

SAFETY RESPONSE SWITCH

In need of repair

I have been on a quest the past few months.

This quest is and feels similar to the quest I took over thirty years ago, when I wanted to know if the faith written about in the scriptures I was immersed in, really held the immeasurable power talked about or was just a lie. And if it wasn't a lie, I wanted access to that power.

I found the answer to that quest. You read about it in the OM trilogy.

The quest I am on right now is to discover how to rid ourselves of the things that stop us from being masterful creators. Those things are fear, lack of self-confidence, fear, lack of happiness, hope, fear, negative beliefs, fear, and habits or addictions that stop our complete freedom of power. (Did I mention fear?)

What I found in my own life is that all the events that occurred during my "seven years of hell" left me a different person. The new me had fears that seemed to come from nowhere, less trust, protective barriers from love, become less social, more suspicious, more introspective, less confident, added weight, what appeared to be an addiction to food (or the inability to lose the weight and keep it off), and so forth.

What about you? Has anything occurred in your past that left you with more fears, less security – a changed person?

Some people end up angrier, distant, confused, afraid, aggressive, shy, abusive, feeling victimized or compulsively working to make sure nothing like that ever happens again.

This quest has taken me down several paths and has already changed so much in my life. It keeps getting deeper and more profound.

The knowledge and wisdom that has been coming to me has already revealed much of what had previously been a mystery to me.

The excitement within me is palpable.

When we hurry through life, we have a tendency to think, "If only if only I weighed less . . . if only I had more money . . . if only so and so loved me . . . if only I did this better . . . if only I had had different parents . . . if only my partner would . . . or my boss would . . . or . . . whatever we think is holding us back.

And we really believe this.

I have.

Have you?

I have thought that if only I could have enough discipline to eat properly ALL the time, my life would be perfect.

What are your “if onlys?”

If only

If only . . .

Life challenges us. Sometimes the challenges are so severe or so emotional that we find ourselves changed - different. We all know people who can't commit because their hearts have been broken.

I wonder how many of us feel broken in one way or another.

When we feel broken, fearful, sad, depressed, angry, or any other debilitating emotion, our ability to create is dramatically lessened.

As I have said, fear, lack of joy, hopelessness, lack of self-confidence, and fear – stop or greatly hinder our ability to create powerfully and consistently.

All of us can be inspired by a great movie, song, lecture, story or book and decide to really “go for it.” And when we do this, wonderful things happen.

But then – life happens – things occur that can take us to a place where we don't feel as strong and confident as we did before.

Has this ever happened to you?

It has to me – many times.

I am assuming you have read *Outrageous Mastery*® and I am assuming you have read the previous writings in *MONTHLY MASTERY*, so I won't go into detail about the traumatic events in my life or the trauma therapy I was in for five months (and how it surprised me when my therapist asked me if I knew I was in “trauma therapy. I had no idea.)

I had not thought of myself as being “traumatized” before this.

All I knew was that I never felt quite the same after my “seven years of hell.”

And I could never figure out or understand why things were different inside of me. I would often ask myself when I didn't think I had lived up to my potential, “What is wrong with me?”

I couldn't understand why I would now be frightened of things that never used to bother me. I couldn't understand why I had problems with losing the weight I had put on during the seven years.

I just never felt entirely like myself.

I had thought the answer was in a better diet, more exercise, more discipline, etc.

I now realize it never was about the food or the exercise or the discipline. Something else had changed inside of me and that was the direct cause of the changes I felt.

Can you relate to my experiences?

Again I want to ask you if anything that happened in your past has changed or altered you? (A loss of love, an illness, an accident, a person of influence demeaning you, a financial or business loss or change, a career problem, abuse or some sort, a situation where you felt you were not successful, etc)

The change I am talking about is one where you are left feeling more fear, less secure, self-assured, less able, less joy, or confidence. And where maybe you picked up an addiction or behavior that helped you cope. Addictions or coping behaviors can be: drugs, alcohol, smoking, eating for comfort, obsessive or compulsive behaviors, panic or anxiety attacks, over-exercising, over-sleeping, excessive TV or sexual behavior, etc. When I speak of addictions, I am speaking about behaviors we cling to, depend on, or are enslaved to that we believe are necessary to help us get through life.

