

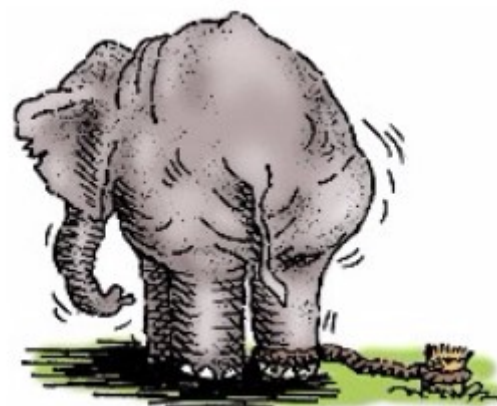
Emotion Regulation

The Elephant's Stake

Circus elephants can teach us a lot about our emotional bondage. Trainers begin when an elephant is a baby by tying the elephant to a stake in the ground. The elephant is unable to pull the stake out of the ground, try as it might.

Over time, the elephant gives up trying as it has learned that it can not get away. You can walk by a large and powerful elephant at a circus that has a rope tied to its leg and it will not even try to get away. The elephant does not know how big and powerful it is because it does not have the same kind of logic brain that we have.

Yet, we can become like elephants when we remain tied to things that we learned in our younger years without ever questioning our ability to get free. Learning to challenge faulty belief systems allows us to move beyond the "elephant's stake" and move into new beliefs that offer more freedom.



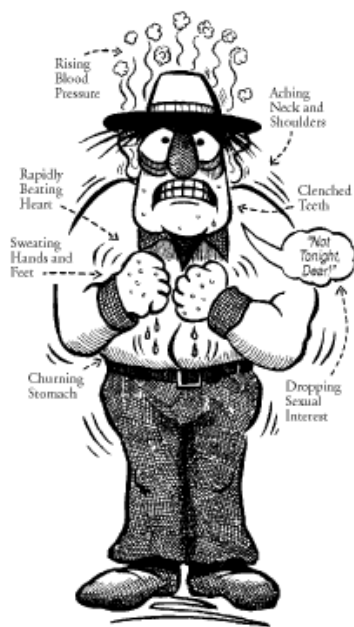
Distress Tolerance

We learned in the Need Cycle that our first clue to trouble is when we feel discomfort - or distress. Our gut reaction to get away from the discomfort is normal. But, learning how to strengthen our ability to handle discomfort is the first step in managing emotions.

Our body has natural reactions to each emotion we feel. For example, when we feel angry our body tightens and saliva decreases to prepare us for battle. Contrary to that, when we feel disgusted, our body secretes saliva to prepare us to spit out or reject the disgusting object.

What we can learn from this is that our body's signs are signals to the emotions going on inside. Learning these cues can help us learn how to cope with distress and tolerate it a little longer.

During times of heightened emotions, there are skills that can be used to lessen the grip these emotions have on us.



1. Deep breathing - our brains need oxygen during stressful times. Take full deep breaths and exhale as slowly as you possibly can.
2. Distractions - Do not try to solve a problem when emotions are high. Do something to distract yourself. Walk away, count backwards from 100, etc.
3. You have got this! - Remind yourself that you can gain the skills to effectively handle any situation that you feel. Hard as it may be, you can do it.
4. Engage only when ready - Come back to the situation when you are certain that your emotions are in check and you can think clearly.

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JUST 6 EASY STEPS

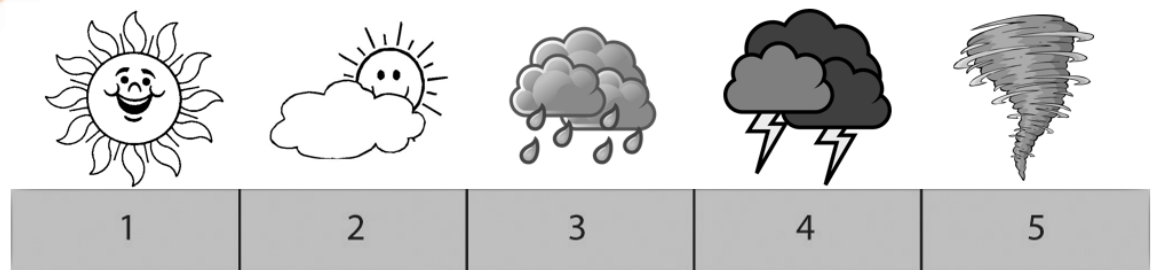
Managing Strong Emotions

Step 1 - Name and rate your emotions.

