

## Lesson 119: Bridging the Reactional Gap

When it comes to how people react to abrupt changes in their personal reality, especially when it involves a relationship, the range of mental and emotional difficulty experienced is as wide and as variable as the circumstances that triggered the change. Reactions set an invisible pendulum in motion that swings just as easily to the far left as it swings to the far right representing the various degrees of difficulty in response to the change, thus creating a gap between the distance of the swing and center. The degree of difficulty is always manifested in the consequent outcomes, positive or negative, desirable or undesirable. Unlike the swing of the pendulum, which represents the degree of difficulty and is where the gap exists, a centered pendulum represents mental stability and emotional balance, hence no reactional gap exist. The ability to center the pendulum or at least bring it closer to center depends on a number of internal influencing factors that when more closely examined can help bridge the reactional gap. Because these influences contribute to a wide range of mental and emotional reactions, from being minimally invasive, thus a quick or easy recovery to that of a mental breakdown and/or an emotional meltdown, the downhill slide can be a tumultuous experience as can the climb back. In more extreme cases, some people are so traumatized by the experience that they suffer from mild to severe symptoms of PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), such as bouts of depression, fatigue and other mild to severe physiological disorders. The effort it takes to bring the pendulum closer to center truly is a journey of self-discovery through self-introspection, especially when you don't know what to look for or where. The purpose of this lesson is to help you identify your own influencing factors, giving you something tangible to work with so that you can better understand the interacting roles they play in your reality when an abrupt change occurs, so that you can bridge the reactional gap.

Not everyone responds to abrupt changes in their reality the same way, as no two people have the same exact constitution. Character traits and personality make up a person's constitution that is as different from one person to another as day is to night. The word character comes from a Greek word meaning, "to stamp, engrave or inscribe" generally referred to as an impress on the soul. Thus, one's character is composed of innate traits, such as aptitudes, talents, temperament, disposition and tendencies accumulated from former lifetimes impressed, stamped, marked or inscribed into the subconscious memory. Although a person is born with these traits in place, they are molded and shaped by early in life experiences in response to environmental and other external stimuli carried into adulthood. Character traits can work for or against you, depending on whether or not they are modified, such as when talents, skills and abilities are further developed by training and education or are left undeveloped and/or suppressed. The same holds true for tendencies, which are a collective of set habits that include thought processes, feelings and emotions, perceptions, beliefs, and expectations, all of which either buildup or tear down your level of confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, in

addition to a host of other influences that collectively pre-determine how you will react to abrupt change.

Reactions to negative or positive external stimuli are dictated by all these various internal influences that with measures of self-introspection can be identified and modified where and when needed. Internal influences such as perceptions, beliefs, expectations, feelings and emotions, and most of all the level of your sensitivity all play an interacting role in how far from center your pendulum is bound to swing when unexamined, and therefore, left to its own devices. Thus, your reactions to an abrupt change in your reality will align in perfect proportion to all these determining influencing factors, most of which you are not consciously aware of because they are not always in plain sight. To find them you have to do a little internal digging, as many of them are habitual, stored in the subconscious. Left unexplored and unidentified you will continue reacting just as you already are as the result of all the various influencing factors interacting with one another, all playing a cause and effect role in your reality, collectively determining the swing of your mental and emotional pendulum. Self-introspection for the sake of examining these particular interacting influences is just the beginning of knowing what to look for and where.

Bridging the reactional gap begins with the realization that if your pendulum has swung too far from center, there is a mental and/or an emotional gap that does need to be bridged if for no other reason than for the sake of your own well-being, which should always be your main priority. In as much as wide swings are self-evident, it can be difficult to see the forest for the trees at the onset or in the midst of a personal crisis, especially when feelings run deep and emotions run high, and when perceptions tend to be somewhat distorted, thereby blocking mental clarity. Abrupt changes in your reality are not planned for events; they are sudden unexpected undesired unwelcomed jolts that can tear a rather large hole in the fabric of your reality. They can leave a marked impress on your psyche and they can alter certain character traits. The consequences are that if you are not equipped to manage the abrupt change, the mental and emotional fallout can actually be far worse than the event that triggered the change.

The moment an abrupt change begins to alter your reality, there comes a host of unknowns that if you are ill equipped to manage as they arise, makes bridging the reactional gap that much more difficult. Unknowns represent uncertainties that trigger confusion, anxiety and most especially fear – namely the fear of change, the fear of what the future holds and even worse is the fear of loss, which all by itself can be a devastating emotional and very crippling experience. Until all the unknowns are known, which does not happen at the onset of change, as these are things that rise to the surface over the course of time, your reality tends to be somewhat distorted and out of focus. An already undesirable situation is further compounded when your own personal needs, wants and desires get in the way to the extent that it prevents you from accepting the

change, whether the change is temporary or permanent. The loss of mental and/or emotional perspective keeps you focused outward on the problem instead of focused inward on the solution, which is where the center of your attention really needs to be. The focus of your attention is not easily directed where it should be, such as exploring solutions or better options, when your emotions are overtaking your mental faculties, which are also distorting your perceptions. There is no moving in a forward direction while focusing on the problem rather than the solution. The outward focus acts as an anchor, which just drags out the healing and recovery process, sometimes bringing it to a complete halt.

