

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1006 Buttons, Triggers, and Responses – Oh My!

Somehow, we humans tend to believe that our problems are external. Whatever is wrong comes from somebody else making life more difficult for us. The enemy is “out there.” It’s those people who constantly push our buttons, they’re the reason that things suck so often. They trigger us, and it’s their fault. I’m Jerry Roberts and let’s talk about buttons, triggers, and who’s at fault, next, on The Extra Point.

Let’s start with a disclaimer: Not all troubles in life are a result of somebody pushing buttons — our buttons — which trigger a negative/frustrating/painful/embarrassing — you add your favorite word to describe and how you feel about it when it happens. No, not all of our troubles come that way. Just more than need be.

Let’s face it, a lot of people know where those buttons are and what they represent. Some of these people are family members who know you inside and out. They’ve seen you get triggered by all kinds of things over the years, and they can easily predict how you will react under various circumstances.

Who else knows? Friends you grew up with. They know. Some coworkers do, as well. I’m not saying that any or all of these people set out to push your buttons as a source of entertainment, or as part of a diabolical plan to ruin you. It’s just good to realize that there are folks who understand you that well.

It’s also valuable to understand that you and I allow things to trigger us. We let the same people trigger us in the same ways, giving them the satisfaction of seeing us give the same response. It’s like they have some kind of control over us. Push...trigger...response... again and again.

We’ve allowed it to become a habit. We blame the button pusher, and don’t accept any

responsibility. “It’s outside of my control,” we say. “it’s them, not me.” And I know I’m lying to myself. Our stimulus may come from the outside, but our problem is inside.

In a leadership conference I attended, the late Stephen Covey said that between stimulus and response, there’s a small space that we own and occupy. It’s the small space where we decide how to respond.

When Jesus was interrogated by the Jewish religious leaders prior to his crucifixion, he was slapped across the face. He could have called down angels to wipe out everybody in the room. Instead, inside that small space that he owned and occupied, he never lost sight of his mission on that day. He accepted a brutal beating, suffered when the people chose to release a criminal instead of him, and then He went to The Cross for the benefit of mankind.

Too often, we let our emotions get out of hand, and we give up that small space. We give up our power to control situations.

That small space might be taking a breath, and spending a few seconds to assess a situation before making a comment or taking a specific action.

It might be saying to the button pusher, “I’ll get back to you. I’m busy right now.” Or, “Golly Mary, you don’t really expect me to respond to that, do you?” Or, maybe just pause and look at them for a few seconds, then say, “Hey, nice try.”

“Oh, but wait,” you say. “What if there’s an element of truth in their pushing the button? What if they highlight a deficiency or a weakness?” The answer there is to eliminate the impact of the weakness.

(Con’t.)

Either work to make it a strength; or, if necessary, improve enough that it doesn't hurt your performance.

Better yet, strengthen an existing strength and let that overshadow any perceived weakness.

Maybe one day you'll be able to say to your button pusher, "You know, I can't thank you enough. When you took the time to point this problem out to me, I asked for some training and soon this won't be an issue at all. I really appreciate that!" I'm guessing that person won't try to push your buttons anymore.

We all get triggered at times, but we don't have to say and do things that will damage our relationships. It may take some time to master this ability, but it's worth the effort.

We also don't have to buy in to the negative things people may tell us. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

Between stimulus and response, there is a space that we own and occupy. It's the small space where we decide how to respond.

Don't give up that small space, that place where we control our emotions, not letting emotions control us.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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