

Freedom Through Self-Responsibility

The following are examples of behaviours that may be exhibited by someone acting irresponsibly:

- displaying “poor me”, self-pity, blame and other behaviours that distance themselves from results they are getting in life;
- withdrawing, being aloof, failing to disclose their true feelings and thoughts, or habitually seeking to please others and otherwise “protect” others (and themselves) from their authentic expression; and
- seeking to control or take responsibility for others.

To act responsibly means that as a person you do own your outcomes, do express yourself with authenticity, and encourage others to do the same. I have strongly espoused taking responsibility for self. Recently, in a positive way, I gained greater insight into the life-giving value of taking responsibility for myself.

Juanita, my wife, and I hold dialogue sessions when one or other of us needs to surface and work through concerns, misunderstandings, hurts, or other potential or real barriers to our relationship. She called for a dialogue. I wondered what was concerning her, being starkly oblivious to anything I might have done. Being committed to holding a dialogue when needed does not mean they are easy, however I have found them highly beneficial.



Happy couple in lasting relationship

Author

[Stephen Harrison](#)

Abstract

In any given moment we get to choose to act responsibly or irresponsibly. This article explores the liberating qualities that come with responsible behaviour within a relationship.

Keywords

Appreciate the Fog, relationship, appreciation, behaviours, love, understanding, self-responsibility

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Juanita started to share what was up for her. To my surprise, delight and relief, she was choosing to use the dialogue to express gratitude and appreciation to me. One of her particular points was that she experiences a real sense of freedom with me because I take responsibility for myself, examples including:

- being open and clear with her about how I think and feel;
- sharing with her any matters I am struggling with and not making the issue her problem so she is not left guessing; and
- she feels comfortable sharing herself with me knowing I will receive her, even when she has something difficult to share, knowing I will listen to and receive what she is saying, seek to understand her concerns before responding, and that I don't get defensive or aggressive in the process.

For Juanita, this means she can more fully be herself, explore and be what seems right and true to her being, and can risk being more fully engaged in relationship with me. If she says something that may challenge me, she feels safe knowing I will take responsibility for my

internal reaction to her, that I will own my reaction without putting it on to her. In the same vein I expect her to own her responses and not dump on me because she feels hurt, misunderstood or is otherwise struggling. Juanita chose to voice gratitude, and we were both blessed as a result. As we both remain committed to being responsible for ourselves and to the other,

we do open up more, engage more fully, freely and authentically with the other, and enjoy a greater sense of being seen for who we really are.

It is a great moment when the blessing of taking responsibility becomes so clear. Walking the path of responsibility can be difficult and fraught, but it is so worthwhile.

For more information related to themes in this article, refer to chapter 3 (Pivotal Life Concepts) of: Harrison, S. G. (2012). [*Appreciate the Fog: Embrace Change with Power and Purpose*](#). Auckland, New Zealand: Xlibris Corporation.

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