

React vs. Respond Quick Reference

The most important distinction in advocacy conversations.

The Comparison

	React	Respond
Speed	Immediate, reflexive	Deliberate, chosen
Source	Emotion (usually anger or hurt)	Strategy (what serves your mission?)
Tone	Defensive, aggressive, or shutdown	Calm, curious, grounded
Result	Confirms the listener's biases	Opens a door

Example: Amy's Story

Amy volunteers at a farmed animal sanctuary. At a family barbecue, her uncle says: "All these sanctuary people are just virtue signaling."

Amy REACTS:

"That's ignorant. You eat meat every day and you're calling ME a virtue signaler? At least I'm doing something."

Amy RESPONDS:

"I hear that a lot, actually. Can I ask — what do you think we spend the most money on? Because the answer surprised me when I first learned it."

Same trigger. Completely different outcome. Amy's response doesn't concede anything — she's still advocating. But from a grounded, curious position instead of a defensive one.

The Pause Protocol

When you feel a reaction rising:

- **Notice** — "I'm being triggered right now."
- **Breathe** — One slow breath. That's all you need.
- **Choose** — "What serves my mission right now?"
- **Respond** — From strategy, not emotion.

Your Fortitude Formula

Write 3 sentences using this format:

"When I feel [emotion/trigger], I will [specific action], so I can [stay in the conversation / protect my energy / respond instead of react]."

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____