

SURVIVING LIFE DRAMAS

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Transcript

Part 5 of 12

Surviving Emotional Pain



changing minds, changing lives



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**Surviving Life Dramas: Surviving Emotional Pain
Part 5 of 12**

Dr. Mike Gosling:

Well, hello. I'm Doctor Mike Gosling from Gosling International and the Emotional Wealth Academy. I'd like to welcome you to today's seminar in the 10 seminar series, 'Surviving Life Dramas'. Today's seminar is 'Surviving Emotional Pain'.

Pain in the past is experienced or remembered as anger and in the future it is perceived as anxiety. Each of us needs to process our emotional pain in present moment awareness, using our emotional style.

Today's speaker is uniquely qualified to speak on emotional pain, having spent more than thirty years helping thousands of people to process their emotion. Ladies and Gentlemen, expert counsellor and Gosling International Counselling Director, Mrs Karen Gosling.

Karen Gosling:

Hello, it's really great to be here again. This is the third seminar in our series and it's wonderful to welcome all of you here today. This series of seminars is about Surviving Life Dramas and in the first two seminars, what I spoke about mainly, was understanding your emotion and understanding what emotion is. And also learning strategies about what to do when things get a bit stressful in life. I also spoke about the fact that stress is very subjective, stress is very personal. And so it doesn't have to be a car accident or a bush fire that you're

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experiencing, it can just be a build up of relentless stress in your own life and you will experience some form of stress response.

We also spoke in the previous seminars about the way that we process emotion, because emotion is a stress response that our body has and none of us like the feeling. None of us like this feeling of being stressed. And so, we process it, we try to get rid of it, and depending on whether you are a 'Fight' or a 'Flight' Person – because that's really what stress is – it's Adrenalin that causes you to fight or flee.

We either are a Reactive Person, a person who has to deal with the emotion straight away, get rid of it, display it, we process it straight away and get over things pretty quickly. Or, we may be an Avoidant Person, somebody who withdraws, somebody who flees from the situation. Somebody who much prefers to avoid conflict and to keep harmony, and to keep the peace. The Avoidant Person tends to dwell on things and build up stress inside. We spoke about that also. Today's seminar is to talk about how to get rid of this pain, how to get rid of this stress that builds up inside of us.

So, whenever we experience a drama in our life, it's because our brain is interpreting that we are somehow threatened. There might be a threat to your health, or a threat to your relationship, a threat to your well-being, perhaps even a threat to life itself. But, when your brain perceives there is something wrong, it will produce this stress response. Adrenalin is produced and it is Adrenalin that we are trying to diminish.

So, even if you're not experiencing a crisis at the time, but you've got this build-up of pain inside of you- that's still what we have to try and get rid of. The person with the anxious personality that we spoke about, is somebody with a very sensitive Limbic System. And the Limbic System is the feeling part of the brain. It's the part that processes, 'Is there threat, or not?' And when that Limbic part of the brain is particularly weak – and that's not a put-down, that's just the way you are biologically – you will be having stress responses about a lot of things. That's what a person, an anxious person, has to deal with. And so, the Anxious Person is producing Adrenalin to be on guard, just in case, most of the time.

Now, in the second seminar, we spoke about the Highly Sensitive Person. And the Highly Sensitive Person - for those of you who have watched the DVDs, or who have been at the seminars - is someone who feels their feelings intensely. The good feelings and the bad feelings. Because, the Highly Sensitive Person has got one of these Limbic Systems that is on guard, on alert, like the Meerkat, all of the time.

So, the Highly Sensitive Person is frequently thinking, analyzing, worrying about their interaction with other people, or how other people are impacting on them So, they're constantly analyzing about relationships. Or, they're thinking, "Am I good enough? Does that person like me? Did I offend that person?" So, the Sensitive Person is constantly thinking about these relationship things. The sensitive person picks up things in the environment – even when they don't want to – they're picking up things about light and sound and heat and irritable clothing and tight shoes. And they can get this stress response when they're not particularly anxious about anything, they just feel uncomfortable.

