

YOU MAKE ME...

Human relationships are complex. When things go wrong, we often play the blame game. Rather than take responsibility for our own actions and feelings, we sometimes blame another person (or entity). The abusive husband can blame the wife and say, “You made me beat you.” The depressed boyfriend can say to his girlfriend “You make me feel ugly.” The ghetto criminal can blame systemic racism for stealing or blame a buddy; “He made me do it.” All this blame constitutes “playing the victim.” A sympathetic or empathetic person might accept this erroneous reasoning and allow excuses for misbehavior.

The stoic realizes that feelings and thoughts are the only thing he can control. Otherwise, he is subject to outside forces outside of his control. No one can make you feel a certain way. How you react might persuade you to feel a certain way, but use of rational thinking can channel feelings into positivity. Marcus Aurelius said, “You have power over your mind—not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.” When faced with an angry person, it is wiser to ignore or agree than to retaliate. It is rational to avoid persons with negativity.

The flip side of this rational disconnection is Love, another complex emotion. One might rationally decide that another person is a soulmate, but something magical and irrational must take place. “Vulnerability is power,” a therapist once said. The intimacy between 2 people requires at least one to be weak or exposed, prompting a protective response from another. It almost sounds contrived. Consider a king who considers himself invincible. He will never love another as much as himself but might fall for a helpless mate because of her vulnerability.

