

A short guide on Getting to grips with our Emotions

We all have emotions.

Some people are better at recognising and accepting their own emotions than others. They are self-aware.

People that are self-aware do just that - they are aware of themselves. They have the ability to notice their feelings, thoughts, behaviours, their habits, and reactions.

By being open to exploring how you are thinking, feeling and behaving, you will naturally become more self-aware. It is a habit like every other; the more you do it, the easier it becomes until it just is part of your everyday being.

Have you ever said, "I can't help how I am feeling!"?

I think we all have said this at least once or twice!

If we understand how the brain works, our basic cognitive behaviours, we can change or manage our feelings better.

And with this understanding, you will feel more in control and be able to manage situations better.



Imagine a situation, like misplacing your mobile phone.

What is your first thought?

"Oh no, I can't manage without my mobile.

What if my car breaks down?

What if my daughter is ill and the school needs to contact me?

And my boss is going to be so angry that I am going to be late to work
and I can't even phone him to tell him....."

What a lot of racing 'worst case' scenario thoughts!

If you were having all those types of thoughts, and more besides
(our brain has an amazing ability to think a zillion things at once!),
what do you imagine you would be feeling?

What emotions would you be having?

Stressed; Anxious; Helpless; Worried; Annoyed;
Out of control; Frustrated; Angry



So let's look at this situation slightly differently, with a different set of thoughts.

"Well, that's a nuisance but it's not the end of the world; at least I won't have any interruptions today and get lots done. When I get to work I will apologise to my boss for being late, these things happen, ring my daughter's school and give them an alternative number. I can even phone my mobile provider and let them know that I might have lost it."

What sort of emotions would you be feeling now?

Thankful (it's not a full-blown disaster/accident);
Optimistic (you are very likely to find your phone);
Purposeful (you know that you will get lots done);
Trusting (that your boss will understand);
Accepting (these things happen);

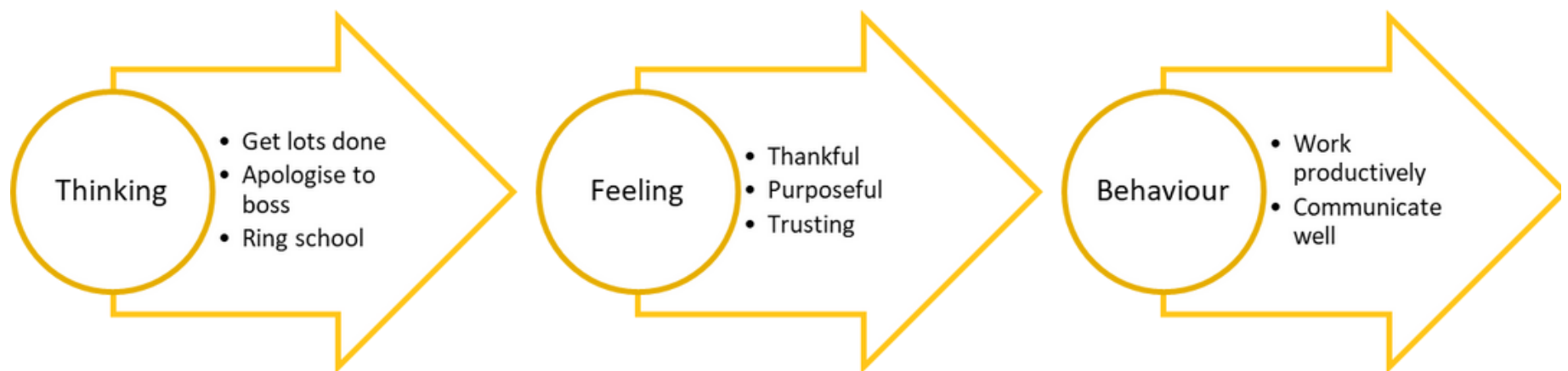
Does that feel better?

It is not the event or the situation that creates your feelings, your emotions. It is your thoughts.



In any situation, you will always have thoughts and feelings, which in turn will affect how you act, behave.

