
Emotion Awareness

What Are Emotions?

What are emotions, really? Most simply, emotions are signals that help you respond to what your brain thinks is happening. Here's how they work: the brain responds to internal and external cues (events or observations from our environment). Then the brain produces biochemical messengers, which we experience as emotions. These emotions motivate us to make choices. For example, the emotion we know as anxiety helps us choose to avoid danger. Anger helps us choose to fight when we feel threatened. Sadness helps us choose to withdraw when we need to process a loss or failure.

From birth, our amazing brains are evolutionarily wired to protect us from harm—to help us survive. That means any time your brain is sensing a threat to your well-being, it will do everything it can to send you emotional messages to motivate you to protect yourself. You may have heard about this process referred to as “flight, fight, or freeze,” all of which are common responses to intense emotions.

However, while our emotional wiring has been adaptive for the survival of the human race over time, the survival wiring doesn't always serve us when it gets activated in a non-survival situation. Over time, your brain develops a “negativity bias,” whereby it constantly scans your environment for anything negative that could be interpreted as a threat so it can protect you. The downside of this protective negativity bias is that you can end up in a state of constant anxiety, or you can be easily triggered—whether or not there is an actual threat.

Author and psychotherapist Tara Brach explains how the negativity bias impacts us: “The emotion of fear often works overtime. Even when there is no immediate threat, our body may remain tight and on guard, our mind narrowed to focus on what might go wrong. When this happens, fear is no longer functioning to secure our survival. We are caught in the trance of fear and our moment-to-moment experience becomes bound in reactivity. We spend our time and energy defending our life rather than living it fully” (2003, p. 168).

EET can help you learn how to respond to non-survival emotions using skills that will help you respond effectively.

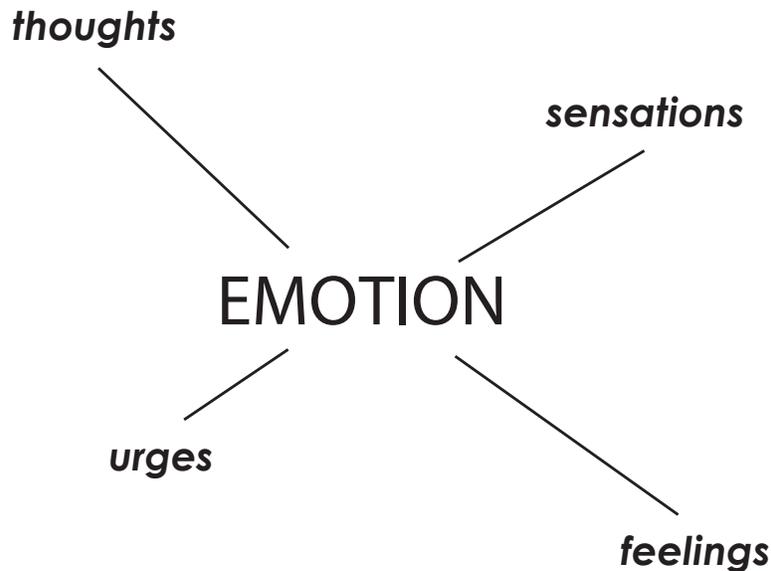
Why Do Some People Struggle with Emotions?

You've probably noticed that some people tend to be more emotionally reactive than others. We are all unique human beings, and how we experience emotions also depends on the wiring in our brains. While we are all born wired for survival, some of us are born with a tendency toward heightened emotional sensitivity. Others develop this tendency as a result of difficult experiences that leave them more emotionally reactive to certain cues.

If you are someone who has heightened sensitivity, you may have an increased vulnerability to stress. Even more, the heightened sensitivity to certain cues can become so ingrained and the emotional reactions so automatic that you may forget you have choices when you get triggered. Unfortunately, this emotional reactivity can negatively affect your well-being, quality of life, relationships, personal goals, and long-term health.

For this treatment, we will focus on how you can respond to distressing emotions and increase your emotion efficacy. You will learn how to stop being controlled by your emotions, how to respond in ways that reflect your values, and how to create more of what you want in your life.

Anatomy of an Emotion



There are four components that make up your experience of an emotion:

- **Thoughts:** Thoughts are the content of what you're thinking. For example, "I never do anything right," or "I want to get out of here."
- **Feelings:** Feelings are the label or interpretation we give the emotion, for instance, sadness, frustration, joy, and so on.
- **Sensations:** Sensations are anything you feel in the body. This might be a sense of looseness and ease in the body when relaxed or muscle tension when anxious.
- **Urges:** Urges are impulses to do something—or not to do something. Examples include the urge to leave, the urge to yell, the urge to withdraw.

Let's consider one example: If something great happens, you may have the thought, "There is so much to look forward to!" The feeling may be excitement. You may notice sensations of looseness and energy in your body. You may experience the urge to engage with people and/or dance around.

Two more examples: When you feel sad, you may have the thought, "I will always be alone." You may sense tightness in your stomach and a lack of energy in your body. You may have the urge to withdraw from people. If someone threatens you, you may feel angry, you may think, "How dare he say that?!" You may notice the sensation of increased heart rate and energy. You may have the urge to attack the person.

