

Personal Mastery

By Jennifer Sohn

www.jennifersohn.com

Personal Mastery Choice and Responsibility

We create our own reality. Those who live in the **Reactive Domain** look for unfriendly sources to blame. Bullies enjoy pushing their weight around to get control, and victims shut down. Those who live in the **Interdependent Domain**, however, realize that we need a human network to be an effective organization and to be our best selves. We can't "do it" alone, and though we can't always control what goes on in the organization and in our personal lives, we can choose to take responsibility and create meaningful connections, even when we're dealing with difficult people. When we choose to take responsibility, we impact our world in profound ways. Take a look at the following beliefs that underlie personal mastery.

- We create our own reality.
 - We choose how we view the world, others, and ourselves.
 - Our view of reality, like everyone else's, is based solely on our limited experiences, and is therefore flawed.
 - No two people can possibly see any one thing in exactly the same way.
 - We can't always control circumstances, but we have total control over how we respond to the events and the people in our lives.
 - We are completely responsible for our responses and behavior.
 - We are not responsible for how others respond or behave. We can, however, create an atmosphere of trust and interdependence by how we respond to problems and people.
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Emotional Intelligence

The emotionally intelligent person recognizes that first reactions and gut responses are misleading and can lead us astray. We must, therefore, ride herd on our emotional responses by doing the following:

Monitor your reactions.

- Monitor our reactions. When confronted with anger, fear, or any negative emotional response, ask
 - What is causing my reaction?
 - On what assumptions am I basing my fear or anger?
 - What from my own past is triggering my reaction?
 - Am I trying to impose "shoulds" and "oughts" on another person?
 - How can I accept the other person even when he/she is behaving outside of my value system?
 - What is my role in what is happening?
 - What can I do to make it better?

Let go.

- Take a deep breath and let go of the thing that has gripped you. LET IT GO. Most of the time, it-whatever IT is- doesn't matter. Since you are not responsible for how another person acts, you do not have to carry their baggage.

Choose your response.

- Choose to be the emotionally intelligent participant in any interaction (as opposed to the one who is defensive or smugly superior).

Anger and Acceptance

Anger is **NEVER** about what is happening at the moment. It is **ALWAYS** about something from your past. Anger usually comes from one of two sources:

- Fear of losing control.
- Fear of looking bad.

Consider that when you let anger take over, you are giving away your power and credibility. You appear out of control. You broadcast your vulnerabilities. In some cases, you may even appear ridiculous, especially to those who see you come unglued on a regular basis. Instead of spending your limited energy in a nonproductive way, try the following:

Take back your power.

- Take back your power. As soon as the adrenalin kicks in, take a few deep breaths and ask the questions listed above, especially the following:
 - What is my role in this?
 - What can I do to make it better?

REMEMBER: It's your choice. When things are at their worst, CHOOSE to be at your best.

Depersonalize.

- Choose to depersonalize. It's not about you or even them. As long as you personalize a situation, someone, usually everyone, will lose. Instead, focus on the issue or situation. Focus on solving the problem.

Get rid of your defensive filters.

- Recognize your own defensive filters and assumptions. Filters come from your past experience with a situation or person. You may be saying to yourself – He never listens; he has to take credit for everything; she's always undermining everything I do. These filters and assumptions are never helpful or productive. When you respond from your defensive listening and assumptions, you are not solving problems in a productive way. **LET GO OF YOUR FILTERS AND ASSUMPTIONS** and focus on the issue.

Lock up Hot Buttons

- Identify your hot buttons. Put them in lock position. Letting people push your buttons sets you back a couple of decades and lowers your IQ and your EQ (emotional quotient). **CHOOSE** to remain focused on the issue.

Let go of expectations.

- Let go of expectations. They will kill you. The minute you expect others to behave or think as you do, you eliminate the hope of healthy interactions. People behave as they do, not as you do. **We perceive the differences we see in others as flaws and afflictions instead of simply differences. You will find a huge weight has been lifted from your shoulders when you let go of your need to control other people.**

Accept people for who they are, no matter how badly (you think) they behave.

- Accept people and situations at face value. As hard as it may seem to accept people who appear to be undermining your efforts or sabotaging your success, you will find that **YOUR** acceptance of **THEM** creates a whole new possibility for moving forward. Your **ACCEPTANCE** gives you back your power and gives them **PERMISSION** to trust you.

Be generous with people.

- Accept that other people are struggling with their own worries over failing, losing control, or looking bad. View their issues in terms of the human struggle and be as generous with them as you hope they will be with you.

Possibilities

Honor The Ten Gold Commitments

Personal mastery occurs when you create possibilities for healthy interactions and positive relationships, no matter what the other person chooses for him or herself. Consider the following **Ten Gold Commitments**:

- I will live in integrity whether or not others keep their word.
- I will keep my cool when others are losing theirs.
- I will trust in others even when they seem suspicious of me.
- I will stay open when others are shutting down.
- I will share information when others are hoarding it.
- I will choose to live abundantly even if those around me are choosing scarcity.
- I will depersonalize interactions even when others are making things personal.
- I will choose the interdependent mode over the reactionary mode.
- I will remain objective when others are becoming protective and territorial.
- I will live responsibly regardless of how others choose to live.

Recommended Reading

Learn more about

- **Personal Mastery** by reading **The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook**, Peter Senge, et.al. (particularly, the chapters on Intrapersonal Mastery, Mental Models, and Protocols for Balancing Advocacy and Inquiry).
 - **Emotional Intelligence** by reading **Working with Emotional Intelligence** by Daniel Goleman.
 - **Choosing your reactions and behavior** by reading **Choice Theory** by William Glasser.
 - **Depersonalizing** by reading **The Four Agreements** by Don Miguel Ruiz.
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Jennifer Sohn

Ph: (360) 699-4636 Fax: (360) 699-4649

jennifer@jennifersohn.com

www.jennifersohn.com