

BEWARE THE EXCITEMENT TRAP

HOW YOUR WELL INTENDED ENTHUSIASM, INSPIRATION AND MOTIVATION CAN BE A DANGER TO YOU IN LIFE!

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Ever sent an email in a reactive, angry, upset and agitated state, then realised later you wish you didn't send it, regretting what you said?

Influence Ecology co-founder, Kirkland Tibbels, has a phrase for this - "Don't let the lizard press send." It's when we react to some situation, and our lizard brain has a fight/flight response. We act on it instead of letting the flood of neurochemicals possessing us subside until we're thinking rationally.

My experience with *Lizard Brain scenarios* is we're taught that it's not good to respond while agitated, upset, or angry. Most of us see common sense in this and try to stop it happening.

But what about these kinds of scenarios:

Ever experienced an inspiring/motivational speech or seminar/workshop - church sermon, Tony Robbins-style weekend, keynote speaker, sales meeting, pep-talk, and the like? You came out feeling like you could take on all sorts of new things in life. Or you've been on a website or social media platform hooked into clicking on a video or ad that caught your attention. You found yourself considering or purchasing a product/service promising amazing results that you need or want. Or someone shares fantastic results they accomplished, and you're inspired to "just do it"?

BEWARE THE EXCITEMENT TRAP!

I am going to talk about the opposite side of this familiar hormonal cascade with

the *Lizard pressing send*. I've coined it "*The Excitement Trap*" - when a situation stimulates our brain to release a whole other set of neurochemicals making us feel inspired, enthusiastic, motivated and excited about a new future possibility. I'll highlight the potential negative consequences and danger it can be to us if left unchecked helping us save precious resources being wasted - time, energy, money, and relationships.

I'll use the word "excitement/excited" as the general term for the cascade of positive neurochemicals that produce an excited state of mind when we get inspired, motivated, and enthusiastic about some new future, possibility or opportunity.

There's nothing wrong with getting excited! I'm a recovering addict of the wonderfully intoxicating neurochemicals in this state - it's TOTALLY addictive, and I love it!! However, I've spent many years training myself to recognise when this state is going to cost me negatively and mitigating this happening.

Our well-intended excitement may be a danger to us, and I'll attempt to show you how, why and what to do about it.

HOW DO WE GET HIJACKED BY EXCITEMENT AND CAUGHT IN THE EXCITEMENT TRAP?

Any situation where our mind is stimulated to conceive a new future, new possibility, or new opportunity, we are at risk of our brain being hijacked by a state of excitement.

It could be an environment with a speaker - one-on-one/group - words get said, usually with some conviction/passion/enthusiasm and some exchange with you/the group - with an intention to inspire, motivate or excite those listening to act. Or we're online, and some advertisement/video catches our attention, we click on it, and the content stimulates our brain to get excited about some product/service.

It's effortless, happens all the time, and not easy to prevent. That's why I encourage people to BEWARE *The Excitement Trap*.

NEUROCHEMISTRY OF EXCITEMENT - WHAT GOES ON IN YOUR BODY-MIND-BRAIN WHEN EXCITEMENT IS TRIGGERED.

While there's a lot more going on in our body-mind-brain, these 4 key neurochemicals/hormones are significant players in this state:

- Dopamine – released during novelty; responsible for a sudden burst of interest/focus/attention; released when we perceive a reward; feeling of reward after accomplishment; contributes to addiction.
- Adrenalin - perfect neurochemical to couple with dopamine, having us not think and rush into action when in this excited state. Mostly known for the *Lizard Brain scenarios*, in the excitement trap it helps us get primed to act in response to our dopamine hit.

- Serotonin – feeling of a positive/happy mood.
- Oxytocin - produced when mothers give birth to bond them; highest right after sex; increases trust, love, and empathy for people; stimulated when we intimately connect with someone feeling a sense of love, trust and a bond with them. Often preyed on in group seminars/workshops and videos on social media. I call it the '*social-environment-double-whammy*' as when we're feeling connected to people, Oxytocin levels rise also stimulating more dopamine and serotonin to get released, getting us extra hijacked by the fact that there are others like us getting excited also!. We commit to things we ought not to and think that "together" we can do anything. Oxytocin makes us want to help others and do things with others at the cost of our own time/energy/money that we may not have to give.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF GETTING CAUGHT IN THE EXCITEMENT TRAP.

