

# SURVIVING LIFE DRAMAS

*KAREN GOSLING*

*COUNSELOR FOR EMOTIONAL WEALTH*

Transcript

Part 2 of 12

Surviving Emotional Style



changing minds, changing lives

## 2 *Surviving Life Dramas*

Published by Gosling International ABN: 28-219-744-700  
13 Valerie Street, Ashmore Queensland 4214 Australia  
<[www.goslings.net](http://www.goslings.net)>

Copyright © 2010 Gosling International

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, including photocopying, recording, scanning, or any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to Gosling International, 13 Valerie Street, Ashmore Queensland 4214 Australia. Tel: (617) 5564 7582, Email: [permreq@goslings.net](mailto:permreq@goslings.net).

Transcription by Dr Jay Polmar <[www.lifeimprovementbooks.com](http://www.lifeimprovementbooks.com)>

Edited by GoslingProductions <[www.goslingproductions.com](http://www.goslingproductions.com)>

Logos and web site design by Ivo Widjaja, Melbourne, Australia <[www.equeenox.com](http://www.equeenox.com)>

Printed & bound in the United States of America by Vervante <[www.vervante.com](http://www.vervante.com)>

**Join Dr. Mike & Karen Gosling's Membership Site**



**Disclaimer:** All material in this transcript is provided for information only and may not be construed as medical advice or instruction. No action or inaction should be taken based solely on the contents of the transcript findings. Instead, readers should consult their physician, general practitioner, or other qualified health professional on any matter relating to health and well-being. Readers who fail to consult with appropriate health authorities assume the risk of any injuries. The publisher is not responsible for any errors or omissions. Reference herein to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the publisher.

**Surviving Life Dramas: Surviving Emotional Style**  
**Part 2 of 12**

**Dr. Mike Gosling:**

Hello, I'm Doctor Mike Gosling and on behalf of the entire staff at Gosling International and the Emotional Wealth Academy, I'd like to welcome you to the twelve part series, *Surviving Life Dramas*. Today's topic is *Surviving Emotional Style*. How many times have you wondered why your partner or your children react differently to you about situations? Heaps of times, I bet.

Our speaker today is uniquely qualified to speak on the topic of surviving emotional style, having helped thousands of people in more than thirty years. Ladies and gentlemen, expert counselor and Gosling International Counseling Director, Mrs Karen Gosling.

**Karen Gosling:**

Hello, I'm Karen Gosling and today we are talking about surviving your emotional style. Now, your emotional style is the way you naturally will deal with stress when you experience Adrenalin in your body. It's the way that we react instinctively or naturally – not everybody is different. You may be a 'fight person' or a 'flight person' because after all fight or flight is the natural response. It's the natural mechanism of Adrenalin. We're going to be talking about how you process emotion.

#### 4 *Surviving Life Dramas*

Let us refer to this picture on the board. In our first seminar, I spoke about the importance of the brain in managing stress. This is my cartoon sketch of the brain where I drew two main components of the brain – the Limbic System, deep within the brain that is responsible for the feelings that we have. And the Cortex – that is responsible for the thinking. It's the Limbic System, with our fear centre, the Amygdala, that will kick off a stress response when our brain interprets that we are under some sort of threat. A stress response gets kicked off, our Sympathetic Nervous System produces Adrenalin. This is a real chemical, it really does arouse our nervous system. It really does give us a negative feeling.

Then, there's also messages that go up to the Cortex for us to determine, "Is this situation dangerous or not? No or yes?" And when we recognise that there is no threat, your Parasympathetic Nervous System puts on the brakes. It stops the flooding of Adrenalin and it restores your body to calm. So the negative emotion, the small fear response, very quickly dissipates. It very quickly goes.

But if your brain interprets, "Yes there is threat and I am in a dangerous situation and this person is out to attack me," the messages get sent more rapidly down to the Sympathetic Nervous System and more and more Adrenalin is produced which then elevates your levels of Adrenalin and cause you to move into protection mode. The way we protect ourselves is very much dependent on whether our natural style, our natural emotional style is more as a 'fight person' or a 'flight person'.

When you are a 'fight person', it doesn't take many surges of Adrenalin to cause you to want to immediately display your emotion and typically, you will become irritable or angry, or you

will fight. When there is a flooding of emotion such as in a dangerous situation, you will even put up your fist and use it to fight. I can actually draw that in terms of a small volcano. The 'fight person' will have two or three surges of Adrenalin and will then display their emotion.

