

HEART TO HEART

Heartbound Newsletter

March 2015

Reaction vs. Proactive Action

Habits. Buttons. Emotions. Pathways. Memories. Quick Responses. How are these all linked? You may be surprised.

Imagine for a moment that you just finished washing dishes. You have been working several hours on this job and have put your heart into it. As you put your finishing touches on the final spot., someone walks up and places a dirty dish in the nice clean sink you have just labored over. An immediate, overwhelming emotional response happens within you and before you have a chance to think of the other person you let them have it with a loud frustrated voice pouring out your feelings on the matter. The person looks quite startled and it begins to dawn on you that your reaction was quite over reactive. After realizing and regretting your hasty response you apologize for reacting so poorly and a normal discussion ensues with a good resolution (or in other cases a large argument and a lot of pain). What happened?

Good habits can save a lot of time and energy, and saving time can be of high importance in an emergency situation. Just the same, in a moment of a flight or fight decision a quick response can be life saving or can prevent injury. How often have you jerked your hand away without thinking after touching a hot stove?

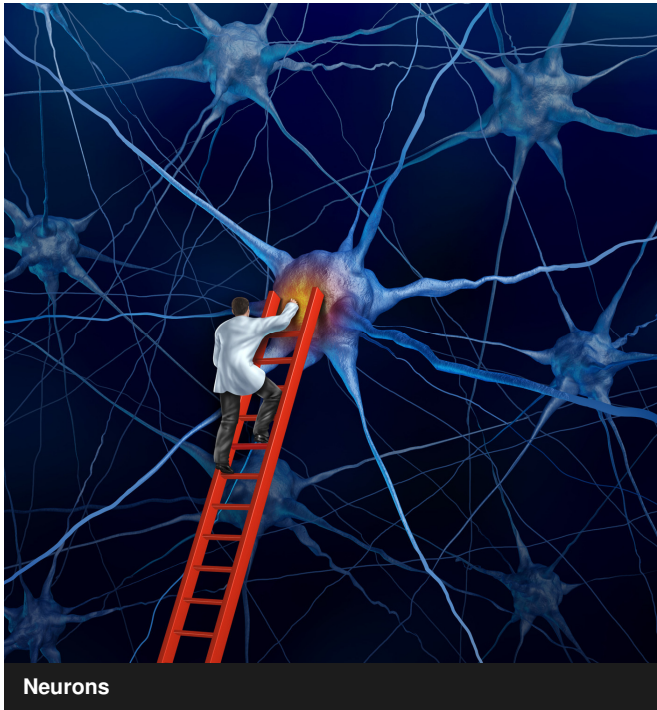


These benefits are valuable indeed, but is there something that we need to be aware of as well that comes along with this benefit? Can it affect us and how we treat others? Perhaps a downside to our ability to have a quick, automatic response and positive edge? Could it be that our past experiences and emotions get tangled up in this wiring at times? And finally, how does this past affect our current responses?

The answers to these questions may be found in the work of a neuroscientist, Joseph LeDoux.

“Could it be that we have automatic paths of damaging responses that are set off by events?”

Which Path Do you choose?



moment when it is not warranted. It is a response disproportionate to the event we are currently experiencing.

Frequently we recognize our overreaction later when our logic and decision-making capacity have returned to action, however, the damage at that point has been done, both to the other person and ourselves. These interactions can be painful and destructive to relationships.

What can be done? Give yourself time. Time to reprogram. Time to consider the other person and time to re-evaluate the feelings that want to automate at the time of the event. Be aware of when high emotion is starting and stop for about 6 seconds to give your brain time to catch up. Breathe deep and think. After a trigger moment, take note and identify the trigger. Do some research into the root that laid this path in you and find out the truth about that original event. Don't bring your past into your present. Over time you can change the way your brain responds to a similar situation in the future, bringing healthier and happier relationships. Check your heart, for out of it comes the issues of life.

"...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.."Romans 12:2

"...the truth will set you free." John 8:32

Professor LeDoux demonstrated that some emotional information (rather than traveling the usual pathway) travels directly from the thalamus to the amygdala without involving the neocortex, or higher brain regions. In other words, a strong emotional response bypasses our rational thought or choice at times.

From this work was coined the term "amygdala hijacking" but it is also known by many as "freaking out" or seriously overreacting to an event in your life rather than choosing and evaluating an event, then giving an appropriate response or proactive action.

Normally we process information with our logical brain (neocortex) without this type of interruption, however on occasion, when an event reminds us of a previous highly charged emotional one (a similar stimulus) we respond to the current event quickly in flight or fight reaction repeating the highly charged emotional response we have had in the past at this

Contact Us

Visit us on the web at: www.heart-bound.com

For more information feel free to contact us at: www.heart-bound/contactus.php