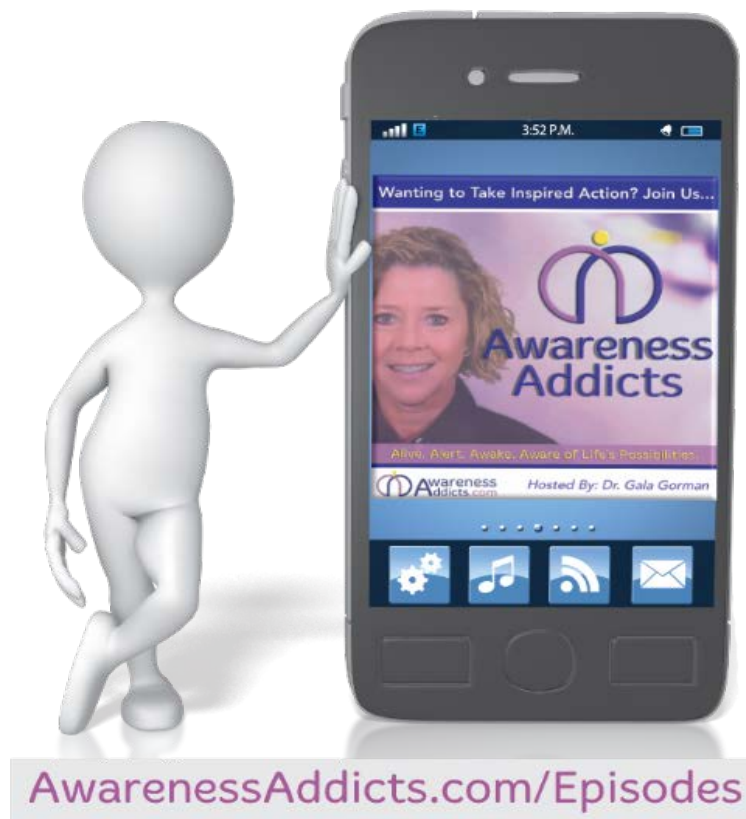


Episode 0008

Managing Emotions

Show Transcript



Presented by Dr. Gala Gorman
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00:05

Dr. Gala Gorman: A better way to look at this is that we have experiences in our past ... and some like to call this baggage ... that we carry with us into the next experiences.

00:19

Announcer: You've tuned to Awareness Addicts with Dr. Gala Gorman. Here, you'll find Sage Advice for taking inspired action. Awareness is the key. With this key, it's easier to navigate in the human world with all of its detours. It requires that we get to know ourselves intimately. If you choose to join us, this just might make you an Awareness Addict . . . alive, alert, awake and aware of life's possibilities.

00:49

Dr. Gala Gorman: This is Episode 8. In this episode, we're going to learn how to "keep our eye on the ball." When we bump up against our fellow humans and overreact, it consumes a TON of energy. We need to learn to deal with these upsets more efficiently so we can stay focused on what matters. I'm Dr. Gala Gorman and I'm an Awareness Addict. I hope you'll join me!

01:12

I came across this article from Politico Magazine. I thought it was really interesting because today we are talking about managing emotions ... and particularly anger management. It is the emotion that we're most challenged to manage.

According to this article in Politico Magazine, there was one big thing that Obama failed to do and that was get angry. The article goes on to say, "If you had to pinpoint one specific thing he's done badly, you might start with his perplexing failure to get riled up about rile-worthy behavior, his no-drama reluctance to pick defining public fights." They went on to say that, "Obama has an anger over-management problem."

In contrast, they talked about Trump. They said, “Trump’s id-driven rise is a jarring reminder, after a series of relatively mild-mannered commanders-in-chief, that anger can be a politically powerful force. He has used his bully pulpit for actual bullying, and many Americans seem excited to see that kind of rhetorical muscle deployed on their behalf.”

We know that “Obama would never use his Twitter feed or—with one annual exception—his podium to lob personal insults at random critics or call out political enemies as stupid, lying, crooked losers and clowns.” Obama would see that kind of behavior as unpresidential. But apparently it isn’t ... is the point of this Politico Magazine article ... because Trump does it all the time.

Regardless of what side of the fence you’re on, I think there’s no arguing that Trump says it like it is ... or at least his version of like it is. He doesn’t have a filter. That’s one of the complaints against him. But, Obama may have been a little too filtered.

