



## Emotional Self-Prevention

**“Touch a nerve”** (*idiom*): def. - provoke a reaction by referring to a sensitive topic.  
*“There are signs that some comments strike a raw nerve”*

Has anyone ever touched your “raw nerve”? Do you even have a raw nerve? Fortunately not everyone has one but unfortunately most people have several. Your raw nerve is that sensitive part of your psyche that can trigger you to react or behave in an excessive or unhealthy way whenever it is stimulated or activated. In other words, a person may be generally mentally healthy with no diagnosable emotional or behavioral conditions, however there still be a few specific personal areas that can be a challenge to cope with. Consider a few examples:

- ✚ A person may have adequate ability to control their anger and frustration except for one specific sensitive area that causes a heightened over-reaction. *Johnny is a pretty calm guy but just don't tease him about his receding hairline, because then he totally loses it to the point where he can be scary to be around*
- ✚ A person may not display symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder in life, except for just one particular area: *Greg is a pretty laid back guy but when it comes to his car he is an out of control neat freak who washes it way more than it needs to, all year round*
- ✚ An individual may not be clinically depressed but one particular sensitive issue brings out a depressive response far in excess of what would be expected. *Lucy is generally a happy person and hard worker but the few times when her boss corrected her she acted like it was literally the end of the world for a weeks at a time*
- ✚ Someone may not have an anxiety disorder but there is one seemingly minor issue that triggers excessive worry. *Sheila really has it together but the other day for the first time it looked like she was going to have a panic attack after she got a parking ticket*

Hopefully you get the gist and perhaps you can come identify your own raw nerve that may trigger an overreaction. A good way to self-examine if something is touching your raw nerve is if you find yourself experiencing some of the following types of thoughts in reference to an event or situation that logically you know really shouldn't be a big deal:

- Stuff like this happens to just about everyone but why can't I just let go?
- Why am I still thinking about this when most people would have dropped it by now?
- I can't stop repeating this situation in my mind and I am getting nowhere
- I keep on obsessing about what I should have said or did even though its way over
- I keep struggling with feeling guilty and embarrassed about how I reacted
- Why in the world did I get so upset?

Why can't let you let this go even though you intellectually know that you should just drop it? Maybe you find yourself feeling guilty or embarrassed the next day after you come to realize that you totally overreacted. Often your raw nerve might trigger something sensitive from your childhood that you have not fully gotten over. Or perhaps your raw nerve is founded upon one of your insecurities or irrational fears. Figuring out the exact origin of your raw nerve is another story altogether that can take time and a lot of self-discovery



In the meantime what good does it do to know what areas are “raw” for you? The answer is that if you know ahead of time, you can then do some **emotional self-prevention**. If you are self-aware of your sensitivities and insecurities that trigger you, then you can have the insight needed to bite your tongue or try to mitigate an excessive overreaction. Being prepared ahead of time through emotional self-prevention can help you pull yourself together when you find yourself unnecessarily going to pieces. No one can ever be 100% prepared all of the time for every emotional trigger, but there are times when you may know in advance of when you may be at-risk. You likely know of those people in your life who are more likely to set you off than others. You also might be aware of situations where you are more at-risk to over-react (such as while driving or when you are overtired, for example) There are also those times of day when you don’t handle things as well, (for example perhaps you are not a “morning person”) Hopefully you get the point: Self-awareness and preparation are the keys to emotional self-prevention. When you know what your “raw nerve” triggers are, then you can prevent and prepare to shield yourself from a potentially emotionally-charged, regrettable, overreaction. When the potential emotional damage is reduced that increases the chance of faster, more effective healing. Take the time to try emotional self-prevention” and see how it works for you rather than suffer the pain of touching yet another raw nerve.

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