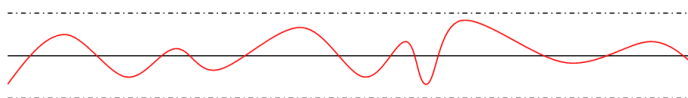
This sounds very easy yet it is not. Naming emotions is critical in order to handle them. Think of them as your employees. They each have a job to do. If you do not understand their job, then you will not be able to manage them.

Like any employee, they make mistakes no matter how valuable they are. When fear is yelling at you to take cover, you need to be able to assess if fear has the right information.

To do that, rate the level that fear, or any emotion you feel, is trying to tell you the situation warrants. We rate 1-5 as outlined in the drawing below.

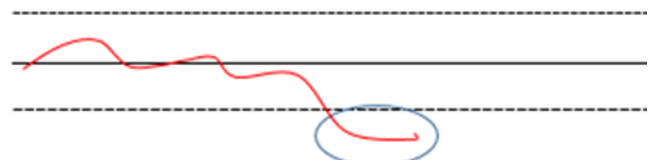
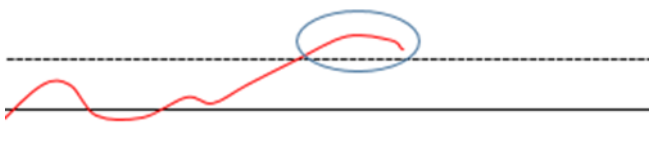


During the course of the day we all move up and down on an emotional scale. Think of this as your “normal or safe zone”. In this stage we have good and bad feelings but it is just normal for most days. This rating would be a 1-2 represented above by the sunny and partly cloudy images. If we were to graph 1-2 it would look like the image below. Within this range, your brain is handling most everything at the subconscious level and you are humming along through the day without a care in the world. Any thoughts simply come and go as you handle them with ease.



Next would be the rating of 3 which indicates that your brain has identified something as needing your attention. You are now “aware” that something is out of the normal/safe zone.

It is beginning to rain on your parade. You are still able to function quite well, but this issue is getting your attention now and then. For example, someone sends you an email. When you read it you wonder if they meant something more by it. You are reading between the lines. Your emotion is heightened and you find yourself thinking about the meaning. If we were to graph this, it would look like the image below where the event has given energy. So we graph above the line. If the event took away energy, such as causing sadness, then you would graph below the line. Both options are shown below. The emotion, whether giving energy or taking energy, is alerting you that there could be a potential problem ahead.

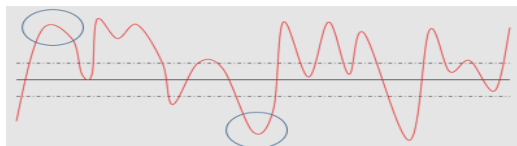


It is important to note here that not all emotions that give or take energy are bad. You could get excited about some good news which gives energy. But for now, learning how to name and rate the emotion is the first step we are concerned with. It is best to handle situations when they are at a rating of 3 because your emotions have not taken over yet. If you wait, you could find it hard to identify solutions if the emotions go further.

TRY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY GET OUT OF HAND!

Perhaps your emotion is going a little higher the more you think about it. A rating of 4, stormy, indicates that you are a little more than aware of an issue. Now you are downright distracted by it. Your brain is becoming more flooded with negative thoughts.

A rating of a 5, tornado, indicates that emotions have taken over. At this point you are unable to even function - so you go home for the day. Ratings of 4 and 5 should be reserved for few occasions. However, many people who struggle with their emotions find themselves operating at a 4 or 5 on a regular basis. This is not good for your body let alone your relationships. The image below shows what a rating of 4 or 5 looks like. You can see that this person lives here often.



