



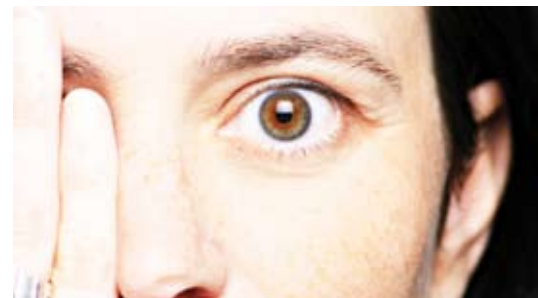
THE LION AND THE LION TAMER

Over these past months and weeks, I have had friends and participants say to me – “You are teaching EQ so as an expert on the subject you should be able to overcome your personal struggles and handle emotions easily” and “I’m surprised you teach EQ and yet, can think of such things or behave in such a manner”.

I don’t think any of us can ever “handle emotions easily.” As I once read some years ago, emotions are like the lion in us. As we grow older, we are continuously conditioned by our personal and work lives that emotions are something to be avoided as it makes us weak, irrational and out-of-control. So they say we should learn to control our emotions, subdue it even.

Wild, primitive, powerful and overwhelming, the lion had long existed before our logic even came into being. A majestic lion needs its space, to roam and hunt freely. It cannot be completely controlled or tamed. At best, we work towards co-existing in harmony – blending of emotions and logic in our decisions, behaviors and existence – like the magnificent Aslan and the many characters portrayed in CS Lewis’ Chronicles of Narnia. An individual with high EQ does not necessarily shield a person from personal struggles or challenges. Neither does it necessarily mean that an EQ expert is able to overcome, easily handle or suppress emotions and not feel any effects and consequences of emotions.

Emotional Intelligence or EQ is not about suppressing or controlling emotions. It’s our ability to accept what we are feeling, and using that “emotional data” to give us deep insights into our intentions – what we truly want and aspire towards. Often, our actions or behaviors do not reflect our true intentions, consciously or unconsciously. EQ helps us to tap into that wisdom to align our true intentions – our emotions and thoughts – with our decisions and subsequent actions. It’s about making conscious decisions with people and the situations around us. Decisions that are well thought-through and emotionally-felt through are EQ-reflective.



The first wave of emotions and thoughts that buzzes through our minds and hearts are seldom ‘controlled’. It’s like a glimpse of the powerful lion, appearing without warning or any prompting. Most times, like the lion tamer through years of training and conditioning, we are able to tuck away these primal feelings and thoughts. With a crack of the whip, the lion tamer is able to stay the lion. But when we are under stress, under tremendous pressure or magnifying situations, we may buckle. The auto-pilot reactions kick in and the lion takes control even if it’s just for a brief moment. We have read countless stories of trainers and tamers being mauled by supposedly well-trained animals that are under stress. The lion will always be the more powerful force. Its power and strength are just awesome.

We call these moments 'hijacks' when metaphorically the thinking brain gets separated from the feeling brain. Our brain detects variables that threaten our very survival. Our primal instincts take over and protect us as best it can base on pre-determined patterns or SOPs embedded in our neural pathways.

So what do we do when these hijacks happen? Intentionally engage our thinking brain more intensively so that the emotions composite balance out, taking the edge off the threat response from our brain. Slow down the emotional flooding of chemicals in our body so that we can gain balance again. We advocate a powerful technique called the Six Seconds Pause.

There are also times when hijacks last longer than a brief moment of insanity. At other times, we aggravate the situation by allowing our Cycle of Escalation pick up a speed of its own through our emotions and thoughts when under threat. So we set ourselves up, unconsciously pulling the trigger back, bracing for fire!

Can we stop our initial emotions and thoughts? Try this – do NOT think of a pink elephant!

