



## Be Brave. Make Space.



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Hi! I'm Coach Margie  
I'm glad you're reading the Brave Space newsletter. My newsletter is written to share information and support.

Happy Monday, all!

This week I'm writing about emotions (again). I write about emotions often because it is my experience that if we can recognize our emotions, we can learn to change our story about them. Changing our story about difficult and painful emotions will set us free from the grips of destructive thinking and destructive behavior. For me, that destructive thinking led me to drink more alcohol than was acceptable to me. I hope you enjoy this week's newsletter and I'd love to hear your thoughts!

### Understanding Emotions: A Path to Change

Have you ever found yourself caught in a whirlwind of frustration or anger, unsure how to navigate those emotions without affecting your relationships? It's a common struggle, but there's a three-word solution that might seem too simple: Trust the process.

I know it sounds like some grand spiritual advice or a sales pitch for enlightenment but stay with me. This simple phrase holds profound potential for change. Emotions, as it turns out, aren't sudden bursts but a four-step journey:

#### Step 1: The Situation

It all starts with an event triggering your emotional response. I'll use myself as an example to help clarify the steps. When my children were teenagers I would often come home from work (a job I didn't like) and find dishes everywhere, obvious messes that weren't cleaned up, clothes dropped on the floor, etc. Now, most of you would probably, like me, find this infuriating (and rightly so!). On one particular day, I received a text from my eldest apologizing for leaving the mess, explaining that their ride to swim practice showed up early.

There's an important nuance here. What did I feel? Anger, resentment, disrespect. What did I do? Screamed and threatened out loud to no one that I was going to run away from home. Then I poured a big glass of wine. But here's the interesting

part: the event or situation alone doesn't directly produce anger or any other emotion. Two more key steps lie between the situation and your emotional response.

## Step 2: Attention

**What we focus on in the situation shapes our emotional response.** Do you fixate on the mess, the future cleanup, or what your family members might have been thinking? Different focal points yield different emotions.

Our thoughts and past experiences shape how we interpret events. What did you focus on when you read my scenario?

- Is the mess everywhere most of your focus? (it's hard to ignore when everywhere you look, there's a mess to clean up.)
- Are you immediately focused on the future, thinking about what you have to do to clean up the mess?
- Are you focused on the apology text?

In all versions, the basic facts of the situation remain the same. **But the focus of our attention can impact the emotion we end up feeling.** This step can radically alter the resulting emotion.

## Step 3: Interpretation

Our thoughts, beliefs, and expectations shape our interpretation of the situation. Our interpretation is often based on the information we have and what we've learned from prior experiences. Perhaps your thoughts jump to how this situation fits into the prior events of your day. You think, "This is just like what happened at work. People never pull their weight and I always end up cleaning up their messes." Or perhaps you think, "I know my kids left a bunch of messes, which was not cool, but they aren't responsible for their ride showing up early."

These interpretations are a key part of the emotion process. They can radically shift the emotion we end up feeling and the ways we end up responding.

## Step 4: Response

Finally, there are a range of ways to feel and act in response to the situation.

- You could feel resentful. You could clean the mess, but fuss, fume, and wait until they return home to unleash your frustration on them.
- You could feel defeated. You could do nothing, drink more wine than you intended, and let them clean up when they get home.
- You could feel a wry laugh bubble up. You could remember what you were like as a teenager and the messes you left for your mom to clean up.

Each of these different responses becomes more or less likely depending on the two middle steps: where you focused your attention and how you interpreted the situation.

Here's a thought experiment for you to try. This week, experiment with these steps. You won't transform instantly, but practicing this mindset helps recognize your patterns and opens up new possibilities.

Remember, it's about trusting the process and taking it one step at a time. You have the power to change. Wishing you a more emotionally aware journey ahead!

Until next week, be brave and make space for yourself!

*Margie*

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