Imagine how you might have acted for the rest of the day in the first set of thoughts, and compare it to the second set of thoughts.



"Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

Victor Frankl

Now we understand how our thinking is driving our emotions, which affects how we act, here are a couple of easy questions to ask yourself next time in a similar situation.

What are the thoughts going on in my head?

What am I saying to myself?

How helpful are they?

How are they making me feel?

What am I wanting to do, and how am I likely to behave as a result of these thoughts and feelings?

What would be a more positive thought?

What would I prefer to be thinking?

And how would this impact my feelings and what I can do?

So what next - yes, change your thinking!



Now let's take a closer look at emotions.
It can be useful to think of emotions as a signpost.



They might be signaling us to make a change or act on something, or they could be a sign of an unmet need.

Firstly, it's important to understand that there are no good or bad emotions, it is our thinking that makes them so.

And we are not our emotions.

Eg: if you are feeling 'stressed', you could be thinking, "everything is going wrong, I haven't enough time or money" but what that stressed feeling really is, is a sign.

For example, that emotion of feeling 'stressed' could be signposting us to take action in a number of different ways:

- you have too much to do, so might need to delegate stuff to others, or speak to our boss and explain;
- you don't have enough money, so might need to look at your budgeting and understanding where the shortfall is;
- or if you are feeling stressed for a long period of time, it could be that a bigger change is needed indicating your life and/or work is not aligned with your values.



There are many emotions, although most people can only name 5 or 6 when asked. If we are able to recognise and accept how we are feeling, we are better able to understand and manage ourselves and act in our best interests.

A useful tool for doing this is the Feelings Wheel,
<https://feelingswheel.com/>

You can start with identifying which of the basic emotions you are feeling, then work your way out until you come to the emotion that matches how you really feel.

For example, you are feeling upset because you weren't successful in getting a job that you applied for.

Thinking you are feeling sad or upset, an obvious solution might be to look to do something to make yourself happy, like give yourself a treat. Short terms 'fixes' are not likely to help in the long term.

By using the Feelings Wheel to work out what you are really feeling, which is actually 'disappointed', it is much easier to accept that it is okay to feel disappointed when you don't get something you want and have worked hard for.



Knowing what you are feeling emotionally will help you form better decisions, help you see things clearer and you will become more self-aware.

It is important to understand that we all show our emotions differently - whether on our faces or in what we say or do. Some people are good at hiding their 'real' emotions, others are not or don't feel the need to.

What we should not do is 'guess' how the other person is feeling just by their face, words, or actions.

An example of this could be seeing a person with tears running down their face.

Just by looking at them, we are unlikely to know the context, what's happening, behind the emotion. They could be tears of joy, or tears of sadness. Facial expressions don't always tell the story behind the tears.



So if we can't 'guess' other peoples' emotions correctly, then they aren't likely to be able to 'guess' our own emotions correctly.

Unless we verbalise the thoughts in our heads or explain our actions, they will just guess based on their own or past experiences.

Therefore, learn to share your emotions with others.

By doing so, you will connect with people more closely, be able to communicate your needs more effectively, and they will understand you better.

You could start by trying some of the following:

- Sharing first with someone you trust, your partner or a close friend
- If it's a work colleague or someone who might not expect it, ask them first by saying "do you mind if I share how I'm feeling?"
- Trying to explore an 'easier' emotion such as feeling happy, proud, or confident before having a try with a more uncomfortable one such as feeling let down, furious, or disappointed.

Key points to remember:

There are no good or bad emotions.

We all have emotions but we are not our emotions.

Our thinking drives our emotions and our behaviour.

We can change our thinking in order to feel and act differently.
By exploring, recognising, and understanding our own emotions,
we will become more self-aware.

Emotions are like signposts, a sign for change or action.

Sharing our emotions helps us to connect with others better.

If you've found my [Getting to grips with our Emotions](#) guide useful, I'd love to hear from you. It's great to connect with people & hear their feedback - see contact details below.

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