

A REAL LOOK INSIDE THE COURSE

Lesson 7 | Section B

When Changing Expectations and Responsibility Reversal Work Together

Six original course pages, reproduced without rewriting.

The excerpt continues in the full Lesson 7.

SECTION B — When Changing Expectations and Responsibility Reversal Work Together

I want you to picture something.

It's six o'clock in the evening. You're standing in the kitchen, and dinner is almost ready.

Earlier that afternoon, the person you live with told you they wanted to eat as soon as they got home.

So you planned around that.

You stopped what you were doing, started cooking earlier than usual, and made sure everything would be ready when they walked through the door.

They come home, look at what you've made, and tell you they're not hungry yet.

Well, okay.

You turn the stove down. You put the food away so it doesn't sit out.

Twenty minutes later, they come back into the kitchen.

Now they're upset because dinner isn't ready.

You explain that they told you they weren't hungry.

They say, "I didn't say I wasn't going to eat. I said I wasn't hungry right then."

And now you're standing there trying to explain why you put dinner away.

Think about what just happened.

You followed the first instruction.

Then you adjusted when the expectation changed.

But when the person wanted something different again, the conversation became about what you did wrong.

That's the connection I want you to understand.

Changing expectations and responsibility reversal are two different things.

But when they happen together, one can create the situation that the other uses against you.

Let's look at how that works.

When the expectation changes

We've already discussed changing expectations in earlier lessons, so I'm not going to spend this section giving you another long definition.

What matters here is what happens after someone tries to meet the expectation.

Go back to that kitchen.

You didn't forget dinner.

You didn't refuse to cook.

You didn't ignore what the other person asked for.

You actually made an effort to accommodate them.

But the expectation changed.

And instead of acknowledging that change, the other person treated your response as the problem.

Here's the difference.

Somebody can change their mind about dinner.

Everybody does that.

They can come home exhausted, lose their appetite, or decide they'd rather eat later.

None of that automatically creates a harmful relationship pattern.

But what happens when somebody changes their mind and then makes you responsible for not knowing what they were going to want next?

Now we're dealing with something different.

Because you can't follow an expectation that hasn't been communicated.

And you shouldn't have to pretend somebody gave you information they never actually gave you.

Let's say you respond:

"But you told me you weren't hungry."

They answer:

"Why do you have to argue about everything? I just wanted dinner."

Now look at where the conversation went.

You were explaining why the food wasn't on the table.

The other person changed the subject to your attitude.

You haven't resolved the disagreement about dinner.

Instead, you're being asked to defend the fact that you questioned what they said.

And if you start explaining that you weren't trying to argue, the conversation can move even farther away from what happened.

You might say:

"I'm not arguing. I'm just telling you why I put it away."

They respond:

"See? You're doing it again."

Now you're stuck discussing whether your explanation counts as arguing.

Meanwhile, nobody has acknowledged the changing instructions.

That's where responsibility reversal enters the situation.

How responsibility gets moved

Responsibility reversal isn't simply somebody disagreeing with your version of events.

The important part is how responsibility for what happened gets redirected.

In our dinner example, there are two separate questions.

The first is straightforward:

What did the person say they wanted, and what did you do in response?

The second is different:

Why are you being treated as though you caused the problem by responding to what they said?

Those questions shouldn't be confused.

If someone tells you they're not hungry, putting dinner away is a reasonable response.

If they become hungry twenty minutes later, they can tell you that.

They can reheat the food.

You might even offer to help.

But their change of mind doesn't automatically mean you failed them.

Now suppose the conversation continues.

They tell you:

"You know how stressful my day was. The least you could do is have dinner ready without making everything difficult."

Notice what was added.

Now their stressful day is being brought into the argument.

And their stress may be completely real.

They may have had a terrible day.

But that doesn't change the sequence of events in the kitchen.

They asked for one thing.

You did it.

They changed what they wanted.

You adjusted.

Then they criticized you for that adjustment.

Their stressful day doesn't erase those facts.

This is where people can get pulled into trying to solve the wrong problem.

You might start thinking:

I know they've been working hard.

Maybe I should have left the food out a little longer.

Maybe I should have asked whether they wanted it reheated.

Maybe I could have handled that differently.

Now, there's nothing wrong with considering whether you could have handled something differently.

That's part of being in a relationship.

But I want you to notice which question has disappeared.

> **What happened to the expectation they changed?**

That's the part nobody is discussing anymore.

You're examining every decision you made while the other person's contribution to the disagreement goes unexamined.

And that matters because it can affect what happens the next time.

When one argument changes the next one

A few evenings later, you're making dinner again.

This time, you remember what happened.

You don't want another argument about whether the food is ready.

So before you start cooking, you ask:

"What time do you want to eat tonight?"

They tell you seven.

You wait until the appropriate time to begin.

At six-thirty, they come into the kitchen and ask why you haven't started dinner yet.

You remind them that they said seven.

They tell you:

"You know I usually eat earlier than that."

Now you have another problem.

You asked for clarification because of what happened last time.

But the clarification didn't protect you from being criticized.

Instead, you're being told you should have relied on what they usually want rather than what they actually said.

Let's examine the connection between those two evenings.

The first argument taught you that following an instruction might still lead to criticism.

So the next time, you asked for clarification.

But when the second disagreement happened, responsibility was placed on you again.

Not for forgetting to ask.

You asked.

Not for ignoring the answer.

You followed it.

This time, the criticism was that you should have known better than to rely on the answer.

See what happened?

YOU JUST SAW HOW WE TEACH.

That was an unedited excerpt from Lesson 7, Section B. The full lesson continues beyond this sample.

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