If you are a 'flight person' you are more likely to become withdrawn, taken aback or even frozen because the 'flight person' internalises their Adrenalin, holds it within, remains steady on the outside, but very distressed on the inside – this is not necessarily visible to others.

So we can represent that by drawing a bigger volcano. The 'fight person' is much more reactive and the 'flight person', who is more likely to withdraw, we call an Avoidant Person. This can be seen in different situations depending on whether it is one, large life drama or indeed, even a build-up of relentless stress. Let me give you some examples of the difference.

I can remember when my youngest son was eight years old and one Sunday afternoon, having a picnic in the playground, he was up on a makeshift swing in the tree and he fell out of the tree. I saw him fall and I reached to help him but I missed him. I immediately had a shock reaction because he had landed pretty much on his head. I thought, "What injury has he sustained?" Then he moaned and he rolled over. I thought, "Good, at least he's not a paraplegic." But then I saw by the shape of his arm that he had very seriously broken his arm. In fact he had broken it clean through and his arm was almost like a v-shape.

Now, at that point in time, I had a taken aback response. I almost froze. I was very calm on the exterior, not panicky, didn't seem to be a calamity, called out to my other son, "I need some help." Then I used the cell phone in my pocket and I held the child on my lap and I rang my husband and I said, very calmly over the phone – because I'm an Avoidant Person and I hold

## 6 *Surviving Life Dramas*

things inside and I was able to be very calm – And I said, "I'm in the playground with the boys. I think I need some help. William has just fallen out of the tree and I think he's broken his arm. Could you come and help. I don't know what to do next."

Now, my husband Mike is a very Reactive Person. He experiences his stress in a different way. So, when he heard the news that there was some danger – possible serious injury of our son – he immediately got angry over the phone and immediately there was this outburst of, "What are you doing letting him climb a tree? What do you mean he was up in the tree? How serious is he?" I was taken aback also by his reaction. I did not expect this reaction. Mike, at that point, took complete control. He was at my side within about seven minutes, caught a taxi and came to where we were, completely took over. He was wonderful. Wrapped our son up in a big bath towel and we got into a taxi and we were able to take him to the hospital where he was given the appropriate treatment.

After the big drama was over and the child was at home with his arm in plaster cast, Mike and I talked our different reactions and I said to him, "Why were you so angry when I rang you and told you that William had fallen out of the tree? I was upset. I didn't expect you to be angry."

He said, "Yes, I'm sorry. I perhaps could have done that better. I didn't know I was going to be angry either, but that's the way I react when I immediately experience a stress reaction." I acknowledged that it didn't last for very long. But, he pointed out something very significant to me. He said, "Karen, I was also surprised by your reaction."

I said, "Why? I was really calm"

He said, "I know you were calm. And I also know that you are person who would be calm in a crisis. But let's face it. You're the trained trauma counselor." And I was, and I'd worked in many traumatic situations in a hospital. He said, "And also, you're the one that has done the St. John's course and knows about how to manage injuries and how to do CPR and when to call an ambulance. Why didn't you take control? I expected you to take control and instead you rang me for help."

At that point, I realised that even though in one situation, I can be very much in control – at that point in time, I was a trained trauma counselor, working in a hospital environment and running a trauma counseling service – and yet, I recognised then that when I was personally involved, my stress was so great that I became clouded and I couldn't think straight. Everything went in slow motion. I was actually not able to deal with the stress of that moment because I was personally threatened. Professionally, working in a trauma counseling service, I wasn't personally threatened and this was a big eye opener for me.

So, what we know is that when your brain interprets that you are personally under attack or personally threatened in some way, your reactions are going to be different than in a situation where you are perhaps professionally involved in something and still in control – as I was in the hospital trauma situation. As a 'flight person', as an Avoidant Person, the way I experience stress is that I feel taken aback and frozen. It's a bit like the deer in the headlights. I feel unable to react quickly. I feel like everything goes in slow motion. After the event, when I've calmed down a bit and my Adrenalin had dropped a bit, then I can think about what I could have done or should have done and things that I would have said.

## 8 *Surviving Life Dramas*

The Reactive Person has this ability to think on their feet. They process their emotion very quickly by reacting and using up the energy of Adrenalin and immediately for them, but particularly after the outburst, the event for them is over.

