



Smart Politics Topics

How to Stay Cool During Hot Political Conversations

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Presented by



Karin Tamerius, MD
Founder, Smart Politics
Political Psychiatrist

JoinSmart.org



Overview

- Introductions
- Triggering explained
- 3 Phases of Emotion Management
- Demo
- Q & A

Exercise #1

- 1) Introduce yourself
- 2) What are common emotions in politics?
- 3) What are good and bad aspects of our strong political emotions?

(10 minutes)



Triggering Explained

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**What does it mean
to be triggered?**

**Negative emotional response to
perceived threat that...**

- 1. Is out of proportion to the danger
we face**
- 2. Clouds our thinking**
- 3. Leads to counterproductive
behavior**

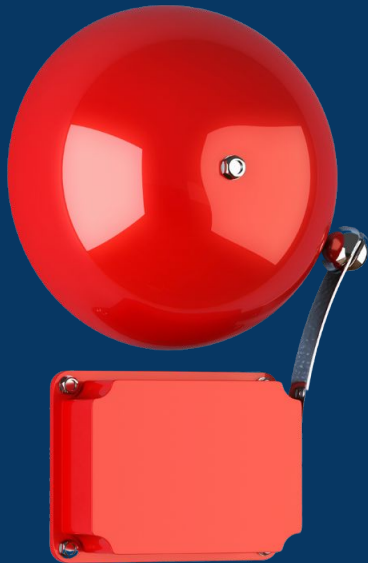
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Why do we need to
worry about
triggering in
politics?

It gets in the way of productive
political discourse and behavior



Why do we get triggered?



- We have a built in threat detection system
- It works the same way for all types of threats
- When a high threat is detected, we tend to go into fight-or-flight
- When in fight-or-flight, primitive regions of the brain take over while the thinking portion of the brain shuts down

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Goal of emotion management

Feel safe-enough to
to learn, grow, and
take risks without
getting triggered.



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**How is this
different from tone
politicizing?**

Emotion management...

- 1. Views anger as normal**
- 2. Involves regulating our own emotions (not controlling the emotions of others)**
- 3. Seeks to make dissent more effective**
- 4. Empowers the disempowered**



Emotion Management

Three Phases of Emotion Management

1. **Training**
2. **Planning**
3. **Conversation**

Training Phase

Training Phase



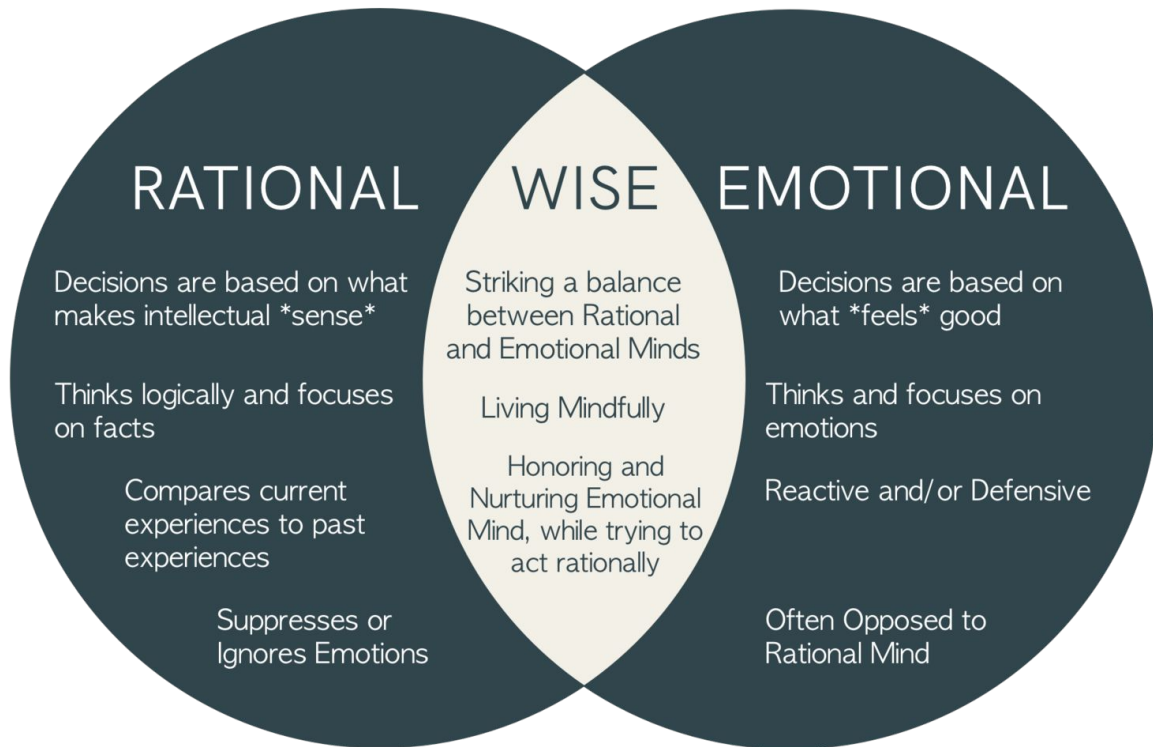
Core Strengths

- 1. Know Your Minds**
- 2. Mindfulness**
- 3. Radical Acceptance**
- 4. Coping with Distress**
- 5. Trigger Tolerance**