Emotion Watching Worksheet

Observing the Four Components of Emotion

Use this worksheet to record the four components of emotion you experience from specific triggers.

Triggers	Thoughts	Feelings	Sensations	Urges

Feelings Word List

Adored	Disturbed	Infatuated	Satisfied
Afraid	Eager	Inspired	Scared
Amazed	Embarrassed	Interested	Scattered
Angry	Empty	Irritated	Secure
Annoyed	Energetic	Jealous	Shy
Anxious	Enlightened	Joyful	Smart
Ashamed	Enlivened	Lively	Sorry
Blessed	Enraged	Lonely	Stimulated
Blissful	Envious	Loved	Strong
Bored	Exhausted	Loving	Surprised
Bothered	Flirtatious	Mad	Suspicious
Broken	Foolish	Moved	Terrified
Bubbly	Fragile	Nervous	Thankful
Cautious	Frightened	Obsessed	Thrilled
Comfortable	Frustrated	Optimistic	Tired
Concerned	Fulfilled	Overwhelmed	Touched
Confident	Glad	Passionate	Trusting
Confused	Guilty	Pleased	Uncomfortable
Content	Happy	Proud	Unsure
Curious	Helpless	Puzzled	Upset
Delighted	Hopeful	Regretful	Vivacious
Depressed	Horrified	Relieved	Vulnerable
Determined	Hurt	Reluctant	Worried
Disappointed	Hysterical	Respected	Worthless
Discouraged	Impatient	Restless	Worthy
Disgusted	Indifferent	Sad	

Mindful Acceptance | Observe + Accept

Mindful acceptance is derived from the practice of mindfulness, which has been shown to reduce psychological stress and improve well-being in numerous studies. The practice of mindful acceptance is essential for emotion efficacy because it will help you better tolerate difficult emotions, recover more quickly, and respond in ways that enrich your life moment to moment.

Mindful acceptance will help you practice observing and accepting emotions instead of reacting to them, avoiding them, or trying to control them. It doesn't mean you have to "like" your emotions; it simply means that you don't resist what you are experiencing.

One helpful metaphor is to think of yourself as the atmosphere and your emotions as the weather. The atmosphere is constant, while the weather is ever-changing. In mindful acceptance, you simply observe and accept changing weather, without reacting, while you as the observer remain constant.

There are many benefits to using mindful acceptance when you are emotionally triggered:

- Practicing mindful acceptance can help you tolerate pain without acting on it.
- Practicing mindful acceptance can help you recover more quickly from the distress of the trigger.
- Practicing mindful acceptance can help you find the space you need to thoughtfully and consciously choose how you will respond to the pain.

Mindful acceptance is practiced by learning to observe and accept the four parts of emotion: sensations, feelings, thoughts, and urges. Following is a simple description for practicing mindful acceptance you can use as you do your skills practice outside of session. Try to practice for at least 10 minutes a day when you are resting or when you get emotionally triggered.

1. Sensation Acceptance

Scan your body for sensations with the intention of observing and accepting them instead of reacting to them. Just notice all the details of the sensations: size, shape, temperature, tension, and movement. See if you can soften to the sensation and make space for it, without trying to change it...just allowing it to be exactly as it is.

2. Feeling Labeling

Try to identify the feeling that goes with the emotion. Name it and allow it to be exactly as it is, without judging it.

3. Thought Watching

Clear your mind, and then wait and watch for each thought as it arises; let the thought go without getting involved in it. Come back to the present moment and wait for the next thought to show up. When a thought arises, you might say to yourself, "There's a thought," and then just let it go. If you find yourself struggling to let the thought go, you might just acknowledge it as a "sticky thought," and then let it go.

4. Urge Noticing

Notice if the emotion comes with an urge to do or not do something. Allow yourself to sit with the urge, without acting on it or judging it. Then notice what it's like not to act on it.

The more you practice these mindful acceptance skills, the bigger your emotion efficacy muscle will grow. It will get easier and easier to observe and accept your emotions instead of acting on them. Practicing mindful acceptance will also prepare you to use the other skills you will learn in EET.

Script for Guided Mindful Acceptance

For the next ten minutes I'm going to lead you through a mindful acceptance practice exercise. You will practice observing and accepting your emotional experience in the present moment. Practicing mindful acceptance in a neutral state will build your emotion efficacy muscle and make it easier for you to use this skill when you are triggered.

First, just sit comfortably, and either close your eyes or relax your gaze and pick a spot to focus on in front of you.

Now, take a few minutes to notice any sensations in your body. Scan your body until you find a sensation and rest your attention on it. See if you can let it be just as it is and get curious about it. Notice its size and shape; whether it's moving or staying the same; if there's any temperature or tension to it. See if you can soften to it, or even lean into the sensation...

Now, see if you can identify a feeling label that goes with the sensation...just name it and allow it to be as it is without judgment or reacting to it.

