

Click to prove  
you're human























First, we have to get familiar with what the opposites of the usual emotional urges are. We will work on four emotions, since they have the most potential to lead to ineffective behaviors: anger, sadness, anxiety and shame. We won't focus on the positive emotions, because they usually lead to positive behaviors such as approaching others, being effective and motivated. Emotion Urge Opposite Urge Anger To verbally or physically attack someone Being polite, more gentle or nice Anxiety/fear To avoid the anxiety-provoking situation To remain in the anxiety-provoking situation Sadness To isolate yourself from others To seek support and socialize Shame To hide from people or to avoid them To approach others and share your thoughts (if appropriate) Now that you know what the opposites of the usual emotional urges are, there are two things that follow. First, when you find yourself in a situation where you experience overwhelming emotions, try to identify what it is that you are feeling. Next, think about whether expressing your natural emotional urge is useful and effective in the situation or not. For example, if you are depressed and you really just want to stay in bed the whole week and not see anybody, that would probably not be the effective solution. If you are very angry with your son's behavior, it probably wouldn't be a good solution to bluntly act on your anger and verbally attack him. If after some consideration you've decided that your primary emotional urge is not the most effective path to take, then move on to the next step. The idea behind acting the opposite of your emotional urge is to engage in this alternative behavior until your emotion eventually changes its quality or gets diminished. Although at the beginning this may not sound as the most natural thing to do, remember that the only reason why we feel like hiding ourselves when we are ashamed or avoiding the situation when we are anxious is because it feels right. But that is not a good enough reason to simply go with the behavior - what our feelings tell us is not always right, they are temporary and programmed mechanisms. Check the table from the first step again, and try to engage in the opposite respective behavior. See what happens, experiment. Maybe you will really find that this is a strategy that works great for you! It may take a little while to start feeling the effects of the new behavior, i.e. for the original emotion to change. This is why you should try and be persistent with doing the opposite action. Give this new strategy a little time. Looking at this from the perspective of the wise mind, if this new opposite action is suitable and justified, it should feel right and intuitively appropriate. Use the worksheet provided to write down how this exercise went for you. 1. Situation: I should give a presentation at work, one for which I was preparing for two weeks. 2. Emotion and effectiveness of emotional urge: I feel very ashamed (emotion) and I find it really difficult to stand up in front of everybody and present my hard work. I am thinking about calling in sick and canceling the presentation (emotional urge). I've been working really hard for this and objectively it's probably not justified or useful for me to do this (effectiveness of emotional urge). 3. Acting the opposite way: I should probably go with the feelings of shame and performance anxiety and do the presentation even though I know it will feel uncomfortable. I should share my work because I worked hard. 4. Repeating: I felt really uncomfortable presenting my work and answering my colleagues' questions but at the end after I finished I felt relieved and I had a sense of accomplishment. It was not easy, but I am glad I did it. Respond in a certain way/react in a certain way Many emotions are self-protective. They encourage us to react or respond in difficult situations. Emotions are responsible for our "fight, flight, or freeze" reactions. With the help of emotions, our bodies instinctively try to protect us and keep us safe in situations that seem dangerous. The good. The bad. The nonjudgmental. There are no good emotions. There are no bad emotions. There are just emotions. Some may be more pleasant than others, but each human emotion is equally valuable. Each one has a purpose and something to communicate. An important reason to listen to each emotion is to evaluate whether or not it is giving you accurate information. But emotions aren't always right. An important reason to listen to each emotion is to evaluate whether or not it is giving you accurate information. We may feel guilt when we haven't done anything wrong, fear when we are in no danger, or joy in an unhealthy relationship. Even when your emotions don't fit the situation, they are still giving you information. Unnecessary feelings of guilt might indicate that you need to practice holding boundaries for yourself. Unnecessary feelings of fear may be saying that you would benefit from challenging yourself more in this area. When you are aware of your emotions, you can decide whether or not they fit the facts of your situation. Examples of Emotions and Their Functions LOVE Love can let us know that something is going right. It could be that the overall relationship is going well, or maybe it's just one aspect of the relationship. GUILT When we feel guilt, it could be a sign that we've done wrong