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Transitions & Inhibition 101:

Using Alexander Principles in Everyday Life

Change is inevitable. We can be flexible and graceful with change, or we can resist it. In theory at least, I prefer to be flexible. My husband and I are about to join thousands of other parents transitioning into our "empty nests". Our youngest recently graduated from high school and he will be heading off to college in late September. Our older son will be leaving at around the same time to finish his last year of college.

Our "baby" seems eager to leave us, but not quite as eager to hit the college level books. As a result, we're all a bit testy right now. The contrast between his apparent desire for independence and lack of desire for responsibility seems HUGE. My reactions alternate between clamping down on him in order to gain control which precipitates "the fight": "You cannot use the car for a month". Or, "the flight": threatening to walk away from parenting altogether - "I'm not cooking any of your meals or giving you money for food". Or, "the freeze": becoming totally paralyzed. These are all common reactions to the stimulus presented. They are as predictable as the "startle pattern" -- the habit of pulling one's head back and down and collapsing when we encounter frightening situations such as lions, tigers, and performance anxiety.

So how do I inhibit my reactions so that I can make new choices? I breathe. I begin to observe my reactions. Then I try to catch my reactions when they are only thoughts and feelings. I inhibit opening my mouth and sometimes succeed in preventing myself from saying out loud the words I would later regret. In addition to giving myself directions to free my neck & move forward & up, I am working on a set of new directions/guidelines for myself; taking much from Marshall Rosenberg's teachings on non-violent communication. It is like learning a new language or learning to walk for the first time. There is