

How to react to real time events and outcomes?¹

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In life we go through a variety of situations as time passes by. At times, we have a very happy moment because we achieved what we aimed for. For example, we got a pay rise or a promotion or a student got admission into his/her college of choice or a job aspirant got a job that he/she was looking for. We rejoice too much and celebrate it in such a magnitude that it is a sure recipe for disaster when some unpleasant moment unfolds later. Others get too egoistic and alienate themselves from others.

There are times when the going has not been good. We invested in the stock market and lost money because the market price of the shares that we bought went down. An entrepreneur might continue to invest more money into a venture still not seeing the light at the end of the day. Alternatively, we lost the job, got a boss who harasses and so on. A student went with some method of preparation but the examination paper was of different resulting in poor performance. Many are unable to face this and slip into mental depression and create problems for themselves and others. Some others simply fall by the wayside not knowing how to react.

Such events do unfold in everybody's life every now and then. While this is common what is not common is our response to these emerging situations in life. Generally, if we observe a number of such situations we will find some broad patterns in our response to these situations. The table below captures some of these.

It is a happy situation	It is not a very happy situation
We are on cloud nine. We want to celebrate it in as grand a manner as possible.	We are in a state of depression and disappointment. We want to avoid thinking about it or talking about it.
We take the full credit for the outcome. We realize how much potential we have and how well we are able to execute the task to perfection that the result was indeed what it was.	We blame everyone and everything around us for the failure. We even blame God for being unfair to us.
We feel we are next to none in this world. No force on earth can stop our progress and success.	We feel we are absolutely worthless and the most unlucky person in the world.
Often times we do not feel the need for others and the feeling of "I" is at its peak.	We begin to feel the need for others around us and how it would have been if they have supported and shared the burden. The "I" is cut to size and is almost non-existent.

¹ Mahadevan, B. (2012). "How to react to real time events and outcomes?", *Sadguru's Blessings*, Vol. 10 (4), December, 2012, pp 18 – 19.

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Relationship to developing leadership traits

Such situations continue to unfold again and again many times in the future. Therefore, it is important to know the long term implications of this behavior. If we analyze the behavioural response to the good and not-so good situations as listed above, it becomes clear that we seem to be merely reacting to the stimuli. This almost resembles an animal behavior. Rejoicing when an apparently good situation unfolds and slipping into a state of mental depression and stress when a “not a happy” situation arises does not help us in any way to develop resilience to face such situations in the future. Such people can never develop inner strength and character required to take responsible roles in the family, society and work place. They will find it difficult to develop leadership traits which are needed as they grow. They do not acquire any wisdom in life. They are continuously battered between the two extremes like a boat caught in a cyclone in the middle of the ocean.

Is there something more that we need to do? How exactly should we react? We shall see what advice Lord Krishna offers to us on this aspect.

Emotional detachment leads to steady mind & wisdom

The root cause of the responses to alternative situations mentioned above is emotional attachment to the issue on hand. When one gets too emotional, the first thing that happens is that the power of discrimination is lost. *Buddhi* is the faculty endowed with the power of discrimination. However, in an emotional state, the mind gains control over the *Buddhi* and switches it off. Once this happens, we will react to the situation in a manner that we may regret later (when the mind is calm and the control is restored back to *Buddhi*). Therefore, Lord Krishna first advises that it is important to develop a state of mind that is always alert and does not indulge in too much attachment to unfolding situations (*sarvatra anabhisnehaḥ*).

Lord Krishna further says that if we develop this capability then the mind will not slip into aversion (*na dveṣṭi*) when the unfolding situation is not good. Also, when the unfolding situation is good it does not over rejoice (*na-abhinandati*). In this process, what an individual will also achieve is that his/her mind is steady and he/she attains wisdom (*prajñā*)

यः सर्वत्राभिस्नेहः तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।

नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ 2.57

*yaḥ sarvatra anabhisnehaḥ tat-tat prāpya śubha-aśubham
na-abhinandati na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭitā*

Developing emotional detachment

Developing emotional detachment is a very valuable capability in life. One requires time and continuous effort to acquire this capability. We must engage in repeated questioning and

analysis of our responses to situations. By doing this consciously over time we will develop a good sense of why it is valuable to be emotionally detached. Such repeated questioning and self-introspection could help us develop an objective view of the world and the situations that we face. An objective view of the world helps us restore the seat of control to the *buddhi* most of the times. This will prepare the mind to listen to the *buddhi* and take its advice seriously.

A pleasant outcome of this journey is that emotional detachment leads us to greater and intense physical attachment to activities and situations around us. We will begin to discover the joy of work as opposed to the drudgery and boredom of work that we currently experience. A closer scrutiny of the life and works of great leaders brings out this aspect clearly. Let us benefit from this advice of Lord Krishna and enjoy a self-transformative experience within ourselves.