I am not condemning any addiction or coping behavior. Most of us have at least one. Life is always throwing challenges at us. My questions to myself for some time now have been, "How can we live life without these crutches? What would it feel like to always feel the inner power, strength and confidence to face anything with love, peace, freedom and lack of major fear?"

What would it feel like to rid ourselves of the pain?

I feel excited right now and a warm anticipation because for several months I have been in a space of learning and it has all been around this area. I wrote about what happened during the Reno earthquake swarm and how I ended up in a mountaintop by a lake writing and being taught for nine days. Looking back, it was almost as if the earth shook me away from my life and placed me in solitude in an incredibly beautiful spot so I could focus solely on the knowledge that was waiting to enter my mind and soul.

This quest is alive in me.

It feels like a huge awakening inside my soul.

I don't have all the answers yet but the ones that are coming are profound.

I am a bit time-challenged since I am in the middle of a major move across the country but I had to get a few thoughts down on paper and recorded here for you while they were fresh. I made a discovery recently and it was profound.

Here is part of it.

There is a part of our brains called the Amygdala. Below are some of the things this part of our brain does. (Notice my italics.)

1. It processes our *emotional experiences and their significance*.
2. It directs the release of hormones into our system.
3. It *alters* cognitive processing.
4. It *creates* and responds to *fear conditioning*.
5. It also affects our eating and drinking behaviors (as well as our aggressive, maternal and sexual ones).
6. Conditioned stimuli and emotional conditions produce strong amygdala activation when presented unconsciously.
7. It *affects social behavior*.
8. Structural or functional changes in the amygdala are associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, phobias, panic, depression and other conditions. *Each of these conditions involves fear and anxiety to some extent – increased anxiety.*

Now, before I lose your interest let me explain to you what happens in our brain when we have had an emotional or traumatic experience.

When we have had a very emotionally upsetting experience that is highly charged, our brains and bodies go into full alert.

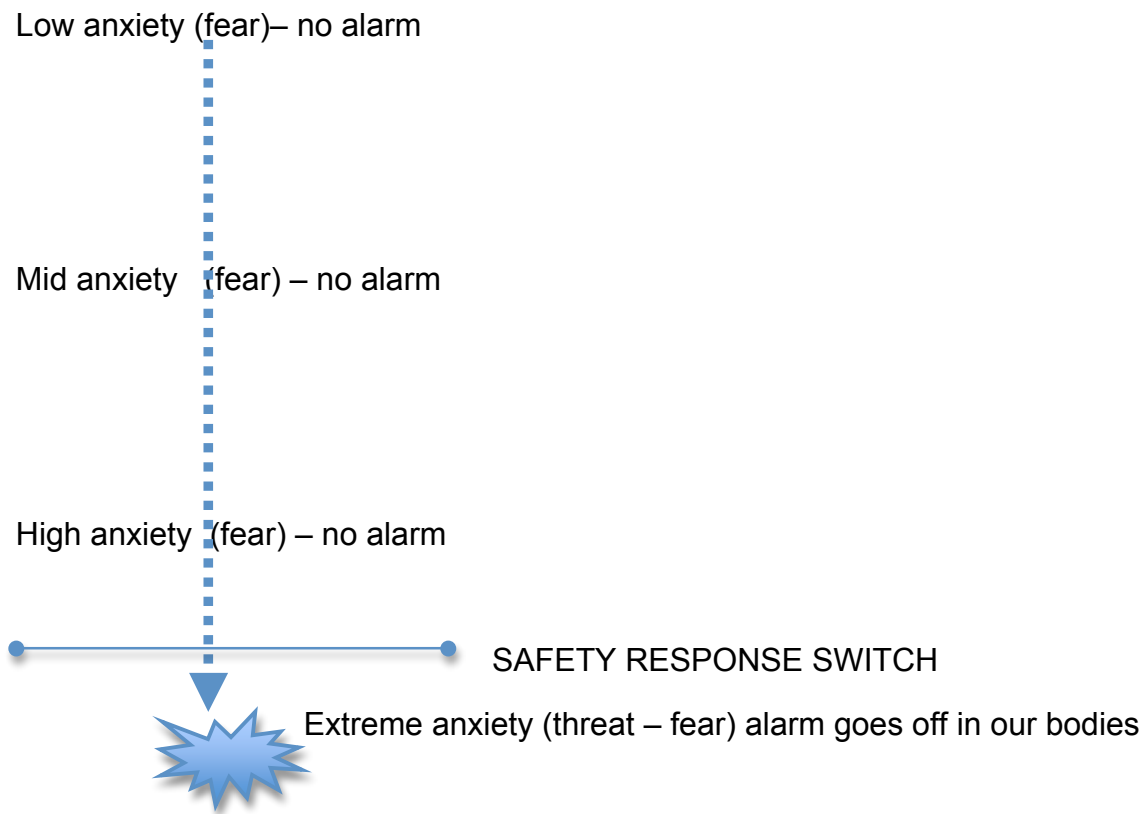
Physical changes take place, our heart rate increases, our breathing gets shallow and quick, hormones are pumped into our system, and numerous other changes take place that we are not even aware of.