Next, we'll spend a few minutes just noticing and watching our thoughts. Our brains produce different kinds of thoughts all the time, and the key is not to get involved with them. Instead, as each thought arises, you can simply say, "There's a thought," and then let the thought go. Then, just return to the present moment, and wait for the next thought to arise. For the next few minutes, notice your thoughts until I say stop...

Okay, now stop. Next, see if there's an urge that goes with your sensations, feelings, or thoughts. It could be an urge to do something or not do something. Try to just sit with the urge. Notice what it's like not to act on the urge, to just surf it.

[Allow the client to sit with the urge for 30 seconds. Then repeat the sequence one more time.]

Before you come out of this exercise, take a few deep breaths and slowly open your eyes as you bring your attention back to the room.

Consequences of Emotion Avoidance

There are at least five types of emotion avoidance that researchers believe are at the root of many emotion problems.

Situational: people, places, things, and activities

Cognitive: thoughts, images, and memories

Somatic: internal sensations such as racing heart, palpitations, breathlessness, overheating, fatigue, or unwanted sexual arousal

Protective: avoiding uncertainty through checking, cleaning, perfectionism, procrastination, or reassurance seeking

Substitution: avoiding painful emotions with replacement emotions, numbing out, alcohol, drugs, bingeing, or gambling

Why not just keep on avoiding? Because the consequences of emotion avoidance are usually worse than the experience of what we try to avoid.

- Since distress, discomfort, and anxiety are all a guaranteed part of life, emotion avoidance is often only a temporary and superficial “solution.”
- Emotion avoidance reinforces the idea that discomfort/distress/anxiety is “bad” or “dangerous.” It reduces your ability to face and tolerate necessary pain.
- Emotion avoidance often requires effort and energy. It’s exhausting and time-consuming.
- Emotion avoidance limits your ability to fully experience the present.
- Emotion avoidance can keep you from moving toward important, valued aspects of life.
- Emotion avoidance often doesn’t work. When you tell yourself not to think about something, you have to think about not thinking about it. When you try to avoid an emotion, you often end up feeling it anyway.
- Emotion avoidance often leads to suffering: addiction, helplessness, hopelessness, depression, damaged relationships, and lost opportunities.

By allowing yourself to experience fears—and difficult thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges—you can learn to decrease your suffering.

Emotion Avoidance Consequences Worksheet

Emotion	Pros of Avoiding	Cons of Avoiding	Cons of Experiencing	Pros of Experiencing

Mindful Coping Through Relaxation

When a powerful emotion has been triggered and you are suddenly facing your moment of choice, a mindful coping skill can help downregulate your emotions before you decide on a values-based action. Practice these relaxation techniques daily so that you can rely on them in your moment of choice.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Place one hand on your abdomen, just above the belt line, and the other on your chest.

Take a slow, deep breath into the abdomen. The hand on the abdomen should move but not the hand on the chest.

If you are having difficulty pushing the breath into your abdomen (and the hand on your chest is moving), you can do one of two things:

- Press your hand into your abdomen, and then inhale so that the breath pushes your hand out.
- Lie down and put a phone book over your abdomen. Breathe so that your inhale pushes the phone book up.

Practice 15 diaphragmatic breaths three times a day.

Relaxation Without Tension

Choose a cue word. Identify a word or phrase that you associate with relaxation. This could be a color (golden light, sea blue), a place that calms you (Tuolumne, Shenandoah), a command (“relax now”), or a spiritual mantra (*om, peace on earth, I let go*). This cue word will become associated with, and soon trigger, deep relaxation.

Observe a muscle group (see next paragraph) and notice any tension. Take a deep, diaphragmatic breath. At the top of the breath, say to yourself the cue word. Now, as you exhale, relax away any tension in the target muscle group. Do this process twice with each muscle group, in any order.

The five muscle groups you will relax are:

- Face (forehead and jaw)
- Neck and shoulders
- Arms and hands
- Chest, back, abdomen
- Legs (buttocks, thighs, calves, feet)

Practice this skill three times a day.

Cue-Controlled Breathing

Use the same cue word you established with Relaxation Without Tension.

Take a deep, diaphragmatic breath. At the top of the breath, say to yourself the cue word. Now, as you exhale, relax away any tension throughout your body at once. Let your body slump forward slightly as you exhale and release all tension.

Take 15 cue-controlled breaths three times a day to practice this new skill.

Five-Senses Exercise

For 30 seconds, focus on every sound you can hear: voices, traffic noise, machinery noise such as the hum of an air conditioner, sounds of movement, sounds your body makes. Try to keep your attention fully on these sounds. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to focusing on what you hear.

For 30 seconds focus on what you can smell: fragrances, odors, scents from your own body or the environment. Try to keep attention on what you smell; return to this focus when your mind wanders.

For 30 seconds focus on your sense of touch, including temperature and texture, noticing the pressure where your body touches the floor or chair. Return to your sense of touch when your mind wanders.

For 30 seconds focus on visual sensations, observing color and shapes, and noticing the objects in your environment. When you get distracted, bring your attention back to what you see.