Step 2 - Identify the message behind the emotion.

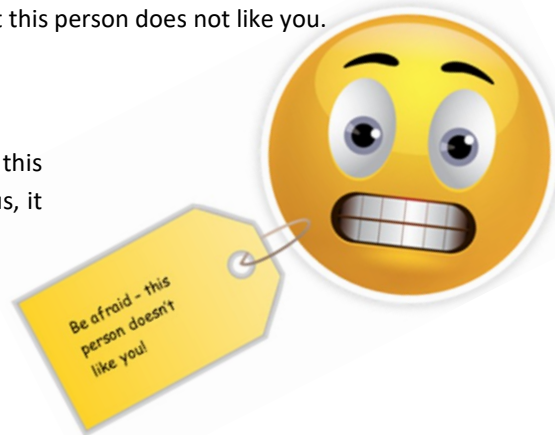
Each emotion comes with a message, sort of like a price tag. In this case, the emotion of fear wants you to believe that this person does not like you.

Step 3 - Identify the need associated with the message.

Each message is an indicator to a need we have. Our pain or discomfort are clues to this need. In this case, the need is to belong. When we believe someone does not like us, it can leave us feeling vulnerable—like we are outside of the herd.

Step 4 - Determine if your emotion, the message and need are valid.

For something to be valid, all components must match. In this case, if you reacted with a level of 3, it may be accurate that fear wants you to know that this person does not like you. That is a healthy protection to have. Fear would be doing its job.



However, if you reacted with a level of 4 or 5, the emotion level may not be valid. Going home based on something so small is not what a “reasonable” person would do. So what do you do when your emotion is acting out of control?

The image on the left shows an event wrapped in an emotion at an appropriate level - such as rating fear at a 3 in this case. When emotions get out of control, as in the image to the right, it is not valid to have so much emotion over a small issue like this.

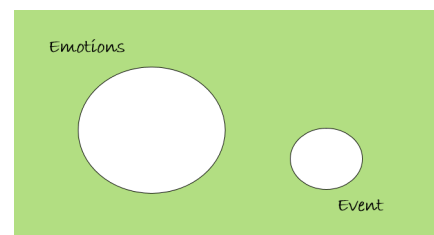
You can almost guarantee, in times like this, that you're dealing with similar events from your past.

If the emotion is valid: Use tools that you have added to your toolbox.

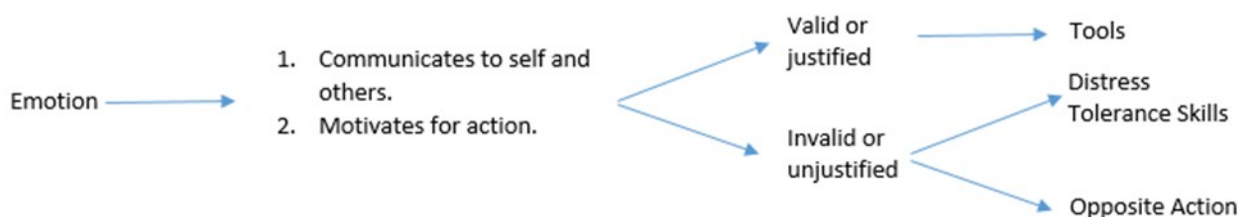
If the emotion is invalid: Use Distress Tolerance Skills or Opposite Action.

Distress tolerance skills work to relax your emotions such as deep breathing while opposite action is doing the opposite of what your gut wants you to do. Instead of confronting, walking away would be an example of opposite action.

Once your emotions are in check (valid) then move onto tools.



Separate Emotions from Event

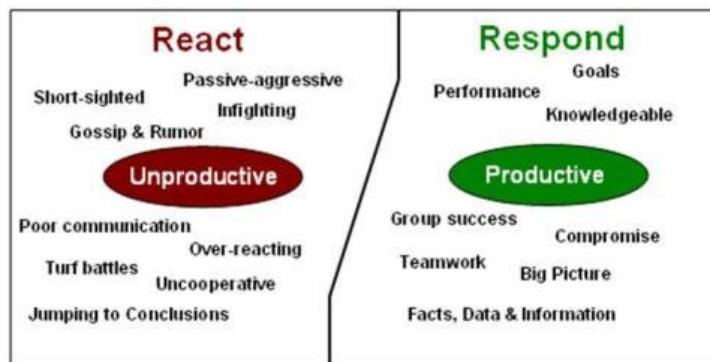


Step 5 - Select tools and respond thoughtfully.