Now this is particularly significant when we examine negative emotions in a relationship. The relationship can be between husband and wife, between boss and subordinate, between brother and sister, between parent and child, between teacher and student. Wherever there is a relationship, there are going to be interactions which aren't always good. Whenever you have a negative interaction - and that negativity may only be experienced by one side, not necessarily the other – but whenever you experience a negative feeling in an interaction, you are having a stress response.

Every negative emotion is a stress response. Adrenalin is being produced because your brain is interpreting that somehow you are under threat. Because of our developed Cortex, we humans can give our negative emotions a label. So, sometimes I might feel threatened or anxious or I might feel put down or dismissed or belittled. It may be a low-intensity feeling. A low-intensity feeling simply means my brain isn't feeling hugely threatened so it just produces a little bit of Adrenalin. And so my feelings might be for example, I feel annoyed or I feel uncomfortable, or I feel a little bit irritated.

But if it's a bigger surge of Adrenalin, my feelings might be, I feel embarrassed or I feel unappreciated or I feel mocked. Or in a big surge of Adrenalin I might feel disgusted or humiliated or rejected or betrayed or scorned. All our different emotional words are describing a negative emotion that we are having in the context of a relationship usually. And so

whenever we experience negative emotion in interactions, our stress is going to increase and as our stress increases, we are going to respond either as a Reactive Person or as an avoidant Person.

When the Reactive Person explodes or displays their emotion in some way – it may not be getting mad, it may just be needing to talk, it may be sorting it out now, fixing the problem now – and so if you are married to a Reactive Person, that person will want to sort things out straight away. They'll follow you from room to room, talking and wanting to sort it out straight away. And then when it's sorted out, the event is over. They get rid of the Adrenalin build-up, they get rid of the Adrenalin arousal that the body feels and they get back to normal very quickly. They don't realise that this display of emotion may well be impacting the other person, if the other person is an Avoidant Person.

The Avoidant Person does not like conflict and does not like confrontation. The Avoidant Person functions the best when there's harmony and when there's peacefulness. And so if they have to hear or experience somebody blowing up or telling them off or raising their voice or using an irritable tone, that will have an impact on this person and this person will have another Adrenalin response. But they don't necessarily show it on the outside. Believe me, it's there on the inside and if the brain thinks about it, the brain can think, "I feel put down, I feel attacked, I feel misunderstood, I feel belittled, I feel scared."

Sometimes, if you are at the receiving end of somebody's aggression - you might be a teacher and you've got students who are getting mad at you – you might very well feel fearful but you don't show it on the outside. But you start to build up this feeling of stress. When the Avoidant

Person builds up such a lot of Adrenalin, these feelings are attributed very often to the other person. Their brain is thinking, "You are making me feel like this and if you are making me feel like this, I'm going to start to feel that you're the enemy and I'm going to start to withdraw from you" (because Avoidant People withdraw). They start off by ignoring and then they withdraw.

Initially, this may not be noticed by anybody else because the withdrawal occurs on the inside – it's a protective mechanism. It's the wall that Avoidant People build up and if you could see inside the wall, there would be this defence of, "What you say isn't going to hurt me anymore." But eventually, they withdraw noticeably. They start not to answer, they start not to engage with the person who is throwing the barbs and this withdrawal very quickly has an impact on the Reactive Person.

Now the Reactive Person is thinking, "What's wrong with this person? Why is she so moody? Why is she not talking to me?" And the Reactive people will say – if they ever get around to talking about it – the Reactive Person will say, "I feel shut out. I feel excluded. I feel like you're punishing me. I feel left out. Why don't you interact with me?" Because, what the Reactive Person is wanting is some sort of solution so that they can move on. They want the event to be over, not knowing that for the Avoidant Person, all these exchanges, these negative feelings, is impacting on the relationship. The Avoidant Person tends to get filled with all these Adrenalin responses, all this negative emotion, that then impacts on the relationship because they feel as though the Reactive Person – the other person in the relationship – doesn't care about their feelings.

The Avoidant Person can release those Adrenalin responses, usually by talking about things in a non-conflict situation. So initially, the Avoidant Person will try and talk things through. Perhaps with a colleague at work or with a boss. They will try and talk things through because if they are heard and understood and able to say how they feel, they will release that Adrenalin and things will be back to normal. But typically, what happens is that when they try and talk about their feelings, there's further conflict, there's further criticism, there's another exchange that causes the Avoidant Person to have an Adrenalin Arousal and so they end up shutting down and thinking, "What's the point? What's the point of saying any more? What's the point of trying to explain how I feel because it isn't going to be successful?"

