



By Silver Rose

Button, button, who's got the button?

Is it your mother? Father? Boss? Lover?

I recall many years ago when I cared for my ailing mother-in-law in our home. People expressed concern about whether we'd get along. They asked, "Isn't that difficult?" to which I replied, "Not at all. She doesn't know where my buttons are so she can't push any." With her son, it was a different story. She needed only give him "that look" and he was six-years-old again, trembling with anxiety.

We all have buttons that, when pushed, propel us into a variety of negative emotions. Living a life of Passionate Self-Care is much easier when you identify and then diffuse your buttons.

For example, for many years I reacted quite strongly when I perceived that someone was treating me as though I were stupid. *That's because I secretly feared I was.* Diffusing that particular button required me to (a) identify the fear; and (b) figure out if it were true. When I came to understand that intelligence has nothing to do with knowledge I also recognized the truth in what Eleanor Roosevelt put so beautifully, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

And there in a nutshell is what diffusing your buttons entails—understanding that the person keeping that sensitivity in place is you. Victims react; Victors respond. It's all about who you allow to be in control of your emotions—the situation or you.

Easily written; not as easily put into practice.

Am I saying there is nothing that should get you hot under the collar? No. Sometimes people really *do* insult, cross boundaries or openly threaten and it can trigger your instinct for survival—fight or flight. But there is real versus perceived danger and too often our buttons make us react as if there is danger when there is not.

Have you ever thought your boss was "out to get you?" Or that your co-workers have "no respect?" These are perceptions that can drag you into places you're better off not going. It's better to think, "Sometimes I can't figure out what my boss wants," or, "It seems like my co-workers don't treat me with the respect I deserve." All or nothing statements (and believe me, I am the Queen of them) do not serve us at all. They are statements of Victims, not Victors.

Passionate Self Care

Identify & Diffuse Your Buttons

If we are to care for ourselves passionately, it is imperative that we question our negative perceptions—they often have more to do with low self-esteem than reality.

The next time you think or actually utter a sentence containing either the word "always" or "never," ask yourself, "Is that actually true?"

I once said to my life partner, "You never bring me flowers." It really took the wind out of my sails when he listed the last FIVE times he had. By the way, he didn't react, he responded.

One of my most popular programs is titled **It's Work, NOT Group Therapy!** It's based on the observation that too many of us expose our buttons at work each day, attempting to resolve emotional issues that have nothing to do with what's happening in the present. We work out old sibling rivalries with co-workers and issues we had with one or both parents with our immediate supervisor. Not only is it unprofessional, it is self-abuse!

The more you can question your negative perceptions, the better you will feel about yourself and about your life.

You see it's also true that no one can make you feel *good* about yourself without your consent.

June 20, 2012