Reacting is filled with emotions and rarely has positive results. Responding, on the other hand, is a thoughtful way to proceed.

Responding validates the emotion and engages logic to use the wise mind to determine what steps to take.

Deciding on a tool to use is personal and depends on the situation. But you should never use a brand new tool without first practicing it when emotions are mild.



Emotions can quickly get in the way of a good plan and wreck any possibility of success. Remember that you are in control of your emotions. Do not allow them to be in control of you.

Taking action requires that you determine ahead of time how you will get your need met. After all, this is why your emotions were in an uproar in the first place. They are motivating you to take action. Move slowly and wise.

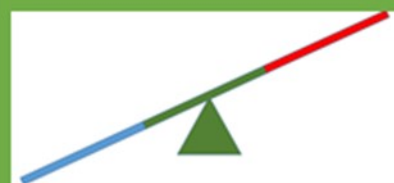
Mismanaged emotions obviously affect us and the relationships around us. But mismanaged emotions can also cause health problems as well. It is well documented by physicians, psychiatrists and psychologists that stressful events, emotional distress, or our evaluation of unpleasant events profoundly affect our health. Our body responds to stressors but is not meant to live within the stressful state for long periods of time. Various body organs have to work harder to manage stress levels and therefore shut down or are impaired over time by strenuous work. Anger and fear, for example, cause substances to be released in our blood which increase the chance of clots forming or high blood pressure.

Mismanaged emotions harm others around us as we show emotions through short tempers, irritability, defensive behavior, mind-reading, lack of bonding, etc. We can become exhausting for others to try and maintain a relationship with us. Getting in touch with your emotions will help you develop and sustain healthy relationships and enjoy life more.

Regulate

Regulating emotions simply means managing them by not letting them get too high or too low.

You can't manage your life until you manage your emotions.



Low Emotional Intelligence

High Emotional Intelligence

Aggressive
Demanding
Egotistical
Bossy
Confrontational



Assertive
Ambitious
Driving
Strong-Willed
Decisive

Easily Distracted
Glib
Selfish
Poor Listener
Impulsive



Warm
Enthusiastic
Sociable
Charming
Persuasive

Resistant to Change
Passive
Un-Responsive
Slow
Stubborn



Patient
Stable
Predictable
Consistent
Good Listener

Critical
Picky
Fussy
Hard to Please
Perfectionistic



Detailed
Careful
Meticulous
Systematic
Neat

Step 6 - Evaluate your success.

Success should always be evaluated by considering long-term outcomes. Confronting someone may feel good in the short run but can cause more problems in the long run if not done well.

One measure of success is the health of relationships. Successful tools help bring people together. The exception to the rule is when success requires that boundaries are set in order to keep us safe from another person.

Another measure of success is that our faulty belief systems are weakened and we begin forming new healthy beliefs that keep us engaged with others and moving toward our goals.

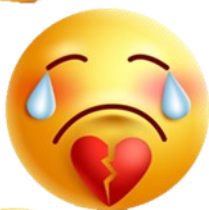
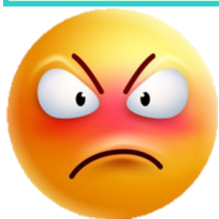
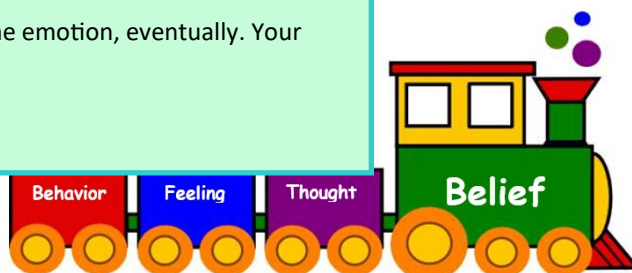
In addition to evaluating the outcome, also consider how well you used your tools. Like a carpenter, success means that we have learned how to use the tools as they were meant to be used. This can take time so be patient with the process as you learn to master new skills.