Most don't realise that during the time spent in that excited state, NOTHING much changed in reality. We simply got flooded with a cascade of some addictive neurochemicals. The available resources we had before that time have not changed much - we just FEEL like we can accomplish so much more. Why this is such a danger is because we will not stop to accurately think and plan what we need to do, often rushing into action without considering the risky consequences of acting in this state. We frequently fall short of what we wanted to accomplish or run out of resources or work ourselves to death just to make it happen.

Here are some of the consequences of The Excitement Trap:

- Waste precious resources, get distracted or taken off course from things we've committed our resources to.
- Make promises we don't know how to keep.
- Buy things we don't need or haven't thought about the time required to utilise them.
- Commit to things with people that we've not thought accurately about.
- Get overwhelmed and overcommitted.
- Get disappointed/deflated when again we fail at accomplishing something we thought we could.

- Addiction to the excited state - needing that excitement hit just to get us into a state where we think we can get things done.
- Think it's the only state where we can accomplish things - having to be positive and inspired ALL the time, which can be exhausting.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MITIGATE GETTING CAUGHT IN THE EXCITEMENT TRAP?

We are inundated daily with situations that can have us get caught in The Excitement Trap. Recently, after a Silicon Valley trip, several new business ideas got me excited. While they distracted my focus for a short period, I recognised I was in The Trap. Before I got too far into acting on them, I checked my excitement with my mentor/business partner, Kirkland, who has full permission to veto them if they are just an intoxicating distraction – which he did!

It's human and healthy to get hijacked by excitement and sometimes makes it easier to do things. Enjoy it when it happens, but like anything in life - in moderation! However, this is different than getting caught in The Excitement Trap where the neurochemicals that flood our brain in a state of excitement have us act on them without thinking accurately, potentially causing negative consequences.

It's tough to prevent ourselves from getting caught in The Excitement Trap, so the best we can do is set ourselves up to mitigate it happening or help us get out of it.

I will offer four things to work on to help mitigate The Excitement Trap.

WE'RE A LIMITED RESOURCE

Recognise and accept that we're a limited resource. Anything is NOT possible just because we perceive it is - which is how we feel when in The Trap. We have limited hours in the day, energy in our body-mind-brain, money to spend, and people to help us.

KNOW THY AIMS

If we don't know our aims in any given area of our life, we'll be more susceptible to getting caught in The Excitement Trap. I've said in previous articles - how do we know what to accept or decline or commit our limited resources to if we don't know our aims.

SELF-AWARENESS

Practice being aware of, noticing, and experiencing when in an excited state. Observe what happens in our body-mind-brain when feeling inspired/motivated,

something makes us feel positive/enthusiastic and begin to see how we react. My practice is to check my excitement once I become aware of it. I say things to myself like – "hold on, your way to excited to make a decision right now, just enjoy the feeling and wait until you're thinking clearly." If I catch it in time, I do my best to just enjoy the experience, let it subside a bit and reassess the situation before I act, looking at my commitments and aims in other areas of life and whether I should take any action with whatever has got me into this excited state.

GET HELP FROM OUR ENVIRONMENT

Have our environment - colleagues, partner, friends - set up to notice when we get excited and encourage them to point it out and say for example, "check your excitement before you do anything - you seem a little too inspired/enthusiastic about it."

In conclusion, we're all human, and we're designed to get caught in The Excitement Trap. As I said earlier, it's not bad if we do, but if not checked, it may be a danger to us and produce a negative consequence.

Now we can observe ourselves and others in situations that hijack our brain into an excited state, simply experience the hormonal cascade that ensues, and do our best to check our and others' excitement before getting caught in The Excitement Trap.

The main point is to beware of our excitement having us commit to things and get into action before we think accurately and cost ourselves precious resources.

Join me in a new narrative about the excited state we often find ourselves in - that it's NOT always a good thing to act on our excitement. We don't always need to be in this state to accomplish great things in our life. Checking our and others' excitement and sometimes curbing it is also OK so we can allow ourselves to think accurately about what resources we have available to commit, and adequately plan out the work and action we REALLY can do.

I think this could help us live less busy and stressful lives by not continually getting caught in The Excitement Trap.



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