

Advice

Emotional Identification, Perception

- **Stay in touch with your feelings.** Pay attention to what triggers them and how you react.
- **Pay attention to your body when you're upset, sad or angry.** What are the signs? Learning to recognize how you react in response to different sentiments can help you become more in tune with your emotions.
- **Be honest with yourself.** Everyone feels things, and it's nothing to hide or be nervous about. Emotions are important signals that we need to listen to in order to feel more fulfilled in life.
- **Get to know yourself better.** For example, make a list of your strengths and limitations. The more in touch you are with who you are, the better you will be able to understand and handle your emotions.
- **Take small steps if you're not used to expressing emotions.** Start with those that are the least intimidating and you will surely find that it's not as bad as you think. On the positive side, begin with genuine compliments and then take it further to an expression of appreciation. When you need to communicate a negative feeling, try writing it if you feel too intimidated to say it. Like learning any new skill, it will get easier with practice.
- **Consider the implications of not releasing your feelings.** A lack of intimacy with others, pent up feelings, health problems, etc.
- **Remember that communication involves a lot more than what is just said.** Our gestures, expressions and tone of voice send just as strong (or even stronger signals) than the words we choose, and can let us know how others are feeling (and lets other know how we are feeling).

Emotional Facilitation of Thought

- **Practice distinguishing between what you are thinking and what you are feeling.** They are not always one and the same, and we need to recognize this in order to clearly express and understand where our feelings are coming from.
- **View setbacks as short-lived.** Whenever you are feeling overwhelmed and find yourself plunging into negativity, remind yourself that things can get better. If you're having a hard time in a class you're taking, for example, or you're having relationship problems, look at it as temporary. Whatever the situation, you can take proactive steps to deal with the underlying issues. Even if you are faced with something that you will have to deal with for a lifetime (like a health problem or family issue), there is always some way to improve the situation. You will grow stronger, heal, or find better ways to cope.
- **Refuse to be a victim.** Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman, renowned author and noted expert on positive psychology, states that the feeling of being a victim leads to learned helplessness. If you blame your problems on other people or circumstances, you will avoid taking personal responsibility for your life. While it may be true that there are things beyond your control, the majority of what happens in your life is up to YOU. Life may throw you many curveballs, but it is you who decides how you'll react to them.
- **Don't brush aside your gut instinct or intuition.** Gut instinct is that voice in your head, that warning bell, that's trying to tell you that something isn't right. Some refer to it as a sixth sense. Whatever the label, it can

offer us valuable information if we take a moment to listen. Those who ignore this inner voice can often end up regretting it. This doesn't mean that logic has no benefits. The perfect balance, in fact, would be to think a situation through, and then going with what feels right.

- ***The good and the bad.*** Both good and bad feelings facilitate the thinking process by allowing us to view things from different perspectives. Did you ever notice how, when thinking pessimistically about a problem, you come up with solutions that are in line with that thinking, and when you think positively, the perspective and solutions change? Our feelings, good and bad, offer us different perspectives on the world. While one perspective may be more beneficial than the other, both angles offer us valuable information about the world around us, and about ourselves.

Emotional Understanding

- ***Empathy.*** While you certainly can't fake empathy, you can increase your connection to other people by truly listening and trying to put yourself in their shoes.
- ***Put empathy in action.*** Get involved in helping people in some way (i.e. volunteering); the closer you get to a situation, the more you will realize the difficulties others might be facing.
- ***Put aside your own preoccupations.*** Consider what might be going through other people's minds in different situations. Ask yourself how you would feel in a similar situation - there are always several perspectives. Try to identify at least 2 or 3 different ways to look at it.
- ***Understand that everyone has his or her bad days.*** Sure it can be hard to overlook it when someone snaps at you or is otherwise unpleasant, but remembering that nearly everyone is unpleasant sometimes when under stress (even you!) can help you learn to take things less personally.
- ***Put yourself in the other person's shoes.*** Think about how your actions will affect others before you act. If you are unsure, ask! Not everyone thinks the same way you do. If your actions will have an effect on others, ask them if they are ok with the decision before you act.
- ***Be aware of how others respond to you.*** Pay attention to how others are reacting, and what they are communicating to you. Putting in the extra effort to really listen and observe can teach you a lot about human interaction and emotions.
- ***Don't fall victim to "The Fundamental Attribution Error".*** We as humans are forever trying to figure out the causes of other's actions. All too often, we attribute misfortunate behavior on the part of others to dispositional rather than situational factors. For instance, writing others off as jerks for snapping at you rather than looking for external causes such as being sick or having been fired that day. As a result, we are less forgiving than many situations call for. Try to understand that others are under just as much pressure and stress as you are and as a result, their behavior may not always represent who they are as people.

Emotional Management

- ***Question your beliefs.*** Do you think ignoring your emotions will make them go away? While this may be true for minor issues, strong feelings will manifest themselves in other ways (health problems, bitterness, etc.).
- ***Boost your coping skills.*** Build a supportive social network, learn how to relieve stress, etc.

- **Step back.** If you're prone to losing control of your emotions, try taking a step back from heated situations. Give yourself some time to gain control rather than reacting immediately.
- **Practice.** Practice keeping your feelings under control (without suppressing them) and it will become more natural. Learn the appropriate times to express them so that they don't boil over in inappropriate situations.
- **The source of emotions.** Remember: emotion is just a whirlwind of activity passing through your body and mind. You help create it and feed it; how you react is important to its outcome. See a professional in cognitive therapy if you wish to learn concrete strategies to overcome negative thought patterns and to question any heavily ingrained beliefs.
- **Don't try to avoid confrontation at all costs.** This results in a buildup of unresolved anger and frustration for both people. Sulking and denial do not accomplish anything either. Besides, bottled up frustration finds its way out, one way or another.
- **Take a time out.** "When angry count to ten; when very angry count to 100." It's not always easy to maintain your composure when you feel like your "buttons" are being pushed, but it is essential that you make an effort to do so. It's important to cool down emotionally when a situation makes you upset or stressed. As time passes, you will be able to be more objective about the issues and to sort out the situation more clearly. Count for as long as it takes for you to reach a state of mind conducive to the cool, rational consideration of possible consequences of your actions. This counting technique can be used no matter what the intense feeling is.