



***Minding Our Own Emotional Business*** is a timely presentation. I created this series at a time in our collective history when it seemed that many, in our homes, in our schools, in our communities and in our workplaces, felt that the “other” was responsible for their feelings. “If only the world and its people would just act right, I’d be okay!” we declared. We seldomly took our own emotional temperatures.

Most humans have at some point responded emotionally in ways we wished we had not. Anger, frustration, and fear have moved us in ways that at times seemed beyond our control. After an emotional episode, exhausted and embarrassed, we might wonder why we got so upset so quick. We may not have known it, but some of our experiences qualify as amygdala hijackings – a state where strong emotions make it difficult or impossible to think rationally.

I believe that the more leaders, employees, team members, communities, and families learn about how our human emotions work and how to manage the stress of upsetting emotions, the greater our chances of having creative, productive, and safe social environments. In my opinion, *Minding Our Own Emotional Business* is not just a presentation but a way of life, a way of existing in the world. A world where we live by the creed:

*“The world and its people may influence my emotional responses, but the world and its people cannot determine my emotional responses. I alone have the power to manage my emotions.”*

In *Minding Our Own Emotional Business* participants will learn how self-awareness, self-management, the science of our emotions, our interpretations of situations and relaxation response impact our ability to manage our own emotional business.

## **Self-Awareness and Self-Management**

One of the first steps in *Minding Our Own Emotional Business* is to deepen our awareness of our own feelings, thoughts, moods, and reactions. Our minds are often too busy thinking, planning, strategizing, and worrying to slow down, take a step back and just observe our interior, our inner realities.

It is often said that “the new frontier is the interior” because while we all have an interior life, we spend far too much of our time in exploration of the outer world exclusively. This presentation will help participants learn to comfortably look within and courageously manage their own world of emotions. Check out one of my favorite quotes by Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*:

*“Emotional awareness starts with attunement to the stream of feeling that is a constant presence in all of us and with a recognition of how these emotions shape what we perceive, think, and do”.*

Self-awareness and self-management require quietude, stillness and courage as we commit to minding our own emotional business. Attuning to our stream of emotions is so important in our minding our own emotional business. We must lead in our quest to discover how our emotions shape the way we perceive the world and its people. Part of the beauty of embarking upon a “minding our own emotional business” journey is that what is good for emotional well-being: relaxation, meditation, introspection, etc., is also good for our physical well-being.

In *Minding Our Own Emotional Business* participants are guided through practices that aid in relaxation, self-revelation, and change.

## **The Science or Physiology of Stress and Emotions**

When I first learned about the relationship between my brain and my bodily responses to danger, both physical and emotional dangers, I was blown away and relieved. As I learned that my body had built-in mechanisms in place to keep me safe, I began to see my own emotional responses differently. I started pondering the difference between stress and danger. I began to inventory or investigate my own emotional responses to the world and its people. I'd ask myself, "Yolanda why did you feel so strongly about that?". "Why was your chest pounding so hard after she said that?" and "What can I do to calm down?" I believe this kind of self-inquiry is essential, easy to teach, and easy to apply.

In addition to teaching participants how to self-inquire about their bodies and stress, in *Minding Our Own Emotional Business*, I highlight the role of the fight, flight, freeze, fawn stress response (4Fs Stress Response) and the amygdala in alerting us to danger and stress. This information is critical to understanding and managing our reactions. One very important point for us humans to understand, is that the fight, flight, freeze, fawn response is automatic, given to us by nature. The relaxation response, the return to equilibrium and deep calm, often must be elicited. We must, to some extent, decide to relax. If we experience stress regularly, like in a demanding job or stressful marriage, our fight flight freeze fawn response may be overactive. Overactive fight flight freeze fawn responses can lead to anxiety, depression, and hypertension.

Understanding the role of our interpretation of situations has on our bodily responses can help greatly with our challenge to self-regulate.

### **Owning Our Interpretations of the Situations**

*Minding Our Own Emotional Business* aims to teach participants to become curious about their personal interpretations of life situations. As participants become more curious and responsible for their interpretations of life situations, the better able they are to mind their own emotional business. It doesn't take long for participants to realize that two people in the same situation could respond very differently to an external stimulus.

Imagine a situation where someone comes to a meeting late. Let's call her Tracy. You may be losing your mind about Tracy's tardiness. Your self talk might sound like this, "What is wrong with Tracy? She is always late - it's so annoying! Ms Thang is getting on my nerves."

Your co-worker, who also notices Tracy's tardiness, may just be glad she made it work. Her self-talk would sound like, "Cool, Tracy finally made it. She must have experienced bad traffic."

Who is most likely to be emotionally and physiologically upset by Tracy's tardiness. Expanding our awareness about our interpretations of life situations is not about who is right or wrong. It's about learning what upsets us, owning our responses, and making changes where necessary.

### **Relaxation Response**

*"The relaxation response is an inducible, physiologic state of quietude. In modern times the relaxation response is undoubtedly even more important to our survival, since anxiety and tension often inappropriately trigger the fight-or-flight response in us. Regular elicitation of the relaxation response can prevent, and compensate for, the damage incurred by frequent nervous reactions that pulse through our hearts and bodies."*

Herber Benson, author of *The Relaxation Response*

Many years ago, I was diagnosed with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). As many of you already know, healing from trauma, reprocessing trauma, can be extremely emotionally painful. I was very fortunate to be exposed to therapy. My therapist emphasized one very important thing: To keep myself grounded I should meditate and practice yoga regularly. That advice instantly resonated with me. Deep inside I knew I needed to slow down and get quiet and introspective. Today, I highly recommend yoga and meditation to the humans I serve, people like you. An important benefit of practicing yoga and meditation is that they help manage unruly feelings through relaxation and the observation or *externalization of the mind*.

In *Minding Our Own Emotional Business*, participants have opportunities to learn and practice grounding, simple yoga exercises, and the relaxation response. Few things give me more joy as a trainer and motivator, than to guide a group of 50 to 100 people into deep silence and stillness and to watch them slowly *come back*, yawning, arms stretching, declaring, "that was good!"

The same therapist who gave that great advise about meditation and yoga, also told me that no matter how emotionally complex it may seem, I needed to accept the fact that even though others had caused my trauma, only I could heal it. I had a harder time accepting this. Many survivors do. However, I think upon scrutiny we must acknowledge that we, as survivors can and must take the lead in our emotional healing.

I'd like to invite you to check out my videos highlighting my personal journey healing from trauma. The series is called *Elum: The Awakened Mule*

Again, *Minding Our Own Emotional Business* is a presentation, but in so many ways it is more than that: it is a way of life. A way of life where we take full responsibility for our emotional responses to the world and its people. One where we challenge ourselves to a deeper maturity about feelings and our responsibility to the others who must interact with us.

So much about *Minding Our Own Emotional Business* reminds me of a quote by Toni Morrison, author of my favorite book, "*Beloved*." In it she says:

*"Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another."*

*Minding Our Own Emotional Business* helps us take ownership of ourselves. I am excited about this offering. It is a presentation for the times! Call me; let's talk about providing this opportunity for your community, staff members or team today.

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