For 30 seconds focus on your sense of taste. What residual tastes do you notice in your mouth—bitter, sweet, sour, salty? Are there more-subtle tastes? If you get distracted, bring your attention back to taste.

Practice this exercise twice daily as a way to focus attention away from negative thoughts and onto present-moment experience.

Mindful Coping Through Self-Soothing

This worksheet will help you identify some ways to soothe yourself using each of your five senses.

Sense of Smell

Using your sense of smell can activate specific thoughts, memories, or sensations that can be calming. If you identify smells that make you feel good in advance, you will be prepared to use them when triggered. Following are some examples, and feel free to add your own ideas:

- _____ Burn scented candles or incense that you like.
- _____ Wear scented oils, perfume, or cologne that makes you feel happy, confident, or sexy.
- _____ Carry perfumed cards from magazines, or ones that you make, in your purse, wallet, or car.
- _____ Go someplace where you know the scent is pleasing to you, such as a bakery or coffee shop.
- _____ Lie down in a park where you can smell grass, flowers, or other outdoor smells.
- _____ Buy flowers or find flowers in your neighborhood.
- _____ Hug someone whose smell makes you feel calm.
- _____ Other ideas: _____

Sense of Sight

Sight is an important sense for humans in that a large portion of our brain is devoted to what we see. What we look at can have powerful effects on our emotions, for better or for worse. If you identify images that make you feel good in advance, you will be prepared to use them when upset. Following are some examples, and a place for you to add your own ideas:

- _____ Look online, through magazines, and in books to select pictures you like. Make a collage of them to hang on your wall, add as a screensaver on your computer, or keep with you in your purse or wallet to look at throughout the day.

- _____ Find a physical place that's soothing for you to look at, like a park, a lake, a museum, or other landmark. Or take a picture of that place.
- _____ Go online or to the bookstore and find a collection of photographs or paintings that you find relaxing, such as the nature photographs by Ansel Adams.
- _____ Draw or paint a picture that's pleasing to you.
- _____ Carry a picture of someone you love, someone you find attractive, or someone you admire.
- _____ Other ideas: _____

Sense of Hearing

Certain sounds can be very soothing. For example, everyone has his or her own tastes or preferences in music. By identifying in advance songs or sounds you know are soothing for you, you will be prepared to use them to help calm down. Following are some examples, and a place for you to add your own ideas:

- _____ Listen to soothing music: classical, opera, oldies, new age, Motown, jazz, emo, whatever works for you. It might be instrumental or music with singing. Go online to iTunes and listen to a variety of music to determine what helps you relax. Look for preselected compilations for relaxation and meditation.
- _____ Listen to audiobooks or CDs. Many public libraries will let you check out audiobooks. Try some to see if they help you relax. You don't even have to pay attention to the story line; sometimes just listening to the sound of someone's voice can be relaxing.
- _____ Watch TV or stream shows on your computer. Find a show that's boring or sedate, not anything activating, like reality TV, or that would make you angry, like the news. Keep the volume at a low level.
- _____ Listen to a gentle talk-show podcast, like a gardening or music show.
- _____ Listen to white noise, a fan, or sound machine. White noise is a blend of sounds that blocks out other distracting sounds. A sound machine has recorded sounds such as birds, waterfalls, wind, rain, and waves. Many people find these machines very relaxing.

_____ Listen to the sounds of rushing or trickling water. Find a personal electronic water fountain or a nearby fountain in a park or a mall.

_____ Listen to a relaxation or meditation exercise. Exercises like these help you imagine yourself relaxing in different ways.

_____ Other ideas: _____

Sense of Taste

Our tongues have distinct regions on them that use taste buds to differentiate flavors and tastes of food. These sensations can also trigger memories and feelings. By identifying tastes you know are soothing for you in advance, you will be prepared to use them to deal with upsets. Following are some examples, and a place for you to add your own ideas:

_____ Enjoy your favorite meal. Eat it slowly and mindfully so you can savor all of its various flavors.

_____ Carry gum, mints, mouth spray, or other tasty treats with you to taste when you're feeling upset.

_____ Eat a "comfort" food that's soothing to you.

_____ Drink something you find soothing, such as tea, coffee, or hot chocolate.

_____ Suck on a popsicle or ice cube, especially if you're feeling warm.

_____ Find a piece of ripe, juicy fruit and eat it slowly.

_____ Other ideas: _____

Sense of Touch

Our skin is the largest organ in the body, and it's completely covered with nerves that carry sensations to our brain. This makes skin a powerful emotional messenger. By identifying tactile sensations you know are soothing for you in advance, you will be prepared to use them to quiet your emotions. Following are some examples, and a place for you to add your own ideas:

_____ Work in the garden, touching the cool earth.

_____ Carry something soft or velvety in your pocket to touch when you're upset.

- _____ Take a hot or cold shower and observe the sensations of water on your skin.
 - _____ Take a warm bath with bubbles or scented oil.
 - _____ Get a massage. If you're not comfortable taking your clothes off, look for massage types such as Shiatsu, which simply requires you to wear loose-fitting clothes. Or find a seated chair massage for a shoulder and neck rub.
 - _____ Massage yourself.
 - _____ Play with a pet—yours or someone else's. Stroking an animal's fur or skin can provide a soothing tactile experience. In fact, having a pet can have many health benefits, such as lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels, and reduced risk for heart disease. If you can't find a pet, visit your local animal shelter, where you can play with the rescued animals.
 - _____ Wear your most comfortable clothes, for instance a worn-in T-shirt, baggy sweats, and so on.
 - _____ Other ideas: _____
-

Distraction Strategies

The following handout will help you identify mindful coping ideas to distract yourself when you have already tried to use mindful acceptance and/or values-based action and are still feeling triggered.

