

Are you getting hooked into conflict with others and it feels like there's nothing you can do about it?

Is your emotional reactivity the fault of someone else?

If you can recognize these situations occurring in your relationships, then you are *taking the bait* and getting hooked.

As annoying as this may seem, the people hooking us into conflict are usually reflecting the resonance that's occurring within us. When we can see these patterns and work on changing them, we give others the space to make a change too. There is a gift to be discovered with people that hook us, and it is always worth the fishing expedition to discover what it is.

When we *take the bait*, we are likely to experience some subtle reactions which include: feeling stuck, closing down, and withdrawing. Next, we have the desire to run. When we have the desire to run, we are hooked. The hooked quality can lead us to self-denigration, blame, anger, jealousy, and other emotions which lead to words, actions, and substances that end up poisoning us. Some people turn to alcohol and drugs to try and numb the pain that arises as a result of not looking at what has hooked us. Getting hooked is usually involuntary and points right to the root of why we suffer.

*Taking the bait* and getting hooked has nothing to do with the conflict we have with others and everything to do with the conflicts we have within ourselves.

You have the power to stop the chain reaction of habitual patterns that can rule your life. Here are some steps to help you not to take the bait and get hooked:

**Let Go.** Sometimes we're not aware of how seriously we take ourselves and our rigid beliefs about how others should behave. We have rules about what's the right thing to say and when it's the right time to say it. When someone doesn't follow our rules, we get rattled and reactive. Practice *letting go* of your attachment to the beliefs and judgments of yourself and others. When you can begin letting go, you'll feel less need to change them.

**Accept What Is.** Recognize when you have taken the bait. It is not our job to try and fix everyone. When we can accept what is, we can quickly catch ourselves from flying off the handle and engaging with people with whom we disagree. Defending your position will only steal your peace of mind.

**Take Time To Get Centered.** If there is something that you need to address with the person, hold off until you can get centered before addressing it. You may say, *Let's talk about this later*. Avoid sending texts or emails when you are upset. They are not reliable sources for communicating feedback and can lead to misunderstandings.

**Relax Into Your Urge**, and the willingness not to act on it. Acknowledge your desire: to shut down, to run, to fight, or to drink. Allow yourself to be present to the hooked quality but do not act on it.

**Communicate From Your Heart.** Imagine surrounding the other person in a field of love. Be compassionate and realize that they too may be *Taking the bait and getting hooked*. Sometimes it is necessary to create healthy boundaries with others. Setting healthy boundaries can be done in a loving way.

**Spend Time In Meditation.** Meditation teaches us to be open and relax to the uneasiness that often causes us to take the bait. Meditation is the best technique to help us to be present in the moment and stop the chain reaction of habitual patterns that otherwise can rule our lives. Meditation builds our consciousness and character. In *The Prayer of Saint Francis*, Saint Francis of Assisi writes, *Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace, Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon*. Meditating on passages like this can shape the quality of our thinking and living.

In a cartoon, three fish are swimming around a baited hook. One fish is saying to the other, *The secret is non-attachment*. The secret is, *Don't Take the Bait!* If we can catch ourselves at that place where the urge to bite is strong, we can at least get a bigger perspective on what's happening and stop the chain reaction of habitual patterns that can cause suffering.

Affirmation: *In the comfort of God's presence, I find true rest and peace.*