

Reaction Versus Response

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Response and reaction are very different things. They may look alike but they feel completely different.

Reaction

When something happens to you and you immediately act, that is a reaction. There is typically no thought involved in this, almost as though you are on autopilot. The more you react, the less empowerment that you have and your mind focuses on beliefs, prejudices, biases, fears, and things that limit the decisions that you can make. This focus and the prejudices that come with it can be completely unconscious. And this unconscious reaction to a threatening situation basically results in your mind going into "fight or flight" mode.

"A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices."
—William James

Response

However, if you practice mindfulness; take a minute, take a deep breath, think through what just happened, you can analyze yourself and think through how what just happened feels. This allows you just long enough to calm yourself and "respond." Taking the time to review the feelings associated with something that happens to you brings that awareness and places a space between the situation and reaction. Furthermore, allowing you to turn a reaction into a response. It becomes a thoughtful choice, a calmer choice, a choice with a better outcome.



Source: ivanacoi (pixabay.com)

Mindfulness cultivates these responses and allows us to continue to have emotions but to be able to handle those emotions differently. It cultivates the ability to respond rather than react. The next time you are faced with one of those "fight or flight" situations, take a breath, think through how you feel and simply respond.

Visit [Mindfulness Series: What is Mindfulness?](#) for more information.