

Alison Whitmire: Our series today, we're talking about the life of an emotion from trigger to response with our special guest, Irvine Nugent who I will give a proper introduction in just a moment. So, what can you expect from our podinar today? Well, first of all, we're going to be giving you the chance to ... Sorry, you probably didn't hear that. Accident mute.

Alison Whitmire: So, our intentions for the day are to define emotions and their characteristics, to talk to you and teach you how to assess emotional literacy in your clients, how to look at and think about the concept of the life cycle of an emotion, it's super fascinating one I hadn't thought of, and how to coach your coachees to an awareness of and language for emotions, how you can work with your coachees to identify their emotional triggers and then relate those emotional triggers to what created them, kind of the origin story of the triggers, and then help them kind of rewind that incident and to create a different outcome. You hear this nice arc through what we're going to talk through today.

Alison Whitmire: And we're going to do a demo. Irvine is going to do a demo with me on the timeline of an emotion and he's going to share with us a case study, how he's used all of this with a coachee, so I'm super excited to be here. And one of the things I love Is there such a great intersection between Irvine's work and what we do at Learning in Action.

Alison Whitmire: So I'm Alison Whitmire, the president and owner of Learning in Action, and I'm here with my colleague, Kris Harty. Hi, Kris.

Kris Harty: Hi, Alison. Hi, everyone. Thanks for joining us today.

Alison Whitmire: Kris is our producer of the podinar series and it's a lot of work and she does it extraordinarily well and keeps us straight and organized and is also responsible for Learning in Action's community and customer care.

Alison Whitmire: So, what the heck is a podinar. A podinar is a word we made up. It's a cross between podcast which is like interview style, and a webinar, which is interactive. And we do hope to interact with you. So, why do we at Learning in Action do this podinar series? Is because we genuinely have a desire to support the people, new people who do this work, this work that has the potential to create transformative change in your clients and teams and organizations in the world. We want to support you thriving doing what you do. We hope that what we do here informs you and inspires you to do you even better.

Alison Whitmire: So, how do you interact with us today? If you want to chat, all you got to do is put the, point your little dicker to the chat box and be sure to turn the arrow to all panelists and attendees then everyone can see what you have to say. And if you just want to say something like you would to a neighbor if you were actually there physically, you can chat that. If you want to ask a question, Irvine and I are most likely to see it if it's put in the Q&A box. That's easier to filter from the chat. And if your question is kind of concise and it's not too theoretical or kind

of boiling the ocean, then it's more likely that Irvine and I can digest it and answer it. So, that's always helpful.

Alison Whitmire: And finally, if you want to participate in a poll, then when the poll comes up, you just select the answer that works for you and click Submit and we'll publish the results. And we're going to do a poll now. Kris is going to launch a poll that asks you how do you identify mainly. Do you identify as an executive coach, as an OD consultant, as both, as neither? That just gives us a sense for like who's on the podinar today. And we'll come back to the results in just a moment.

Alison Whitmire: So next, I would like to introduce our special guest, and I'm super excited to have Irvine with us today, Dr. Irvine Nugent. He's the founder of Irvine Nugent & Associates. He's a behavioral analysis expert. He's got 15 years in senior leadership position. He is a Paul Ekman Master trainer, one of the first in the US. He's certified in the facial action coding system, one of the few coders in the world. He's a keynote speaker, he's a professional trainer and he's a certified EQ in action certified practitioner, Learning in Action EQ certified practitioner, so yay. So, Irvine, welcome.

Irvine Nugent: Thank you. Thank you for the invitation. Delighted to be here.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. I think I told you this, I don't know, I have a really special connection to this work because my son was born with a learning difference and he didn't have way to know what other people were feeling and that's when I first found Paul Ekman's and I know it works because we spent years and years and years with him saying, this is a face, this is the emotion on that face, this is what's going on inside that person and now he's one of the most empathetic people we ever meet. So, I'm super happy to be exploring this with you. What drew you to this work?

Irvine Nugent: I really think the seeds of me getting involved in this work has to do with my background and growing up. I'm classically known as a child of the troubles. So I grew up in Northern Ireland just as the troubles as we call them began. And so I grew up in a very divided society, almost tribal, where sides had forgotten how to communicate, communication had broken down. So there's this real passion within me to understand the human person, why communication breaks down and how can we build bridges among groups. So like, a lot of the work that I have done has really been around that, about understanding ourselves and understanding each other so that we can build a bridge of communication between each other. And that's taken on different facets in my professional career.

Irvine Nugent: But this specific work actually came to me during my doctorate. I was in a doctorate in management. And my subject area was to do with accountability and transparency among CEOs. And with that, issues of impression management, issues of dealing with emotions and fears and all that came up in my grounded interviews. And so, the work of Dr. Ekman came to me as well.

And I just got hooked, fascinated and it has been a wonderful journey and really has amplified and helped all of the other areas that I've been involved in.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, I appreciate the origin story of that. How do you tell people what you do? Like what's your elevator pitch?