Pay Attention to Someone Else

One effective way to shift your attention when you are emotionally triggered is to place your attention on someone else. Following are some examples of how you might do this, as well as a space for your own ideas:

- _____ Call your friends and ask if they need help doing something, such as a chore, grocery shopping, or housecleaning.
- _____ Ask any family members who live nearby if you can assist them with something: running errands, yard work, babysitting, walking the dog, etc.
- _____ Call your local soup kitchen, homeless shelter, volunteer organization, or advocacy group and sign up to help.
- _____ Bake cookies for a neighbor or coworker.
- _____ Send a “just because” card to someone you haven’t talked to in a while.
- _____ Write a thank-you email to someone who did something kind for you.
- _____ Write a handwritten letter to someone who has changed your life for the better and tell him or her why.
- _____ Make a list of people you admire and want to be like and write down why.
- _____ People-watch. Go to a local store, shopping center, bookstore, or park and notice what other people do, how they dress. Listen to their conversations. Observe as many details about other people as you can.
- _____ Play counting games while people-watching, for example, count the number of blue-eyed people versus brown-eyed people you see.
- _____ Think about someone you care about. What do you imagine he or she is doing right now?
- _____ Keep a picture of those you love in your wallet or purse. These people can range from family members to friends to public figures you admire. Look at the photo whenever you need comfort.

_____ Imagine having a healing, peaceful conversation with someone you deeply care about or admire. What would he or she say to you that would help you feel better? Imagine him or her saying this to you.

_____ Other ideas: _____

Pay Attention to Something Else

Our brains are amazing thinking machines. They produce millions of thoughts every day. Our emotions follow what we think about, and you can intentionally shift your thoughts when you're triggered to decrease your emotional activation. Following are some examples of how you might do this, as well as a space for your own ideas:

_____ Pay attention to the natural world around you. Observe the flowers, trees, sky, and landscape as closely as possible. Observe any animals that are around. Listen to all the sounds around you. Or, if you live in a city without much nature, observe what you can see and hear.

_____ Keep a copy of your favorite prayer or saying with you. When you feel distressed, read it to yourself. Imagine the words calming and soothing you. Use imagery (such as white light coming down from the sky) to soothe you as you read the words.

_____ Walk around your neighborhood or a park and notice the scenery, the colors, the textures of your surroundings.

_____ Listen to music that's pleasing to you. Also try listening to new music: from a different genre or from another country.

_____ Listen to an engaging audiobook. Close your eyes and really try to pay attention.

_____ Watch a TV show or movie you know will hold your attention and take your focus off yourself. Think about whether you would have written a different plot or ending.

_____ Learn a new language.

_____ Learn how to play a musical instrument.

_____ Write a letter to God or your higher power.

_____ Write in your journal.

_____ Other ideas: _____

Be Productive

Many people don't schedule time to take care of themselves or their living environments. Doing tasks and chores can be an effective way to shift your attention away from your distress. Following are some examples, and a place for you to add your own ideas:

- _____ Make a to-do list.
- _____ Wash the dishes.
- _____ Make phone calls to people with whom you are not angry and want to catch up with.
- _____ Clear your room or house.
- _____ Clean out your closet and donate old clothes.
- _____ Redecorate a room in your house.
- _____ Organize your books, files, drawers, etc.
- _____ Make a plan of action for finding a job, or for finding a better job if you already have one.
- _____ Make appointments with various people—doctor, dentist, optometrist, accountant, etc.—and arrive on time.
- _____ Get a new hairstyle or haircut.
- _____ Get a manicure or pedicure.
- _____ Get a massage.
- _____ Wash your car.
- _____ Plan something: a party, event, your next vacation.
- _____ Mow the lawn.
- _____ Plant a garden, or do gardening work in your own space or in a community garden.
- _____ Clean out your garage.
- _____ Do homework or other work.
- _____ Clean your bathtub and take a bath.

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_____ Go grocery shopping and cook a nice dinner for yourself.

_____ Pay bills.

_____ Other ideas: _____

Do a Pleasurable Activity

_____ Call or text a friend.

_____ Visit a friend or invite a friend to come over.

_____ Exercise: lift weights; do yoga, tai chi, or Pilates, or take classes to learn how; stretch your muscles; ride your bike; go swimming or hiking; play something you can do by yourself, such as basketball, bowling, handball, miniature golf, billiards.

