

Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace

How to control your reactions
and respond effectively



Program Workbook

Video Session 3

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Part 3

Change Your Story, Change Your Reaction

Video Session 3

I woke up with a start and immediately felt deeply anxious as I realized my alarm hadn't gone off and I was an hour late to an important meeting! Then I put on my glasses and realized I had misread the clock and it was actually two hours earlier than I had thought. In the space of a single moment, I went from feeling deeply anxious to feeling relieved and delighted I could go back to sleep! The clock hadn't changed. It was my interpretation of what I thought I saw that created my different emotional reactions.

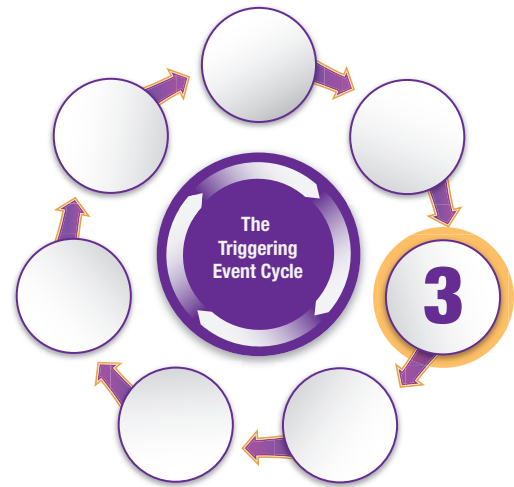
In every situation we make up a "story" about what we think is happening. Our story creates our feelings, physiological "warning signs" that we are triggered, and our thoughts about ourselves and others. If we change our story, we change our reactions.

In this module you will practice shifting your initial story and changing your automatic emotions, thoughts, and physical reactions.

Step 3: Change Your Reaction by Shifting Your Story

Shifting your interpretation results in your feeling less triggered and opens up energy and space to choose a productive response.

Directions: Reflect on the following prompts as you write about a recent difficult situation.



Describe “just the facts” of the situation, the circumstances.



What did you make it mean? What “story” did you make up about what you thought was happening?



What retriggered intrapersonal roots may have fueled your interpretation?



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When you thought this initial story:

➤ What were your feelings?



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➤ What were your physiological reactions?



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And what thoughts did you have about:

➤ Yourself?



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➤ Others?



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➤ The situation?



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How did you react less productively? What other unproductive reactions were you considering?



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What was the impact of your reactions (on you, on others, on the situation)?



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How does this story “serve you”? What is the “pay-off”?



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How do you want to feel?



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Shift your story: Create a different interpretation that leaves you feeling less triggered and possibly more open, receptive, understanding, curious...



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Re-imagine the same situation, but with your new interpretation, your new story.

➤ How would you feel?



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➤ What are your physiological reactions?



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➤ What are your thoughts about yourself, others, and the situation?



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➤ What potentially more productive responses might you consider from this new perspective?



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Step 4: Identify the Full Breadth of Your Triggered Emotions



Directions: Reflect on a difficult situation where you felt deeply triggered. Review this list of feelings and circle each one that you experienced in that moment. Add any others to the list.

Aggravated	Crushed	Empowered	Impatient	Powerless
Agitated	Defeated	Empathetic	Incensed	Preoccupied
Alarmed	Deflated	Enraged	Indifferent	Puzzled
Alienated	Dejected	Envious	Indignant	Raging
Ambivalent	Depleted	Exasperated	Infuriated	Regretful
Amused	Depressed	Excited	Insecure	Relieved
Angry	Despair	Exhausted	Inspired	Remorseful
Anguish	Determined	Exhilarated	Irritated	Repulsed
Annoyed	Disappointed	Fascinated	Jealous	Resentful
Anxious	Discouraged	Fearful	Jubilant	Sad
Appreciative	Disgusted	Forlorn	Lonely	Surprised
Apprehensive	Disheartened	Frightened	Longing	Sympathetic
Appalled	Disillusioned	Furious	Mean	Tender
Awe	Dissatisfied	Grateful	Mortified	Tense
Ashamed	Distracted	Gratified	Nervous	Terrified
Bitter	Distressed	Grief	Numb	Touched
Bored	Distrustful	Guilty	Outraged	Unsettled
Burned out	Drained	Hateful	Overwhelmed	Useless
Calm	Dumbfounded	Heartbroken	Panic	Vulnerable
Carefree	Eager	Hesitant	Paralyzed	Wary
Confident	Edgy	Hopeless	Peaceful	Weary
Confused	Embarrassed	Hurt	Perplexed	Worried

What are your thoughts as you look at all your circled emotions?