The Basics of Emotions

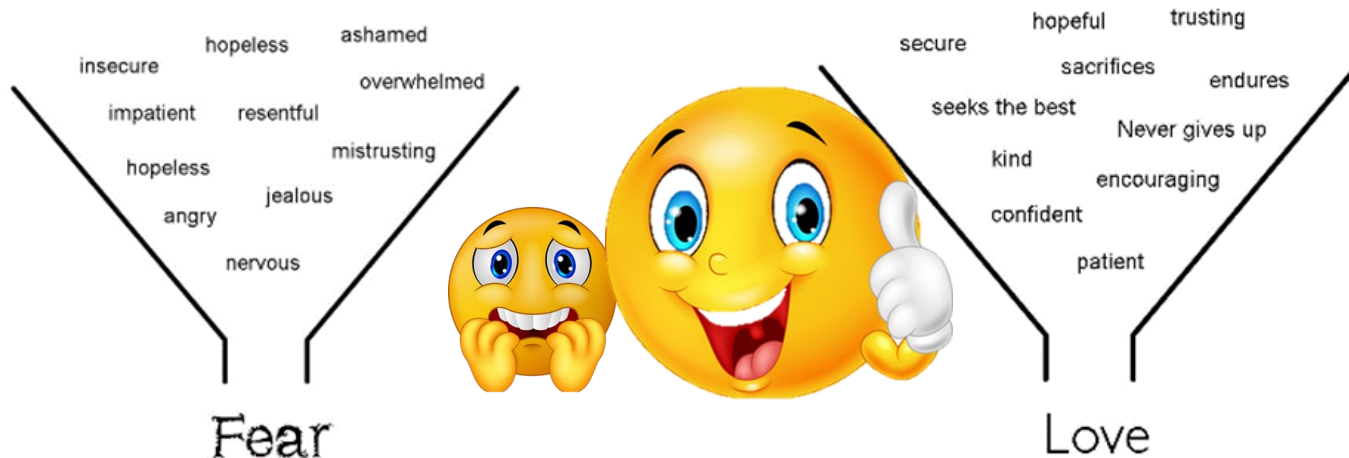
JUST THE FACTS

- ◇ Emotions are not good or bad—they are just necessary.
- ◇ Emotions are short-term, lasting for only about 30 seconds. You can keep them alive by feeding them or choose to let them go.
- ◇ You are not your emotions. If you feel angry a lot, you are not an angry person but need to deal with past issues that caused the anger.
- ◇ Your emotions are not always telling you the truth! You need to challenge them to see if there are details you are missing. Just because you feel it does not make it true.

- ◇ Emotions are interpretations that you have about events you experience. If your emotions are misleading you, it is a strong indicator that you have faulty beliefs. The emotion is not the problem but the belief system is!
- ◇ Happiness is not built on the emotions you feel. You begin feeling emotions based on the thinking that happens inside your head. If you find that you are unhappy a lot, try keeping a gratitude journal.
- ◇ Emotions follow thoughts. Change the thoughts and you will change the emotion, eventually. Your emotions should be the caboose not the engine.
- ◇ When a strong emotion comes, you DON'T have to act on it!



- ◇ Stuffing emotions does not make them go away. Your body remembers all experiences at the cellular level even if you can not recall it at a conscious level. Those unchecked emotions take root and begin to negatively impact your body and mind.
- ◇ People who think they do not feel are lying to themselves. Everyone feels and you can not choose to have some feelings and not others anymore than you can choose when your heart should beat. It just happens. You can lose touch with your emotions, but your body still experiences them.
- ◇ We mirror emotions meaning that they are contagious. When someone smiles we tend to do the same.
- ◇ Extended times of stress or continued negative emotions can cause great harm to a body. Your body is made to handle great amounts of stress but needs resting periods to remain healthy.
- ◇ Emotions fall into one of two funnels - love or fear. The brain is responsible for your survival and sees each experience as good (something to repeat) or bad (something to avoid).