One of the things that we have to consider, as we learn to manage our anger and emotions, is how to allow that passion and enthusiasm to still be alive and well, while at the same time, not feel like it has to turn to anger and bullying. Just a little food for thought as we launch into this discussion.

04:17

Let’s take a moment to develop awareness. This is something you can practice anywhere . . . anytime. Begin by noticing where your breath is landing in your body? Are you feeling your breath in your chest? Is it expanding your rib cage? Or, even your belly?

Just become aware of your breathing.

Now, we're going to breathe intentionally. We'll start by breathing deeply into our belly. Breathe deeply . . . expanding your belly. Notice how it feels for your belly to expand. Then, pull your abdomen in so that all of the stale air gets pushed out on the exhale.

Let's do that again. Breathe in deeply . . . all the way into your belly. Expand your belly. And again, breathe out and flatten your tummy. Squeeze all that air out.

Next, we'll move the breath up to our rib cage. Intentionally expand your ribcage with the breath. It may feel like your ribs are stretching out on both sides . . . or you may feel it expanding your back. Just notice how that feels. You're stretching your lungs to the side and creating flexibility in your ribs. Take another breath into your ribcage.

Now, let's go back to how you were probably breathing when we started this practice. Breathe into your upper chest. You can feel your breastbone raise and lower with the breath. Notice how it feels to take a shallow breath now that we have expanded the breath into our belly and rib cage.

We have sent a clear message to our brain and nervous system that we can take control. Let's use this feeling of empowerment to practice Aware Appreciation.

What is ONE BIG THING that you appreciate right now? And, keep this in mind as you notice more things to appreciate as you move through your day.

06:36

Why is it so challenging to live life intentionally and "keep our eye on the ball?" Don't be too hard on yourself. We are constantly bumping up against our fellow humans . . . often reacting in a way that consumes a TON of energy. Let's learn some how-to techniques to manage emotional upsets more efficiently . . . so we can stay focused on what matters.

07:05

In the world of mental health counseling, anger management would be more readily called “managing emotional triggers.” If you have seen a caricature that has a big button in the middle of their chest, you might see somebody poking that button trying to see if they can get them riled up. That is your emotional trigger point, or emotional button.

The people that know us best are the ones who tend to be most likely to push those buttons. They know our weak points. When we are triggered emotionally, we feel overwhelmed and that overwhelm eclipses us. It doesn’t leave a whole lot of mental capacity for making good decisions or choices.

08:13

When we are angry, we typically go into fight-or-flight mode. Fight means “I’m going to come out punching. You hurt me and I’m going to hurt you back.” Flight means, “You hurt me. I don’t want to deal with you. I’m going to go to my room or leave,” or whatever your version of flight looks like. When this happens, the story going on in our heads is that it is all their fault. “What they did is causing this experience in me.”

For some people, we refer to this as the “hulk emerging.” You can think of the movie, The Incredible Hulk. When Bruce Banner is triggered by something emotionally, he has no control over his transformation into the hulk. That is what it can feel like when you are emotionally triggered.

09:14

Once the hulk returns to Bruce Banner, we have access to hindsight and start to deconstruct what happened. We can recognize that our reaction in most cases was disproportionate to what was actually going on. And, that is a big clue to tell us that there is some dormant experience from our past that was reactivated. A better way to look at that is that we’ve had experiences in our past. Some like to

call this “baggage” that we carry with us into our next experiences. We’re on the lookout, “I want to make sure that doesn’t happen again. If there are any experiences that I’ve had that feel even remotely like that, I’m going to react appropriately so I don’t get myself into that kind of situation again.”

10:21

Most of the time there is a historical significance to this triggering experience. As we are applying hindsight, in essence, we create an intervention with ourselves by saying, “How could I have stopped it before I turned into the hulk ... before I made a bigger mess of things than already existed.”

This of course requires that we develop awareness, which is what we are doing here as Awareness Addicts. But, we must also be willing to accept that it might not be a 100 percent their fault. “I may have had something to do with the triggering experience. Accepting that I may have had a reaction that took a 20 percent experience to 100 percent. So 20 percent really was something that they did and the other 80 percent was me overreacting and going off the deep end because it triggered some other old memory of historical significance for me.”