Irvine Nugent: At the moment, because it changes, but at the moment-

Alison Whitmire: I know, mine too.

Irvine Nugent: I always say to people, look, I help people expand their emotional intelligence so that they're better able to connect, to communicate, and then to make difficult decisions in critical times. So there's the element of using this as well, why is it important, what's this emotional intelligence for? And it's so that we can improve human relationships and decision making.

Alison Whitmire: Mm hmm. Yeah, I hear that. So how do you when you're first maybe engaging with a client, how do you assess their emotional literacy, like their benchmark to start with and then what do you do with that?

Irvine Nugent: So it's a really interesting question. I think there's a couple of elements to that. I think one element is how do they express their emotional life? So, when they are beginning to, and I would throw in a few questions there which evoke emotional situations. Tell me about your greatest joy in the last year, what are you passionate about? So not necessarily the negative but the positive too. And then, what's been your biggest frustration, etc. And beginning to assess the quality of how they describe those situations is really illuminative.

Irvine Nugent: So, do they have a vocabulary around that? What I find is that some people who are very what I call limited emotional literacy, it's the emotional, the specter of emotion is very narrow and they can define maybe one or two, I was angry, I was sad, I was happy. And then when you try and amplify the language around that, there's an inability to do that.

Irvine Nugent: And so that gives me a clue into their ability just to express. And then from that then, I agree, point to self awareness. So how aware of themselves are they and what's going on? What's going on somatically, physiologically within their body? Are they aware of what's happening when an emotion happens? And when does that awareness happen? And then how much management do they have? So it's really going back to the four classic quadrants of emotional intelligence and making assessments of where they're at in each of those quadrants.

Alison Whitmire: Okay. And then what do you do with that?

Irvine Nugent: Well, from that benchmark, I think, especially with emotional literacy, I try and do a bit of work on helping them expand the emotional words. And the training that we do, expanded trading, we actually have this wonderful word game,

where we have maybe 75 different emotions and we go through them and we try and put them in different families of emotions. So in other words, say for example, happiness. Are we able to define the strength, the intensity of that happiness? Can we go from elation or to joy or a lower intensity, a form of happiness? So can we expand the emotional literacy around is one aspect.

Irvine Nugent: And then the second one is to begin to have some self reflection about what's happening inside, and that can be the most difficult. Really, wow, so much of the work is around the opening and the burgeoning of self awareness and this ability to notice the connection between how I feel, how I express what I'm feeling, and how I feel that physiologically within my body.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. So a couple of questions that are coming up for me that either people from the audience asked when they registered or that have come up for me before. I have kind of been part of coaching programs, where they've said, well, I tend to want to ask people how they feel, when I'm working with them, I want to ask people what they're feeling right now. Sometimes I've been coached that, you hear an echo?

Irvine Nugent: I don't, no.

Alison Whitmire: Okay, maybe it's just on my end, sorry. I can live with it. So, sometimes when I have been asking people what they feel, I've kind of been coached to kind of say, well, if people can't describe what they feel with a high degree of literacy, just go somewhere else. Like, ask them what their sense is and what they think. And that doesn't feel, that doesn't feel right to me. I mean, I feel like part of my job isn't just to go where they're comfortable and where they can name but actually kind of help them expand. So I don't know, what are your thoughts on that?

Irvine Nugent: So I would agree with you. I think part of emotional awareness is the ability to help people expand. And this work is not easy work, it is difficult work. And I think, if there's one critique I would have, it would be trying to sell emotional intelligence to simply. The work of becoming self aware is difficult and it takes a commitment. But I think as a coach, I have an obligation to a client to really help them dive into the richness of the emotional life that's happening.

Irvine Nugent: Now, sometimes at the beginning of a coaching engagement, I won't necessarily say, how are you feeling. What I like to do, or even start, say, with a centering exercise, because sometimes I think that can shift the baseline, I like to go in and just kind of experience and try and read what's happening, read what's happening in their face, what emotions are they showing, and then read how they're describing the situation they're in. And then really, then being able to look at that situation and reflect back to them. Here's what I think I'm seeing here, here's my impression. Are you aware of this? Because very often, if people have low self awareness, they're not aware of the emotions really that they're putting out.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. You know, I had a client and I worked with him for a long period of time, and I would notice that sometimes when he talked, his eyes would pool. And my sense was, when that happened, that he was, it wasn't obvious, he's feeling something. It might have been like sadness or it might even be kind of this sweetness. And I would mirror that for him and he'd have no awareness of it. So, I'm curious, like, how often that happens with you and and how you work with that over time.

Irvine Nugent: It happens a lot. I think if I look at all the leaders that I work with, not always, but I think, just the environment that we find ourselves in. We're in an arena of rapid change, we're an arena where we're constantly pressured, we're in an arena where the reality of business gets quicker and quicker and quicker. And, of course, that mitigates against taking time to be more self aware. And so part of it is just the environment that we find ourselves in. And so, I think to be of service to reflect back what we're seeing, experiencing, feeling is of immense importance, especially since we know about how contagious emotions are.