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This is a vicious cycle for the poor old Sensitive Person, but we spoke about how to deal with that. The Sensitive Person none-the-less is the one who is more prone to stress, more prone to anxiety, more prone to depression, simply because they are constantly building up Adrenalin in their body because of the fact that they are going over and over things in their mind. Because their thinking produces more stress.

This is important for the seminar today – to understand this. The Sensitive Person sees threat in their environment when there is none. They will catch a glance from someone and they will think, "That person isn't happy with me." And it's really just the way their brain is interpreting the situation. Somebody will make a comment to them and they will pick up a tone that will make them think, "Somebody's cross at me. I've let somebody down." And really, the other person is just frustrated because they've been rushing or something like that.

The Sensitive Person is the one who grows up with comments all their life, like, "Oh, you're just being too sensitive. Oh just let it go, don't worry about it." And so, the Sensitive Person grows up thinking, "There's something wrong with me. There's something wrong with my feelings." As I said before, theirs is a vicious cycle. The person who is not so sensitive generally doesn't even know that the Sensitive Person is dealing with all of these internal rumblings.

So, if we talk about resentments, if we talk about this build up of pain inside, what is this all about? What are these resentments and what are we going to do about them? There are three main things that destroy relationships – and the relationship might be parent-child, it might be husband-wife, it might be siblings, it might be boss-colleague – but the three things that might

destroy a marriage (I'll talk in terms of marriage) is these unresolved hurts, is the resentments, is ineffective communication - so that when you actually try and talk about your resentments, things get worse not better - and about partners not knowing how to give love that is meaningful to the other one. And in the course of this series I will be addressing each of those things.

Now, a resentment is an emotional wound. It's about something that has happened in the past, that when you think about it, it still causes your body to have pain. This resentment isn't something you think about twenty four-seven. Sometimes days and even weeks go by and you don't necessarily think about that particular painful event from the past. But, when you do, your body surges a pain. And, if you are a more Reactive Person, you will feel the pain as anger and you'll say, "Oh, it still makes me angry." If you are an Avoidant Person, you will feel the pain as upset. Interestingly, Avoidant People don't necessarily feel a lot of anger. And similarly, Reactive People don't necessarily feel a lot of anxiety. They experience their Adrenalin as irritation, anger, frustration.

This pain that we talk about is physical. It is an Adrenalin feeling that your body is producing. When you then try and talk about a resentment to try and get rid of it – because talking will release the Adrenalin – things very often get worse. Because, if I'm trying to explain my pain to somebody else, you as the hearer are hearing it as an attack, or me blaming you, you'll then get defensive and you'll say things back again, and I now go, "Well, that's not what I meant. I was trying to tell you my feeling. I wasn't having a go at you."

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But because of the conflict that then arises, it gets worse. It can either escalate into an argument – or if you are an Avoidant Person as I am – you will tend to shut down. And you'll go, "What's the point? I'm not going to talk about that anymore. Remind me not to talk about my feelings anymore." That's the sort of thought you have in your brain.

So, people will try and talk things through - particularly at the beginning of a relationship - to get rid of or to process this emotion, because they genuinely want to leave it behind. We know these clichés, "I want to move on. I want to get rid of my baggage. I want to leave it behind." And, even though they are clichés, they're actually correct. That's what people are trying to do. They want to move beyond this point where they feel pain every time they think about something painful that has happened in the past. If you can think back to something that's happened in the past, and it isn't painful anymore, then it's resolved. That's what 'resolved' means.

If we think of an example where wife talks to husband. Let's say wife is the sensitive one. Husband's a nice guy, but not so sensitive. So, wife will talk to husband and say, "You never listen to me. I try and talk to you." And then, he feels attacked and then he gets defensive and says, "Well, what do you think I'm doing now? I'm listening to you now." Maybe there are people in this room who actually know exactly what I'm talking about.