Our physical and emotional body begins preparing to protect us. I call it our “Safety Response.” Our body wants to keep us safe.

It is like an alarm has gone off and all stations become battle ready.

Imagine we have a pole that is a foot high inside of us. Consider it our measured alarm system. Normally, as we begin life, our alarm goes off rarely, because it has been set to only go off at times of high-alert. This would be like a national alert being sounded only when a nuclear threat is present. It rarely goes off because this alert system is only for major emergencies.

Consider the diagram below.

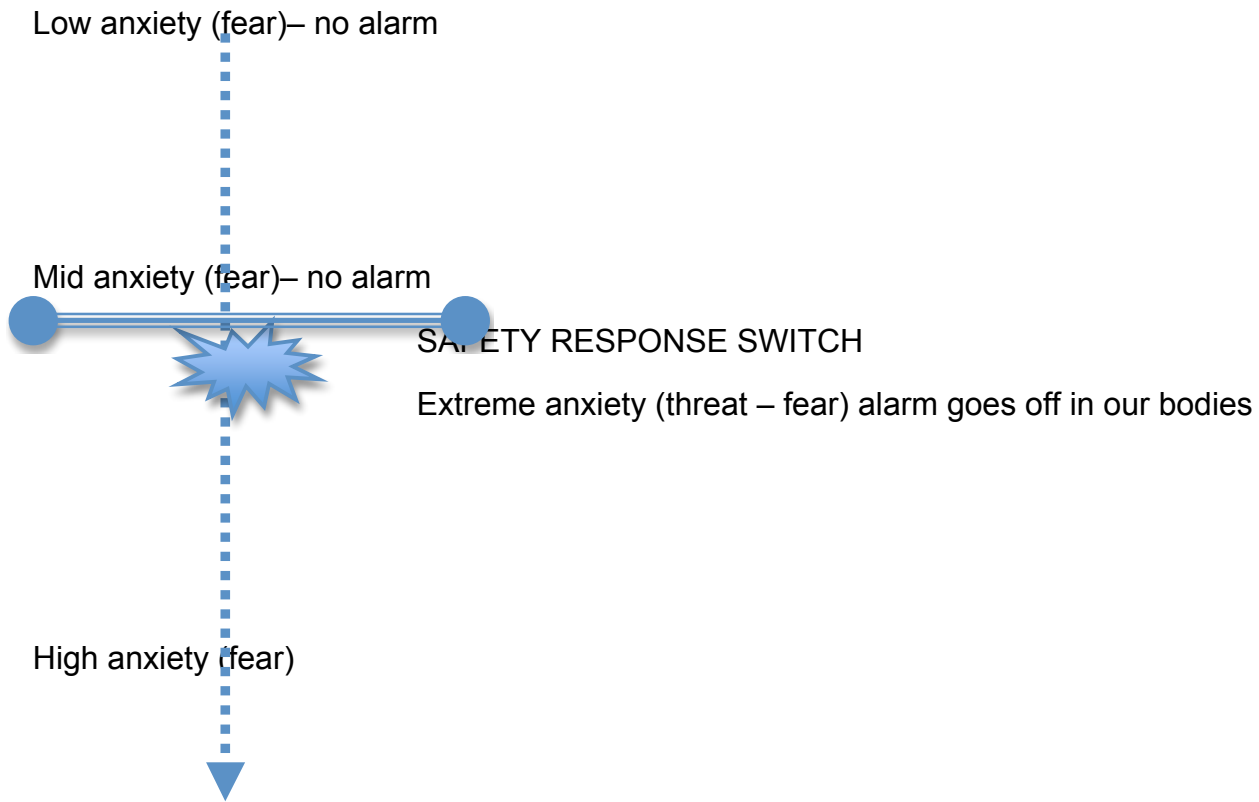


The dots in the arrow are the series of emotional events that take place before the “Safety Switch” goes off and the full-blown physical, mental and emotional crises response takes place. Our body is merely reacting to the crisis at hand. (The crisis may be abuse, divorce, failure, firing, rejection, loss, traumatic illness, or any other traumatic experience or threat.)

The horizontal line is our “Safety Response Switch” and it is controlled by the amygdala. When it measures the traumatic event to be life-threatening, it sets off the alarm.

Trauma is rated differently according to your personality. For some a rather small event can be traumatic while for others it takes a mountain falling on them before they feel traumatized. Synonyms for trauma are: shock, upheaval, distress, stress, strain, pain, anguish, suffering, upset, agony, sorrow, misery, grief, heartache, heartbreak, torture, trial, ordeal, tribulation, trouble, worry, anxiety, hell, nightmare, and hellish.

Now, if the experience has truly traumatized us, turned our world upside down, drastically escalated our fear, our bodies will learn from the experience. The amygdala will realize it didn’t do a very good job in protecting us, so it will raise its “Safety Response Switch” like the diagram below.



Notice that the “Safety Response Switch” has become thicker as well as moving higher up the scale of anxiety or fear.