11:43

Beginning to really understand what’s going on here helps us to accept that awareness is going to require a rational brain. When we are triggered emotionally, we simply aren’t rational. Our decision-making capacity is taken offline. The only thing we can hope to do is recognize that we are triggered. At that point, we zip our lip and walk away. Do whatever we need to do so that we don’t escalate the problem. These emotional triggers, or over-the-top emotions, are huge energy drains and incredibly stressful for you and whoever it is that you are interacting with.

12:41

For your own sanity, peace of mind, and health, it is extremely important that you learn to unravel what is going on here. Especially if you have something that seems to repeat itself with regularity. This happens a lot in

relationships. We do this dance where we're reminding ourselves of past relationships and former experiences. The only person that we have right now, in the moment, to put it on is this person standing right in front of us.

13:17

If you are finding that you are having this sort of experience over and over with someone that you're in a relationship with, just know that the experience, in the moment, is 20 percent and 80 percent is you. And, you have control over that other 80 percent.

It is impossible to be effective and productive, and create a big happy and fulfilling life when these sorts of emotional upsets are consuming our energy and resources. This is not something to take lightly. If this is something that you regularly experience, I urge you to consider what you've heard here and look for ways that you can begin to unravel this yourself. That may require that you get professional help. I really encourage you to do that, if that feels appropriate for you but in some way you need to address the problem.

14:26

What's your takeaway for today? One little "aha" and your time will be well spent.

Well you may have heard me point out that it is not possible to make good decisions and choices when you are triggered. It is not possible to have any sort of deep awareness when you are triggered and in this fight-or-flight mode. What is possible though is to have the slightest gap and put that to good use. To pause for just a second when you feel that flood of emotion taking over. If you are not in jeopardy of being hit by a bus or eaten by a wild animal, pause and say, "I really want to react differently. I know it's not going to happen unless I pause and give myself a moment to calm down before I try to figure out how to react. If I go on autopilot and I just react, then I'm going to get the same thing I always get. If I pause, then I give myself a moment

for my rational brain to come back online. Now, I can start putting some conscious thought into this experience and make some choices that have a possibility of creating a happier ending.”

16:07

Question:

My parents are extremely religious and homophobic. I have known I’m attracted to people of the same sex for a long time now but have been afraid to tell them. I’m really tired of living a secret life . . . trying to deny who I have feelings for. Should I tell my parents I’m gay or just keep it to myself to avoid the risk that they will disown me?

16:34

Dr. Gala Gorman: First, thanks for submitting your question. I’m sure it is exhausting to live a secret life. We all want to be loved and celebrated for who we truly are. Living in fear of your secret being revealed will kill you. Dying may come slowly. And to those who don’t know you well, you may even still appear to be living fully, but you’ll know the truth. Death is winning.

You may need some professional counseling to help you prepare to share that you are gay with the people closest to you . . . but you do need to share it with them. It may be stormy for a while but once the clouds part you will feel better. I have had close friends that are gay . . . including my husband’s sister. While I can’t possibly know the pain you’ve experienced feeling like you need to hide from the outside world, I do empathize and know there are plenty of people that will support you. It will be up to you to find where you fit. Good luck to you!

17:31

Announcer:

Are you ready to create an attitude adjustment? Practicing Aware Appreciation will make a positive difference. You can access the Aware Appreciation Worksheet by visiting AwarenessAddicts.com/AA. In just a few minutes a day,

you'll stop negativity in its tracks...and gain some insight and awareness in the process.

Your feedback makes a difference. What part of this episode helped you the most? Join the Awareness Addicts Facebook group and share your thoughts. Make sure you leave a review wherever you've accessed the show. And, if you know others who could use some divine inspiration, share with them! Remember, all the links and resources are available at AwarenessAddicts.com/Episodes. Don't waste another moment feeling confused and stuck. As an Awareness Addict, you're alive, alert, awake and aware of life's possibilities.

18:27

Dr. Gala Gorman: Once we're starting to make some progress, the voice in our heads may get really loud. "Things look great now but you know that won't last." If we give that voice much freedom, it can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. It doesn't have to be that way. In the next episode, we're going to make sure we don't sabotage our success. You don't want to miss it.

18:53

Announcer: This was Awareness Addicts with Dr. Gala Gorman. For more information and to find any resources mentioned in this episode, visit AwarenessAddicts.com/Episodes. Thank you for tuning in.

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