The person with the Avoidant emotional style tends to very much live in their own head with many thoughts and many emotions inside their body, feeling hurt, feeling distressed and somehow thinking that the other person should be understanding how they feel and help them deal with it. Now the other person isn't feeling like that at all – they've already had their little explosion, they've already had their angry outburst. They're back to normal and wondering why you are sulking, why you are moody, why you are so withdrawn – which of course makes them feel left out, shut out, excluded and punished. They are the typical words that the Reactive Person will use.

There's a lot of stress for the Avoidant Person that comes from arguments. In every argument, there is a trading of hurts. If I'm arguing with you, you might feel attacked, then you'll say something and I feel criticised, I say something back and you feel put down. Then I feel humiliated and then you feel misunderstood and then I feel belittled. And so the exchanges occur. So, when there's conflict, it's very rarely about a topic. It's actually always about trading

## 12 *Surviving Life Dramas*

hurts and the exchanges go backwards and forwards and each of us are trying to defend ourselves. The Avoidant Person is the one who ends up feeling, holding in, internalising these pains and then dwelling on it.

In my previous seminar, I spoke about how we dwell on things – the more Adrenalin that you have in your body, the more you feel worked up, the more your body has this Adrenalin arousal, the more your brain is going to be on alert going, "Where is the problem?" And so the Avoidant Person thinks more and more - for hours sometimes – about what has gone wrong in the interaction. They will dwell on it and the more they dwell, the more Adrenalin they will produce. So, the Avoidant Person is prone to having these stress responses in their body. They are more prone to stress and they are more prone to depression because their body experiences this Adrenalin.

Meanwhile, the Reactive Person has got mad in the argument, has got over it, they don't feel worked up anymore and they have returned to normal. This is very difficult for the Avoidant Person to understand. The Avoidant Person is wanting to get rid of their Adrenalin in a non-conflict way so that they can restore to normal.

The brain remembers hurts and emotional pain in the same way as the brain remembers a smell. So, think about this. If you smell something today that you haven't smelt for six years, the way you identify what the smell is, is the brain receiving that particular sensation through the olfactory glands, it identifies the smell by whizzing through its file of memories and going, "Ah. I remember what that smell is and I remember where I smelt it." So immediately, the

brain can recognise what the smell is and where you smelt it and that memory is resurrected, even though you perhaps hadn't thought about that memory for six years.

In exactly the same way, when you have an emotional pain, your brain recognises what the pain is by going, "I've had that feeling before. What is it?" It whizzes through the file of memories, suddenly finds it and remembers what the label is – "I feel humiliated" – and remembers that you felt humiliated two weeks ago, two months ago, two years ago, twelve years ago. So all of a sudden, the emotional pain that you experience today in an argument brings up all these other memories of times you have had this pain before. And if those previous times have not been resolved, then every one of those memories – and this happens so fast in your brain, you're not even really aware that it's happening – all those memories will surge another little bit of Adrenalin and so today, the experience that I am having, which feels like I am humiliated, is actually causing me to experience a much bigger volume of Adrenalin than today's situation warrants. I therefore am experiencing what others might call an over reaction. I've got a disproportionate amount of Adrenalin in my system because of this event. My reaction to it, the way I deal with that, is in response to the amount of Adrenalin I have got. So, that's why it comes across to others as an over reaction.

Because I am a Sensitive Person with a weaker Limbic system and I trigger off quite quickly to threatening stimuli, or perceived threatening stimuli, and because my body produces a lot of Adrenalin, I frequently have Adrenalin responses which cause me to feel uncomfortable. These Adrenalin arousals, if I'm not careful, cause me to then think with the Cortex of my brain, that other people are making me feel this. It is very common for the Avoidant Person to think that they feel hurt because other people are making them feel it. The reality is yes, I feel

it, yes, the feeling is in my body, the feeling is valid, but are you necessarily making me feel it? I doubt it, unless you're some sort of psychopath or evil person.

You probably don't go around trying to make me feel bad, you are probably just trying to survive in this world as well and so you are reacting in your normal style but your actions, your behaviors, have an impact in me. The way that I can try and minimise my Adrenalin is by using my brain to think about the situation differently so that my stress doesn't continue. I have a responsibility of reducing my stress so that my thinking becomes clearer. My feelings are going to get better and my thinking is going to be less impaired when my Adrenalin levels are down.