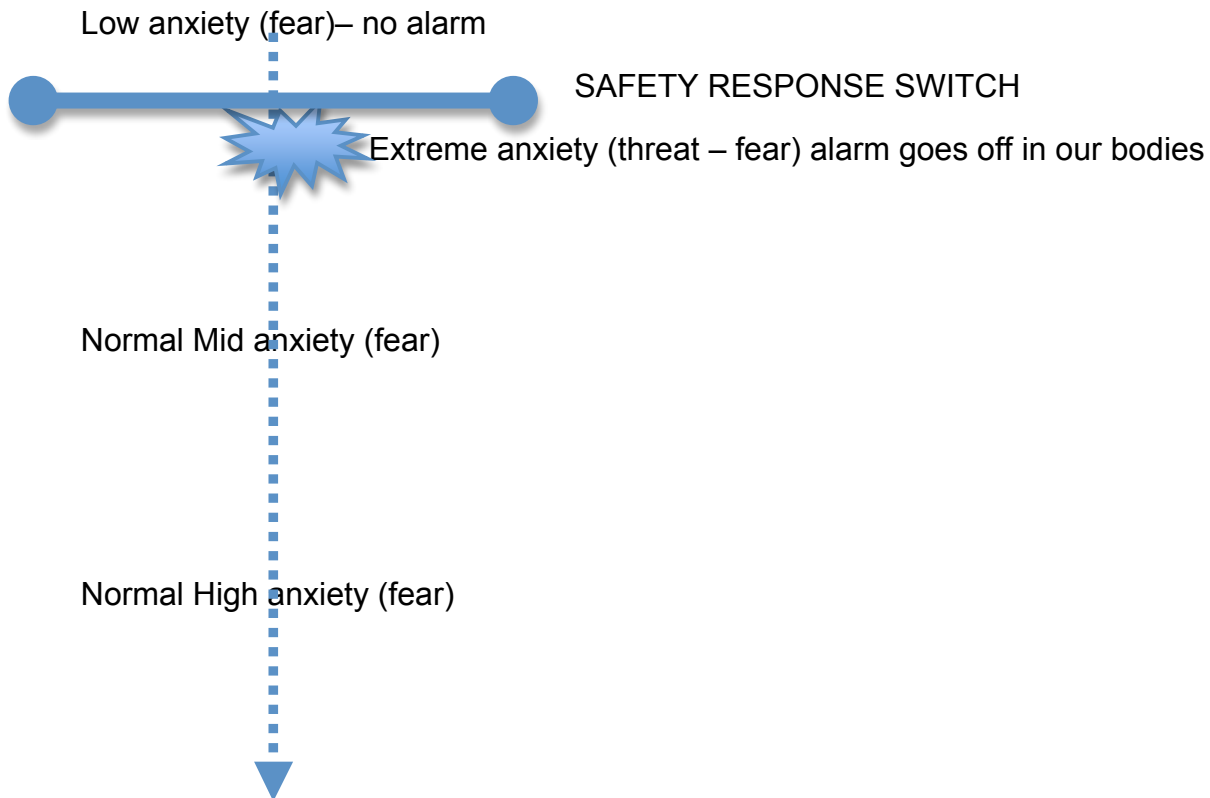
Our body has learned it needs to set off the alarm earlier if it is to protect us (or help us protect ourselves).

And it thinks it needs to be stronger and more consistent. It also sends out signals to help us stick to our addictions or coping mechanisms. Our coping mechanisms become much stronger in the process. It is only trying to protect and help us.

But, what actually happens is – we react quicker and with more fear, anxiety, desperation, sadness, anger (or whatever our own triggered emotions are) to lesser stressors. We find that what never bothered us before, now causes fear, doubt, and anxiety in us. And we may find ourselves trying to stay away from anything that would trigger the Safety Response Switch and set off all the alarms in our bodies.

And then we find mini-traumas occurring where none occurred before.

And our amygdala thinks it needs to protect us even better so it raises our Safety Response Switch again and in time it looks like this.



Our life may now look very different or feel very different than it did before. And thought patterns or habits set in that we consciously or unconsciously generate to try and protect ourselves. (Remember, all thoughts and habits originate from the brain).

They may look like this.

1. I can't commit because it would only lead to another failure.
2. I can't trust because I may get hurt again.
3. I can't go to that social situation; I may be embarrassed again.
4. "It is stupid to take a chance like that. I am smarter than that. You will probably fail."
5. I can't go out alone; I may be attacked again.
6. I can't let you love me; you may abandon me.
7. I need a cigarette/drink/dessert/drug after a stressful day. It calms me.
8. If you criticize me, I will become defensive and attack you. I must protect my image at all costs.
9. I must do everything possible to look attractive so people will like me. I can't risk alienation.

10. I can't take that job/position/assignment; I may end up looking like a fool.
11. I am just not happy.
12. I am not fulfilled.
13. I am not successful.
14. No one really loves me.
15. I have to pretend all the time. I can never just be me.
16. I wish I were . . .
17. I wish I could . . .
18. I am tired of trying.
19. Why can't I do better, have more confidence, be happier?
20. If I lie, no one will know.

Our freedom has disappeared. Our power is lost. Our confidence is hidden. We may not even feel real.

This is what begins to happen to us when our Safety Response Switch is going off over minor incidents. We become triggered to respond to minor incidents like they were major ones. And our bodies respond like they are in a major crisis.