Change that is abruptly experienced, whether it is life altering or life changing, is not only threatening, it is also intimidating, especially when issues of self-worth and self-esteem rise up. Depending on the circumstances, change can leave you feeling helpless and out of control. A sudden shift in your reality can leave you stunned and dazed, not knowing what direction to turn in, much less know what you really need to accept other than the obvious, which is that your reality has been adversely affected by someone or something, as the case may be. All you know at the onset of an abrupt change is that the event caused a significant shift in your reality that you probably did not see coming, and were not prepared for in any manner of speaking. People are seldom prepared for significant shifts in their reality and are often thrown for a loop even more so when they cannot gather their wits.

As panic sets in, followed by shock and denial, your immediate response is to try to stop the change that threatens to turn your world upside down and inside out, which you are inclined to do by way of negotiation, even to begging and pleading out of desperation when pride takes a back seat. While such tactics may work some of the time, they do not work all the time, thus the efforts can backfire making matters much worse. When your immediate response fails to produce the desired results, your next response is to try to reverse the change in an attempt to bring your reality back to where it was prior to the change, if for no other reason than the fact that change is uncomfortable, undesirable and sometimes downright scary. Change triggers fear, such as the fear of letting go of something or someone that you do not want to let go of or the fear of losing someone or something you cannot bear to lose. Your automatic fight or flight instincts kicks in. You do everything you can to circumvent the change to avoid the discomfort and the emotional pain that so often comes with an undesirable shift in your reality, especially one that results in a significant personal loss, magnified more so when the change threatens to be permanent, such as the collapse of a relationship.

Depending on the circumstances, you may be forced to accept the change that has occurred in your reality because the event itself has altered your reality in such a way that is not reversible, not initially and perhaps not at all. Finality is a condition not easily accepted; it is like the proverbial horse pill one swallows down hard. This is

especially true when someone, acting on free will for any number of reasons, makes a choice that adversely affects your reality and is not willing to reverse that choice, whether right away, sometime down the road or perhaps not at all. When you are left out of the decision making process and a choice has been forced upon you, leaves you feeling as though you suddenly stopped existing, making it even more difficult to accept a change that you had no say in. An abrupt change not only alters your reality, it creates a significant shift in your day-to-day affairs. You may feel lost, disoriented and uprooted, and nothing about your reality looks or feels the same. You may be expected to act as though accepting the change in your reality is just a walk in the park, act as if it has no effect on you and is something you should do with the greatest of ease. Nike's slogan, "just do it" doesn't hold a lot of clout at the onset of an abrupt change or in the midst of a personal crisis. The question in such instances is "do what?" because there is always that element of uncertainty, as things are not always crystal clear, such as what choices and decisions need to be made that are in your best interest and when. People are not inclined to stop life on a dime nor do they suddenly turn their reality in some other direction in the blink of an eye. It takes time to adjust to the change and time to adjust to the loss when there is a loss, which doesn't magically dissipate. New choices and decisions have to be made, sometimes on the spot and sometimes further down the road. Loss is often reevaluated as one counts the cost later on, as opposed to how it looks and feels initially.

Sometimes acceptance hinges on just being heard, but sometimes being heard is not possible because the other person involved, when this is the case, does not hear you or does not want to hear you. In the case of the latter, when the decision has been made and is deemed non-negotiable, means it will not be retracted in spite of any negotiations nor any amount of begging or pleading. That person's point of view is that the decision stands as is; therefore, no more be said. From that perspective, you simply no longer exist. The need to be heard often means turning to others for advice, which is sometimes risky business. When seeking advice from a non-professional, it is wise to remember that family and friends are not professionals. Thus, the advice they give is generally biased in keeping with their own feelings, beliefs, perceptions and expectations. Above all, there is always a desire to communicate what they think they would do if they were standing in your shoes, which is not what they would do if they were actually standing in your shoes because their constitution, among other things is not the same as yours. Though they genuinely mean well, the advice given runs the risk of not being helpful, not to mention it can cause a rift between you and those who are doing their best to be supportive of you. When doling out constructive criticism, there is always the risk of resistance and feelings can be easily hurt, especially when family or friends feel backed into a corner and feel they have to choose sides or are compelled to say things you really do not want to hear. Some things are said from a position of truth and sometimes it's from their own perspectives, which does not make it factual or helpful. When it comes

to family, there is an automatic bias built in. The rule of thumb is that blood runs thicker than water – always.