I'm going to give some examples and tips about how to reduce our Adrenalin. In a previous seminar, I used my hands as a platform to describe how when our Adrenalin rises, our Serotonin drops. Serotonin is the chemical in our brain which we need for thinking – it's a neurotransmitter. Similarly, as Adrenalin drops, Serotonin rises. These operate as a counter weight. So, when you're feeling really stressed and your Adrenalin is high because you've got a lot of negative emotion or you may have just had conflict or confrontation with someone, it's a biological equation that your Serotonin is going to be very low.

You can say to yourself, "I know straight away that my thinking is going to be impaired, my self-esteem is going to drop. I have to reverse this chemical imbalance so that I can get back to at least equilibrium so that I can be in control of my thinking, even though initially, I may not be able to be in control of my feeling because my Adrenalin takes some time to release." Even

after the threat or the argument is over, you still take a while to calm down – the calming down is your body releasing Adrenalin.

So, we have to try to restore to balance as quickly as we can. So, if you can visualise what's going on your body, if you can visualise how your brain and the interpretation of threat is causing your body to produce Adrenalin responses, you have to say to yourself, "No, there is no threat." So, there are two ways that you can restore to equilibrium. One way is to reduce the level of Adrenalin in your body, the second way is to restore your self-esteem – to drag up your self-esteem which of course is elevating Serotonin. It doesn't matter which one you do first. It doesn't matter which one you tackle at that particular time. As long as you are bringing the platforms back to equilibrium, your feeling will increase and your thinking will be less impaired.

Let's talk about dragging down Adrenalin. Visualise yourself as a vessel and you're trying to bring down these levels of Adrenalin. One of the easiest ways that you can do that, particularly when you're feeling very worked up and your body has got the physiological responses of stress and your heart might be palpitating and you're actually shaking or quivering – this could be in trauma situation or it could be in the middle of an argument. But when you've got these physiological responses and you know that it's Adrenalin and you can picture your vessel filled with Adrenalin and you desperately want to get the level down, what you can do is breathe differently. The easiest and simplest mechanism is to breathe differently. Some of you will have done yoga and will have learnt different breathing techniques but don't necessarily realise the impact of the breathing on what's happening in your body.

Let me explain. If the simplest form of breathing is that you breathe out longer than you breathe in, let's say you breathe in for the count of three – try that now, wherever you are – and breathe out for the count of four. Or breathe in for the count of four (whatever's comfortable for you) and breathe out for the count of five. What happens is that when you breathe out for longer than you breathe in, you are in fact mimicking the way that you breathe when you feel relief. When we feel relief (we sigh) out and we have a longer out breath. So, by deliberately breathing out for longer, we are actually tricking the brain into thinking that we feel relief. In other words, everything is okay.

The message goes from your body, back to your brain, it bypasses the Cortex, goes straight back to the Limbic system and says that everything is all right. So the Limbic System will then activate the Parasympathetic Nervous System with the message, "Everything is okay. There's no threat, there's no danger." Breath by breath, you start to calm down because the Parasympathetic Nervous System has stopped the flow of Adrenalin and it doesn't add any more.

Now, if you've got a moment to spare in your trauma or in your life drama and you can think a little bit more clearly than just breathing out long and deep, you might like to imagine a square. We'll call it the breathing square. Imagine that you are walking around this square – 4 steps on each side. And as you are walking around the breathing square, breathe in for the count of four, hold your breath for the count of four, breathe out for four and hold your breath for four. So again, wherever you are, just try that for a moment. Breathe in for four, hold for four, out for four, hold for four.

If you do that three or four times, you will start to calm down. You can do it many more times, anywhere, any time. Lying in bed trying to sleep, driving, sitting at traffic lights, sitting in an exam. Wherever you want, you can walk around the breathing square. Because, what happens is this; as you are walking around the square, you are thinking present tense. When you are thinking something in the present tense and it is not threatening – and there is nothing threatening about walking around an imaginary square – you are not adding in Adrenalin. You will only produce Adrenalin when your brain is interpreting that there is some sort of threat. You only produce Adrenalin when you perceive there to be some danger.

So, walking around the imaginary square – no threat, present tense, not adding in any more Adrenalin and the breathing out and holding out is again, mimicking the way we breathe when we feel relief. As you mimic relief, the message goes straight back from your body to your brain that everything is all right. NO DANGER! The Parasympathetic Nervous System stops the flow of adrenalin and breath by breath you restore to calm. Simple, easy techniques to lower your levels of Adrenalin – not necessarily to get back to normal, but certainly enough for you to be able to manage your thinking and be able to remain steady.