_____ Get out of your house and go for a drive in your car, or ride public transportation.

_____ Plan a daytrip to somewhere you've always wanted to go.

_____ Sleep or take a nap.

_____ Eat something you really like.

_____ Cook your favorite meal.

_____ Watch TV or stream shows on the Internet.

_____ Go to a sporting event.

_____ Play video games.

_____ Join an Internet dating service.

_____ Create your own blog or website.

_____ Go shopping.

_____ Go to a bookstore and read.

_____ Go to your place of worship.

_____ Sing or learn how to sing.

_____ Take pictures.

- _____ Join a club or attend a meet-up group.
- _____ Make a movie or video with your phone.
- _____ Go to a flower shop and smell your favorite flowers.
- _____ Knit, crochet, or sew, or learn how.
- _____ Make a scrapbook.
- _____ Write a loving letter to yourself when you're feeling good, and read it when you're feeling upset.
- _____ Draw or paint a picture, or learn how.
- _____ Make a bucket list of things you want to do before you die.
- _____ Make a list of 10 things you're good at or that you like about yourself.
- _____ Masturbate or have sex with someone you care about.
- _____ Join a public-speaking group and write a speech.
- _____ Pray or meditate.
- _____ Other ideas: _____

Alternatives to Self-Destructive Behaviors

Some people who struggle with overwhelming emotions use self-destructive behaviors to temporarily relieve their distress. Instead of continuing to hurt yourself, consider using some tools to help shift your emotions rather than acting on them. Following are some examples, and a place for you to add your own ideas:

- _____ Instead of hurting yourself, hold an ice cube in one hand and squeeze it. The sensation from the cold ice will be numbing and distracting.
- _____ Write on yourself with a red felt-tip marker instead of cutting. Draw exactly where you would cut. Use red paint or nail polish to make it look like you're bleeding. Then draw stitches with a black marker. If you need more distraction, squeeze an ice cube in the other hand at the same time.
- _____ Snap a rubber band on your wrist each time you feel like hurting yourself. This is very painful, but it causes less permanent damage than cutting, burning, or otherwise mutilating yourself.
- _____ Dig your fingernails into your arm without breaking the skin.

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_____ Throw foam balls, rolled up socks, or pillows against the wall as hard as you can.

_____ Scream as loud as you can into a pillow or scream someplace where you won't draw attention, like your car or at a loud concert.

_____ Cry. Sometimes people don't cry because they're afraid that if they start they'll never stop. This never happens. In fact, the truth is that crying can make you feel better because it releases stress hormones.

_____ Other ideas: _____

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Take a Time-Out

Sometimes when you get emotionally triggered, the best thing you can do is leave, or take a “time-out.” If you find yourself in an extremely distressing situation with someone or something, and, after trying to practice mindful acceptance or enact a values-based action, you’re still very upset, it’s often best to distance yourself and shift your attention away from the trigger to a more positive present-moment experience.

Try to remember that if you’re already overwhelmed by your emotions, it will be more difficult to resolve your problem in a healthy way. If you stay in the situation, you may make it worse than it is already. If you can put some distance between you and the situation, and give yourself time to calm your emotions, you can better think about what to do next.

It may be helpful to rehearse doing this, or to write a short script ahead of time, so that you’ll know exactly how you want to excuse yourself from the situation. If you don’t feel you have time to excuse yourself, sometimes just walking away is the best you can do to keep from making a difficult situation worse.

Values Clarification Worksheet

Review the list below and circle your top 10 values.

Accountability	Contribution	Equality
Accuracy	Control	Excellence
Achievement	Cooperation	Excitement
Adventure	Correctness	Expertise
Altruism	Courtesy	Exploration
Ambition	Creativity	Expressiveness
Assertiveness	Curiosity	Fairness
Authenticity	Decisiveness	Faith
Balance	Dependability	Family
Belonging	Determination	Fitness
Boldness	Devoutness	Fluency
Calmness	Diligence	Focus
Carefulness	Discipline	Freedom
Challenge	Discretion	Friends
Cheerfulness	Diversity	Fun
Clear-mindedness	Dynamism	Generosity
Commitment	Economy	Grace
Community	Effectiveness	Growth
Compassion	Efficiency	Happiness
Competitiveness	Elegance	Hard work
Consistency	Empathy	Health
Contentment	Enjoyment	Helping
Continuous improvement	Enthusiasm	Holiness

EMOTION EFFICACY THERAPY

Honesty	Patriotism	Speed
Honor	Piety	Spontaneity
Humility	Positivity	Stability
Independence	Practicality	Strength
Ingenuity	Preparedness	Structure
Inner harmony	Professionalism	Success
Inquisitiveness	Prudence	Support
Insightfulness	Quality	Teamwork
Intellectual status	Reliability	Temperance
Intelligence	Resourcefulness	Thankfulness
Intuition	Restraint	Thoroughness
Joy	Results-oriented	Thoughtfulness
Justice	Rigor	Timeliness
Leadership	Security	Tolerance
Legacy	Self-actualization	Tradition
Love	Self-control	Trustworthiness
Loyalty	Self-reliance	Truth-seeking
Making a difference	Selflessness	Understanding
Mastery	Sensitivity	Uniqueness
Merit	Serenity	Unity
Obedience	Service	Usefulness
Openness	Shrewdness	Vision
Order	Simplicity	Vitality
Originality	Soundness	

Moment of Choice

As humans, we don't have control over whether or not we have emotions. Emotions will arise naturally in response to what's happening inside us and around us. But we can control how we respond to our emotions, and that's where we find true emotion efficacy.

