



## The 2 Words That Tame Tension

When tensions rise, replace your urge to **react**.

Instead **respond** and say, "Thank you."

If you're thinking, "Wait, you want me to say thank you after someone has just criticized me or hurt my feelings?! Are you kidding me?," I get it. I can totally relate because these are the exact same thoughts that I had.

I didn't understand why I should thank people for causing me pain; it seemed counter intuitive. I wanted nothing more than the conflict to end and go away, and in my opinion, saying "thank you" was going to make it drag on even longer. But what's so crazy is that the first time I did this – the first time I thanked a customer after she finished venting and cursing me out – it changed the game forever. The woman paused so long that I didn't know if she was still on the phone before she stumbled over herself and said, "You're welcome...I guess?"

When the other person sees you lay your weapons down, there's no longer a threat, and since the only thing separating conflict from conversation is the presence of a threat, **when the threat has been removed, the conflict dissolves.**

Keep in mind, the threat that you're posing to the other person may not even be real. For instance, you may look super calm and be using a soft tone and polite words, however if the person views you as a complete villain, he or she will react to you based on that mental perception. Your saying "thank you" throws a total wrench in that.

In the case of the customer I was speaking with, I really was thankful because she provided information that I didn't know about prior to her call. I could have been upset about her tone and the criticisms that she was throwing my way about the company I worked for, however I chose to see her complaints as a gift. It's all about perspective.

**The way you see things determines how you respond to them.**

If you are adjusting to new glasses and you think that someone's driving over the yellow line on the highway, you may jerk the wheel erratically, whereas if you were wearing your old glasses, you would have seen that there was plenty of room and wouldn't have even flinched when your cars passed each other.

**What you see, but more importantly what you *think* about what you see, determines your response to it.**

In conflict, do you see some people as being the reason you're not having a good day, or do you see them (and the information that they're sharing with you) as a gift to not only grow yourself but also grow your business?

Because I've chosen to think about conflict as a gift (it's knowledge that I didn't previously have and can now use to take me and the business to another level), I no longer *react*, but instead *respond* in gratitude. I'm thankful for the information, and I relay this gratitude to the people with whom I'm speaking.

I can't change what I don't know about, and if people never verbalize their frustrations or share the complaints that they've been stewing about, I will be none the wiser and move about my day in involuntary ignorance. When it comes to business, ignorance is not bliss. Ignorance is the surest way to guarantee that you'll be out of business.

### **Thank people for the trials they put you through. It's free growth!**

Any pain that you feel from having your buttons pushed is an indicator; it's a spotlight on the areas where you're weakest and where you need to do the most work in the emotional gym.

When muscles aren't worked, they lose their strength and the next time something difficult comes along, requiring strength in those areas, you may be unable to do it. Think about trying to put luggage in the overhead compartment on a plane. If your arms aren't strong enough to handle it, your carry-on bag could fall back onto your head and hurt you. The same happens with conflict – if you don't have any hard times that allow you to practice and strengthen your emotional management skills, you'll lose strength, become soft, and become badly hurt the next time someone says something mean.

That's why I'm now thankful for resistance. Resistance bands build physical muscles and resistance from people builds my emotional muscles.

After learning material in school, your teacher always gave you a test to make sure you fully grasped the material before moving to the next level. The same happens in life. Before you can move to the next level of maturity and emotional growth, difficult people come into your life, not to make your life miserable, but as a test to make sure you've mastered this level and are ready for the next one. Be thankful for that.

Every single person we encounter in life teaches us something; he or she either teaches us behaviors we want to adopt or behaviors we want to avoid. Either way we learn.

So, the next time your buttons are pushed, or you're faced with conflict, say to yourself, "Oh, I'm passing this test! It's time to go to the next level!" And when your inner 2-year-old wants to scream, "I hate this!" practice saying, "Thank you" instead.

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