The Faces of Anger

Anger is a secondary emotion.



Anger is a very real emotion with a message attached telling us that something is wrong. Unfortunately, our brains go right to anger as a way to protect us. Psychologists say that anger is a secondary emotion, meaning that it is the cover-up to another emotion.

Why would anger cover another emotion? Because the other emotion is most often a vulnerable emotion. For survival, we do not like being vulnerable so instead of saying we feel nervous, jealous or insecure, we say we are angry. Notice the vulnerable emotions noted in the iceberg picture.

Anger makes us feel more powerful and in control. The problem is that we really are not in control and we do not get to the real issue underneath if we stay angry. It is helpful to dig a little deeper to identify what is triggering the anger so we can get the real need met. Give it a try!

Anger has many faces.

Did you know that anger has many faces - meaning that it can be expressed in different ways. Understanding how it can look can be helpful to better understand what's going on under the surface.



Check out the types of anger listed below. Mark those that you can identify with.

- ☐ Passive Anger: Trying to avoid confrontation by using sarcasm or mockery as a way to hide feelings.
- ☐ Self-Inflicted Anger: Punishing self for something by harming their body (cutting, eating disorders).
- ☐ Paranoid Anger: Feelings of jealousy or intimidation can lead to anger to avoid vulnerability.
- ☐ Anger Avoidance: Ignores angry feelings out of fear of their or other's anger.
- ☐ Shame-Based Anger: Internalizes criticism and feels shame but expresses anger for lack of approval.
- ☐ Moral Anger: The right to be angry because another has broken a rule. Someone must be scolded.
- ☐ Addictive Anger: Wanting or needing feelings that come with anger in spite of consequences.
- ☐ Habitual Anger: Normalizing anger by waking up angry or set off by small things.

Internal Anger

- ☐ Judgmental Anger: Putting others down, causing emotional harm by making others feel worthless.
- ☐ Retaliatory Anger: Lashing out at someone or getting even for perceived wrong they've done.
- ☐ Volatile Anger: Ranges from silent to explosion out of nowhere and builds over time.
- ☐ Deliberate Anger: Using anger to control someone or situation through intimidation.
- ☐ Silent Anger: Denies anger that is real by holding a grudge, using silence or withholds affection.
- ☐ Explosive Anger: Blows up quickly and can vanish just as fast like a thunderstorm.
- ☐ Hatred Anger: Hardened anger from unresolved issues or unforgiveness. Places sentencing on others.

External Anger

Verbal Anger

Expressed through words or expressions to hurt others.