At the same time, you can drag up Serotonin. When we drag up Serotonin levels, it's actually using self-esteem techniques and most people will know some self-esteem techniques. It's about talking to yourself in a positive way. It's very significant at this point to say things to yourself about yourself that you know to be true. If you say things that are a little bit way off, the message in your brain is going to be, "That's just ridiculous." So, it's important to say things about yourself that you know to be true. Rehearse things at a normal time when you are

not stressed and have them ready in your compendium of important information to grab hold of when you are feeling under stress.

The information can be things like, "I have a loving partner, I have children who adore me, I've got a Masters in Science, I can play the piano well." Short statements about yourself that you know to be true. "I've got three good friends." And label them. "I was very successful in organising that committee meeting at the PTA." There's many, many things that you've done in your life that are successful and if you can grab onto those areas of success, those things that you know are true, then in a time of stress, when you absolutely need them, you can actually bring up your self-esteem enough to just restore to calm.

I'll give you an example of how rapidly your thinking can just go completely out of whack when you have Adrenalin racing around in your body. I remember some years ago when I was first starting my private practice here in Singapore, I was doing some work for the medical evacuation companies – I had registered with them as a trauma counselor. That was my previous work back in Australia. Now on this one occasion, the international SOS company tried to get hold of me to call me out to a medical evacuation that they were needing to do from a ship out in Malaysian waters. Apparently there had been some accident on the ship and the captain had died. The staff on the ship were very traumatised and the medical evacuation company were going out to retrieve the body and were trying to get hold of me as a trauma counselor to go out and spend a couple of days on the ship to speak with the staff.

By the time I was finally able to be reached, there was only fifty minutes left for me to make a decision and to get to the airport to catch a plane to take me across to the ship. I took ten

minutes to hesitate and to think, "Should I go? What about my family? What about these appointments that I've got over the next two or three days? What would I wear?" I took ten minutes to hesitate and then I decided I would go. And then I had to race home from where I was, put some clothes into a suitcase, grab a passport, make a phone-call about whether or not I needed a visa and then caught a taxi and fled down to the airport.

By the time I got there, I was too late for check-in. The plane was still on the tarmac but the counter staff, for security reasons, would not let me check-in and board the plane. I was all flustered and I was panicky. My whole body was racing with Adrenalin. This was exciting but then I wasn't able to catch the plane. I said, "You must let me catch this plane, I've been asked to be on this plane, I'm needed. You must let me go. I'll be letting people down if I don't." But the counter staff were quite clear about it and said, "No, we're sorry, we cannot let you check-in."

I became desperate and I went to other airlines and I tried to catch other planes to get to the same location. There was no way that I could board a flight and so, as I sat there at the airport trying to settle myself down, because of the increase of Adrenalin and the lowered Serotonin – which happens automatically when there is a rise of Adrenalin – I felt panicky and my thinking became impaired. I was saying to myself things like, "You're such a failure. You're hopeless. You're a trained trauma counselor and you couldn't even make a rapid decision to do this job. Because you hesitated, you missed the flight. What are people going to think about you? They'll think that you're a failure and inadequate. Your business is going to suffer because nobody else will ever use you for trauma counseling."

These thoughts went on and I went from being flustered about missing the flight to my business in Singapore being absolutely ruined because my thinking got so impaired. The more I thought, the more stressed I became. All of these things, I held inside of me – this is my Avoidant style. I didn't get mad with anybody, I kept it within, my thinking became impaired and as I sat there – and it took me the entire afternoon to calm down from this particular life drama – and still that seed of doubt about my capability stayed with me.

Now, of course my business didn't fail and there were no real repercussions about me missing the flight. Yes, I did let some people down and I did have to ring the head office in Sydney and say I'd missed the flight. So, I had a certain amount of humiliation – another Adrenalin arousal when I did that. But at that time, when my thinking was so warped and so wrong, I could have used my own techniques that I'm teaching you. I could have done the breathing exercise to reduce my Adrenalin, I could have thought about successful things, positive things, things that were good in my life to raise self-esteem, just to restore some balance so that I would not be so affected by the external event that had happened.

