The 4-Step Formula To Not Taking It Personally

Rena DeLevie
Chief Compassion Officer,
Management For Millennials
NTiP

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This booklet is about learning how to not take it personally, which is #5 of the 10 Innate Tools of Compassionate Management.

What is Compassionate Management?

It’s a management style that brings out the best in people. Compassion is a word that makes some business people think of crystals and hippies. In fact, compassion is a superpower tool that, when combined with accountability, can lead to incredible efficiency and break-through creativity. It’s using the awareness of what somewhat else might be going through to figure out the best way to get the work done, and feel good about how we made it happen.

In Compassionate Management, we apply compassion in place of fear. It's the internal shift that makes it so powerful. We move from being affected by others actions to being in charge of how we react. It's not about trying to change anyone else; it's about shifting your own experience to turn what could be a destructive accusation into an interesting discussion, or a difficult interaction into a manageable moment.
Compassionate Management is kindness and accountability; courage and candor; laughter and commitment. It’s an incredibly efficient, effective, and proven methodology to bring out the best in ourselves, which leads to bring out the best in each other.

There are 10 Innate Tools of Compassionate Management. Each tool is a piece of the puzzle of managing effectively and releasing ourselves from other people’s drama. In this book, we focus on #5.

The 10 Innate Tools of Compassionate Management are:

1. Be Your Self
   When we show up fully and quietly confident.
2. Trust Your Gut
   When we trust our deepest knowing.
3. Own Your Power
   When we control how to respond.
4. BOD, Baby
   Giving others the Benefit of the Doubt.
5. **Not Taking It Personally**
   When we decide it’s not about us.
6. Coexisting Truths
Two truths do no negate each other.

7. Seen, Heard, & Understood
The universal desire.

8. Tone Of Voice
Meaning changes as our intonation changes.

9. Meet Your Inner Critic
Disarm the internal terrorist.

10. Be Self Aware
We choose who we want to be in this world.

Ready to learn How To Not Take It Personally? Go for it.
Truly the most freeing choice we can make is to not take it personally.

It’s making the shift from negative thought to neutral thought. This is by far one of the hardest things for humans to accomplish on a regular basis. But it’s a choice and, once we realize this, we can choose a happier path.

Taking things personally is either:
1. Accepting someone’s accusation as our truth
2. Creating a story where it’s possible none exists

When I ask an audience how many times they’ve done either 1 or 2, all hands go up. We’ve all done this, which means we have all given away our power. And when we give way our power, we end up suffering. We experience the pain of helplessness, insecurity and lack of confidence.

There is zero benefit to taking it personally, whereas Not Taking ItPersonally is freeing, empowering and energizing. Like all effective methodologies, it takes root when we practice it repeatedly.
Here’s the formula for Not Taking It Personally:
Step #1. Recognize when we’re taking it personally
Step #2. Define the meaning we are applying
Step #3. Factualize it
Step #4. Move forward

Let’s dig a little deeper in the most crucial and hardest step. *Step #1. Recognize when we’re taking it personally*. The goal is to develop self-awareness of something we’ve accepted as the norm for many years. It starts with real-time awareness of how our bodies react to someone. Did my heart race when he said that or did I clench my fists when I read that email or why do I always grit my teeth around her?

Now we’ll do an exercise to help you recognize how your body reacts to a trigger. Are you ready? Read the next page. Go!
“With all due respect…”

Stop and analyze what reactions your body had. Do these resonate?
Jaw clench
Tummy tighten
Face flush
Heart race
Fists grip
Breathing shorten
Chest constrict

What else would you add?

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_____________________________________________________________________
Each body reacts uniquely. It’s important to know what our individual body does as this is our personal map guiding us to decipher what’s happening around us. And when we can consistently recognize a body reaction, we can then teach ourselves to Pause. Until then, we are trigger responsive and that usually results in counter-productive feelings and behavior.

Paying attention to what our bodies are doing is a direct short cut to awareness of what our mind is thinking. Our body says, “Attack in progress!” and our mind instinctively agrees. So now we “know” we’ve been attacked personally. But have we? And that’s where the Pause is a gift to ourselves, allowing us a moment to consider how we want to respond.

Let’s look at 3 scenarios where most human beings feel personally attacked and learn how to choose to Not Take It Personally.
I. When It Really Isn’t Personal (or creating a story where this isn't one)
“Why was the ABC project late?”

Step #1. Recognize when we’re taking it personally
I did NOT delay the project! I worked really hard… WAIT! My heart is racing and my palms are sweaty. I’m receiving that question as a personal attack!