Irvine Nugent: I do a lot of speaking, but, you know, the highlights that people get there is the importance of the leader for sowing seeds that they want to. If you say to somebody, what mood do you want to create in the organization? And to be aware and conscious of how you're showing up and how that impacts the life of everyone around you.

Alison Whitmire: Mm hmm. For sure. For sure. So, you mentioned something when you talked about kind of the assessment you're doing is around kind of how people experience emotion. And we got a question from someone in our audience around kind of like the somatic experience of emotions and how sometimes people can have a sensation that we might have a hunch is related to emotion, that they don't make the connection that it's an emotion. And I'm curious, like, if or how you work with that?

Irvine Nugent: I mean, I think the somatic element is incredibly important. And I mean, I think from the scientific point of view, we would call that the physiological. So in other words, what we know and we'll get into in a little bit from the timeline of an emotion, that we experience the emotion in our body before we become consciously aware that we're in that emotion. So therefore, the more somatically aware, the more attuned we are to what's happening within our body, the greater our ability to insert choice in our reaction.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, love that.

Irvine Nugent: And so therefore, it's absolutely essential. Again, another issue, of course, is that so often, we run into situations where so much of our life is lived from the neck upwards. To the extent that that's the case, it mitigates against having greater management offer emotions and our power to use those emotions to build relationships.

Alison Whitmire: Mm hmm. So one more question then we'll go to the audience and see what they're cooking up. It's super common to go into workplace situations and have coaches or have coachees kind of discounting the value of emotions. This is work, it's not about emotions, or emotions are about drama, or they connect emotion with drama. So what's the coaching or the conversation you have with clients around, who discount emotions?

Irvine Nugent: Well, first of all, there's a great coaching conversation just within that question as well. When I get clients, and they say, oh, you know, I don't want the drama, etc. So then I'm curious about where's that coming from because there's certainly an emotional history there-

Alison Whitmire: There's attaching drama to emotion.

Irvine Nugent: So what is it about your history that sees emotion as drama? So I think that can be fascinating. Then I think another question is this, is look, whether you like it or not, you cannot stop the emotion.

Alison Whitmire: Oh, that's really good.

Irvine Nugent: The emotions happen before you become aware. So what we can help you is become aware of the emotions that are already there. But to think that there is a situation where you can have this clinical scientific environment that is emotionless is not scientific.

Alison Whitmire: It'd be more emotional denial.

Irvine Nugent: Totally. And I think, you know, what I do is very often, I do a lot of work in the scientific community, and so sometimes it will come, and I just say, let me show you the science. And I think when you say that, here's the science, the science is that you cannot stop the emotion. You have choice on how you want to behave without emotion. And I think once you do that, I love, I think most people are receptive.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, for sure. Okay, Kris, what's going on in the chat? Or any questions? I see, there's some questions.

Kris Harty: Hey, Alison. You know we had comments from Simone, that she'd love to hear more about the six second rule around emotions. And we also, we haven't had too many other questions specifically, but a lot of people are saying a lot of this is resonating with them.

Alison Whitmire: Right. Thank you. About the six second, the question was what about the six second rule?

Kris Harty: Just that she'd like to hear more around that as it relates to emotions.

Alison Whitmire: Great. You want to go ahead and take that one, Irvine?

Irvine Nugent: By the six second rule, are you, I teach about a seven second vacation? I'm not sure-

Alison Whitmire: I'm not sure what that is either.

Irvine Nugent: Yeah, if she wants to clarify, want me to share about the seven second vacation that I talked about? Okay, sure. So one of the things that I talk about is how do we insert moments where people can be grounded quickly in situations where they know that they've been triggered. And we'll get into this a little bit. But the seven second rule that I do is second number one, place your two feet on the ground. By physically planting feet on the ground, it disconnects a little bit from the emotionality that we're feeling.

Irvine Nugent: So that physical touching, feel what that feet feels like, go there, three seconds breathe in, for three seconds. And that is just assess where you're at with your body. And this is the whole somatic thing, where sometimes when we're in the midst of feeling something, our body is out of whack, or we moved or where we're here, we're back or whatever. And then three seconds to breathe out, to let go of tension and then to reposition.

Alison Whitmire: That's nice.

Irvine Nugent: Yeah. So I'm not sure if that was the six second. That's the one that I use.

Alison Whitmire: I think is based, you know, so there's an organization that has an emotional intelligence instrument and then they're called six seconds. And they say it takes six seconds to experience an emotion. But I guess you might say it's happening in the body whether you're recognizing it or not.

Irvine Nugent: There's a difference between when that emotion, after being triggered, that emotion is happening, and then there's a different question about when we become aware of that emotion. That can be six seconds, which actually is a pretty long time when it comes to emotional life. There's a different question between awareness and what's happening. Whether we're aware or not that we're in an emotion, it is happening.

Alison Whitmire: Right, right. So we've got a question about, can you please share your perspective on the genesis of an emotion? Thank you, Robert.

