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Why we all need Obama's anger translator

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Anna Wildman, Director, Oil in the Engine

At the annual nerd-prom otherwise known as the White House Correspondents Dinner held last month, the traditional speech by the US President had a supporting cast: an 'anger translator'.

While Obama spoke in measured terms about the value of the press and important issues of the day, 'Luther' his anger translator (otherwise known as comedian Keegan-Michael Key) stood behind him and let rip with what Obama was *really* thinking, shredding Fox News, CNN and fellow politicians alike.

[Watch the clip here](#)

Couldn't we all do with one of these anger translators? While we are waiting at the check-out for the shop assistant who is casually chatting to her friend instead of serving you, or walk past the dog owner ignoring their pooch fouling the grass, wouldn't it be such a release to let rip

with a well-judged tirade that hits the spot? ‘*Come on, puullheeeze! Can’t you see how annoying you are?*’ It may not be the most effective way of dealing with the situation, but we feel better already.

Watching Obama's speech shows another side to this, though. Simply observing our anger outside ourselves, as if we were an interested onlooker, helps us to feel differently about it. It distances us from the initial intense emotion and allows us to assess the situation more objectively. It can even allow room for humour (much appreciated by the press corps attending the dinner).

This distance can be the smallest separation, a sliver of gold leaf between you and the issue, but it's all the brain needs to make the difference between a knee jerk reaction and a deliberate response. It may be wafer thin, but it's crucial.

Of course, observing your anger doesn't always mean becoming cool and calm. You might still let rip. If it's your *choice* then go for it; there are times in life when it's important to give frustration a voice.

But when it's *not* what you would choose — given a split second's reflection — that the briefest pause can really help. When, in fact, it works better to explain to the shop assistant that you would appreciate her attention because you are pressed for time, or to the dog owner that they probably didn't see their dog foul the grass and are they OK for a bag? It might just achieve the behavior you want; at the very least the other person should react more helpfully.

So next time you feel anger rising up, imagine you have Luther behind you. Pause for that spit second, let him vent unseen, and *then* choose. It just might make all the difference.

Anna Wildman

Anna Wildman is a Director at Oil in the Engine.