Major source: Gill, R., Leu, L., & Morin, J. (2009). *NVC Toolkit*. BookSurge Publishing.

Conduct a “Systems Check”: Scan or Pan Yourself in the Moment

When you first notice you may feel triggered, use the following prompts to conduct a “systems check” as you scan or pan yourself before deciding how you want to respond:

What am I feeling? (Step 4)

How triggered am I on the -10 to +10 scale? (Step 4)

What are my body sensations and physiological reactions? (Step 4)

What was the stimulus, the trigger for me? (Step 1)

How am I interpreting what I think is happening? (Step 3)

What assumptions and stories am I making up? (Step 3)

What additional data or information might I have overlooked initially? (Step 3)

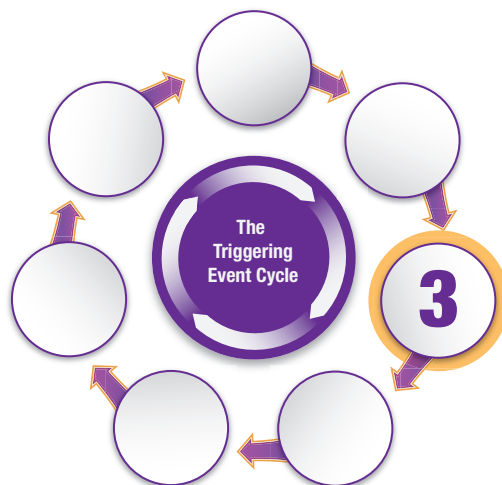
What are my initial negative thoughts (Step 4)?

What are my initial unproductive intentions (Step 5)?

Why might I feel triggered? What intrapersonal roots might be involved? (Step 2)

- Current life issues
- Cumulative Impact
- Unresolved issues and old wounds
- Fears
- Unmet Needs
- Ego-driven desires
- Bias, assumptions, shoulds, expectations, and judgments





Step 3: Putting It All Together ~ Shift Your Story and Change Your Reaction



Directions: Review the example below to understand how the story we create at Step 3 impacts the rest of The Cycle: our emotions, thoughts, and reactions.

<p>Situation (Step 1): When you express your concerns about the impact of a pending decision, your supervisor says, "Don't worry. That won't happen."</p>	
<p>Step 3: If you create this story...</p> <p>My supervisor is out of touch and doesn't value me or my input...</p>	<p>Step 4: What emotions and negative thoughts might result?</p> <p><u>Thoughts:</u> He doesn't appreciate me! Why do I invest so much of myself here? Maybe I should look for another position....</p> <p><u>Feelings:</u> Anger, resentment</p>
<p>Step 6: Given your story and the resulting feelings, what (less productive) reaction do you initially consider/do?</p> <p>Sulking; withdrawing energetically; not participating in further conversations; I will sit back and watch as they fail</p>	
<p>If at Step 3 you shift your interpretation to.....</p> <p>My supervisor may not have all of the same data I have.</p>	<p>What emotions and thoughts might result at Step 4?</p> <p><u>Feelings:</u> Hopeful, willing to stay engaged</p> <p><u>Thoughts:</u> Maybe if I share the facts I have, he will understand more of my perspective.</p>
<p>Step 6: Given your story and the resulting feelings, what (more productive) reaction might you now consider?</p> <p>Offer to share some additional data and context; Ask to continue the conversation in the near future; Continue to research and gather more information</p>	

Use the same prompts to explore the impact of shifting your story at Step 3:

<p>Situation (Step 1): Write about a recent difficult work situation.</p> <p></p>	
<p>Step 3: What was the story you created:</p> <p></p>	<p>Step 4: What were your triggered emotions? Negative thoughts?</p> <p> <u>Feelings:</u></p> <p><u>Negative thoughts:</u></p>
<p>Step 6: Given your story and the resulting feelings, what (less productive) reactions did you initially consider?</p> <p></p>	

If you shift your interpretation to...



What emotions and thoughts might result?



Feelings:

Thoughts:

Step 6: Given your revised story and the resulting feelings, what (more productive) reactions might you now consider?



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EXECUTIVE/LIFE COACH

choose courage. speak your truth. live on purpose.



If you are interested in inviting me to speak to the members of your organization or if you would like to explore ways to work with me as an Executive Coach or Life Coach, please contact me:

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