

**LIVE**

**health notes**

**NOTICES**

Investors Group Walk for Memories: The North Shore Forget-Me-Nots are looking for persons with dementia and/

or caregivers to build a team to participate in a walk, Sunday, Jan. 31 to raise funds for the Alzheimer Society of B.C. Info: [www.walkformemories.ca](http://www.walkformemories.ca) or 604-984-8348.

Persian Community Educa-

tion Series: The Canadian Cancer Society presents this free series for the Persian community on cancer prevention and healthy living once a month on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. at John

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# Learn to manage your emotions to stay calm

**QUESTION:**

My boyfriend and I have a good relationship, but at times we get into some nasty arguments. He really knows how to push my buttons and I would like to get better at not reacting. What can you suggest?

**Answer:**

I'm not sure where the ubiquitous expression "he/she knows how to push my buttons" originated. The suggestion is that we are like some sort of wind-up toy at the mercy of the maniacal efforts of our partner to search out and set off one or possibly a number of buttons that can surprise and betray us by messing up our usual composure and substituting it with a response that's out of character and alien to our nature.

The biggest challenge in being in a relationship is managing your emotions in the face of your partner's. Their anger, disappointment or irritability can fly across the room and infect us within seconds. To a degree this happens to all of us, but some



rather than anxiously. The simple things we learned from our parents, like to take a deep breath, count to 10 and take a time out are all attempts to regulate our heart rate and muscle tension when we feel like we are under fire. If we can get better at regulating our physiology we will do better at keeping our emotions distinct from those of our partner.

The bigger questions about where emotions come from, how they interlock and why some set us off more than others are too big to answer here. The importance of knowing more about them is obvious, but no matter how much we know we will still need to develop a means of managing them.

This requires a concerted and determined effort, but it is possible.

No one should be at the mercy of their own buttons and who might intentionally or accidentally bump into them. If you take on the mission to control them you will not be disappointed.

people seem to be better at extricating themselves from these entanglements more quickly than others.

The solution is to take back your buttons, wrestle them from the hands of your partner and make them yours. The first and critical step is to believe that you can do it, to believe that your buttons are yours and yours alone to control. Allowing your partner to manage them places you and your emotions in his control. This can never be a good thing. It's hard on your self-esteem and hard on the relationship.

In order to keep your emotions separate from your partner's you need to be able to recognize and diminish that split-second reaction when you see him riled up and unhappy with the world. This requires the ability to get calm so you can think rationally

*Margaret Anne Speak, M.A., C.C.C., works with couples, individuals and families from a Bowen Family Systems perspective at Family Services of the North Shore. Questions? Write [onthecouch@familyservices.bc.ca](mailto:onthecouch@familyservices.bc.ca) or call 604-988-5281.*



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