It is very difficult to consistently create our dreams when this is going on. We are continually fighting the fear and doubt that is now being triggered way too often.

This is when our Safety Response Switch has become faulty!

What we are going to cover in the next installment are the most effective and quickest ways to dramatically lower our SRS.

Doing this will restore peace, security, and certainty to our souls. And we will be freed to create with incredible power.

Interested?

Stay tuned to our home for mastery. Come home often. There is love here.

A little bit of scientific data (just in case you are interested)

“Fear Conditioning” is where we learn to fear new stimuli or situations when it is paired with our Safety Response Switch going off all the time. Eventually, neutral situations elicit the state of fear in us and activate a fear-response. Fear Conditioning also comes from the amygdala.

It is kind of like Pavlov’s dogs. Remember that?

Pavlov's experiment

During his research on the physiology of digestion in dogs, Pavlov noticed that, rather than simply salivating in the presence of meat powder, the dogs began to salivate in the presence of the lab technician who normally fed them.

In his initial experiment, Pavlov used bells to call the dogs to their food and, after a few repetitions, the dogs started to salivate in response to the bell.

A traumatic event involves a single experience, or an enduring or repeating event or events, that completely overwhelm the individual’s ability to cope or integrate the ideas and emotions involved with that experience.

People who go through traumatic experiences often have certain symptoms and problems afterward. How severe these symptoms are depends on the person, the type of trauma involved, and the emotional support they receive from others. Reactions to and symptoms of trauma can be wide and varied, and differ in severity from person to person. A traumatized individual may experience one or several of them.

After a traumatic experience, a person may re-experience the trauma mentally and physically, hence avoiding trauma reminders, also called triggers, as this can be uncomfortable and even painful. They may turn to alcohol and/or drugs to try and escape the feelings. Re-experiencing symptoms are a sign that the body and mind are actively struggling to cope with the traumatic experience. Triggers and cues act as reminders of the trauma, and can cause anxiety and other associated emotions. Often the person can be completely unaware of what these triggers are. In many cases this may lead a person suffering from traumatic disorders to engage in disruptive or self-destructive coping mechanisms, often without being fully aware of the nature or causes of their own actions.

This can produce a pattern of prolonged periods of acute arousal (meaning the body goes into high alert) punctuated by periods of physical and mental exhaustion. (Many times I would find myself so physically exhausted I could barely move – and could never figure out why – until now.)

Emotional detachment can frequently occur. Dissociating from the painful emotion includes numbing all emotion, and the person may seem emotionally flat, preoccupied or distant.

Some traumatized people may feel permanently damaged when trauma symptoms don't go away and they don't believe their situation will improve. This can lead to feelings of despair, loss of self-esteem, and frequently depression. If important aspects of the person's self and world understanding have been violated, the person may call their own identity into question. These symptoms can lead to stress or anxiety disorders (which I call a "Faulty Safety Response Switch").

Trauma is often defined as a coping response to and a consequence of overwhelming situations.

Regardless of the source of the trauma, the experience has four common traits: it was unexpected, it was psychologically overwhelming, the person was unprepared or unable to cope with it, and there was nothing the person felt they could do to prevent or mitigate it.

Trauma is often overcome through healing; in some cases this can be achieved by recreating or revisiting the origin of the trauma under more psychologically safe circumstances, such as with a therapist. (This is the perfect place to start if you find yourself in the place I was. I found it almost impossible to go back to the point of original trauma in my mind. I told my therapist on day one, "People all over the world are being inspired by my story – but, when I think back on my life, I am filled with regret, embarrassment, pain, and confusion. I want to feel inspired by my own story. And how will I ever be able to travel and speak about it if I can't talk about it without crying?" Going to that place with the love and help of my therapist freed me from that unbearable pain and confusion I had carried inside me for so long. So, if you find yourself in this place, find a reputable therapist that you can trust and walk back into the darkness with a guiding hand until you can leave the darkness behind and step back into the light.)