



You Know You're Taking It Personally When...

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When you are involved with a High Conflict Person (HCP) whether personally or professionally, you have experienced how easy it is to get "hooked" into the conflict and how difficult it is to not take it personally. You can recognize the signs of taking it personally and learn how to manage your own emotions and work on solving the problem.

You know you're taking it personally when...

- You feel you have to *defend* yourself.
- You feel emotionally *hooked* with fear or anger.
- You feel the natural "*fight, flight, or freeze*" responses.
- You start thinking *It's All Your Fault!* about the other person.
- You think there's only *one way* to deal with this problem and you have no choice.
- You feel you have to *prove* something to the other person or to other people.
- You feel the other person is *knowingly* taking advantage of you.
- You feel the other person is *knowingly* getting away with something.

With this list, I'm not saying that HCP's actions are okay and you should just ignore them. In a future article I'll discuss other methods of dealing with the HCP's misinformation and misbehavior. For purposes of this article, I'm just saying you'll become emotionally hooked and much less effective in dealing with an HCP if you get stuck thinking or feeling these things.

The goal is to solve the problem. HCP's avoid solving problems by becoming preoccupied with blame. If you take it personally and respond in a similar manner, you'll prolong the dispute, increase the frustration you experience, and possibly appear as though you're an HCP (or the only HCP) to other people who become involved in the case.

Remind yourself that it's unconscious. This high-conflict behavior isn't a conscious process for the HCP. He or she is not "knowingly" taking advantage of you. His or her actions are driven by unconscious personality patterns. This doesn't mean that everything they do is unconscious. Most HCP's I've handled have lied about something and knowingly engaged in behavior that's improper. But they're driven to do these "bad" things for unconscious reasons.

There's always been a Target of Blame. Before you and after you, the HCP will have treated somebody else the same way—because it's about the HCP's personality pattern of blame, not about you. This doesn't mean you shouldn't consider changing your own behavior, re-examining your own values, or making different decisions. You should always be considering ways to change and improve your life. It just means the cause of the emotionally intense and

negative feedback from an HCP is his or her personality.

Maintain your own mental and physical health. You're much less likely to be triggered by an HCP when you're feeling good. You don't take on as much blame and it's easy to see that it's not all anyone's fault. On the other hand, when we get run down we're more likely to lash out at others and easily allow ourselves to get emotionally hooked. This part is our own responsibility—our own part of the problem.

And we must be continually aware of this. Getting exercise and enough sleep are good practices.

Get support and consultation. Checking out our responses with trusted friends or a therapist is essential when responding to a High Conflict Person. We often aren't conscious of when we're being defensive. Friends and therapists can be very helpful in seeing what you can't see. They can suggest positive responses you might not be able to think of under stress.

Don't engage in a personal battle. If you're already engaged in a personal battle, then disengage now. At any time, you can let go of taking it personally. Remember, HCP's are more comfortable making it simple and personal. It doesn't mean they're happy doing this; it's just that it's familiar to them. They feel safer being engaged in a conflict that's personal. So, you'll naturally feel like responding personally.

Once you realize you're about to respond personally, tell yourself: ***Don't engage!*** If you have already started responding in a personal, defensive manner, you can still tell yourself: ***Disengage!***

This part is up to you. Remember: Don't take it personally. You don't have to defend yourself. It's not about YOU!

Bill Eddy is a lawyer, therapist and mediator. He is the President of High Conflict Institute, which provides training and consultation for dealing with high-conflict people and situations. He is the author of [several books](#) on high-conflict personalities and has developed the following methods for managing high-conflict people in any situation: [New Ways for Families®](#), [New Ways for MediationSM](#), [New Ways for WorkSM](#), [The CARS MethodSM](#) and [BIFF Response®](#). To learn more about our training, coaching, consultation and videos, visit us at www.HighConflictInstitute.com.