Irvine Nugent: So Robert, I think we're actually about to go into that with the timeline. So Robert, if you just wait just a second and we'll go into that, and then you can ask then, I think we'll actually talk about that.

- Alison Whitmire: Cool. And I see Alan just posted a question, how do you define the difference between emotion and feeling?
- Irvine Nugent: Yeah, it's a great question. I think they are used interchangeably a lot between, but I think with emotion is more the technical aspect of a scientific description of affect. Is emotion anything people describe what's happening within them is more the feeling that I'm feeling on that emotion.
- Alison Whitmire: Great. Thank you. Anything else, Kris?
- Kris Harty: No. Just FYI from our poll. We do have more half of our folks on today are executive-
- Alison Whitmire: Thank you. Great. Thank you.
- Irvine Nugent: I'm actually just seeing a question from Sarah about the four facets of EQ that I mentioned. So let me just say. So the four quadrants. Quadrant number one is self awareness. Quadrant number two is self management. Quadrant number two is other awareness or social awareness, quadrant number three, sorry. And then quadrant number four is relationship management.
- Alison Whitmire: And Sarah, you probably know those, that's the Goldman model.
- Irvine Nugent: It's the Goldman model, it's the classic model of EQ. And I think it just adds as a perfect element of the four areas that in fact that we want to expand and develop our emotional life and our emotional management.
- Alison Whitmire: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Kris. So appreciate that. Okay, so moving on. So talk if you can about emotional triggers, what they are and how you help your clients identify them?
- Irvine Nugent: So could you put up the slide that-
- Alison Whitmire: Yes, I will. Oops, sorry. Share, where is it, there it is. There it is.
- Irvine Nugent: So this actually, there's a lot in here, and I could spend hours in here. I want to try and go into what actually happens from the moment of a triggering of emotion to how that emotion is expressed. And I think this can be really helpful and rich to really help us dissect an emotion and help our client as well understand what's happening with an emotion. And then also, this whole key of awareness which helps choice.
- Irvine Nugent: So the first is this, what you'll see there, and I'm going to work from left to right. So the first thing you'll see there is an automatic appraisal. And that's the reality that as human beings, we are constantly appraising our environment and it is happening whether we are aware of it or not and most often, it's happening

below our consciousness. And of course, that awareness is for anything that threatens us, anything that's important to our wealth.

Irvine Nugent: Ekman would describe an emotion as something that helps us deal with matters that are important to our welfare without us even thinking. So, we are constantly, because of, you know, we're wonderfully made as human beings, we are made to survive. And part of that mechanism is this appraisal system, almost like a radar that's constantly on the lookout for anything that is important to our welfare. And then above that, you'll see trigger. And so, there are events that happened to us that caused a trigger and that trigger goes into our emotional alert base that we need to be paying attention to this because it is important to our welfare. And that triggers an emotion.

Irvine Nugent: Now, the trigger there is interesting because where did the triggers come from? The triggers, first of all, I think we are predisposed to certain triggers because of this need to survive. And so, therefore, evolution has placed some triggers. But then also, our learning and our experience. So as we go through life, we have experiences which we learn from and they become implanted within us as triggers, emotional triggers, as we learn how to behave and react to situations in the future. And what you'll see is that there's a snake below and a rope above.

Irvine Nugent: So, sometimes the trigger resembles something real and sometimes it's a real thing. So sometimes we always don't get it right. When we react, we can think we saw snake when actually we saw a rope. But we go into the same reaction as if we saw a snake. And so, it can resemble.

Alison Whitmire: And it happens in relationships too, right? Just to put it in the day to day, it's happening all the time everyday.

Irvine Nugent: All the time. We think we heard something and it resemble something and we go into this kind of emotional reaction. So then from that, an affect program is activated. Now what is that? An affect program, it's using almost like a computer analogy, that there's a program that plays and that program has certain information. It has information about the emotional signals. What shows up in the face, what emotional signals show up in the face. The physiology, what physiological reactions are going to begin to be generated as we react to this trigger and implement a program. What images, what memories, what expectations are going to come up. And then finally, the display rules, which we'll get into.

Irvine Nugent: And every emotion has a different affect program, it's not all the same. Every person's affect program is different for the different emotions. So how I react in fear is different how you react in fear, because all our learnt experiences are different. And so then what happens is this program is activated and then we begin to feel some of the impulses. This is where the beginning of the work begins. And so, that is what are we feeling in our heart, what are we feeling, say

with perspiration, our blood pressure going up, motor movements? All these different impulses that are felt and the beginning of awareness of those.

Irvine Nugent: And then we come to the learned display rules. So we know that not everyone expresses emotions the same ways. And what's very interesting, Ekman's research is that there are universal emotions. Part of the groundbreaking work that he had was that there were seven universal emotions. However, what we also know is that there are culturally learnt display rules which modify those expressions.