Behavioral Anger

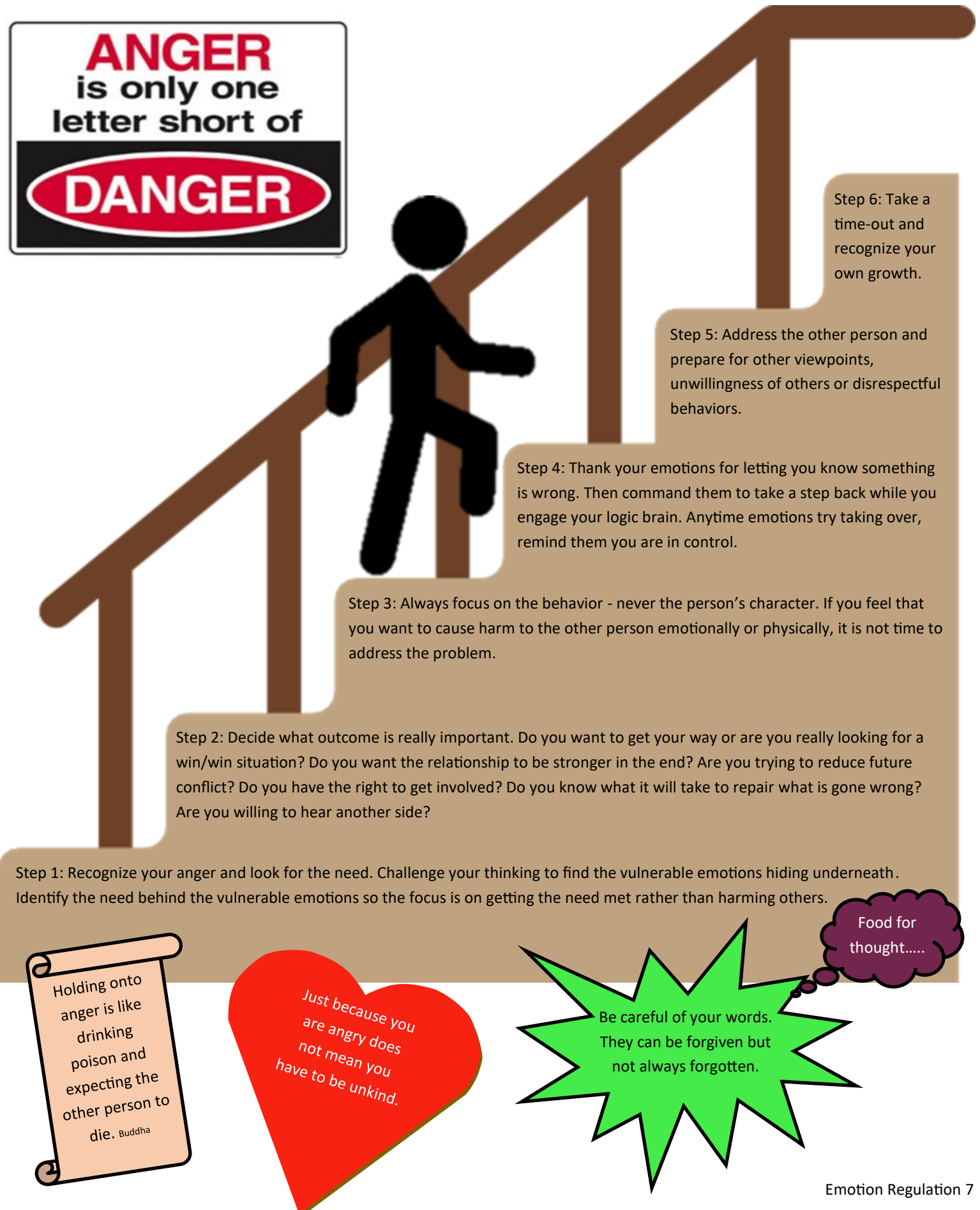
Expressed through behaviors like aggression to hurt others.

Violent Anger

Expressed through physical harm to another person.

Using Anger Correctly

Constructive anger motivates us to make corrections in a healthy way that confronts injustices or wrongs assertively without harm. Do you know how to use your anger correctly? Check out these steps.



Ten Emotions

Our emotions send messages to our body to motivate us to action. Within fragments of a second we can think, feel and act in ways that impact our lives for good or bad. Emotions can impact the quality of your life. Managing them is vital to our well-being.

1

Joy! Many people think of happiness when they think of joy. You can experience joy even in pain. Joy includes emotions such as optimism, hope or satisfaction. You can feel great loss yet feel joyful about your life. We can let our traumas dictate our emotions or we can rise above them feeling the joy that is involved in living life. Joy isn't situational but a state of mind. Joy reminds you that all people are valuable, that life is precious and there is reason to always keep moving forward.

2

Love! Three Greek words that describe different levels of love are *Phileo*, *Eros* and *Agape*. *Phileo* is brotherly love where we value human lives around us. *Eros* is romantic love where we get our word erotic. *Agape* love is a verb, an action. It means unconditional love that acts for others. Love moves us toward one another in a way that no other emotion does. Be careful that you do not allow love to become something that you stop acting on when you no longer feel it. Real love is action in spite of how we feel.

3

Fear! In opposition to love, fear pulls us away from people and experiences. When accurate fear protects us. Unfortunately, most fear-based responses contain only partial truths. This means that we miss out on far more than we should when fear is not speaking the full truth. Fear should motivate us to take appropriate action and allow us to move on once the danger is overcome. Yet too many people live in fear which detracts from love and joy.