and we can work to correct it. If you're feeling guilty and you realize something is off in a relationship, the guilt is letting you know that you might need to take action to correct the relationship. ANGER Anger is a very common emotion that lets us know we've been wronged. We can use this emotion to inform us how to make the situation better. Perhaps we need to confront the person who wronged us, or simply vent to a trusted friend or family member who understands. SHAME You may have heard that shame is the only emotion without a purpose. While it might arguably be the most unpleasant, shame does have a purpose. Shame gives us information about our faulty core beliefs. For example, if you feel shame when your friends exclude you, your faulty core belief may be "I'm not wanted". Once you're aware of the faulty beliefs that cause feelings of shame, you'll be better able to process through these beliefs. ANXIETY There are two types of anxiety: productive and nonproductive. Nonproductive anxiety is so intense that it stops you from getting your daily tasks done. This anxiety is too intense for the situation that surrounds it. Nonproductive anxiety may cause you to feel so overwhelmed that it increases stress and decreases your ability to handle things effectively. Productive anxiety, on the other hand, is very natural and innate in almost everyone. This anxiety helps us to be prepared and accomplish regular activities. This is the anxiety that gets us to work on time and encourages us to study for a test. SADNESS/GRIEF When we're experiencing sadness and grief, we naturally want to seek out and receive support from those we love. Having support makes it easier to get through the grieving process. When we lack appropriate support, it can be very difficult to process through these emotions. In addition to the urge to seek support, those around us experience an urge to comfort us when we appear to be sad or grieving. When we try to avoid connection or pretend we aren't sad, it further complicates our experience and our overall emotional health. HAPPINESS When we experience genuine happiness, it is a signal that something is going right. We are able to feel happiness even while we are dealing with difficult life situations. Emotional Regulation Exercises Once you understand the function of emotions, you can use dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) skills to help with emotion regulation. These skills will encourage you to accumulate positive experiences, build mastery, cope ahead, and take care of your physical health. We encourage our students at Sunrise to experience all emotions. Some teens come in stuck in unpleasant emotions, while others may deny ever feeling any negative emotions. For many students, it can take several months for them to feel comfortable acknowledging and expressing a variety of emotions. Incorporating the knowledge of emotions into your life can increase your understanding of yourself and others. One student came to Sunrise with severe trauma. She had been stuffing her true emotions surrounding the event for several years, and presented as superficially bright and cheerful. It took months for her to be able to express how angry and sad she was. We encouraged her to continue experiencing these feelings for as long as she needed to. This turning point allowed her to experience all emotions more genuinely and move forward in her treatment. Incorporating the knowledge of emotions into your life can increase your understanding of yourself and others. It can help you to know what others may be experiencing and why they are reacting in a certain way. When those around you experience emotions you may not understand, don't invalidate the emotion by communicating that what they're feeling doesn't matter or doesn't make sense. Instead, pay attention to what information the emotion is giving you, and how it can help you understand this person better. If your child is acting hostile toward you while clothes shopping, ask yourself if it's really you that they are angry with. If so, why? If not, what's going on for them? Instead of assuming, ask them. Ask what they are experiencing, and how you can help. It's common for anger to be conveyed when they are actually just trying to figure out how to express a different emotion. Maybe your son or daughter is stressed looking for items that will help them fit in at school. Perhaps they are experiencing body image issues and they're exacerbated by clothes shopping. Or maybe they are worried about how much the clothes will cost and that they are not worthy of such a large expense. When working on these skills at home, pay close attention to what the emotional experience is trying to tell you. Remember that every emotion has a purpose. The more aware you are of your feelings, you'll find that you better understand yourself and the people around you. Sunrise uses more comprehensive outcomes than any other fully integrated DBT program. By integrating DBT into every aspect of our program, your teen will live the skills, not just learn them. We focus on the family to create a healthy system in which your son or daughter will thrive after returning home. Through therapy, activities, academics, and support, your teen will become a healthy young adult with a passion for life. If practicing emotion regulation and other DBT skills at home hasn't been enough to help your teen and family, we're happy to