things? How do you handle those?” In my experience, a little disturbance or a huge disturbance requires the exact same approach. Many of my clients, and I myself, have experienced long-term chronic physical pain. If we have a circumstance in our lives that we have no control over, and we have no idea if or when the pain will ever leave. The only empowered way to find joy and a sense of well-being in spite of any circumstance is to manage our moment-to-moment response to it. We can be a victim to the pain, or we can choose how we respond to the circumstances we have before us. Frankl instructs, *“When we are no longer able to change a situation – just think of an incurable disease such as inoperable cancer – we are challenged to change ourselves.”* Viktor Frankl’s observation of managing the gap between stimulus and response is true, no matter how small or large the stimulus may be. If Viktor can do this at Auschwitz, I think we can do this too!

How to Break the Momentum!

I have created a system called *The Momentum Buster* to help us jump off the blame and fear train and return our minds, hearts and bodies to peace, joy and love. If you perform this self-management tool as soon as you possibly can after noticing that a trigger has entered your mind, you can stop the momentum of the fear monster and even turn around the power of all those stress hormones. You may need to repeat it more than once if the trigger really has you in a tizzy. Because the trigger hits us at the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels, we need to deal with it at all four levels to stop the momentum. *The Momentum Buster* does just that!



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You can do this management tool anywhere—sitting in an airplane seat, a bathroom stall, anyplace and anytime. You may have to be a little sneaky about it, but you can even do it while you're sitting in a meeting. [The graphic and instructions on the following page](#) gives you a few ideas on what you can do at all four levels: physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually (PEMS). These are just a starting point. You will find what works for you. The important thing is to remember to do something that breaks the momentum at all four levels!

Give it a try—You CAN bust the momentum!

Buddha and Viktor Frankl would be so proud of us!

“The momentum buster and the forgiveness prayer completely eliminated my road rage! Now my commutes through Austin rush hour traffic are so much more pleasant.”

~SR, Graphic Artist and Sales Team Support

Scroll to the Following Page For:

[The Momentum Buster Instructions and Worksheet](#)

Additional Uses for *The Momentum Buster*:

- When you feel a craving for a food or substance that is not good for you
 - When that afternoon lull comes upon you, it will energize you
 - When a sudden illness or injury is present
 - When you feel lethargic , down or lonely
 - When something deeply disappoints you
 - When something startles you



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The Momentum Buster Worksheet

The response of over-reactivity to external stimulators has FORCE, habit and momentum. Our culture often fosters victim-consciousness, and the addiction to drama. To break this cycle and free yourself of the habit, you must break that grip at all four levels. Below you will see several suggestions on how to do this. Pick one action from each level and do them in sequence: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual (PEMS). Try to do one from each level all together in less than five minutes. Repeat as needed until you feel a sense of peace, quietude and joy returning. The triggering circumstance does NOT have to change, only our response. As Viktor Frankl teaches us—therein lies our growth and freedom!

Physically

Do jumping jacks.
Get your heart rate up.
Take a VERY brisk walk.
Run water over your hands.
Drink a full glass of water.
Twirl around several times.
Take several deep breaths.
Sing—Clap—Dance!

Emotionally

Laugh (fake it if you have to).
Smile big and silly.
Call someone and just say, “I love you!”
Text someone with a kind thought.
Laugh again (on my Homepage, you will find **Magic, the Laughing Monkey** at the **purple button** to keep you laughing).



Mentally

Say or write five things you are grateful for.
Remind yourself that this “reaction” is to an old wound or belief; you do not have to let it ruin this day.
Chose how you want to feel now!

Spiritually

Ask for Divine help to let go of this drama!
Say the all-purpose forgiveness prayer or do your own devotional practice.
Prayer: *Spirit, please help me correct and heal the condition in my mind that is the cause of this fearful disturbance and help me forgive myself, and all concerned for not knowing any better.*

*PEMS Graphic by Stephenie Rockwell

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