And of course, when that happens, wife will immediately – because she's sensitive and she now feels attacked – she'll shut down. So wife initially, was feeling let's say, she might be feeling criticized about something that's happened; or she might be feeling dismayed. They're two negative emotions that are both stress responses. And she tried to resolve them. She tried

to get rid of them by talking about them. What happened is, she had a response from husband that now makes her feel attacked, rejected, not heard. So, she started off with two bad feelings, now after the exchange, she's got five bad feelings. And this is how stress accumulates because every negative emotion is a stress response.

And so, when we called the title of this seminar, 'The Emotionally Dirty Dozen', you can see how rapidly negative emotions can accumulate. You start off with two, then you quickly get to five, then you quickly get to nine, then you quickly get to fourteen, because every one of these negative emotions that you feel, sits there.

I mentioned a minute ago about what 'resolve' means. Let me repeat that. When you finally have resolution about something, you are able to think back to an incident that happened in the past, that you remember was painful at the time – you can even remember having the pain – but when you think of it now, it doesn't hurt anymore. That means it's resolved. Biologically what is happening is that now that your brain is thinking about that event, it is no longer interpreting the event as a threat. It is no longer a threat to you or your well-being, and your brain can have an intellectual memory – a memory in the Cortex – without the threat being perceived in that Limbic part of your brain that picks up threat. And so, it is over. You can move on. Sounds simple. But in a moment we'll be talking about why it isn't so simple.

I'm going to give you an example of something that was resolved. My eldest son Daniel is now eighteen, but I recall very vividly when he was three years old, and I had invited a girlfriend to come for afternoon tea and she brought her children with her. They also were toddlers. I thought the kids could play together. While I was having afternoon tea with my girlfriend, the

kids were playing together and all of a sudden there was an outcry. And the other woman's little boy came crying because Daniel had bit him. Had bit him on the arm and drawn blood.

I was absolutely furious – I saw red and I dragged this child of mine to his bedroom. And I can remember dragging him up the corridor and I bounced him really roughly on the bed and I was screaming at him saying, "You mustn't do that." And I smacked his bottom – it was padded beautifully in his diaper fortunately – but I can remember smacking him on the bum, I was just so angry and upset that he should bite this child. Because of course, my son biting another person's child reflected on my parenting, I was embarrassed, I was ashamed. Dreadful. These were all my feelings that I was reacting to.

Now, what shocked me about that incident was my reaction because I am actually an Avoidant Person who gets upset. I very rarely get angry. And so, because I experienced anger at that time, that also upset me. It was out of character. The woman subsequently left with her children. It's been a long time since I've seen that woman – I'm not sure it had anything to do with that particular incident.

But, what I realised afterwards was that I was so distressed on that occasion because my expectation was not met. I did not expect my child to bite another child. And the reason why I didn't expect it was because there had been some biting incidents at the childcare centre where he attended. And we'd talked about biting, and we'd talked about different ways of dealing with emotion. And biting was wrong, and biting wasn't appropriate. And even though he was three years old, we knew that he understood all of this because they had also talked about it at child care.

Now, when I think back fifteen years to that incident, it is completely resolved. I remember how upsetting it was, I remember that I was very upset with Daniel and his behaviour, but I don't feel it now. And the issue about Daniel's behaviour is completely resolved, but I must say, when I think about it, I still have a negative feeling. It isn't quite resolved about my behaviour. I still can feel the feeling that it wasn't appropriate.

I reacted because of my hurts – I wasn't reacting in a way that showed him that I could see things from his perspective. Because what had in fact happened – I didn't take the time to find out – was that other little boy had taken his favourite train and Daniel had asked nicely to have it back, but the other little boy wouldn't give him his train back. I didn't even take the time to find out what had happened. I just reacted. And so, when I think back fifteen years, I still have a negative feeling of shame about not protecting my child – not listening to his perspective. And that's the feeling that hasn't been resolved. It's not about Daniel, it's about me. That's the feeling we call Guilt. When we actually direct a negative emotion that still lingers around inwards to ourselves. By the way, Daniel remembers that incident as well. He remembers that.