4

Anger! Anger is a secondary emotion, meaning that it covers and protects us from more vulnerable emotions. Righteous anger is when we are right to take a stand against something that is harmful to us or others. But we use anger far too frequently to protect us from all other emotions because we lack the courage to face them. Our culture does not respect vulnerable emotions so we quickly grab onto anger as a way to solve too many problems. Anger says, "I have a need that was unmet or violated."

5

Disgust! Preserving us from contamination is the emotion disgust. It repels at spoiled food but also at behaviors or experiences that we deem offensive or repelling. The emotion is believed to be a part of protecting our immune system for survival purposes and is one of the emotions that are universally recognizable regardless of culture. Our facial expressions show slightly narrowed brows, a curled upper lip, wrinkling of the nose and visible protrusions of the tongue.

6

Sadness. Associated with losses, sadness not only tells us something is wrong, but also reminds us of happier times or expectations. Meant to move us to grieve, sadness desires to express tears related to the loss. Scientists have shown that our tears are unique depending upon the sadness we grieve. Releasing tears actually helps the body release emotional tension. Grieving losses as well as building positive events into our lives are ways to work through sadness. Depression can result in unresolved sadness.

7

Envy. Being green with envy is a saying that best reflects the purpose of the emotion. Envy tells us that someone else has something that we want. When we feed into this emotion from a negative perspective we begin to harbor bitterness. Yet the emotion is meant to motivate us to continue movement toward the objects we want. We rarely admit to being envious but it drives competition and leaves us feeling inferior to others. Allow envy to admire the success of others while still striving for your own success.

8

Jealousy! This is considered the enemy of love! Unlike envy which causes you to compare yourself to others, jealousy is relational in nature. The strong emotion is a signal to you that you are close to being expelled from the social group, rejected or losing the status you desire. Let jealousy show you areas that you can improve relational skills so that you can feel the safety skills are meant to bring. Be careful not to allow yourself to be dragged into jealousy by others. Many people use this emotion as a weapon.

9

Shame. The emotion you feel when someone has told you through words or actions that you made a mistake. Every culture or "herd" lives by values and norms. Many of these are unspoken but we are aware of them when we are told we crossed a line. Shame's purpose is to get us back on track and protect the herd as a whole. Once back on track we, and others, should let go of the judgment that caused the emotion. Unfortunately too many people carry shame and the pain it caused for a lifetime. Learn to let go.

10

Guilt. The emotion you feel when your heart stings because of something you said or did is guilt. It is an internal thermometer to your relationships and values. A bothered conscious tells us we are at fault and need to make amends. We can correct behaviors and get back into right relationships. However, too many people carry guilt, like its counterpart shame, for a lifetime. They allow these emotions to become a part of their identity rather than letting go once the correction is made.

Set your eyes on what is ahead.

Directions:

- All questions are “behavior” based, meaning that you are rating yourself on what you “do” rather than what you “know”.
- Answer the questions below by rating yourself as follows:

0 - Does not apply to me at all.

1 - Applies sometimes, but not often.

2 - Applies to me often.

3 - I have this one down on a regular basis.

Check the boxes of the behavior you would like to work on during this section.

Pre		Post
	I have worked on ‘Elephant Stake’ issues.	
	I can name my emotions and rate them appropriately using the 1-5 scale.	
	I can accurately identify the messages behind an emotion by investigating what is under the surface.	
	I can accurately identify the need behind an emotion by investigating what is under the surface.	
	I regularly check to see if an emotion is valid/invalid (justified/unjustified).	
	I know how to separate my emotions from the event that triggered them. I get my real needs met.	
	I can tell which emotions are driven from fear and which ones from love/trust.	
	I know that anger is a secondary emotion and always check to see what the real vulnerable emotion is that anger is covering up. I respond based on the vulnerable emotions.	
	I have a good understanding how the ten basic emotions impact my body and therefore my choices.	
	I use distress tolerance skills when really upset. I can explain what they are.	
	I work hard to respond rather than react.	
	I can regulate my emotions so that I do not make unwise choices that I will later regret.	

“I Will” Statements

To get closer to my Big Hairy Goal, “I Will” do the following:

◇ _____

◇ _____

◇ _____

◇ _____

What I Got Out of This Section