



# REACTING versus CREATING

by Gerry Monasterial



Have you ever had one of those "AHA" moments? I recently had one that I thought was worth sharing. My family & I were discussing the state of chaos that we're in because of the Covid pandemic, along with other issues that keep us up at night. At some point in the conversation, like many parents that are passionate about protecting and directing our families, I began to lecture. (I'm truly working on lecturing less & listening more). On this occasion, however, as I concluded all the right ways & wrong ways we could handle this season of uncertainty & hardship, I closed with, "we can either spend all of our time reacting to everything happening around us or we can spend it creating our own path & opportunities." After a moment to take a breath, I had a light bulb moment & thought, "creating & reacting literally have the same exact letters." These two words are anagrams, different words formed by the same letters.

A few other examples of anagrams are: 'brag & grab', 'inch & chin', and 'heart & earth'. Some of the funniest include: 'stressed & desserts', 'dormitory & dirty room', and 'slot machines & cash lost in me'. As for reacting & creating, these anagrams couldn't be further apart in their meaning and their implementation.

*We can either spend all of our time **REACTING** to everything happening around us or we can spend it **CREATING** our own path & opportunities.*



First, let's define both words.

In its purest form, **reacting** is instinctive. It's a natural defense mechanism that is based on emotion in the moment. Reacting is even different than responding. Reacting is emotional & quick whereas responding is emotional intelligence that considers the outcome. It's a straight line from stimulus to action. "Reacting" is responsible for many of our regrettable moments. Reacting puts us as the object that was affected.

## *REACTING IS INSTINCTIVE*

**Creating** is purposeful, bringing something into existence or causing something to happen because of our action(s). It's making or producing something. To compose, shape, or even forge. We are the cause for something to happen of our choosing. Creating puts us as the subject that is affecting an object, not the other way around. It makes space for something intentional between a stimulus and an action.

## *CREATING IS PURPOSEFUL*

Next, let's discuss 3 ways we can transition our tendency of instinctively reacting to purposefully creating. Let's discuss the BLT components.

### **1) Breathe**

Interestingly, if you ask people what stresses them out the most in their lives, most answers will boil down to one common theme, lack of control. We lack control of our time, resources, and activities. Our outlook calendars are filled with almost everything but our own true personal agenda. Many of these outside circumstances can leave us feeling like someone else is dictating our journey. However, if we want some semblance of control of our outside circumstances, we must first impose control from the inside. Breathing, whether it's in a moment of heightened emotion or during a scheduled meditation, allows us to have control of ourselves, which is the only thing we actually can control. Purposeful, slower breathing can lower our heart rate and our tension. It can relax our muscles and our senses. And finally, it can increase our energy and our mindfulness.

### **2) Listen**

Since we based this whole article on a set of anagram's, let's use another. Listen & Silent. If you're like

me during conversations, you hear what's being said to you while also hearing what's being said by you, simultaneously. In other words, we are usually having two conversations at once. One that's audible with the other person and one that's quiet enough that only we can hear so that we're prepared with a reply (a reaction). In order to minimize our tendency of reacting, we must allow silence to work for us. Our own silence. This allows us to hear and pause while we consider and reason, which is the ignition to purposefully creating our own response. Furthermore, in circumstances that are not about conversation, listening is a metaphor for our ability to pick up on the subtle details of our circumstances. Are you just hearing all the noise or are you listening for the sounds? Because, although we are not always at fault for our circumstances, we are always responsible for our responses, and the difference between responding and reacting can simply be quieting down enough to truly listen.

### 3) Think

This is the most under-estimated & under-appreciated action we participate in as humans. Think about it... On your calendar, do you have scheduled time to "think" from 1-2pm? Does your weekly schedule include "Think-time" on Thursdays? Even during your "office days", do you really have a slot for "do some thinkin" right below "complete expense reports"? One of the best known memes of all time is a light bulb above someone's head. This is the universal picture of someone having a thought or an idea. I don't know about you but I have never seen a light bulb just turn on by itself. It always requires a switch. Someone always has to flip that switch. When is the last time you purposefully sat down, flipped the switch, and took time just to think? Not just time to think about something specifically related to a problem but time to brainstorm, to dream, to imagine possibilities. To ideate in order to create. Even more, as an employer or a leader, would it benefit you and your people to apply as much importance on purposefully thinking as reactively doing?

This BLT can make the difference between spending most of our time reacting to the circumstances around us versus creating our responses and possible opportunities.

In a time of uncertainty & fast-moving changes, our actions make a difference. It definitely seems worth choosing between these anagrams, reacting and creating. The letters can be unscrambled however we choose. **Which will you choose?**