Training Phase

1. Know Your Minds

Learn the difference between emotion mind and reasonable mind and work to exist at the intersection of the two



Distinguishing Between Emotions and Thoughts



Training Phase

2. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to use simultaneous awareness of our emotions and thoughts to respond more wisely to our experiences in the moment



Simple Meditation



the
value
factory

2 minute mindfulness
simple, mindful breathing

Training Phase

3. Radical Acceptance

The ability to accept situations that are outside of your control without judging them so as to reduce your suffering

Pain x Resistance = Suffering

what is acceptance?



IT'S RAINING

i don't like rain.
i wish it wasn't raining.
my day would be better
if it wasn't raining. my day is
ruined. every day is like this.
it's always like this. why does
it always rain when all i want is
for it to be sunny?



IT'S RAINING

yup.

—

**In politics,
what's within
your control
and what
isn't?**

Radical Acceptance

Radical acceptance means that you have stopped fighting with reality and throwing fits about what has happened. You have decided to acknowledge and accept it instead. Once you do this, you may feel intense sadness because you have now given up on all hope of a better past or a better outcome currently. At the same time, you may also feel great relief because, now, you can finally let go of the fight over what should have been and deal more effectively with what's in front of you—as it is.

Training Phase

4. Coping with Distress

Learn how to calm yourself quickly when you are triggered.

1. **Controlled breathing**
2. **Name it to tame it**
3. **Ground yourself**

Trigger Practice



Calming Down

How triggered are you
right now?

1. Controlled breathing



Calming Down

**How triggered are you
right now?**

- 1. Controlled breathing**
- 2. Name it to tame it**
- 3. Ground yourself**

Training Phase

5. Trigger Tolerance

Raise your threshold for being triggered by political stimuli



RECAP

Training Phase

Core Strengths

1. **Know Your Minds**

Practice: Distinguish emotions from thoughts

2. **Mindfulness**

Practice: Meditation

3. **Radical Acceptance**

Practice: Focus on what's within your control

4. **Coping with Distress**

Practice: Breathing, naming, and grounding

5. **Trigger Tolerance**

Practice: Exposure

Planning Phase

Planning Phase

3 Steps

1. **Set good-enough goals**
2. **Anticipate challenges**
3. **Plan emergency exit**

Setting Good-Enough Goals

What makes a goal good-enough?

1. Realistic
2. Short-term
3. Measurable
4. Within your control

Setting Good-Enough Goals

Examples of good-enough goals:

1. Be respectful
2. Listen and reflect
3. Express yourself authentically
4. Lay the groundwork for future dialogues
5. Learn something new

Anticipate Challenges and Prepare to Deal with Them

Think about what might make this conversation especially difficult.

1. Have you had difficult conversations in the past?
2. Do you have a challenging relationship?
3. Is this person easily triggered?
4. Is this person afraid of talking about politics?
5. Does this person watch Fox News?

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Think about what you can say and do if you start to get triggered.

Emergency Exit

- 1. “Excuse me, I have to go to the bathroom.”**
- 2. “I really want to discuss this with you, but now isn’t a good time. Can we put a pin in it?”**
- 3. “I’m sorry. This conversation is hard for me and I can feel myself getting a bit triggered. Can we try again later when I’m feeling better?”**

Exercise #2

Plan for a political conversation with someone you know:

- 1) What are your good-enough goals?
- 2) What are some likely challenges?
- 3) What's your exit plan?

(10 minutes)



Conversation Phase

Conversation Phase

3 Tips

1. **Slow things down**
2. **Set boundaries**
3. **Elicit stories**

Slow It Down

Change Conversation Cycle



Set Boundaries

4 Steps

1. Humanize
2. Negotiate contract
3. Remind them of agreement
4. Suspend conversation

Elicit Personal Stories and Emotions

Cultivate feelings of empathy

- 1. Ask how they developed their views**
- 2. Ask about how political events make them feel**
- 3. Ask about how important people in their life have influenced their political beliefs**

Demo

Q & A

The logo consists of two overlapping speech bubbles. The top bubble is blue and contains the word "SMART" in white. The bottom bubble is red and contains the word "POLITICS" in white.

SMART

POLITICS

UPCOMING:

- “The Smart Politics Show” Podcast
 - Book Clubs
 - Sunday night Practice Group
 - Intro to Smart Politics webinar
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Thank you!

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