Step #2. Define the meaning we are applying
I’m interpreting that statement as an accusation that I caused the delay. I didn’t, but I do feel uncomfortable about the project being delivered late.

Step #3. Factualize it
I began working on the project the minute I received the information. The information and the edits came late. It was a cascade of missed deadlines along the way.

Step #4. Move forward
“There was a cascade of missed deadlines along the way due to the circuitous lifecycle we have right now. We’re streamlining processes to ensure this doesn’t happen again.”
II. When It Might Actually Be Personal (or when we accept accusation as our truth)
“I didn’t realize you were invited to this meeting.”

Step #1. Recognize when we’re taking it personally
Of course I’m invited! Does he think I’m not bringing value here! What a jerk… WAIT! My jaw is clenched and I’m making fists. I’m taking this statement personally!

Step #2. Define the meaning we are applying
I’m interpreting that statement as an accusation that I forced my way in or that I’m in competition with him.

Step #3. Factualize it
I was invited because I do bring value. I have nothing to feel uncomfortable about. I assumed he would also be invited because of his role in the project. His snarkiness is about his own insecurity; it has nothing to do with me.

Step #4. Move forward
“I was invited. It’s an exciting project.”
III. The third scenario is a real-time thought shift to help us through a difficult moment:
You're running a meeting. You look around the table and see:

*Sideways glances. Choose your thought:*
  a. They both think I’m clueless.
  b. They’re having an affair

*Yawns. Choose your thought:*
  a. I run a horribly boring meeting.
  b. Her puppy was up at 4am.

*Grimaces. Choose your thought:*
  a. I keep suggesting bad ideas.
  b. He ate something funny at lunch.

This doesn't mean you can skip out on running a great meeting. We still can learn from grimaces and yawns, but in the moment of running the meeting, we cannot allow distractions to take us off point. That’s why shifting from negative to neutral thoughts are effective.

The tone of voice someone uses is often the source of what makes us take things personally.
Now let’s revisit the idea that when we take it personally, we accept the accusation as our truth. How often do we do this? Only you know. Now that you’ve succeeded in noting your tight tummy and squeezed shoulders, pay attention to the thoughts flooding your brain. Are you agreeing with the crazy statement because it touches on a childhood trauma? Are you buying the accusation because you have insecurities? You’re in good company. Even the most successful people in life have insecurities and childhood trauma. We all do. This is good to know because now that we recognize the original trigger, we’re empowered to put it into perspective. We can be in charge.

An example:

Days later, I thought about this exchange and
realized how happy I was at the time. I didn't want to be in a relationship so quickly and was enjoying my life. Why did I take on her condescension as my truth? Because I had been programmed from early on that a woman can only be happy with a man by her side, and that I must actually be a loser. In hindsight I can see that it was likely her fear of being alone that led to her reaction to my romantic status; it had nothing to do with me. Nothing at all; my truth was that I was happy.

The scenario could have gone like this:
“Are you dating anyone?”
“No.”
“Oh. Oh. I’m sorry.”
“No need to be sorry; I’m happy.”

The options I had for responding to her statement were to:
1. Buy it hook, line, and sinker, and feel terrible.
2. Know my truth, and feel ok – or even good!

I'll take door number 2 every time, thank you.
The fact is, a statement has no emotional meaning until we apply meaning.

When we choose to Not Take It Personally, we have the power to assign any meaning we want, including one that isn’t personal. It is a choice we make everyday – to take it personally or not to. To give away our power or to own our power.

We may still get annoyed, angry, or frustrated because someone behaved inappropriately, but we have freed ourselves from unnecessary drama and enabled ourselves to focus on what’s important.

Not Taking It Personally frees us from the impact of others’ drama and puts us in the seat of Power.

Go you!
List 3 phrases that trigger you, and why

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List 3 people who trigger you, and why

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Name 4 body reactions you generally experience when triggered

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Identify a recent experience where NTiP would have been beneficial

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About The Author

Rena DeLevie, Chief Compassion Officer, is a corporate business coach, speaker, writer and management consultant who is dedicated to bringing compassion into the workplace and the world. She approaches business with a warm heart towards people, creativity and the process, and with a cold eye on the bottom line.

Rena has over 30 years with Fortune 500 companies where she was a Creative Operations Management executive. Prior to that, Rena was an Art Director and Graphic Designer.


www.managementformillennials.com
rena@managementformillennials.com
There’s a 4-step formula for **Not Taking It Personally** inside this book. Read it and master how to catch yourself taking it personally, so you never have to again.