Have you ever been in a situation where you think something has been resolved, you're pretty sure it is – on a normal day, you can think about it. You don't feel the pain anymore. And yet, in an argument, that topic gets brought up again. Now, if that's happened, you'll have a partner who'll say, "Oh, you're always bringing things up from the past. You've got a memory like an elephant. Why do you always bring stuff up?" And very often, you will also say to yourself, "Why do I bring things up. I thought that was over. I thought that was done."

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This is the difficulty. This is why we think nothing gets resolved. One of the reasons why women tend to bring things up a lot is because it is proven through medical research that women have got a bigger Hippocampus than men. Hippocampus is the part of the brain that stores emotional memory. It is the reason why women are much better at remembering anniversaries, birthdays, the date of the first kiss. Women remember all of that stuff. When we climbed the Eiffel Tower, what the date was. Men remember number plates and rugby scores. Their memory storage is in a different part.

So, women have got a bigger Hippocampus, and it has got nothing to do with hippo, it has got nothing to do with them being like an elephant, it has got nothing to do with them being like a hippopotamus. It's just the name of the brain.

But, men also will remember things from the past, depending on who they are, depending on whether or not they have resolved things from the past. Men also can bring things up in arguments. It goes both ways, regardless of the fact that they've got a smaller Hippocampus. And what I'm about to explain is why this happens.

I want to introduce you to the Pain Timeline. Emotional pain works along a timeline. There is a past and a present and a future. The pain we are talking about of course is emotional pain. When there has been an emotional pain in the past that hasn't been resolved – a summary of what we've just been saying – what remains is a resentment or an anger.

That is what your body feels when your brain thinks about it. We have also talked about the fact that if it's resolved, memory remains of the incident, but there is no pain. That's where

resentments belong – in the past. In the present-tense, when something happens in the present-tense that is painful - a word that you hear, a scorned comment, a betrayal – the feeling that generically describes what you're feeling is a hurt. "That hurt me when you said that. That really hurt me when you did that."

Hurt is a present-tense feeling but it doesn't describe very much what the hurt is. The hurt can be anything from feeling disappointed or annoyed – which is a small intensity feeling – right down to feeling rejected or humiliated or disgusted or fed-up, and everything in between. And the intensity of feeling that you feel, is simply a description of how much Adrenalin you surge. Depending on how much your brain perceives the situation to be a threat. So, if it's only a little bit of a threat – for example, you didn't get a card from your partner on your birthday, you might just be disappointed – it's not a real threat. But if there's infidelity, you might feel betrayed – that's a high intensity feeling. So, it depends on the level of threat which then describes the feeling that you've got.

Now, if you think about a pain that may happen in the future, it hasn't happened yet, but you anticipate that it might, then your body experiences again, an arousal of this Adrenalin because of the picture that is in your brain. And what you experience is Anxiety. These are the 'What ifs?'. These are the 'Maybes'. What if it happens? Perhaps it will. And then the picture in your brain causes you to have the body feeling in the present-tense, which is what we know as anxiety. Anxiety is simply the future-tense of stress.

All you need to have is three or four feelings in the present-tense and you'll start to feel stressed. That's the feeling we all know. It's where your body starts to tighten up. It's where

you start to feel a bit hunched in your shoulders, or your heart might palpitate, or you start feeling hot, or you start to feel uncomfortable. Then, we try and get rid of it. None of us like that feeling, it's an Adrenalin Arousal, it's a fear feeling. Stress is actually a fear feeling.

And so, what we try and do is get rid of it. The Reactive Person will blurt out something because they need to deal with it straight away. Reactive People deal with things straight away then the event is over. Avoidant People will store a few things before they say anything.

