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If you answered "yes" to this question, or if you'd like to consistently conduct yourself in a more rational way, then here are five ways you can help yourself:

1) *Know yourself thoroughly.* You'd be surprised how many people look the other way when it comes to themselves, causing a lack of self-awareness and loss of control during emotional meltdowns.

We all have an emotional self whether we want to admit it or not. And since emotions can rear up without regard to awareness or warning, they can catch you off guard. When that happens, your emotions grip you physically and set off a blazing fire inside your head. The key to having control over this rests with your willpower and self-awareness. The moment you are aware of how your emotions operate and dominate you is the moment they lose their hold on you and can be tamed. Therefore, your first step toward becoming rational is to always focused inward. You want to catch your emotional self in action.

For this purpose, you must reflect on how you operate under stress. What particular weaknesses come out in such moments--the desire to please, to bully or control, deep levels of mistrust? Look at your decisions, especially those that have been ineffective--can you see a pattern, an underlying insecurity that impels them? This internal recognition is vital to your self-awareness.

2) *Examine your emotions to their roots.* If you become angry, let the feeling settle from within, and think about it. Was it triggered by something seemingly trivial or petty? That could be a sure sign that something or someone else is behind it. Perhaps a more uncomfortable emotion is at the source--such as envy or paranoia. You need to look at this square in the eye. Dig below any trigger points to see where they started. (It might be wise to use a journal in which you record your self-assessments with ruthless objectivity.) Your greatest obstacle here is your ego

and how it makes you unconsciously maintain illusions about yourself. You must strive to find a neutral position from which to observe your actions, with a bit of detachment. After you've practiced doing this, in time, you will be able to step back and find a neutral position anytime an emotion rears its ugly head in some situation.

3) *Increase your reaction time.* This is not easy--this, too, requires practice and self-control. When some event or interaction requires a response, you must train yourself to step back. This could mean physically removing yourself to a place where you can be alone and not feel any pressure to respond. Or it could mean writing an angry email but not sending it. (It would be wise to do this task on a Word document or other similar platform to prevent yourself from accidentally sending it.) You can also sleep on it for a day or two. Whatever you do, it's best to not make any phone calls or communicate while feeling some sudden emotion, particularly resentment. Cool the emotions down. The longer you can take the better, because perspective comes with time.

4) *Accept people as facts.* We are continually judging people, wishing they were something that they are not. We want to change them. We want them to think and act a certain way, most often the way we think and act. And because this is not possible, because everyone is different, we are continually frustrated and upset. Instead, try seeing other people as phenomena, as neutral as comets or plants. They simply exist. They come in all varieties, making life rich and interesting. Work with what they give you, instead of resisting and trying to change them. Make understanding people something stimulating--perhaps treat it like you're solving a puzzle!

Now I know this can be extremely difficult to do when you're dealing with the nightmare types--the raging narcissists, the passive aggressors, and other inflamers--people who can cause you great harm. If you can't find a

therapeutic measure to help yourself tolerate these types, then consider seeking outside help or perhaps you can pursue a major life change. Fighting irrational behavior with irrational behavior of your own will only leave you in a whirlpool of misery from which you won't be able to ever float away.

5) *Find the optimal balance of thinking and emotion.* The ancient Greeks had an appropriate metaphor for this: the rider and the horse.

The horse is our emotional nature continually impelling us to move. This horse has tremendous energy and power, but without a rider it cannot be guided; it is wild, subject to predators, and continually heading into trouble. The rider is our thinking self. Through training and practice, it holds the reins and guides the horse, transforming a powerful animal energy into something productive. The one without the other is useless. Without the rider, there's no directed movement or purpose. Without the horse, there's no energy or power. In most people, the horse dominates, and the rider is weak. In some people, the rider is too strong, holds the reins too tightly, and is afraid to occasionally let the animal go into a gallop. The horse and the rider must work together.

So what does this mean? It means we should consider our actions beforehand. We should do as much thinking as possible in a situation before making a decision. But once we decide what to do we have to loosen the reins and enter action with boldness and adventure. Instead of being slaves to this energy, we channel it. This is the essence of rationality.

If you apply these five things I mentioned herein, you can certainly tame your emotional self and become more calm and clearheaded. In this state of mind you will be less consumed by petty conflicts and considerations. Your actions will be more effective with less turmoil. You will have more mental space to be creative. You will feel more in control. You will be ideally rational.

~ The End ~