This concept was illuminated by neurologist and psychiatrist Victor Frankl as follows:

Between stimulus and response there is space.

In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response.

In those choices lie our growth and happiness. (n.d.)

How effectively we respond to difficult emotions depends on being able to locate this "moment of choice." This moment is the time when you realize that you're emotionally triggered, and you realize you have the power to choose how to respond. You might think of it as a "sacred pause" when you can either react, avoid, or try to control it—or you can choose a response that is life enriching.

In EET, you'll learn a variety of skills you can choose to use in your moment of choice to help you respond to your emotions in a way that brings you close to what you want to create in the moment.

EET Model = Observe + Accept Emotions > Locate Moment of Choice > Choose EET Skill

Values Domains Worksheet

1. Intimate relationships Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

2. Parenting Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

3. Education/learning Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

4. Friends/social life Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

5. Physical self-care/health Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

6. Family of origin Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

I = Importance

Rate:

0 = unimportant

1 = moderately important

2 = very important

A = Action: How much action did you take in the last seven days toward your value?

Rate:

0 = no action

1 = one or two actions

2 = three or four actions

3 = five or more actions

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7. Spirituality Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

8. Community life/citizenship Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

9. Recreation Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

10. Work/career Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

11. _____ Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

12. _____ Value: _____ I = _____ A = _____

Values-Based Action:

I = Importance

Rate:

0 = unimportant

1 = moderately important

2 = very important

A = Action: How much action did you take in the last seven days toward your value?

Rate:

0 = no action

1 = one or two actions

2 = three or four actions

3 = five or more actions

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Values Domain Worksheet

(Client Sample)

1. Intimate relationships Value: Caring I = 2 A = 0

Values-Based Action:

Express concern, interest re: difficulty getting organized

2. Parenting Value: Supportive I = 2 A = 0

Values-Based Action:

Talk with gentleness/love when they didn't listen or are sassy

3. Education/learning Value: Learn how to write I = 1 A = 0

Values-Based Action:

Enroll in community college class

4. Friends/social life Value: Listen I = 1 A = 2

Values-Based Action:

Ask about what's going on, be interested. Don't interrupt or judge.

5. Physical self-care/health Value: Healthy stamina I = 1 A = 1

Values-Based Action:

Cardio exercise 3x week

6. Family of origin Value: _____ I = 0 A = 0

Values-Based Action:

7. Spirituality Value: _____ I = 0 A = 0

Values-Based Action:

EMOTION EFFICACY THERAPY

8. Community life/citizenship Value: Volunteering I = 1 A = 0

Values-Based Action:

Help at children's school

9. Recreation Value: _____ I = 0 A = 0

Values-Based Action:

10. Work/career Value: Support co-workers I = 2 A = 2

Values-Based Action:

Ask how their projects are going

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Benefits of Values-Based Action Worksheet

Now that you've identified your values—and you understand that the moment of choice presents an opportunity to make a helpful decision about how to respond in an emotion-filled situation—let's explore possible reactions. Answer the following questions about your values, your intentions, and your actions around your values.

How does values-based action affect my relationships with friends and family?

How does values-based action affect my relationship with my spouse or partner, or my living situation?

How does values-based action affect my relationships when I am emotionally triggered?

How does values-based action affect my work or school?

How does values-based action affect my financial situation?

How does values-based action affect my health?

How does values-based action affect my long-term goals?

How does values-based action affect my safety and security?

Client Coping Thoughts

Coping thoughts can be used when you are facing a difficult emotion. They may be especially helpful after you've practiced observing and accepting the difficult emotion, and you're still struggling with specific ruminations, or a repetitive automatic thought is fueling your emotion wave.

You now know that your emotions will follow whatever you pay attention to. If you're triggered, you're likely to have negative automatic thoughts. One way to tolerate the distress and shift your emotion is to replace the negative automatic thought with a coping thought. The key with a coping thought is that you believe it to be true and realistic. If you don't believe the thought, it's unlikely to be effective.

Following are some examples of coping thoughts:

"This situation won't last forever."

"I can feel anxious/sad/angry without reacting."

"I can tolerate this emotion until the wave goes down."

"This emotion won't kill me, it just doesn't feel good right now."

"I've dealt with this situation before, and I can do it again."

"I can take all the time I need to just let go and relax."

"I can let this emotion run the show, or I can use values-based action."

"Just because I feel this emotion, doesn't mean I have to act on it."

"I am not my emotions... I can choose my next action."

Replacing Automatic Thoughts with Coping Thoughts

Use this worksheet to record specific triggers, the automatic thoughts that go with them, and alternative coping thoughts with which you can replace them.