The person with the anxious personality is more likely to be a Sensitive Person – somebody with a weaker Limbic System. They will have over reactions to threatening stimuli, external and internal, the thoughts, the feelings, the worries. They will find it more difficult to settle because they have more Adrenalin in their body anyway. The Sensitive Person will have a greater level of Adrenalin at the best of times, whereas a person who is not so sensitive, doesn't have that level of Adrenalin and therefore doesn't have that level of impaired thinking.

The anxious personality, because of the fact that they dwell on that anxious cycle will often consider the worst case scenario and sometimes they can be quite pessimistic and negative. And that can impact on relationships with people around them. Sometimes, people with an anxious personality will have physiological responses to things that don't make sense to anybody else.

I have a son who doesn't like travelling home on a public bus because he says he feels scared about sitting next to strangers. When we travel in the plane together, he's the one that has to sit on the aisle seat and poor mum has to squash up in the middle because he has a physiological reaction because of generalised anxiety about sitting next to a stranger. Even though intellectually he knows that that is silly, his body is still having an anxious response.

I have another son who delights in telling the story about the first time that I took him, here in Singapore, to an Indian festival – the Thaipussam festival – and in this particular festival, for those of you who don't know, the devotees pierce their bodies with skewers and spikes. If you've not seen it before, it can be quite a gruesome thing but the devotees are in a trance and they do this out of respect and gratitude for their gods. My son, at the age of ten, came with me to this festival because I was fascinated by it but I forgot to think how he might feel at this height. We got caught up in one of the processions and he became anxious because he thought that because we got caught up with this crowd of people, many of them who were skewered and pierced, he thought that this meant that this was going to happen to him as well. He still recalls – it's a great dinner-party story – about how fearful he felt and the Adrenalin reaction that he had and how his body felt when he perceived or imagined that he was also going to be skewered.

The Anxious Person – again more likely to be the Avoidant Person, because the Avoidant Person builds up Adrenalin and this causes anxiety to be felt right, throughout the body – will frequently have what we call a 'pause and check response' as well. So, instead of releasing or displaying their emotions straight away – as a Reactive Person does – and getting it out of their system and getting it off their chest, the Anxious Person is likely to hold things inside and to pause and check the situation for safety before they proceed.

For example, if somebody comes to you with an angry comment or a criticism or demanding something to be done and there is a tone that sounds aggressive or impatient, the Avoidant and the Anxious Person is likely to hesitate, stop, appraise, check. Is it safe to continue or not? And that pause might take one or two seconds and in that time, this Reactive Person who is shooting from the hip, will probably come in with another comment. And will again express anger. So people actually do need to understand how other people are experiencing their emotion.

There is nothing right nor wrong with these different emotional styles but they are different. And the difference that we experience, the difference that we exhibit is impacting on somebody else.

I can remember one time when I was sitting doing some work – my head was thinking about a counseling session that I had just done so I was involved in my own thoughts. I was involved in my thoughts about the couple that I had just seen for marriage counseling. My husband, Mike came to me with a piece of paper – he'd just printed off something that he was working on on the website – and he passed this piece of paper to me and said, "Tell me what you think

about this." I can remember inside going, "Oh, what does he want?" That was the taken aback feeling. And I thought, "I'm thinking about something else, so should I tell him I want to finish thinking about this before I respond to him? No, this is important for him, I'll think about this and then I'll come back to thinking about what I want."

Then I thought, "What does he want me to comment on? Does he want me to comment on the font, the type of printing, the colour, the lay-out, the content?" And all of this time in my few seconds of hesitation, I was trying to determine what I should respond with. This was my 'pause and check response'. But my more reactive husband, in the two or three seconds that I was trying to determine all of these things in my head and displaying no reaction at all, grabbed the paper from me and said, "Well, obviously you don't think it's very good." And he walked away.

Then I had another feeling. I felt aggrieved – that was another Adrenalin response. I felt unfairly attacked. So I followed him and said, "Wait. Give that paper back to me. I haven't finished looking at it and I don't even know what you want. You must allow me to change my head around – to pause, to check – and not to have that reactivity that again makes me feel as though you are cross with me." Because of these internal feelings, the Avoidant Person, the Anxious Person will often feel as though other people are cross with them and annoyed. They feel they annoy other people and upset other people.

If you identify for yourself that you are a person with increased levels of Adrenalin and that other people who are angry or reactive or more aggressive or more able to respond quickly are

having an impact on you, you will need to take control of your Adrenalin and try and calm it down. We've spoken about the breathing square and we've spoken about the breathing out.