Irvine Nugent: And the way he learned that was fascinating experiment, which they did, showing some Japanese and American people, a movie, was pretty gory movie. And what they found is that when they were together, the American showed a negative emotion, maybe disgust or fear or whatever. And the Japanese students showed mass emotion with fear with a smile. And then when they removed the American and the Japanese by themselves, the full emotion was expressed. So we know that there's some cultural modifiers, display rules, which impact the showing of that emotion.

Irvine Nugent: And then finally, we have the-

Alison Whitmire: I'm sorry. Would you say that the nugget of what Lisa Barrett work has uncovered, because she presents as opposition to Ekman work. No, this universal things aren't true. Is that where her contention comes in?

Irvine Nugent: I think, you know, Lisa Barrett, I mean, I think she critiques very heavily the work of Ekman, but I don't think she also brings up, it's almost like you create a white horse and then you take it down. And I think Ekman has always talked about cultural sensibility when it comes to emotions, this research has been around a long time. And so, therefore, I would say that that's one of the things that's never not really not mentioned is the sensitivity to display rules. Yeah, absolutely.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. Sorry to interrupt you.

Irvine Nugent: No, no, no, please. And then we come to the action. So what actions, what behaviors are generated? And there is a period there which is called the refractory period. And the refractory period is whenever we have our impulses and then we go into our behaviors, we enter this period of time where the only data that we're able to bring in is data that supports that emotion. And that, of course, evolutionary was important because it helped us react in moments where we had to survive. However, the longer the refractory period, now it can get us in trouble, because after the, we become aware, when we become aware of the emotion that we're having, the longer the time of the refractory period, the less helpful it becomes.

Alison Whitmire: So can I ask you a question about that? What comes up for me is if that's why we humans may be so married to being right. Like what's happening maybe in that refractory period is like, what I think I heard you say is just what we're experiencing is what confirms that that emotion and kind of excludes what doesn't confirm it. And I'm wondering if like that's part of like the evolutionary process of why we're so hooked on being right and making ourselves right is there's actually maybe a biological.

Irvine Nugent: Yes, I agree. Totally. It is. This is part of our evolutionary programming to help us survive. And when we get in the midst of emotion, it is so difficult to move out of that at times. We also know that say for example, we can be very emotionally attuned, we can be very attuned to our impulses and we can be very good about choosing our behavior. But the moment we become exhausted and tired and our energy is low, all of a sudden, some of that goes out the window and we can find ourselves back in an unemotional episode with little awareness about that.

Irvine Nugent: I remember, like two years ago, I got a gift which was to go to South Carolina for my birthday. And it was an opportunity to ride around the BMW track with some fast cars, which to me was just like the best gift ever received. It was like amazing. And I remember I got to the airport, and I'm in the airport, and I hear my name. I go up to the desk, and I'm thinking, oh my God, not only am I going to get a chance to go around the track, I'm also going to be upgraded to first class, how cool is this. I go there and the the woman who made the announcement trying to help me says, sorry, Mr. Nugent to tell you, but the incoming flight will be delayed and you're going to miss your connection and there is no way we can get you to your destination tonight.

Irvine Nugent: Now, I heard, I didn't even hear that whole sentence. I heard there's no way we can get you, and all of a sudden, I went into this anger, because, you know, one of the things we know about emotions, they have a universal triggers. And one of the universal triggers for anger is taking away something, is denying a goal. And so I had this goal of wanting to get there and all of a sudden, Fred, my husband is with me, and he taps me on the shoulder. And he says, "Irvine, Irvine, stop, she is trying to help you. She thinks she's found a way to another route to get you there." And of course, I hadn't heard that. I was in the midst of what I, the only data that I could receive in is my goal has been thwarted and this person has thwarted my goal and I was in the midst of that. And then I became aware and then I was able to deal with the reaction that I was having.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, but it took that tap on the shoulder.

Irvine Nugent: It was a tap on the shoulder before I became aware that I was in the midst of that.

Alison Whitmire: That's a great example.

Irvine Nugent: And then what was fascinating as well was, I sat down and of course, the thing about trigger and emotion is, of course, all those physiological reactions are still happening, that blood is still flowing, the heart is beating, I'm sweating, I'm tense. So that life lingers longer afterwards, which is incredibly important as well.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah. Awesome. How do you work with clients around this? I mean, obviously, you educate them on this and then what?

Irvine Nugent: So I think what I like to do is I like to first of all begin with trigger, and kind of what are some of your emotional triggers. And then especially in the workplace with leadership coaching, what I like to do is I like to, I like to show them or share with them some potential triggers and then really spend some time asking them to identify, have they noticed situations where they get into which evokes from them an emotional response, a triggered emotional response?

Irvine Nugent: So I think part of it is just that awareness. And you know, oh my God, the workplace is so full of them. Everything from being budget cuts to people feeling left out of the loop, to people not responding to an email. All these events happen and they can trigger behavior. So becoming aware of that, then helping them plot that out. And there's an exercise that I like to do with a graph that helps them plot out the life of that emotion and how that showed up to really help them begin to identify the intensity and the life of that emotion. And then from that, begin to then look at the impulses, begin to, can we become more aware of when the emotion first shows. We cannot stop the affect program being activated but we can become aware earlier of the impulses. And the earlier we are of the impulses, the more choice then we have about the action that we want to take.

