

REACTION VERSE RESPONSE IN CHANGING TIMES



When we don't know what end is up or what move to take next because the future holds little promise of a definitive result, what do you do? How do you respond? This seems to be the question marked by current times. Let's ask ourselves how have we handled the events that 2020 provoked, everything from the virus, rioting, politics agendas to crime in our streets. These were things we never thought we'd experience in our lifetime, yet we have.

So the question is, where has your mind and mental health been during these troubling times? Would you say you rode the current rollercoaster of emotions, sometimes up and sometimes down? Allowing yourself to be swept up in whatever current that moment presented?

There is a lot to say about taking your power back during times of conflict, confusion and uncertainty. The choice is ours. But the question remains, what do we do to ensure our decisions in such instances are the best they can be? Have you done your due diligence to allow the space and breath to make good sound choices?

So let's begin by seeing the bigger picture and better understanding how our mind responds when we can't seem to see beyond or directly in front of us. When things get confusing or overwhelming for many, human nature typically does nothing. Yes exactly that, nothing. What does that look like? Often when we are presented with a bombardment of unexpected events or emotions beyond what we imagine as possible, our sensory overload is overwhelmed. When that happens, many people shut down and close up because our mind is in overdrive. Other times, our response comes too quickly and a knee-jerk reaction is to get out of dodge. Our defense mechanism kicks in as a protective measure. This tool can be good to help balance the intense influx of energy. However, when that happens, rather than closing off for a long period of time and avoiding the obvious, we can set a timeframe for our mind and body to take a breath and get our arms around the situation. Allowing the mind and body to sync is imperative in navigating choppy waters with clear eyes.

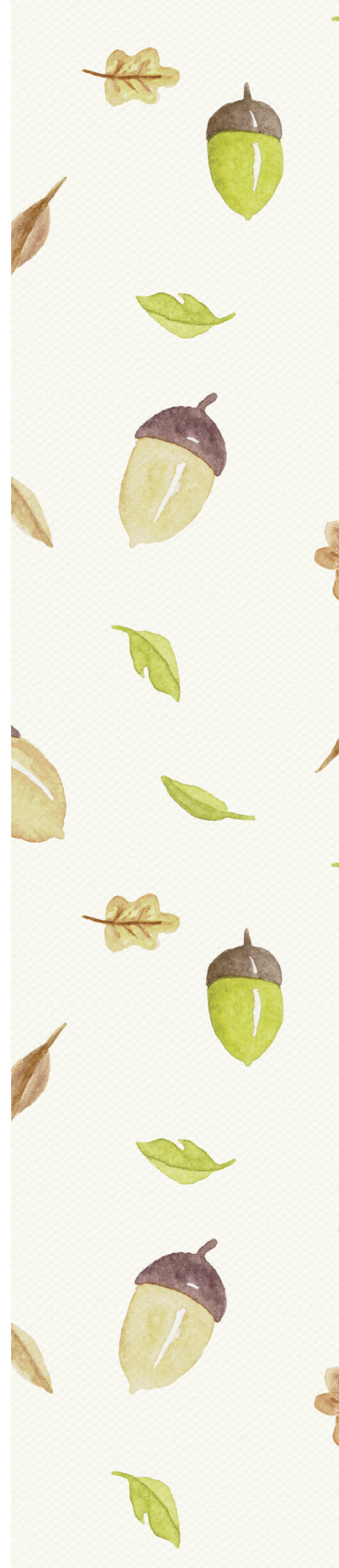
It's helpful to know that we have two major ways we can respond to what suddenly shows up at our door (unexpectedly), either Respond or React. What's really important is to take note that regardless of what is going on remember that there's never a good decision made under pressure or fear. Most sound decisions come after we have had a moment to calibrate with the situation, think, prepare and then weigh the choices before deciding on our actions. Responding instead of reacting showcases control and peace. How do we get to that place when our autonomic reflex is to react? First, we must understand the differences between the two.

Type of Responses:

1. **Taking your time to look at all side of the issue before quickly jumping to a decision. We connect to ourselves in this moment and look inside to find the answers.**
2. **Create a list and write down the pros and cons of each item. Take note of how both sides affect you: emotionally and physically specifically observing how they make you feel.**

Types of Reactions:

1. **Fight or Flight is often spawned from fear.**
2. **The opposite of fear occurs when we paralyze our brain, freeze us from making any decisions.**
3. **Making a rash decision without thinking about all sides of the equation or the long term affects. We simply make a decision on the fly and go with it.**



Ways to Stay in Balance:

- 1. First, begin with a blank canvas, check your preconceived notions at the door.**
- 2. The minute you want to say or do something: Stop, Breathe and Imagine a clean slate.**
- 3. Put on your investigative and creative hats to drift through the mental fatigue, impulse and strain of it all. Here are a few simple tools we can pull out and utilize anytime to help get us over the hurdle.**
 - **Step 1.** Think outside the box. Don't use the same old patterns, behaviors or what you typically fall back on; instead, take this time as an opportunity to understand your response(s). In other words, do not feel rushed to take action. Allow yourself a little time to get your head around the scenario and sit with it for a day or two. Remember the old saying "sleep on it"? This is great advice as we often find a fresh new perspective when we have had a moment to "live with it". However, it is important set a timeframe for yourself.
 - **Step 2.** Assess the situation. Be brutally and lovingly discerning and honest with yourself and know what's what. It's easy to get caught up in the fear and urgency pushed on by the media or worried individuals. What we need to remember is that the pendulum swings both ways and wide. Gather perspective and assess the situation from all sides. See what is being said outside the lens of fear, confusion, worry or the doom-and-gloom approach. This never makes for good problem solving. In fact, the realization of being in limbo can be more devastating than actually the news or issue itself. Have you ever watched a horror film? How often is the suspense of the impending doom more scary than the actual reveal of the danger? Nine times out of ten our mind plays a significant role in creating the added drama. The moment there is unsettled feelings, uncertainty or confusion about the future, our mind goes into a tailspin. What I mean is, we begin living in "fear" of the worse case scenario which creates all sorts of false narratives. This brings us further away from making concrete and sound decisions. Our job is to understand this phenomenon and mitigate the collateral damage when we are living or thinking from this space.
 - **Step 3.** Once you have done your investigative analysis, see what comes up more commonly for you. What we have to remember is that peace comes when we find the balance of response as opposed to reaction.

In times of stress, we often forget to stop before responding. This is called reaction. Instead, what I tell my coaching clients is to grab a piece of paper and jot down your choices, before verbalizing them and moving in either direction. This helps us identify the benefits and drawbacks before putting them into action. Most importantly, ask yourself: if I choose "X" how does that make me feel. If I choose "Y" what are the results and How does it benefit my life or others? If it doesn't make you feel happy, excited, or open then STOP and realize something needs to be adjusted in how you are perceiving the situation.

As we enter Autumn, we should strive to mirror nature's rhythm of feeling grounded and safe. We can achieve this through responding instead of reacting. Taking the time to form our thoughts and course of action allows us to discern the old and the new and the nutrients from the waste. Ultimately, this allows us to let go of the our old beliefs and patterns and make loving space for the new.