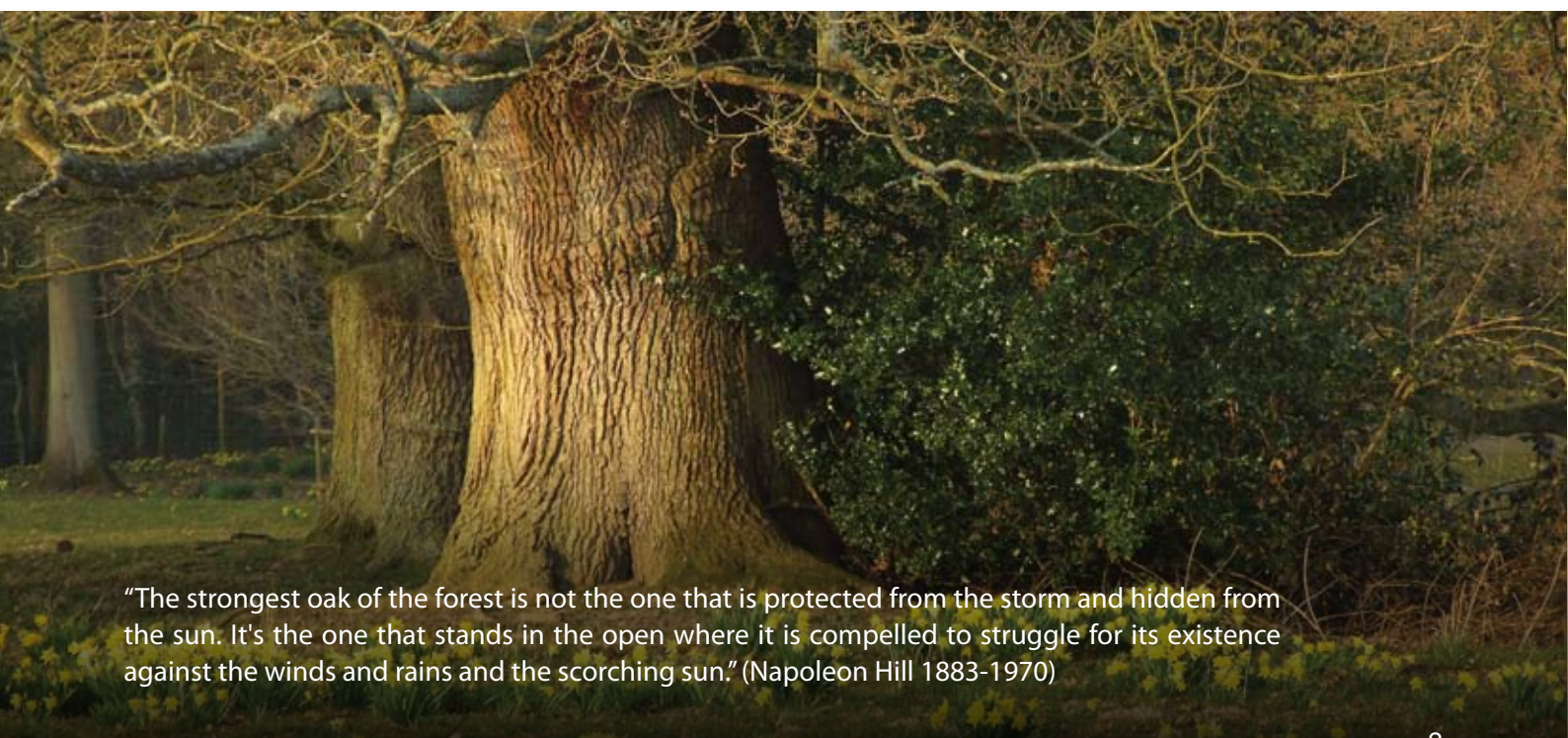


Now, how many of us actually saw a pink elephant in our minds? An elephant, possibly but, a pink one!??? Now how did that happen? Did the lion just pop up again despite the lion tamer instructing it not to think of a pink elephant?

To my friends and participants, this is my response. I am a work-in-progress. There are so many types of threat responses our brains detect in a day. Maybe the threats that my brain is detecting goes beyond the usual, perhaps the burdens are a wee bit too heavy for my faithful shoulders to bear at any one time especially when so many variables are being fired at the same time or quite possibly, I am just being true to my reactions and intentions because that something has hit me so unexpectedly and really close to my heart and home.

By FC Law, Country Director of Six Seconds Malaysia and founder of The Solutions Gallery.
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"The strongest oak of the forest is not the one that is protected from the storm and hidden from the sun. It's the one that stands in the open where it is compelled to struggle for its existence against the winds and rains and the scorching sun." (Napoleon Hill 1883-1970)