

***Connecting or Disconnecting  
Constructive or Destructive  
Effective or Ineffective***

We are doing one or the other; learn to verbally acknowledge the above dynamic when you sense this happening. When this happens, learn to *stop, acknowledge* the disconnect, take a *time-out, regroup*, and begin again. It is critical to be aware when you are becoming very hurt, fearful, or angry – if you continue it only gets worse before it gets better.

Agree / Disagree + Right / Wrong + Fair / Unfair = Winner / Loser

***Cause / Affect***

***React vs Respond*** – in all situations, in any moment, we are either *reactive* or *responsive*. When we react to *what we think* we hear and see without confirming the other person’s meaning, conflict begins and usually escalates into argument. Rather than focusing on the issues at hand, we react to protect our feelings, perceptions, expectations, and self-worth. When we feel attacked, even if only because someone does not see our point, we go into our automatic coping cycle of *defending* instead of dealing with self, other, and context.

When we get into difficulties, we usually are stuck at the content level and in convoluted ways are really expressing “You did this or that (attack), and you shouldn’t have (judgment).” The whole cycle of right and wrong, fair and unfair, gets triggered once the reactive self-defense pattern is in process. To break this defensive pattern and understand someone’s communication, we need to look at that person’s *intent*. The content only provides the context in which the self’s and other’s *needs* are met or not.

When we react to a situation, our feelings and inner interpretations usually reflect past experiences. Whatever hurt, fear, and anger we have stored within may be triggered by our current encounters. Early learning’s, history, feelings, and coping patterns are all sorted, coded, and recorded in our neurophysiology. When we feel punched in the stomach by a word, a sensation, a sound, a picture, a taste, or a smell, we usually react to it with our old ways of coping.

***We reap what we sow*** - Realize that we affect and influence each other – *period*. We’re often very aware of how we’re affected yet we need to realize just as much our part in the way we affect each other. Also realize that we affect in ways that determines how well we’ll be understood, appreciated and cared for. If you *react* / sow with anger, expect to reap anger. If you *respond* / sow with love, you have greater potential to reap understanding.

***Timing & Approach*** – Is this a *good time* to talk? Approach is very subtle – it’s about the *manner* and *tone* in which we express our self.

***Perception of the Other*** - takes trust to share and be open to the other’s perception of self. As the old saying goes, “no one likes criticism” – yet on the other hand, though potentially painful, being able to receive personal feedback can be one of the more profounder areas of growth and healing if done with sensitivity and love.

*It’s all choice...*

