



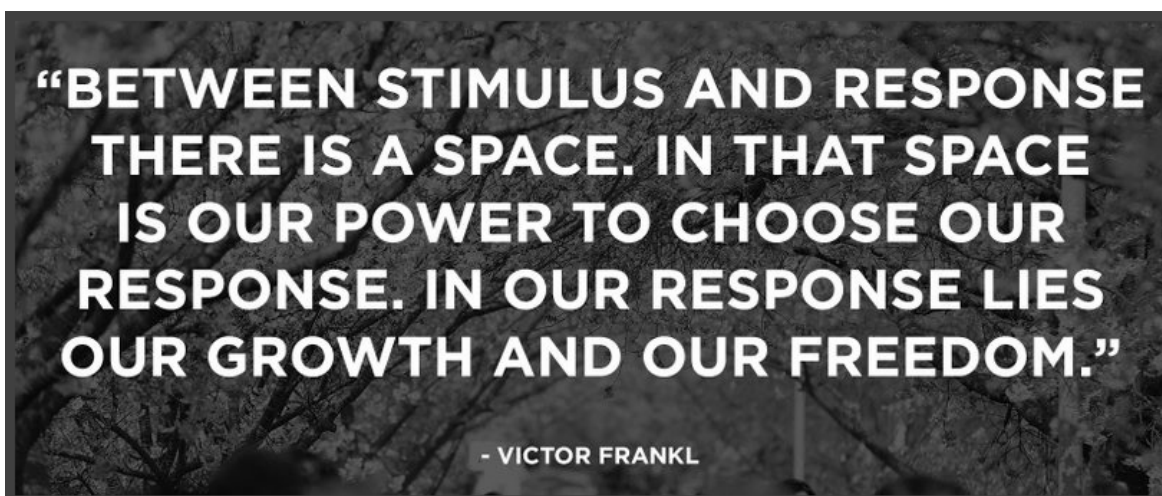
The Space Between

Background – So much of what impacts our life happens in this space:

The Space Between Feeling and impulse and Words and Actions:

Feeling and Impulse →-----**The Space Between** -----→ *Words/Actions*

This original concept is attributed to Austrian neurologist Victor Frankel, who said:



Consider an Example: Larry was extremely irritated by the fact that his partner insulted the new outfit that he spent hours shopping for, in view of the upcoming party. On an even deeper level, he felt hurt as he was really expecting a nice complement from his partner like “*Wow you look amazing in that new outfit!*” but he didn’t get it. Larry’s impulse was to say something hurtful and insulting back in return to get even.

Larry then DID NOT take advantage of “*The Space Between*”

Larry let his irritation and hurt get the best of him and he let his angry impulse take over and he told his partner “*Have you looked in the mirror lately yourself, you’re really putting on weight so you shouldn’t talk about looks*”

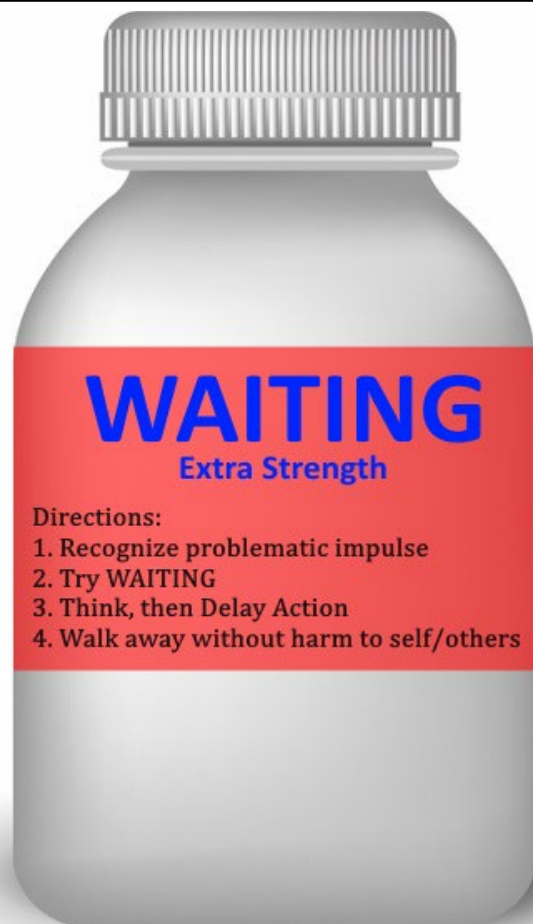
You can imagine where that conversation then went as surely a big fight and argument ensued from there and it was not pretty.

Discuss: If Larry had done something different in **The Space Between** and then used that time to choose different words and actions, **how may have things turned out better?**



Some Positive Ways to Successfully Manage the Space Between

1. **Use the Space Between to Just Wait** – So many problems in life can be avoided by **waiting before we speak or act**. Consider the following “advertisement” for the concept of **WAITING**



Finally, a way to deal with those pesky impulses to do stupid things that most of us end up regretting later: **WAITING** – *How it works:*

Almost everyone from time to time gets a bad idea that may even seem good at first. Sometimes there may even be a strong impulse to just act on that idea, especially when emotions are running high or when we are otherwise feeling impetuous, distracted, desperate or overly excited. It is during those moments when **WAITING** does wonders. During these moments, simply try **WAITING**, and allow **WAITING** to take effect long enough for the stupid impulse to go away. Then walk away unharmed with no painful regrets, irreversible losses, or crippling guilt, ready to face another day!