Irvine Nugent: And then finally, it's working a little bit up on what would the, so at the moment, this is how I react. How would I like to choose something different? What reaction might be more helpful for me or more constructive or build the relationship? And work a little bit on that.

Alison Whitmire: You have them kind of tune into their body like, okay, when you're triggered, what sensations are you feeling in your body and like that's their cue that they need to employ the seven second rule, ground the feet?

Irvine Nugent: Seven second rule, or, you know, especially if, say, if they're in a situation where, say it's a weekly office meeting where something that keeps repeating itself so we have an opportunity for them to really learn from that, then it is, then it's the beginning of almost becoming aware that a situation might arise where say, I'm going to have this emotional reaction beginning to become more aware of those impulses at the beginning. A recognition that, okay, I have been triggered in this emotion. And then almost, have I prepared? How might I respond differently, or, and it may be the seven second rule, it may be just not

responding, breathing and becoming more thoughtful. Or it may be something more active in choosing another action.

Alison Whitmire: Cool. Cool. So, one of the things we said we do is a demo. Is this a good time to go into the demo?

Irvine Nugent: Sure, absolutely, yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Okay. So like I'm your client and, hey.

Irvine Nugent: So, I think I'd ask you to share with us an emotional episode. And then we'll just kind of go through it and I'd help you kind of break down that into the segments of the graph that we just went through.

Alison Whitmire: Great. So, yes. Not long ago, I experienced more anger than I think I can remember experiencing in my entire life. And the situation was that my brother had told me he'd held on to some information he said he'd learned that I'd said that wasn't true, and had substantial impacts. Our father passed away about a year ago and he said he'd been told that I had recommended that he not be put in charge of the family's affairs. And it's not true. There's not a part of it that's true, not any of it. And he said, he held on to that, and was real upset about it. I felt accused, I felt hurt, I felt angry.

Irvine Nugent: Yeah. So let's go back to the moments when this played out. When you're looking at that initial conversation. So were you face to face with your brother, how did that initial conversation come up?

Alison Whitmire: It happened in an email and he copied my other brother?

Irvine Nugent: So the first moment that you learned that is when you opened an email and then you read the email?

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

Irvine Nugent: Okay. And as you go back to reading that email, if you had to breakdown that experience, were you aware, how quickly did it happen before you were aware that something was going on within you?

Alison Whitmire: Oh, not long. Just like, you know, I could barely, I didn't make it through the email. It's kind of like you describe your experience at the airport, I didn't make it through the email.

Irvine Nugent: Okay. As you go back to that, what were some of the physiological reactions going on within your body, do you remember?

Alison Whitmire: So yes. My heart was racing, I was feeling hot. And it's so funny and very kind of constricted restricted if that makes sense.

Irvine Nugent: Yeah. Yeah. So you read the email, you began feeling these emotions. You had these impulses. What was the behavior? What happened? Talk a little bit more about. So you read the email, you barely made the end of it.

Alison Whitmire: I was apoplectic. I was beside myself. And I wanted to respond and I also knew that I wanted to respond in a balanced way. So I took a lot of deep breaths and I thought about it, I talked to my husband about it. I thought about what I wanted to say and I thought about what the outcome was that I wanted. And then I sat back to respond to the email and I did. And typically, I'd just pick up the phone and call him, but since my he'd looped my brother in, I don't know. Anyway, I decided, and it was because it was about the family's estate, which was important.

Alison Whitmire: Anyway. I wrote the email back and I essentially said, I'm sorry that you lived with that for two years, that must have been hard. And it's 100% not true. You're absolutely the best person to be doing this. I've been supportive of you all along. I hope you felt that. And I'm hurt. And I feel angry and sad that you didn't talk to me about it. I've learned, I read a book called, The Four Things. So the four things are, I love you, I'm sorry, please forgive me, I forgive you. And that's kind of how I ended the email.

Irvine Nugent: What I would do as well is even go back, so the actual emotion itself and how we're able to identify the actual emotion is actually, even before you had left and talked to your husband and came back and then constructed kind of the email to respond, it's very interesting this is an email because if it was in person, it would be fascinating to see kind of what that initial response would have been. So you had this distance to enable you to do that. But actually, when it comes just to that initial emotion of anger, you were in this plateau, and then when, if you had to describe the moment that you became aware of how angry that had made you to the best of your ability, what would that be?

Alison Whitmire: I think in this case and maybe in all cases, I don't know, you're the expert, like the anger built. There's kind of a, it started with a combination of shock and anger. And then all that mix of combination of hurt and sadness. And then the anger built over time. And then I had to like tamp it down. Like I literally, like, this is not going to be good. Like tamp down, tamp down, tamp down. And so, yeah. Lots of deep breaths, lots of walks around the neighborhood, talking to my husband. What do I really want?