So, I'll draw a picture so you can visualise that. See the different sizes of the volcanoes. The Reactive Person might only use, or might only need two or three Adrenalin surges before they will do something about it, or might explode, or might get angry. Or they might just go, "We need to talk about this." Or, "I've got to do something to fix this." These are the Reactive People who need to do. They process the emotion, they get rid of the Adrenalin, for them the event is then over. These are the people who will get on with things quickly. Move on. Get rid of the Adrenalin. They'll sleep and then the next day, it's like a clean slate. They're perfectly happy to move on. They're still in relationship with you.

By contrast, the Avoidant Person, who doesn't like conflict or confrontation, will build up many, many, many stresses in the body. This one might be, "I feel criticised, I feel annoyed, I feel let down, I feel fed up, I feel frustrated, I feel not heard, I feel misrepresented. It goes on and on and on. Usually more than a dozen. It builds up and then this volcano gets bigger and bigger and bigger, and every one of these reactions (from a reactive person) has an impact on this person (avoidant).

This one might get frustrated, explode. This one says nothing, but feels unfairly attacked. And so this build up occurs. Then this one starts to withdraw – this is the Avoidant Person, doesn't like conflict, doesn't want to talk about it. Starts to shut down, starts to withdraw, starts to flee. This behaviour (withdrawal) has an impact on this person (reactive). It is very common that the Avoidant Person who doesn't get angry, who doesn't engage in conflict, feels like the self-righteous one.

I have been known to feel self-righteous because I think I'm handling things better than people around me who are getting angry and exploding. I'm the one that is keeping my cool. I'm the one that is doing it right. I'm the emotionally intelligent person. That's what I used to think, until it was correctly pointed out to me that my behaviour then had an impact on other Reactive People around me, because I was going silent. And, what did the other people feel – they were feeling shut out, excluded, punished, ignored. As though I was being uncooperative, sulking. These are all the words I then started to hear – how they felt – their negative emotion about me.

This is the way we impact on one another in relationships. And neither one has a monopoly on bad feelings. We just process them differently. When arguments start, when conflict starts, it's this exchange of bad feelings is what's happening. A bit later on, we're going to talk about how to manage this conflict.

What happens in the past and in the future, is fantasy. It's only in your mind. What is reality is what's happening now. The only reality is that you are sitting in this chair, in this room, in this hotel, listening to me give a seminar. You are not on a plane, you are not at home with your

children, you're not on holiday. You can picture all of those things in your mind. You can picture them easily, but you're not there, you're here. Because you can only have one reality at a time.

And so, if we can recognise that in terms of the pain timeline, what we're experiencing in the present-tense is the only thing that is real. What happened yesterday and last week, the pain we felt then, is passed. What might happen next week is only anticipation. It's only in your brain. We have to recognise that we must stay in present-moment awareness. We must deal with what is, not what was, not what might be. Because all the pasts and all the futures increase our own stress when there is no need to. If the present is fine, stay in the present.

I've had many couples who come for counselling because they live in the future. And they go, "What if our relationship continues to be bad? What if we keep arguing like this. Let's quit while we're ahead."

And I say, "Pardon me."

They say, "We want to quit. We want to separate while we are still talking to one another, because we can see our relationship is going down the drain. We have two children, we want to be able to separate amicably, so that we can be good parents for our children."

I said, "Okay, I hear your request. You've come for separation counselling, not for marriage counselling."

"Yes," they said.

So, I talked about the pain timeline – they understood all of that. I said, "So, you are living in the future. You're worried about the fact that your relationship might get worse. And you want to quit now, in case it gets worse?"

"Yes."

I said, "Well, you want to be able to talk nicely to each other in the future so that you can be better parents for your children as a divorced couple?"

"Yes."

I said, "Well, why I don't I get you to learn how to talk nicely to each other in the present-tense, so that you can come back here and deal with the hurts in the present-tense, so that you can be better parents for your children now."

They said, "Okay."

I said, "Then you may not have to separate."

"Ah. We got that. Okay, so if we learn to deal with our hurts here, present-tense and to stay there" – and I finished the sentence for them. I knew where they were going. I said, "Yes, then if worse case scenario happens – and it may not – you may get to the future and you may not have this dreadful relationship. But if you get to the future and there are still hurts in your relationship, you'll know the skills to deal with them. You'll know how to communicate with one another, you'll know how to manage conflict as it's happening. Which means, the future that you are worried about, when it happens in the present-tense, you'll be able to sort it out."

