



Managing Emotion Attack

The brain is one of the largest and most complex organs in the human body. It is made up of more than 100 billion nerves that communicate in trillions of connections called synapses. It produces our every thought, action, memory, feeling and experience of the world. This jelly-like mass of tissue, weighing at around 1.4 kilograms, contains a staggering one hundred billion nerve cells, or neurons.

They can send signals incredibly fast. In fact, different parts of our brain can communicate at different speeds! If the brain perceives a threat, it automatically triggers our body into action. A common reference as “fight or flight” response.

This survival mechanism bypasses our reasoning brain (the neocortex) and puts the amygdala (our emotional brain) in charge. While this served us well living in this challenging world, it could cause some unforeseen problems in our daily life. Any strong emotion such as anger or anxiety can trigger this survival mechanism, and you have been hijacked! The term “amygdala hijack” was first used by Daniel Goleman in his book Emotional Intelligence.

All of us have experienced moments of distress where we yell at both objects, strangers or even your family members (children). Those are the moments where we encounter emotional (amygdala) hijacks that lead us with illogical thoughts and actions which often result in regrets. However, it is important for us as parents to be aware of this phenomenon and **train ourselves to manage such emotional attack (hijack).**

For parents living in today’s stressed-out world, we can easily overreact when something drastic happens to our lives. Our reaction becomes irrational, and we say words that are judging and hurtful to our children. This damages our relationship with our children.

How do we train ourselves to manage emotional hijacks?

Below are 5 suggested steps:

1. Be aware that you are experiencing an emotional outburst (eg anger). Label it. Tell yourself:
“I feel angry towards....., why am I angry?”
2. What is in my thoughts? How do I think?
3. Can I react differently?
4. Take a moment to redirect your energy to your breathing, ask yourself: Can I react differently? What do I want to achieve out of this emotional outburst?
5. Reconstruct your thinking again.

Recognizing what is happening is half the battle won! Practice being mindful of your reactions. Practice waiting for a few moments before you respond to any given situation. This

pause allows your reasoning brain (neocortex) to catch up to your emotional brain(amygdala). This is the reason for counting to 10 before you respond. This gives your reasoning brain time to gain back in control so as to react rationally. Managing emotional attack successfully is a constant practice that requires awareness and mindfulness. The more effort we make to strengthen our emotional literacy and usage, the better we will be at peace with ourselves living with the people around us.

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