Irvine Nugent: Yeah. So I mean, first of all, what you're displaying is a wonderful sense of awareness that's enabled you to know how intense that was, and then realizing how powerful that was, and then to initiate kind of different actions that help you damp that down. You do actually bring up an amazing point and something that's intense as well. Very often we say, something happened that just made

me angry the whole day. And really, that's not what's happening. What's happening is just exactly what you described. So I get this email, and then all of a sudden, I have this emotional peak of anger. I become aware that I'm in that anger and then I rethink about that. That email comes up again and it triggers me again.

Irvine Nugent: And so really what's happening is people think I was angry the whole day and really what was happening is that I'm re-triggering myself with that email. And so the more you thought about it, the more it kind of triggers you as well. Maybe not to the same intensity but this kind of re-triggering. This is very common in intense emotional experiences that we kind of revisit the trigger and then we're re-triggered again and we begin to feel that emotion, which is kind of what you were happening. And luckily, you had enough wherewithal to sit back to detach before you can post an email response.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. Yeah.

Irvine Nugent: So, what's the lesson from that as-

Alison Whitmire: I feel it right now. I still feel it. Like right now I feel it. Like it's coming back, I feel like my heart racing.

Irvine Nugent: I love what you're bringing up as well. So the power of the emotion is this. There are two ways in which we can bring up emotion. We can bring up emotion through our memory, which is exactly there, so I was about to go there. Just in reliving that memory, so what are you feeling as you bring that up?

Alison Whitmire: It's so funny. My heart is racing, I'm feeling constricted. And this is odd too. I feel like my eyes are different. I almost feel like my eyes are dilated in some way. I don't know. I mean, I can feel the physiological response in my body.

Irvine Nugent: So the power of the physiology of memory, memory evoking the physiology. So very important for us to know in the midst of a coaching session where we're dealing with a hugely important and highly triggered event, that we have to honor the situation that the client's in and to be able to be able to realize that they are reliving that emotion once again. And then that becomes, and just to allow space and time for that, especially if the emotion is sadness because the sadness is a much longer emotion and lingers. And we just have to be very sensitive to how we end the episode and then move on.

Irvine Nugent: And then the second way that emotions come up, of course, is by just by our facial. So there's a few micro-expressions of anger as well. So in other words, the experience was coming up and you were expressing even in your face some of-

Alison Whitmire: No doubt. I didn't notice it but I trust you. So let's go to our audience and see what kind of questions or thoughts or anything come up. Kris, what's going on?

Kris Harty: Boy, this has triggered a lot of comments from our [inaudible 00:49:58] and we're very grateful. Yeah, people are just basically spot on and they're really enjoying this one. Thank you both. Let's see here. So there's a few questions, several, a handful. Julie, [inaudible 00:50:17] asks, how do you help a client shorten or pull out of the refractory period so they aren't just recognizing data that confirms the emotion?

Irvine Nugent: I did not hear the, Kris, I didn't hear the first part of that question.

Kris Harty: Oh, sorry. How do you help a client shorten or pull out of the refractory period so they aren't just recognizing data that confirms the emotions?

Irvine Nugent: Yeah, that's a great question. So I think the big problem is, of course, is that the, and you know, what I didn't say here is, the strength of the trigger depends on a number of things. The more intense the original experiencing of that trigger, the earlier it happened in our life or the more recent that trigger, the harder it is for us to manage that trigger.

Irvine Nugent: So sometimes depending on what a person is feeling, that refractory period can be longer and I think we just have to honor that. I think the only way of lessening a refractory period. And remember, a refractory period is not all bad. So a refractory period helps us survive. But I think a way, if it's unhelpful of lessening, is making that awareness earlier, and so doing a lot of work around the impulses, the schematics, the physiology of what's happening within the body. So to help them identify a little bit earlier what's happening.

Irvine Nugent: And then also to become more familiar with their common patterns of triggers. I often say, you know, we have a unique fingerprint, I always say we have a trigger print too, which is unique to everyone. And the more that we can really investigate and really notice what's triggering us, the more data and power we have to notice then what's happening within us. This is not easy work. If this was easy, everyone would be doing it and it's not. So I definitely understand that. But I really, the clients that I've worked with who have used it have really been helped.

Alison Whitmire: Cool.

Kris Harty: Nice, nice. We have a question about what is the difference between an emotional trigger and an emotional block or blockage? And it comes from [inaudible 00:52:35].

Irvine Nugent: An emotional trigger and an emotional blockage. The way that I understand is the blockage is, a blockage is a learnt response that prevents, that there's so much anxiety fear around that that they've learned to suppress it and not display it and not let the behavior be displayed. Or they may even have done that because of trauma or whatever that they're even not consciously aware that that's happening so they didn't push it out.

Alison Whitmire: It's like a suppression.

Irvine Nugent: Suppression, yeah. A trigger could well be happening in that, it's just that it's not expressed.

Alison Whitmire: That's good. Kris, you're on mute.