They got that. And you know what, that couple stayed together and they've got two more children. Twins. The next pregnancy was twins! That is very rewarding – to be able to touch people's lives in that way and to be able to say to them, "Don't live in the future. Deal with the present. The future hasn't happened yet. It may not happen, and if it does, it's present-tense, and then deal with it in the present-tense. That's what we have to work on."

There is a difference between being anxious and planning for the future. It's perfectly okay to plan for the future. It's perfectly okay to do a 'What if?' and then have different options and different scenarios. That can be very settling. That can give you back a feeling of being in control.

I remember some years ago, a woman came to me who had just been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis – early stages, but she'd done a lot of internet reading and she knew what was going to happen. She knew how her condition was going to affect her over the years. She was worried physically, she was worried emotionally. She was making plans – because she was an Anxious Person – about what was going to happen in the future. Would her husband still want to be with her if she was in a wheelchair? Could she still live in this country if she was in a wheelchair – it's not necessarily wheelchair accessible. Footpaths, shops, condominiums.

And I said to her, "This is okay to plan. Let's look at option ABC. Let's look at these options and say, if you don't get into a wheelchair, what would you do? If you do need a wheelchair, what would you do? If you need physical help because your condition deteriorates enormously, what would you do?"

We organised all of these options, which was all in one session and she went away feeling much more in control – knowing what she might do in the future, depending on what A, B or C option occurred. So, yes she was anxious, but she took control of the situation and minimised her anxiety by planning for the future. She was then able to go home – and instead of just expressing a whole lot of anxious emotion, she was able to talk with her husband about A, B or C. He was able to reassure her about his love and support regardless of A, B or C. He

was able to say, "Look, if we need to go back home – which was the States – because your condition deteriorates, not a problem." So, she was able to gain reassurance from him because she was able to talk it through with him. So, planning ahead is different to having anxiety.

If we are in the middle of an argument, if we're having a volcano time, and we're feeling feelings in the present-tense, we are experiencing Adrenalin Arousal. That is the worked up feeling that we experience in an argument. It is our body producing Adrenalin. The more we argue – the more we are in conflict – the more worked up we get. What is happening is that every time you have an exchange in an argument, you are trading hurts. If you criticise me – or that's what my brain is thinking – and then I retort back, I'm actually trying to hurt you back. It's called retaliation.

Children do it. Children in the sand pit do it. Throw sand. Throw sand back. Pull hair. Pull hair back. It's a very normal, human response to want to hurt back when you feel hurt. Tribes have done it since primitive days. You kill one of ours, we'll kill one of yours. Then things get settled. So this need for retaliation is a human response. It is very hard to overcome that.

So, if you feel attacked, you will retort back. Then there is this trading of hurts. So it might go like this. "I feel frustrated. I feel unfairly attacked. I feel put down. I feel annoyed. I feel unheard. I feel misrepresented. I feel unappreciated", and so it goes on. And by this time, the Adrenalin Arousal is increased, you feel more and more upset and what starts to happen is that your brain remembers other times that you felt like this. What I'm talking about now, is why things never seem to be resolved. Your brain remembers things in the same way as your brain remembers a smell.

If you think about when you smell something. You may not have smelt it for seven years but how do you identify it? You rapidly whiz through your fileadex of memories in your brain and you associate it with a previous experience, and you go, "I know what that was. I remember smelling that smell seven years ago and I remember exactly where I smelt it." And that's how we label a smell. A smell is a sensation that comes into our brain through our olfactory glands.

