

Keeping Emotions Appropriate for the Situation

In the book, *Innovative Mindset*, John Sweeney talks about the REACTION FRACTION. It's an idea developed by Sweeney's son, William.

The reaction fraction is made up of a numerator and a denominator, just like any other fraction. But in this case, the parts of the fraction represent things that happen to us and how we react. It looks like this.

$$\frac{\text{My Reaction}}{\text{Event}} = \frac{\text{Anger}}{\text{Disagreement With friend}} = \frac{8}{2} = 4$$

Reaction may be irrational (too high) for the event. Re-evaluate.

Taking some license with the tool, let's see how the REACTION FRACTION might help us when we're involved in a conflict situation. The denominator (the number on the bottom), represents an issue we experience. We assign a numerical value for the denominator based on how big a deal the situation is for us. So, if it's a really big deal it may be a 9 or 10. But if it's not that important, you might give it a 2 or 3. The numerator (top number) is the one we can choose (as in choosing how we respond). By the way, we do have a choice. So we identify a numerical value to our reaction. So if we're only a little upset, we might give it a 2. If we're really angry or hurt about the issue, we might give it a 9.

Quoting William, "The goal is to choose a reaction that is close to the numerical value of the circumstance – that is, for the numerator to be about the same as the denominator so that the value of the fraction is as close to 1 as possible. When the reaction is the same number as the circumstance we know that we reacted the right way. If it's much too low or much too high, it's an indication that we need to choose a different reaction."

Exercise: Think of a recent or current conflict situation and choose a number for how big a deal the issue is to you and place the number on the bottom of the equation. Now CHOOSE a number reflecting your emotional response and place the number above the line. Do the math and determine the value of the equation. How close to the number 1 is it? If the value is either greater than or less than 1, check to make sure your valuations for the situation and response are appropriate.

$$\frac{\text{My Reaction}}{\text{Event}} = \frac{\text{-----}}{\text{-----}} = \text{--} =$$