Acceptance under extreme circumstances is difficult at best, but is even more compounded when things like shock, denial, fear, confusion, anger, frustration and mistrust take hold of your heightened senses, adding to the stress that already has a tight grip on you. As is always the case, hindsight is such perfect vision, but what if you could just see everything upfront, know where to find the answers and be aware of all the things you need to know at the time you need to know them. How different the situation that has thrown you and your reality for a loop would look from a different perspective or point of view if it could make everything appear crystal clear. You would know right away what direction to go in and what choices and decisions would be wise to make at the time that are not going to come back to haunt you later down the road because you've reacted versus being proactive, thus bringing even more undesirable consequences into a situation that is already difficult enough. The much needed antidote to confusion and uncertainty is clarity of mind, which enables you to see the things you really need to see at the time you need to see them and brings the answers to your awareness in such a way that you may find yourself whispering under your breath, well duh, that was easy. However, this too is a process because there are other influences at work behind the scenes that need to be examined before fully bridging the reactionary gap.

Clarity of mind is the fruit of self-discipline, and is relative to the level of emotional maturity, confidence, knowledge, wisdom and insight you currently possess. Each of these influences interact with one another and collectively determines how you will react when personal circumstances in your life suddenly change, especially when the change is significant, such as when it is a life altering experience or is the result of a life-changing event. These influences act as determining factors, directing the flow of your attention, inward or outward, which also determines how well you cope, accept and adapt to change in the way it has impacted your reality. These same interacting influences also determine the choices and decisions you make thereafter and even determine where you go from there. Thus, bridging the reactionary gap means examining each one of these influences at close range.

Just as self-discipline clears the path for clarity of mind, which enables you to stay focused on the right things; it also increases the level of your emotional maturity, which in turn increases your level of confidence as you start to see the positive results. The benefit of broadening your scope of knowledge is that it too increases your level of confidence, which in turn increases your emotional maturity. Taken a step further is that when you factor in the benefits of firsthand experience, which really is the best teacher of all, your scope of knowledge, wisdom and insight increases substantially. When it comes to understanding the role these influencing factors play in your reality, is

that there are no separations and no straight lines, the flow between every single influence moves continuously in an interacting circular fashion. Thus, the combination of all these influences working in tandem with one another increases the level of your self-discipline, emotional maturity, confidence, knowledge, wisdom and insight proportionate to the investment you make in yourself, all of which do their part to help bridge the reactionary gap.

An unexpected abrupt jolt in your personal reality is further compounded when the focus of your attention is directed outward on the problem rather than inward on the solution. The result is that you end up struggling to accept things that you really do not need to accept, rather than focusing on the things you really do need to accept. Besides being an emotional uphill battle, the futile effort depletes your mental energy and saps your physical strength. Time out for some much-needed self-introspection is worth the effort. It directs the focus of your attention on the right things, which is self-evident because it moves you in a forward direction, which is a visible and tangible accomplishment. Focusing on the wrong things not only keeps you stuck in a mental emotional rut, doing so blocks the healing and recovery process and disables you from moving forward with your life - qualitatively speaking. It stands to reason that focusing on the right things isn't just half the battle, it's the whole battle and it can be won, but first you may have to win a few internal wars with yourself before you can win the battle and bridge the reactionary gap.

It is difficult to imagine when you are in the midst of a personal crisis that everything really is okay and that you are okay, even though you do not feel okay because something about your reality is not okay and maybe you don't know exactly what you need to do, should do or can do to fix it. Regardless of what anyone else says, the fact that you are the one experiencing the undesirable change in your reality is all the confirmation you need to validate that neither you nor your reality is okay. However, as things are seldom as they appear on the surface, the fact that you do not have a sense of well-being does not imply that you are not okay. It's just that you haven't arrived at that pivotal moment when you realize that you really are okay and that you've been okay all along, but just didn't know it until you discovered that you really were okay. Sounds confusing and contradictory to say the least, but a time will come when you will experience this astounding moment and then promptly lose the sense of being okay, regain it back only to lose it again. This fluctuation will go on until the idea of being okay becomes habitual, when you no longer *think* you are okay; you *know* that you are okay, when you see the evidence that hey, you really are okay. Even more surprising is when you discover that you really were okay all along even though it sure didn't feel like it.