Well, an emotional hurt is a sensation as well. It's an Adrenalin Response. And so, when we feel it, our brain remembers by association. So, if I feel humiliated today, my brain will immediately remember when I felt humiliated two weeks ago, or two months ago, or two years ago, or fourteen years ago. Because the brain remembers by association. And immediately – and it all happens so rapidly, we're not necessarily aware of it – but all of those little memories of what just cropped up in my brain, all surge another bit of Adrenalin, which then causes my body to have a disproportionate amount of Adrenalin produced to the event that happened today.

So, now I feel this intense pain because it has been related to other events. And at this point in time it doesn't matter whether they're resolved or not resolved because I'm feeling it today. And because I'm feeling it today, my brain remembers things from the past, even things that have been resolved. And it happens again. So, now I have a feeling of Adrenalin in my body which is disproportionate to the event that's happened today. And what I have then is a reaction that is proportionate to the pain I feel.

Others will probably see that as an over-reaction, but for me it is not. Because the memory of these past pains contribute to what I'm feeling today. So, yes, the past is in the past. But it does contribute to the present-tense. So, for example, you might be in the middle of an argument with a partner and you feel embarrassed. Immediately you will remember when you were embarrassed before by your partner. And you will say, "I can remember when you yelled at my sister at that Christmas function fourteen years ago."

Or in the argument, you might feel betrayed. Perhaps your husband has got a pay rise and he's told someone else before he's told you and you feel a bit betrayed. Immediately that feeling of betrayal will bring up another memory. And in the argument you will say, "Well don't you remember when you had a fling with your ex-girlfriend when we were engaged." And the husband is going, "What?" There doesn't seem to be any correlation, but what's happening is that you are remembering things unrelated to today's event that have the same feeling. It is the feeling that the body is remembering and is resurrecting all of these emotions.

The feeling of being disgusted is one that is worthwhile mentioning, where perhaps there's alcohol problems in the relationship. And every present-tense incident that occurs where a person feels disgusted by a partner's behaviour, will resurrect every other incident in the past where they have felt disgusted. And that's why there's always so many arguments.

If these behaviours that cause you pain keep reoccurring, you will get more and more stressed. You will want to exit the relationship in the end. You will want to do the big flight. And very often, they keep reoccurring because the partner doesn't know that you're being impacted on.

Partner very often doesn't even know how you feel about the behaviours that they're doing – especially if you bottle things up inside.

When they get sufficiently high, you will end up with trauma feelings. Trauma feelings is when your body is experiencing so much stress and so much Adrenalin, that it feels like you may as well have just been in a car accident. In fact being in a car accident is better. When you're in a car accident - for those of you who have been in one – when the car stops rolling, and you're able to think to yourself, "Hey, I'm still alive." From that moment onwards the threat of death is over. So, even though it was pretty unsettling, you know you're safe, you know you're alive, you just have to be rescued, you're going to be fine.

But, what happens when there's all this relationship drama that goes on, is that you feel as though you are in a car accident and the car hasn't stopped rolling, because you don't know when to feel safe. You just keep on feeling threatened and threatened and threatened. Dreadful feeling. So what happens is that when these sorts of situations in relationships occur, and you keep on having negative emotions, and they keep on reoccurring and nothing changes, you end up just getting so stressed that for your emotional health, you will think about leaving.

And women are more likely to leave a relationship for this reason than men. And the reason for that is that women are more aware of their feelings and the intensity of their feelings than men. This is not a put-down, it is not derogatory, it's just that women have an ability to feel low-intensity feelings more than men. Men start to feel their feelings when they're medium-intensity. And it's the reason why men tend to get to the explosion level faster. Women will talk about feeling uneasy, or feeling uncomfortable, or feeling concerned. Men generally don't

talk about those feelings because they don't quite know what uneasy or uncomfortable feels like. They get mad, they get annoyed. They get those sorts of words because they're medium-intensity feelings.

So, it's important to know that if you are building up resentments inside, your partner may have no clue that that's what you're feeling because your partner may not have the same sensitivity as you. They may not have an awareness of how they're impacting on you. If they're a Reactive Person and they release Adrenalin as the event occurs, they may not know that you're bottling up and this impacts on the relationship. Because every one of these exchanges impacts on your relationship and you feel more distant. You want to be more away from the relationship, but the partner may not be aware of that.