Trigger	Automatic Thought	Coping Thought
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

Replacing Automatic Thoughts with Coping Thoughts (Client Sample)

Trigger	Automatic Thought	Coping Thought
1. <i>Turning in a project to my boss.</i>	1. <i>My work isn't as good as it should be.</i>	1. <i>I'm doing my best, which is all I can do.</i>
2. <i>Being at a party with people I don't know.</i>	2. <i>If I don't say the right thing at this party, people are going to think I'm a loser.</i>	2. <i>I can have this thought without acting on it.</i>
3. <i>My wife comes home and goes straight to the bedroom.</i>	3. <i>My wife doesn't love me anymore.</i>	3. <i>My defectiveness schema is talking, but I'm not listening.</i>
4. <i>Anytime... . . .</i>	4. <i>Something's wrong with me.</i>	4. <i>I have strengths and weaknesses, just like everybody else.</i>
5. <i>My boss doesn't talk to me at the office-wide lunch.</i>	5. <i>My boss doesn't like me.</i>	5. <i>It's not my job to be liked. It's my job to do my job.</i>

The Art of Radical Acceptance

What It Is

Part of successfully navigating intense emotions is knowing when it's time to try to improve your situation and when it's time to accept it. *Radical acceptance* is another mindful coping skill that allows you to accept "what is" and stop suffering from rejecting the reality in front of you. We have a choice in every moment: to reject the reality of what is or to accept it. The choice we make will determine whether we continue to suffer or create space for something else to exist.

Our natural response to distressing emotions is to fight against the reality that we think caused them. In doing this, we can make ourselves and others miserable. Choosing radical acceptance—to accept "what is"—is a huge shift for most people. It feels like the opposite of what your emotions urge you to do when you encounter pain.

What It's Not

Radical acceptance does not mean you like or condone what happened. It just means that you accept the reality that it happened. In other words, some situations in life are simply unjust or unfair. In other situations, you may share responsibility for what happened. Either way, just because you accept that it happened doesn't mean you're condoning it.

The more you practice radical acceptance, the easier it will become to stop resisting what you cannot change.

Following are a few examples of radical acceptance:

"My girlfriend broke up with me, but it doesn't mean I have to retaliate or try to win her love back."

"I have suicidal thoughts all the time, but that doesn't mean I like having them or that I will act on them."

"I didn't set a reminder to pay that phone bill, so I will have to take responsibility for the consequences."

Radical acceptance requires a willingness to look at things differently. Sometimes our disappointments and moments of frustration were preventable. We can also practice radical acceptance by accepting what we might have done differently, and taking responsibility for how we didn't. For example, could you have prevented being late to an appointment, forgetting to do work assignments, or behaving in a way that was less than stellar? Moreover, could you have prevented lying to hurt someone or allowing yourself to be motivated by hate? Many times we have culpability in "what is." Accepting that is key to practicing radical acceptance.

While the outcomes of these situations may have serious consequences, they can also be opportunities for growth if you can view them as moments of learning. Often people who struggle with intense emotions believe that life is something that “happens” to them, instead of recognizing their own power in creating their experience.

The good news is that if we have responsibility in the things happening, we also have the power to make different choices—choices that can alleviate suffering and bring us closer to living the life we want in accordance with our values.

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Radical Acceptance

Assessing the Situation

Think of a situation you have no control over, but about which you struggle to accept. Then answer the following questions:

Describe briefly the distressing situation:

What past events led to the situation?

What role, if any, did you play in creating the situation?

What roles, if any, did others play in the situation?

What do you have control of in this situation?

What do you *not* have control of in this situation?

What was your response to this situation?

How did your response affect your own thoughts and feelings?

How did your response affect the thoughts and feelings of others?

How could you have changed your response to this situation so that it led to less suffering for yourself and others?

How could the situation have occurred differently if you had chosen to radically accept the situation?

How to Practice Radical Acceptance

Once you've identified the situation and have a clear understanding of it, you can use these steps to practice radical acceptance during imaginal exposure or when you get upset.

1. Recognize your resistance to the reality of "what is."
2. Practice mindful acceptance of the emotion that goes with the situation or reality. Using the four components of emotion, make room for all your thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges, allowing them to be there without reacting or acting on them.
3. Stop resisting by reminding yourself of the facts, such as: "This is just the way it is, I can't change it" or "I have to accept the consequences of my actions."

Emotion Efficacy Therapy Skills

You now have a whole new set of skills to use to help you make choices that are effective and consistent with your values when you get triggered. Use the following list to review the EET skills you've learned and to complete the Personalized Emotion Efficacy Plan worksheet.

Mindful Acceptance

- _____ Sensation Acceptance
- _____ Feeling Labeling
- _____ Thought Watching
- _____ Urge Noticing
- _____ Emotion Surfing

Mindful Coping

- _____ Relaxation
- _____ Self-Soothing
- _____ Pleasurable Activities
- _____ Coping Thoughts
- _____ Distraction
- _____ Time-Out

Values-Based Action

- _____ Identify your value and the corresponding action in the moment of choice
-