

More on Trigger, Appraisal and Response

Trigger (include day, date and time)

Saturday 3 June, 11:15 a.m. The kids next door were playing soccer in the street outside. They had already been across the lawn several times and finally the ball hit the front window.

Response (what did you do?)

I went straight out, took the ball of the kids, rang the bell next door and gave their mother a piece of my mind.

First of all, looking at the example above in which Marius tells how he was driven to distraction by his neighbour's kids playing football in the street. Which of the following possibilities do you think was the trigger?

1. The kids repeatedly running across his grass.
2. The ball hitting his window.
3. The thought that his neighbours showed no consideration for him.
4. The belief that kids playing in the street makes the area look poor?

In this particular case the answer Marius gave was both (1) and (2) i.e. the kids repeatedly running across his grass and the ball hitting the window; but what really irritated Marius was that the neighbours had no consideration for people around them, and indeed made the street look like a rough area. So in a way Marius's anger had more to do with his *appraisal and judgement* of the trigger, rather than the trigger itself.

Nevertheless, if he wants to sort out his irritability and anger he needs to spot the 'visible' trigger of the boys playing soccer. Once he knows this is his weak spot, then he can sort out how to reappraise it, if that is what he decides on. If Marius wanted to become less irritated and angry, he could view the children playing outside in a different light. He could view it simply as: 'kids having a good time' and 'showing that the street is a lively place to live'. Or if that is just not realistic then he could look at the response. His response was to take the ball from the kids and storm round and shout at their mother. Other possibilities include:

1. Switch on the television, turn the volume up loud until their game is over.
2. Every time the kids appear on the street, go round to their mother and put his point of view in as friendly a way as possible.
3. Do nothing, just blank it all from his mind?

4. To take 'opposite action'. This means, for example in this case, to go out onto the street and join in the game of soccer: "If you can't beat them, join them"

Which would you go for?

I would suggest that option (2) is good: to go round and put his point of view, amicably, just as often as he likes, just as soon as the kids appear on the street.

Option (4) is good too though (to take 'opposite action' and go out in the street and join in the game of football), and might transform the situation

Many angry and irritable people make the mistake of thinking that the best reaction is:

(3), to 'do nothing at all'. This is not necessarily the case. It may be right to stick up for your rights, assertively. But 'assertive' does not mean 'angry' or 'aggressive'.

So in summary we have options of:

1. Removing the literal trigger (this is not always possible) i.e. moving to another table to avoid the draughty door
2. Discovering our appraisal of the situation and trying to reappraise it in a different way
3. Changing our response