

Keeping your “Cool”

Ask your self this question: “Am I able to remain detached when somebody else is angry or argues with me?”

If you are like most people, your answer is not only no, but HECK NO!

When you are emotional, what are you listening to? Where is your attention? Is it on the other person? Nope. You are listening to the dinosaur in your head screaming phrases like: “How DARE they say that to ME?” “They’re calling me STUPID!” “She’s ATTACKING me!” “I’ve got to defend myself!”

When you are listening to the beast in your brain babbling, you cannot stay neutral. Your body receives a command to flood with adrenaline, preparing for “fight or flight”. You are primed for action, not thinking, or speaking rationally.

So how do we get the little voice to shut up? Well, the bad news is, you can’t. The good news, however, is that with practice, you can turn down the volume and allow the rational part of your brain the space to work in.

First step – breathe. Inhale deeply, fill to your belly button. Then exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat at least 3 times. You need to get oxygen into your brain to replace some of the adrenaline that is rushing all over.

Next, shift your body into neutral. If sitting, uncross arms & legs. Put your feet flat on the floor. If standing, make sure you are balanced on both feet, get your arms down by your sides. Unclench your fists. Uncross your arms. Unclench your jaw. And keep breathing.

Listen to the dinosaur brain screaming in the background, but do not believe it. Just notice it. Then practice a neutral response, such as:

“I’m astounded! I cannot respond rationally right now. Let me get back to this in a few minutes”

or

“I have no idea how to respond to that”

or

“I’m so shocked at what was just said, I have to think about how I want to respond.”

Or

“Rather than say something I will regret later, I want some time to think about what I am going to say.”

Notice how these statements do not intensify any crisis, but give both you and the other party time to cool down and think (not feel) before you speak. Your feelings may still want to rip someone’s face off, but your intentionally calming actions – breathing and relaxing – and neutral statements will not leave them in control.