

Paul Solomon Lectures

Emotions

WORKING WITH NINE-STEP PROCESS FOR MASTERING EMOTIONS

AN EXAMPLE

SITUATION: A mother relates the following story: “My son just graduated from high school and didn’t have a date for the prom. A girl asked him if he had a date. He said, “Yes, I do, but my date is sick.” The young girl turned to him and said, “Well, you are so ugly. I can’t imagine why anybody would want to go to the prom with you anyway.”

The mother is putting her emotional reaction through the Nine-Step Process.

STEP 1. RECOGNIZE YOU ARE BEING EMOTIONAL

Guide: The child has described to you a situation in which he felt victimized by someone else’s remark. When you heard that, you felt compassion for the child. Where does that express in your body?

Mother: I felt my facial muscles tighten and there was a tingling feeling in the solar plexus area. After a few moments my shoulder muscles tightened.

STEP 2. LABEL THE EMOTION NEGATIVELY

Mother: I am reacting to this as if my son were a genuine victim. My reaction is teaching him that we are all victims in this universe. My reaction is one of believing that I am impotent and helpless in this situation and probably that he is, too. The emotions were affirming a faith in evil (fear), and of denying responsibility for my feelings (hurt)

STEP 3. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR EMOTION

Mother: I have a number of choices in how to respond. The one I chose was based on fear. I take responsibility for my emotion.

STEP 4. IDENTIFY THE CATALYST

Mother: My son telling his story.

Guide: In this case the catalyst was not what the little girl said to her son, but his telling of the story to his mother. She would never have been affected by what was done unless he had told it to her.

STEP 5. IDENTIFY THE CAUSE

Guide: Remember, the cause is always one or more beliefs.

Mother: The cause of my reactions are two beliefs:

1. I am impotent in a situation in which words that are powerful enough to hurt have been aimed at my child.
2. I believed that my child was impotent in the situation.

STEP 6. IS THE BELIEF VALID? DOES IT SERVE YOU?

Mother: The belief is not valid at all. They are not serving my child or myself in this situation. They have caused a reaction of fear on my part.

Guide: First is the belief that the little girl saying such a thing to her son can hurt him. If the mother holds a belief that I can hurt, he is going to respond with deep hurt. Obviously he has responded in that way because he is pouring out his hurt to his mother. That is his belief as well. If the mother reinforces this belief by saying, "Yes, that is a terrible thing, and yes, I understand why it has caused you deep hurt and, that sort of thing does have the ability to cause you deep hurt, then the mother has reinforced an invalid belief that her son holds.

STEP 7 IDENTIFY THE CARROT

Mother: There are probably two carrots to my having an emotional response. One, is that I want him to know that I love him and two, I want to show him that love by being as deeply hurt as he is. When he is hurt, that hurt is something to be shared in the family.

Guide: It may seem like a strange carrot that says it is good to come to your mother when you are hurt because it makes her feel useful. In fact, a mother can even take pride at being hurt at an outrageous situation happening to her child. It provides an opportunity to express love, which, when you look at it, is an irrational belief and an irrational carrot.

STEP 8 DID YOU GET YOUR CARROT?

Guide: What was the cause/effect relationship? Did you get your carrot?

Mother: It seems like it did.

Guide: Do you really want that carrot? Do you want to be a person to whom he can come when he is hurt to be nursed, or do you want to reinforce his strength so he doesn't need to come to you? That can be a real dilemma for a mother. Do you want to reinforce the son's belief that he is a victim so that he will always come when he is hurt or do you want to change your carrot so that if that particular situation ever happens to him again, you wouldn't even know about it?

STEP 9. NEW RESPONSE

Guide: What would be a better response?

Mother: I don't want to teach him to be a victim, but I really don't know how I could respond more appropriately.

Guide: First, here is a girl who obviously was hoping for a date, a girl who was hurting inside and was forcing herself to overcome her hurt. She pushed herself to hint to a young man that she was available by asking if he had a date. When he said he did, but the date was not coming the girl felt rejected, hurt, and embarrassed, so she lashed out. She had to say that for her own pride. If he could have realized that what she said had nothing to do with his looks, and as a matter of fact, she paid him quite a compliment. He could be helped to see that there was no need for his feelings to be hurt at all. It should have been the opposite. His manhood, his pride, his self-confidence should have been reinforced by what that girl did. At the same time, it gave him the opportunity to be a healer for a girl who was hurting, for him and for her. The appropriate response was compassion for the girl, rather than hurt for

her son. When you first begin to do the Nine-Step Process, it might take a bit longer to work out your beliefs and your carrots, you will soon be able to see through your own negative emotions to the beliefs that are causing them just as quickly as in the above process. Once this is accomplished, you will soon be able to go directly from Step 1 to Step 9.

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