

Reacting Vs Responding.

When it comes to the context of human interactions, communication and relationships, reacting and responding are mistakenly used as synonyms - when really they are different.

Scenario:

Think about it, when your boss sends you an email that rubs you the wrong way, or when you receive a text that offends you, you are inclined to respond immediately and “give them a piece of your mind.”

This is reacting. It is “emotionally charged” as described by Anita Avedian in her anger management essentials workbook. Giving the sender a piece of your mind can be interpreted as an attack – right? There could be insults, and words exchanged that we later regret. After some research here are some brief **characteristics of reactions**:

*They are defensive/ Emotionally driven / They are sporadic or instant – Meaning long term effects aren't taken into consideration / According to **psychology today**, they are “driven by the beliefs, biases, and prejudices of the unconscious mind.” / They are forms of defense mechanisms/ They are normally passive which tend to digress the relationship in question and last but not least / There is lack of a mindfulness element.*

However, if we take the same incident and *respond* to it rather than *react* to it, then there is a difference. There is time taken to reduce the emotional charge, it's well thought out and not as harsh as a reaction. Here are some **characteristics of responses**:

They are thoughtful and contain reasoning /They are logic driven / They are active and tend to progress a relationship because the long term effects are taken into consideration / Takes time / Takes both conscious and unconscious mind to formulate a response.

Big Idea:

The goal is to respond and not to react.

Application:

Now that we have understood what the difference between reacting and responding is, it is advisable to do the latter. It is a healthy way to be mindful, improve relationships, reduce self-sabotage and to be self-aware in different situations. Some wonderful examples provided in **Anita Avedian's Anger management essentials workbook** are;

- 1. Wait. Take some time to cool down before responding. Take a walk, sleep on it, do breathing exercises, walk away – to give you an opportunity to clear your mind.*
- 2. As you wait, journal through your emotions and thoughts. You can draft a response immediately and after some time has elapsed and you have calmed down, go back and go through the draft. Use this as an opportunity to identify the differences in the reaction vs. res.*
- 3. Call a trusted person, vent and brainstorm the appropriate way to respond.*