



What Emotions Do for You

EMOTIONS MOTIVATE (AND ORGANIZE) US FOR ACTION

- Emotions motivate our behavior. Emotions prepare us for action. The action urge of specific emotions is often “hard-wired” in biology.
- Emotions save time in getting us to act in important situations. Emotions can be especially important when we don’t have time to think things through.
- Strong emotions help us overcome obstacles—in our minds and in the environment.

EMOTIONS COMMUNICATE TO (AND INFLUENCE) OTHERS

- Facial expressions are hard-wired aspects of emotions. Facial expressions communicate faster than words.
- Our body language and voice tone can also be hard-wired. Like it or not, they also communicate our emotions to others.
- When it is important to communicate to others, or send them a message, it can be very hard to change our emotions.
- Whether we intend it or not, our communication of emotions influences others.

EMOTIONS COMMUNICATE TO OURSELVES

- Emotional reactions can give us important information about a situation. Emotions can be signals or alarms that something is happening.
- Gut feelings can be like intuition—a response to something important about the situation. This can be helpful if our emotions get us to check out the facts.
- **Caution:** Sometimes we treat emotions as if they are facts about the world: The stronger the emotion, the stronger our belief that the emotion is based on fact. (Examples: “If I feel unsure, I am incompetent,” “If I get lonely when left alone, I shouldn’t be left alone,” “If I feel confident about something, it is right,” “If I’m afraid, there must be danger,” “I love him, so he must be OK.”)
- If we assume that our emotions represent facts about the world, we may use them to justify our thoughts or our actions. This can be trouble if our emotions get us to ignore the facts.



What Makes It Hard to Regulate Your Emotions

BIOLOGY

- Biological factors can make emotion regulation harder.

LACK OF SKILL

- You don't know what to do to regulate your emotions.

REINFORCEMENT OF EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR

- Your environment reinforces you when you are highly emotional.

MOODINESS

- Your current mood controls what you do instead of your Wise Mind.
- You don't really want to put in time and effort to regulate your emotions.

EMOTIONAL OVERLOAD

- High emotional arousal causes you to reach a skills breakdown point. You can't follow skills instructions or figure out what to do.

EMOTION MYTHS

- Myths (e.g., mistaken beliefs) about emotions get in the way of your ability to regulate emotions.
 - Myths that emotions are bad or weak lead to avoiding emotions.
 - Myths that extreme emotions are necessary or are part of who you are keep you from trying to regulate your emotions.

EMOTION REGULATION HANDOUT 4A

([Emotion Regulation Worksheet 3](#))

Myths about Emotions

1. There is a right way to feel in every situation.
Challenge: _____
2. Letting others know that I am feeling bad is a weakness.
Challenge: _____
3. Negative feelings are bad and destructive.
Challenge: _____
4. Being emotional means being out of control.
Challenge: _____
5. Some emotions are stupid.
Challenge: _____
6. All painful emotions are a result of a bad attitude.
Challenge: _____
7. If others don't approve of my feelings, I obviously shouldn't feel the way I do.
Challenge: _____
8. Other people are the best judges of how I am feeling.
Challenge: _____
9. Painful emotions are not important and should be ignored.
Challenge: _____
10. Extreme emotions get you a lot further than trying to regulate your emotions.
Challenge: _____
11. Creativity requires intense, often out-of-control emotions.
Challenge: _____
12. Drama is cool.
Challenge: _____
13. It is inauthentic to try to change my emotions.
Challenge: _____
14. Emotional truth is what counts, not factual truth.
Challenge: _____
15. People should do whatever they feel like doing.
Challenge: _____
16. Acting on your emotions is the mark of a truly free individual.
Challenge: _____
17. My emotions are who I am.
Challenge: _____
18. My emotions are why people love me.
Challenge: _____
19. Emotions can just happen for no reason.
Challenge: _____
20. Emotions should always be trusted.
Challenge: _____
21. Other myth: _____
Challenge: _____



EMOTION REGULATION HANDOUT 5

([Emotion Regulation Worksheets 4, 4a](#))

Model for Describing Emotions