Eventually, when you have so much unexpressed resentment in your volcano, you may even end up having an allergic reaction to your partner. Now, that's an awful feeling. I use the word 'allergic' because when you become allergic to your partner, you actually have a physical response when you're near them. This is a very bewildering situation because you can feel a physical aversion to somebody that you used to feel close to. It doesn't make sense – this is somebody that I love, but I don't even want to be near them?

If your partner travels and you feel normal when they're away and you start to feel tense when they come back, you're getting close to that situation. It's the feeling allergic to somebody and it's the same sort of physical response as if you were allergic to a food product. Because if for example you are allergic to peanuts, or you're allergic to shrimps, the more you have an exposure to it, the faster and more intensely your body reacts. And the same thing happens

with emotional allergies. The more you have an exposure to feeling criticised, or to feeling humiliated, or to feeling ridiculed, the more you'll have a physical response to it. And it is such an awful feeling that you will want to go into a situation, or want to be in an environment where you don't feel it anymore. So, you avoid.

So, when that happens, when I see couples in a counselling environment, where they actually have this aversion, I will very often talk about the need for separation for a while. A separation with a view to getting things back on track. A separation so that they can live apart and let Adrenalin drop, so that they can think more clearly. Because you cannot think properly when the body is filled with Adrenalin. You cannot think clearly.

As a starter, having a holiday individually might be good. Wife might go back with the kids and see her parents. Or husband might go on a golfing trip with the boys. Whatever. But a separate holiday can be a really good start. These are all strategies that you can put into place to try and manage this Adrenalin feeling that is happening.

So, I say to couples, "Before you take the drastic step of quitting – whether you feel it in the present-tense that you want to quit, or you're planning it for the future – before you take that drastic step, see if you can resolve the Adrenalin, the stress that is inside of you. And this can be done in two ways. And in the next seminar segment, I will speak about managing the resentment from the inside. Or talking it through, which is about managing conflict, or managing your fear of conflict. Because if we don't do that, our own stress will continue to build.

If you are not able to deal with the build up of resentments inside, you will end up becoming indifferent and indifference kills more relationships than fighting. Statistically in America, more women file for divorce on the grounds of emotional neglect than they do on the grounds of physical abuse. Because indifference kills intimacy and indifference kills love.

What happens when you feel indifferent is that you have feelings like, "I don't care anymore. Whatever. Who cares? Not interested". These are the reactions that you have inside when you are indifferent. You generally don't say anything because you feel it on the inside and your partner may have no clue what is going on. They can't read your mind. And so you have to take the responsibility of confronting these things before you take that drastic step.

After you have done everything there is to do, after you have taken the responsibility for that, maybe there still will be a separation. But, we're talking about *surviving* life-dramas in this series. And that's why I want to talk to you in the next segment about managing conflict both with partner and within.

How you behave with your partner, how you behave in an environment at work when there is conflict, is the most important thing to determine whether or not something gets resolved. It's how you behave. Because if there is anger, if there is no listening and the other person in the relationship doesn't get things resolved, the conflict, the hostility continues. And so if people knew, they can learn how to behave and we could resolve so many issues, so that people could stay in the present-tense and not always have to go back to the past. So, I look forward to seeing you at the next session.

Dr. Mike Gosling:

Thank you Karen for an excellent explanation on Surviving Emotional Pain. It certainly helped me understand my volcano of irritation, frustration and negative emotions. The next topic in the Surviving Life Dramas series is, Surviving Hostility. How to manage conflict and learn effective communication techniques.

The complete Surviving Life-Dramas series of seminars is available in DVD, audio CD and e-book formats. To get your copy now, www.survivinglifedramas.com. Perhaps you would like to subscribe on a monthly basis to all our emotional information. You can do this at www.emotionalwealthacademy.com.

I'm Dr. Mike Gosling of the Emotional Wealth Academy. See you next time.