Kris Harty: Sorry about that. Is there time for more question, Alison?

Alison Whitmire: You know what, how about we just do one more and then we'll come to a close?

Kris Harty: That sounds great. Okay. Linda Sable, and this might be more of a summary than anything, but she asks, how do you help the person react better to the triggers? Is there a means to replace their automatic response with a more reasonable one?

Irvine Nugent: Yes. So in other words, the one thing we can't do is we cannot stop the trigger. We can diminish and we can manage the trigger. That's why I say, for example, a person who is a driving instructor with pedals on their side, they've learned instinctively not to press the pedal when they want. So we can manage our triggers. So I think a part of that is, the work is up front, it's about beginning to notice the trigger. It's learning your trigger print. It's learning, it's going through each of those emotions and finding how does anger show up within me? And how does fear, how does joy, how does sadness? And so it's really that work of getting very granular within those emotions and learning the impulses that are generated so then that we have, we become to notice that, ah, there it is, there is that trigger now. How do I want to respond?

Alison Whitmire: Nice. Nice. Thank you. So, any closing comments you want to make Irvine here before we complete?

Irvine Nugent: You know, this is, I realized, I tend to do this a lot, I unpacked a lot knowing that we had a very short period. But I think this is so rich I think, and really breaking down the emotion can really give people insight into what's happening in a concrete way that often can remain mysterious. And so, a lot of what we did today, we have a full two day course, which goes into this at great length. I think if you're intrigued or interested or if you want to read more, I mean, Paul Ekman's book Emotions Revealed is a masterpiece, and really gets into, I was just looking at some questions there about universal, what are some of the universal triggers, etc, goes into a lot of this research. So if you're fascinated about this, that's certainly one resource that could really help people.

Alison Whitmire: Fantastic. So let people know where they can find out more. So a couple of things here, the end. So, let us know how you like this podinar. We're always trying to make it better and better so let us know. Kris is going to launch a poll here in a minute. I'm going give you a chance to see what you thought here.

Alison Whitmire: So, if you'd like to know what we do here at Learning in Action, you can enroll in one of our free classes. We have a free intro to relational intelligence, we're actually doing one of those sessions today and one of those sessions again in October. You can find all that information at learninginaction.teachable.com. Kris is putting that in the chat box today so that's handy for you. For those of us who are on the call who are practitioners, we're having a mastering the debrief class and we are upping our game in terms of what mastery of the debrief process means. And that's a free class for people who are certified, only people who are certified in Learning in Action's EQ profile. You'll definitely up your EQ profile game.

Alison Whitmire: We're doing a brand new class in March called The Neuroscience of Emotional Intelligence. It's open to everyone, super stoked for you to look into that. That's a two day class 90 minutes sessions, November 1 to November 15, check that out also on Teachable. We're also doing a new class that's about, for those of you who are practitioners, it's about self other orientation, which is the most salient, the most challenging aspect of the EQ profile to understand. And we're opening this class up to everyone. We'll be explaining the dimension outside of the context of the EQ profile and helping everyone understand how critical, where we focus on in that point conflict is to helping us navigate a conflict successfully.

Alison Whitmire: So there'll be two classes on that. They'll be the 10th of October and the 24th of October. You'll find out more about that on Teachable. We have our EQ certifications going on all the time for both individuals and for teams.

Alison Whitmire: Now, for what you really want here, contact information for Irvine is here. He has two upcoming trainings in Chicago. What we talked about today is the basis of the emotional skills and competency course. It's in Chicago in September, the date's there. It's also coming to DC in April of next year. You can find out more about all of that and sign up at the website microexpressioncourse.com. And if you'd like to stay in touch with me, there's my contact information. Do you like to follow Learning in Action, there's all the information there. We hope to in the near future allow you to subscribe to our monthly podinar series and we would love to have you. That way, you wouldn't miss anything, you'd be automatically subscribed to everything we're doing. We're still figuring out those details now.

Alison Whitmire: So, we have another podinar coming up. Next month's podinar, so stoked, is with my buddy, Judson Brewer. He's an MD PhD two time doctor, doctor squared. And we'll be talking about habit change and the science of self mastery. Judson Brewer, he was quoted in Michael Pollan's book, How to Change Your Mind. He was the guy who Michael Pollan went to do the fMRI. Anyway, he has one of the, he's a neuroscientist among other things and he has developed this combo practice between neuroscience and mindfulness and has developed the most successful smoking cessation program known based solely on mindfulness. Anyway, super excited for that. So, you'll have the opportunity to sign up for that one when you get the email follow up from today, you'll get a

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recording from today, you'll get the resources from today, and you'll have a link to follow up for the next one.

Alison Whitmire: So, thank you all for coming. Irvine, thank you so much.

Irvine Nugent: Thank you so much.

Alison Whitmire: It's been an honor, I learned so much and it was so fun. Kris, thank you for doing all that you do to make this podinar series successful. And to those of you who came, I hope you enjoyed it. I hope it informed you. I hope it inspired you. I hope you come again. Bye now.