WORKSHEET

The Space Between Stimulus and Response

Where the Enneagram and emotional intelligence meet — and what to do in the half second before you speak.

Viktor Frankl called it the space between stimulus and response, and said our freedom lives there. Six Seconds names the sequence Know Yourself, Choose Yourself, Give Yourself. The Enneagram tells you what the reaction is protecting. This sheet is for widening that space by a little. Not for becoming someone who never reacts — that would require not being human.

A Practice to Begin

For one week, catch a single reaction a day. The jaw tightening. The voice half a step higher. The reply already forming while the other person is still talking. Do not fix it. Write down three things: what happened, what you felt in your body first, and what you were protecting.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the reaction you have promised yourself you would not have again?
2. Where does it show up in your body before it reaches your mouth?
3. What is it protecting? Not clinically — honestly. What is at stake for you in that moment?
4. If you know your Enneagram type, what does your type's core fear have to do with this reaction?
5. Who receives this reaction most often, and what do they think it means about them?
6. What practice would build your capacity to notice before acting — centering prayer, breath, a walk, a rule about not replying within the hour?

An Invitation for the Week

Choose one relationship and one reaction. For seven days, aim only to notice it one second earlier than you did the day before.

The reaction isn't irrational exactly. It's just faster than our awareness.

— The Most Intelligent Thing You Can Do Is Slow Down