

Hooked or triggered- reacting from a bias place.

Facilitators report being "hooked" by participants and it can "trigger" emotions, including anger, fear, embarrassment, pain and sadness. Many experts in the field use the term "trigger" to describe the "instantaneous response to stimuli without accompanying conscious thought."

We now often use the word unconscious bias to understand a more subtle and deeper level of being hooked by our ingrained beliefs.

Being hooked or triggered can become disorientating. I personally have felt "de-skilled" and on the spot as a facilitator in the middle of my own reactions over the years. Most recently I had this experience with one of our teens.

I went to meet our teens last week. He has the most "teenager" look about him and had been in some trouble in the previous week. He is the classic "teenager" I use to work with. The moment I saw his shaggy hair, turned in shoulders, eyes to the ground I was triggered to my desire to no longer work with the hardened teenage population of my past career. Thankfully, with moments of the internal reaction I noticed I was feeling resistant, uncertain, nervous. Right away I could see *I was creating* assumptions and impressions that this kid was going to give us a hard time, have an edge.... all with very minimal data to support it.

In a split second multiple things happened internally.

1. I noticed the reaction. I noticed the expectation forming. This is often the first and hardest step, being aware of your reactions
2. I consciously opened my body language
3. I silently reminded myself to remain neutral and let him show me who he is.
4. I softened my voice and verbally greeted him with gratitude.

This is a reversal skill of mentally and physically choosing to act against the bias and story forming internally. In doing so I dismantle my assumptions that have been forming and can interact from a place of neutrality.

He of course did not turn out to be at all like I was bracing for. He was sweet and honest and owned his mistake.