



EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: RESPONDING NOT REACTING

We have all had experiences where our leader, boss, or senior management team has done something or said something that triggers anger in us and causes us to want to “act out” – maybe even quit. Most of the time, when feelings are acted out, people get hurt.

Here are some things *not* to do when triggered:

1. Talk too much about it without considering about whom – or *to* whom – you are speaking.
2. Make decisions with incomplete, imperfect, or filtered information. You may have misunderstood the message from the other party. Go for clarity.
3. Take action without thinking – no knee-jerk response, please.
4. Have a short-term attitude. Don't do something that is the equivalent of shooting yourself in the foot.
5. Turn to band-aids like food or alcohol.
6. Ignore it, wall-paper over it, bury it – whatever it was, it will not magically vanish.

Here are seven actions you *can* take to ensure that you have the best outcome when you feel your situation is hopeless.

1. Privately and honestly **explore why you are upset**. Were you ignored or left out? Were you treated disrespectfully? Did someone fail to credit you/credit someone else for your work or efforts? Ask yourself, “Why am I so angry?”
2. Once you know the honest answer to the first question, consider what actions you should take, if any. **Stay calm and plan** a grown-up, adaptive response. That response could be doing nothing, talking to an ombudsman or similar individual, moving on, or having a conversation with the person who triggered you.
3. **Utilize healthy outlets** to provide distance and perspective and to restore equanimity – outlets such as vigorous exercise, reading a good book, going out with friends, or taking a walk.
4. **Take advantage of sounding boards** – “safe” people to talk with while you're sorting things out.
5. **Write yourself a letter or story**. Get it all out – put all of your feelings (and why) on paper. Just do it in a confidential environment (e.g., not at work, not on a corporate network!). Rage if you have to – no one is going to see this but you.
6. **Figure out what your interests really are**. That will drive your plan (see #2 above).
7. **Figure out what the other party's interests are**. This may open up dialogue with them and drive your plan or strategy for implementing that plan.

You do not have to be the victim of your own response. You can choose responses that are healthy and that will further your interests without damaging anyone including yourself.

Have you ever reacted to emotional triggers in a premature, immature way? What was the outcome? In retrospect what do you wish you had done? Are there people on your staff you need to coach on this?