As intimidating and as threatening as change is, an abrupt change in your reality brings with it the potential to chart a new course, sometimes mapping a new direction in your

life. Change is very often the catalyst that triggers the inflow of new possibilities, opens the door to new opportunities that otherwise would not have opened. Acceptance of the right things helps to bring a much-needed change in direction into focus, sometimes it's a change you didn't even know you needed or could benefit from. The problem is that these life-altering revelations usually occur over the course of time, and that it requires patience and self-discipline, which of course is always much easier said than done, before a new sense of direction or a new path opens up. Practice does make perfect when it comes to wining these internal wars and eventually winning the battle too. The bigger surprise is that when the battle finally comes to its long awaited end, it turns out to be a very different battle than what you initially thought at the onset of the abrupt change. Turns out the battle had more to do with you than it did with someone or something else because the battle was more internal than it was external. When all is said and done and the dust finally settles, the only real thing you were able to fix is yourself. Self-introspection, as difficult and as grueling as it can be, bridges the reactional gap.

And speaking of time...do not underestimate the power of time. Although it may seem as if time is standing still because the crisis in your life just never seems to end, time is not the enemy. Time is really your friend. Time can and will do for you what you cannot and sometimes will not do for yourself. Time brings answers where no answers are found. In fact, time doesn't just bring answers to the surface of your awareness; time brings the right answers at the right time. Time brings relief in the way you need to experience that measure of relief. The things you need to accept become very apparent, and when this occurs, acceptance of the right things is effortless. Time also moves you along the path of healing and recovery, brings closure where and how closure is needed and can close the wounds, albeit it not all wounds because some wounds never really heal, but time can make some wounds more bearable and even heal or mend a broken heart. Time doesn't necessarily bring back the dreams that were shattered, the memories that never happened or the goals that were not achieved, but time can bring new dreams to realize and new goals to achieve. Time gives you a new purpose in life and a new mission to fulfill. These positive shifts in your reality are usually subtle, they just sort of flow in gently, almost without notice. Although they may not come right away, do not give up because the things you never thought were possible, time makes possible and even then some.

There is something to be said about right knowledge. With time comes the potential for new discoveries that explain important things about the nature of your personal reality, about yourself and even about others that can put a very different spin on the abrupt change that occurred in your reality, which makes it much easier to accept. Sometimes these discoveries appear to have nothing to do with one another. They can appear as if they are separate or isolated discoveries, having no bearing on one another. However, each discovery made weaves a thread through the fabric of your reality that over time

strengthens the fabric of your reality. The pitfall is in thinking that every time a new discovery is made, the effort marks the end of your journey of self-discovery and self-introspection and that it will be smooth sailing from there on because there just couldn't be anything else left to discover. Not so fast, the story is never over until it is over. You aren't perfect and until you reach the level of Buddha, Krishna or Christ-like perfection, there will always be more things to discover and many more things to learn. Every discovery adds a new colored thread that when woven together with all the other colored threads paints a much bigger picture that over time more clearly depicts the nature of your personal reality. No one comes into life knowing everything there is to know nor does anyone ever leave knowing everything there is to know in the span of one lifetime. Knowledge is an ongoing process that spans across many lifetimes. Every discovery you make and every new thing you learn is significant and together they tell your story. The effort of time spent in self-introspection pays well in returns, as more and more things about yourself, your reality and even some important things about others is put in perspective. Knowledge explains the unexplainable and makes sense of the insensible, which plays an important role in bridging the reactional gap. Sometimes no answers are answers, as some things are best left unsaid or unknown.

Because life is not relegated to a one-size fits all journey, no two paths are ever the same, thus, self-discovery and self-introspection is a very personalized experience. The answers you are seeking may not necessarily be the same answers someone else is seeking or even need for that matter, as no two circumstances are ever exactly alike even though they may share some common threads. Your feelings are your measuring stick. They let you know when something about yourself or your reality is out of alignment with the things you are trying to accept or overcome. This is an especially rough road to hoe when they are not necessarily the things you really need to accept or overcome at the time or are things you are resisting, even more reason for self-introspection. Many well-intended self-help books or other healing methodologies, spiritual or conventional often fail to deliver lasting results, if they deliver any real results at all because there truly is no one size fits all methodology or set standards when it comes to how a person copes with an abrupt change. There are just too many internal influences that need to be examined before the pendulum can be brought to center. It takes time to uncover them and time to process, assimilate and integrate them into the fabric of your reality. Thus, there are no quick fixes and no overnight successes. Attempts to side step, ignore, bypass or deny the presence of these influences does not change a single thing internally; neither does it change very much externally, except that things can worsen. Whether you work with a trained professional or work through it on your own, self-discovery takes time, patience and a consortium of sources and resources to help you pinpoint all the influences that are collectively playing an interactive role, determining how you will react to an abrupt change in your reality.

In closing, we hope that we have brought as many influencing factors to your awareness as is possible, given all the many variables, which are endless. The intent was to cover as many bases as possible to help you identify internal influences that are operating internally, which pre-determines how you will react to abrupt changes in your reality, but when identified and modified as need be will help make the transition through an abrupt change in your reality, whether now or in the future much smoother. The ultimate reward is that you will have bridged your own reactional gap.

Many Blessings, Recovery and Healing,

Linda, Z and the Collective We