

Harry Potter gets Emotionally Hijacked Too

"Every bitter and resentful thought that Harry had had in the past month was pouring out of him..."

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix p. 65

By Jean Greaves and Travis Bradberry

Do you know what to do when someone blows up at you? Sometimes you can see it coming and sometimes you can't. Regardless of the warning, when emotions take over, they take calm and reason right with them. This is called an emotional hijack. It means emotions hijack the person's usual rational thought right out of the situation. What do you do in response?

Take Harry Potter, for example. Harry is entering his troubled teenage years and allows his emotions to get the best of him throughout J.K. Rowling's fifth smash hit book, *The Order of the Phoenix*. Watch as he joins his two best friends, Ron and Hermione, after a summer of isolation and danger without news or help from his mentor Dumbledore.

'Maybe Dumbledore thinks I can't be trusted' said Harry, watching their expressions.

'Don't be thick,' said Ron, looking highly disconcerted.

Harry: 'Or that I can't take care of myself'

"Of course he doesn't think that!" said Hermione anxiously.

Harry: "So how come I have to stay at the Dursley's while you two get

to join in everything that's going on here?" said Harry, the words tumbling over one another in a rush, his voice growing louder with every word.

Let's stop here a moment and notice that Ron is *highly disconcerted* by Harry's suggestion and Hermione feels *anxious*. Harry's friends know him well enough that they feel something's wrong when Harry jumps to conclusions that their respected school master has doubts about Harry. In response, Ron focuses on Harry with *"don't be stupid"*, while Hermione focuses away from Harry on to Dumbledore *"of course he doesn't think that!"*.

Here's what happens next...

But before he knew it, Harry was shouting. Every bitter and resentful thought that Harry had had in the past month was pouring out of him; his frustration and lack of news, the hurt that they had all been together without him, his fury at being followed and not told about it: All the feelings he was half-ashamed of finally burst their boundaries.

"WHO HAD TO GET PAST DRAGONS AND EVERYOTHER FOUL THING LAST YEAR? WHO HAD TO ESCAPE FROM HIM? ME!"

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Harry's tirade continues for a page and a half. Here's how his friends are doing through it all.

Ron was standing there with his mouth half-open, clearly stunned and at a loss for anything to say, while Hermione looked on the verge of tears.

Their responses are understandable. No one believes they are the cause of someone else's anger and rarely is the person whose on the receiving end of an emotional outburst the entire cause of the emotions. In this case, Ron and Hermione are the first friends Harry ever had and they are the first people he gets access to after a long and life threatening summer. It's a sign of trust in a weird way. Harry finally feels safe to express his very real emotions. He just saved up so many that they explode.

So what should Ron and Hermione do to get it to stop? Read on...

Harry: "I SUPPOSE YOU'VE BEEN HAVING A REAL LAUGH, HAVEN'T YOU, ALL HOLED UP HERE TOGETHER"

Ron: "No, honest."

This is a start. Ron speaks up for them and doesn't get angry and yell back. But this isn't enough because

Ron is responding at a rational level. It's too easy for Harry to keep coming up with new speculations about how everyone's been leaving him out. It's Hermione who is able to stop Harry's fury. Here's how she does it...

"Harry, we're really sorry!" said Hermione desperately, her eyes now sparkling with tears. "you're absolutely right, Harry – I'd be furious if it was me!"

Harry glared at her, still breathing deeply, then turned away from them again, pacing up and down. "What is this place anyway?"

There it is. The most effective method for diffusing an outburst is to validate the other person's feelings. This doesn't mean you have to agree *what* the person is saying, just how they are feeling. Once Hermione tells Harry his feelings are justified, Harry is able to stop, breathe, get it together and move on.

The next time you face the wrath of Harry Potter, use Hermione's conflict management strategy:

1. Tell yourself this isn't about you
2. Stop talking about the topic at hand
3. Acknowledge the person's feelings
4. Give the person time to regroup

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