Try WAITING for yourself and see the amazing results!
Proven effective for adults and safe for children and adolescents too!

- **DISCUSS** – How can simply waiting before thinking or acting benefit you? Can anyone come up with a personal example of a life situation where waiting before speaking or acting made a difference?



2. Use The Space Between to Put Things in Perspective

Feelings can start out strong but at times feel differently especially after we look at the broader perspective. It is helpful to consider extenuating circumstances that may be contributing to our feelings. *Example below*

Feeling - Anger towards brother who is acting like a stressed-out jerk

Impulse – Tell him off, put him in his place, insult him, lash out

Put things in perspective in The Space Between – “My brother actually just found out his wife is sick so even though he is acting like a jerk; I am going to give him the benefit of the doubt and let it slide for now”

- Another example:

Feeling – Feeling disrespected by daughter who is misbehaving and talking back

Impulse – Yell, complain, threaten

Put things in perspective – “My daughter is really tired from being up sick last night, so she is not herself. I am going to redirect her for the way she is acting and speaking, but I will do it in a much calmer and more gentle way now that I put things in perspective first.”

- **Discuss** – Can anyone in the group come up with a personal situation where it is important to put things in perspective before speaking or acting?

3. Use The Space Between for Consequential Thinking

There are times when reacting a certain way may be justified but still if there are consequences involved it may not be worth it. *Example:*

Feeling – Disrespect, injustice, irritation, anger – *This guy is complaining out loud in line at Walmart and he has a really big mouth, so someone needs to shut him up!*

Impulse – Confront him, take control, take things into my own hands to shut him up myself

Consequential Thinking in the Space Between- “I am already on probation for that fight I got into last year and things are finally going well as I have not been in trouble for a while now. If I say something to this guy and he talks back to me there may be a fight. The last thing in my life I need is to get arrested again for fighting. So, never mind, I’ll let someone else deal with this loudmouth. I am just going to walk away and choose another line and get out of this place without getting involved which is for the best for me right now.

- Another example:

Feeling – Excited and intrigued that the neighbor next door is flirting and coming on sexually

Impulse – Flirt back, see if I can get something going sexually with this person

Consequential thinking – Even though there is excitement and attraction here, this person lives with their partner and children and I’m in a relationship too. The last thing I need is drama with the neighbors. I’ll pass on this situation to avoid the trouble that will surely follow

- **Discuss** – Can anyone in the group come up with a personal situation where it is important to use consequential thinking in The Space Between?



4. Use the Space Between to Pause and Cope

There are likely many coping skills discussed in therapy and in this group that can be used in The Space Between before speaking or acting. ***Some simple coping skills for The Space Between:***

- **Deep breathing** – Just one deep breath can slow things down and calm the mind and body
- **Counting** – Counting to 10 is an old but effective coping skill to help pause and calm down before speaking or acting
- **Meditate on calming thoughts** – It can be so effective to have calming thoughts prepared ahead of time for the Space Between. For example, “*Even if I cannot control my feelings, I can keep my feelings from controlling me*”
- **Grounding techniques** – This involves simple strategies to connect us with the present to separate ourselves from emotional distress. ***Using your senses*** is one example of grounding: **Feel** something in your hand, **listen** to background noise around you (Like the birds chirping). Try to count five things you can **see** in your environment around you.
- **Praying** – If this is something that works for you and you believe in, pausing for a brief silent prayer in The Space Between, before thinking or speaking can prevent regrettable decisions
- **Walking** – Simply just getting up and taking a few steps out of a situation can buy time to reset our thoughts.

Keep in mind that all of these coping skills for The Space Between take practice and do not improve instantly or overnight. Still, we take the time to master how we use The Space Between, so we can avoid a lot of unnecessary problems in life. How we use The Space Between can really impact our words and actions in a positive way. So many of our problems can be avoided by successfully choosing the right words and actions for each situation. **Using The Space Between in a positive way truly helps this process work in our favor**

Closing thoughts:

Lesson – What we do with “The Space Between” can be life changing. Successful, healthy, and happy people learn to use The Space Between their feeling/impulses and their words/actions in a positive way to avoid regrettable decisions and outcomes. What we do in that little space every day can mean so much for our future

Using The Space Between effectively can prevent us from ever having to later say the following statements:

- Darn I really **overreacted!**
- Ugh, I **spoke too soon**
- I should have **just left**
- I messed up because I **came to the wrong conclusion** too quickly
- I wish I would have **waited**
- I let **my feelings get the best of me**
- Why didn’t I **think of the consequences** first!

Closing question Come up with one or two things discussed today that you can start doing or using to effectively master The Space Between feelings/impulses and words/actions?