There's another little quick technique that I can teach you before I finish and this one is about smiling. You know the old saying about smiling – 'What you give out to the world will come back to you.' But, smiling actually helps you more than it helps other people. When you smile, even if it's a fake smile, you are activating your cheek muscles and when you do that, you actually send a message from your cheek muscles, straight up to your brain, into the Limbic System, bypass the Cortex and the message is, "Everything is all right." You actually only ever smile when everything is fine. You only ever smile when you're feeling good, so if you don't feel good, you can fake it.

If you can't smile, because you think that giving a fake smile is a little bit too difficult, then you can start to sing. If you sing, after just two minutes of singing and thereby activating your cheek muscles, you are actually going to feel better. If you don't believe it, try it. We can manipulate our brain into thinking that everything is all right. It restores us to calm. It gives us more ability to manage our emotions and our responses to things.

So again, what I'm stressing is that when you are experiencing a life drama you can look after yourself and stop expecting other people to change their behaviour so that you feel better. I have the ability to change how I feel by the way I think. If other people are expressing aggression, that is their style. I still need to control my reactions and my response to that.

When you identify that you are a Reactive Person and you are a person who's likely to shoot from the hip and display your anger and you know that you are having an impact on other people around you, the chances are you'll want to do something about it. Similarly, if you are an Anxious Person or an Avoidant Person and you recognise that your withdrawal and your build-up of resentments inside, that's also impacting on relationships and on people around you, you will want to do something about it as well.

So, what to do? To help with this process of what to do, let me describe what I call an 'anxiety scale' and an 'anger scale'. We normally feel feelings at a low intensity and as situations continue, they go up to a high intensity. So, we can label our feelings at these different intensities. English has the largest number of emotional words in its vocabulary than any other language in the world, it has been researched. So, whilst in other languages, people might talk about feeling bad or feeling bad, bad or feeling bad, bad, bad to describe their intensity, in English we have different words.

Let's say you are a person who experiences anxiety. At a low intensity, you might feel queasy or a little bit uneasy. Perhaps the queasy feeling becomes uneasy and as your Adrenalin increases, you start to become more and more churned up. If you are involved in an interaction with somebody else or perhaps it's an argument, you may then start to feel blamed or criticised. The intensity of your feelings are increasing and you can label all of these words.

'Misunderstood', frequently is one that the Avoidant Person feels. They feel as though they are not heard. Then in an argument they can become attacked. The feeling of being attacked, the feeling of being misrepresented and finally, they might say that they are furious. When you

recognise all of these feelings, you will know that these feelings are felt in different parts of your body. In this part of your body, it might just be a little bit in your stomach area. These feelings, you very often, as the Adrenalin increases in your body, you start to feel more in your chest area and your head starts to pound. And by the time you feel misrepresented and furious, your whole body is involved and you will probably be shaking and quivering and having a desperate need to run away – to exit the conflict, to exit from the situation that you're in.

If you are an angry person, your anger scale, your reactive scale from one to nine will have different sorts of words. What you might feel in conflict, might be that you feel unwanted or rejected and then you might feel dismissed by your partner. You might feel not valued, or disrespected, or frustrated. When you are an angry person and these feelings are felt on the inside, you tend to display them more on the outside. Angry people recognise that they feel feelings initially in their head, then their chest and then their hands. And then they want to attack and it is the reason why angry people can identify that they feel things in different parts of their body.

Because this development of the Adrenalin is inevitable if you continue, it's important to recognise at what level you have to take action and to do something different. If you don't do something different at this level, it's inevitable you are going to end up becoming furious or in a rage at this level. And so, once you identify where your Adrenalin is in your body, you must take action. When we recognise that we have either an anxious response or avoidant response or an angry response, we have to know that, because these reactions of ours are impacting on other people, we can take responsibility for how we react by thinking through things

differently and using strategies about how to behave differently when we want to take control and manage our emotions.

**Dr. Mike Gosling:**

Thank you Karen for an excellent explanation on emotional style. I've learned that I have a reactive emotional style. How about you?

The next seminar in the twelve part seminar series *Surviving Life Dramas* is *Surviving Sensitivity*. Did you know that it is estimated that 20% of the population in North America are HSPs – Highly Sensitive People. Are you a HSP? Be sure to get the next seminar in this series, *Surviving Life Dramas* to find out.

I'm Doctor Mike Gosling from the Emotional Wealth Academy.