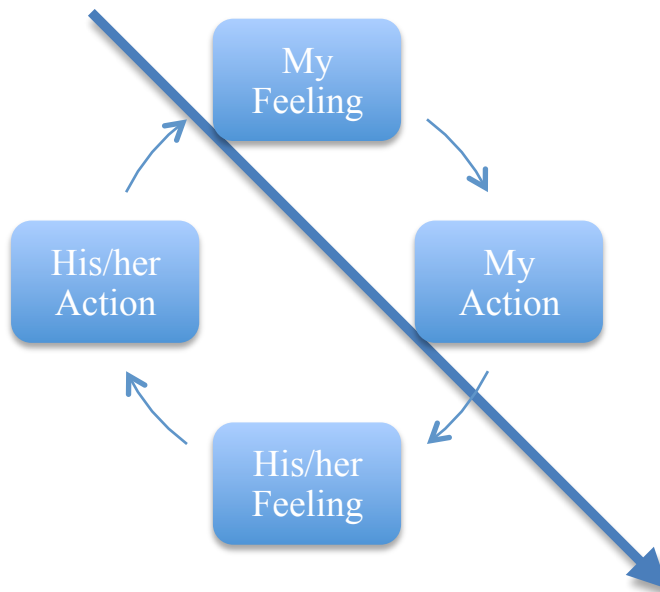


BREAKING CYCLES

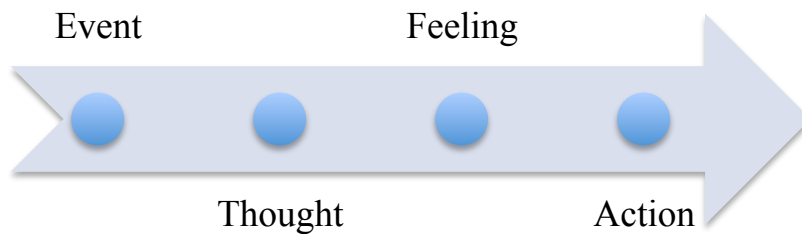
STEP 1: Identify your cycle:



STEP 2: Partition off your responsibility. Let this be your focus for now:



STEP 3: Take a step back and a look up. Identify your deeply embedded thought processes:



When an interpersonal “event” occurs, it triggers certain deeply embedded, often unconscious or semi-conscious thoughts. Those thoughts facilitate reactive feelings, which lead to actions. If the thoughts change, the feelings will change and lead to better actions. Unconscious thought leads to *reaction*, conscious thought leads to *proaction*. Do the hard work of identifying and changing your unconscious thoughts. But don’t work alone. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

“Search me, oh God, and know my heart, try me and know my anxieties. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,”
Psalm 139:23, 24.

“Wicked way” is from the Hebrew *otseb*, and is an unusual word with multiple meanings, including “idol,” “labor,” “pain,” and “toil.” We could translate the verse, “See if there be any way of idolatry and pain in me.” It seems that when sin is active in a relationship, leading to dissention and animosity, we build an idol to self right in our midst. This, many of us know, is a painful, laborious, energy-sapping experience. In ancient times, the building of an idol entailed using much energy and strength in heating and bending the metal. Today, in the realm of our relationships, we turn up the heat and try to bend each other into the shape we desire. But this endeavor miserably fails.

Stepping out of the cycle requires a vertical connection. Our focus must shift from the other person to God. Rather than *react* to the other person, we learn to *respond* to God, and then to them.