

Be Responsive, Not Reactive

by Jeremiah Gruenberg

It is more productive to be *responsive*, rather than *reactive*. When we choose to be responsive, we are empowered. When we allow ourselves to be reactive, we are victims of our untamed thoughts and feelings.

Reactive action is:

- ◆ Not thought out
- ◆ Emotionally charged
- ◆ Usually immediate (short-term vision)
- ◆ Based primarily on emotion and negative past experience
- ◆ Blind to the needs of others

Responsive action is:

- ◆ Intentional (thought out)
- ◆ Measured
- ◆ Goal-oriented (long-term vision)
- ◆ Motivated by values and principles
- ◆ Aware of the needs of others

How to be creatively responsive:

1. Analyze and understand your reaction(s). Take a moment to be honest and reflective. What is your reaction to this situation? Why are you reacting in this way? What are the emotions or past experiences that immediately motivate you in this situation?
2. Put aside this reaction for a moment. Call your initial reaction “choice #1.” You can always come back to this first choice if you need to.
3. Review your personal values and guiding universal principles. What are the factors that *should* motivate you in this situation? Write them out if you need to.
4. What are the long-term goals involved in this situation?
5. Formulate a response that is informed by your values, principles, and goals. This is “choice #2.”
6. Compare your reaction (choice #1) to your response (choice #2). Which one is stronger?
7. Execute the best choice in a thoughtful manner.

Need consulting, coaching, or speaking on this topic?

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