discuss treatment options with you. FacebookTwitterRedditLinkedInWhatsAppTumblrPinterestVkEmail © Sunrise Residential Treatment Program, an Embark Behavioral Health program | All Rights Reserved | Built by Venture Creative When you experience emotions, there are changes in your body. Sometimes people have trouble sensing their body changes. To regulate your emotions you have to be pretty good at sensing what is going on in your body. If you have practiced shutting off our body sensations, this can be difficult. However it is a learned response and you can unlearn. Emotions involve body changes such as tensing and relaxing muscles, changes in heart rate, breathing rate, skin temperature and color, increases and decreases in blood pressure, etc. The most important of these changes for you to be aware of are the facial changes: clenched jaw, tightened cheek and forehead muscles, tightened muscles around the eyes so that they widen or narrow, grinding teeth, loosening and tightening around the mouth. Take note of your posture and facial expression. Are you hunched over, trying to make yourself smaller? Are you smiling? What are your hands doing? Are they open, willing hands or are you wringing them? These seemingly small changes communicate a lot about how you're feeling. Researchers now believe that changes in the facial muscles play an important part in causing emotions. That's why Half-Smile works. 4. Action Urges Emotions involve what are called action urges. An important function of emotions is to prompt behaviors. For example if you feel angry, you may be prompted to fight. Or if you feel fear, you may be prompted to run. The action itself, the fighting, or running, or hugging is not part of the emotion, but the urge to do the action, the feeling that prompts you to do the action, is considered part of the emotion. For example, if you feel angry at someone, you may feel an urge to start yelling at them. That urge is part of the angry feeling. But the fighting is not part of the feeling. 5. Expression and Communication One of the most important functions of emotions is to communicate. In order to communicate something, an emotion has to be expressed. Sometimes, if you have not learned to express your emotions, you may think you are communicating but the other person isn't getting it. This can cause misunderstandings. Emotions are expressed by facial expressions, words and actions. Expressing emotions through behaviors can also cause problems, because different people interpret behaviors in different ways. Marsha Linehan, the founder of DBT, developed a 6-step technique that will help you look more closely at the way your emotions spiral out of control. When you familiarize yourself with this technique, you will be able to apply it next time you feel like you are burdened by an avalanche of overwhelming emotions that are piling up. Sometimes we are not even aware of everything that we felt in the situation, or how we were actually thinking about the situation. Becoming mindful about these six phases, as opposed to being on autopilot, can make a world of difference between a healthy and a harmful way of coping with an emotional whirlwind. Think of a situation from the past where you felt overwhelmed with a lot of emotions. It can be about any aspect of your life. Describe the situation - what happened, where it happened, who was involved. Write down your thoughts on what you think caused the situation. The way you explain the situation to yourself will shape your emotions about the situation. Try to remember the situation you picked and be honest about what your thinking process was like during the event. What do you think caused the main aspects of the situation? Now that you described the situation and what you think caused it, it's time to describe how you felt as a result. Try to remember what your emotions were. What did you first feel? Were there other emotions that you felt as a response to the first one? For example, maybe first you felt disappointed at somebody, and very shortly afterward you felt anger and self-hatred, and eventually that led to you feeling sad. When you feel overwhelming emotions, you probably have physical sensations in your body because of the emotions. Do you remember how your body felt during the situation? Were you tense, had a fast heart-beat, or sweating? Perhaps you felt like crying and your body started trembling. What did you want to do as a result of your emotions? What was your first urge? What action did you want to take? This is not necessarily what you eventually did, it can be just a thought that you briefly had. This is a very important step as you become more used to this technique. Next time you find yourself in a situation where you experience overwhelming emotions, recognizing your urges can help you to not automatically act on them. In this step, think about what you actually did. What action did you take as a result of your emotions? Take your time and try to remember. Did you have an argument with somebody because you felt really hurt and angry? Try to remember what you said to the other person if there are other people involved in the situation. How did this situation, your emotions and your resulting actions affect you later? Was the outcome of this situation good for you or not really? This step focuses on the consequences that you may experience in the longer term. Being observant and honest with ourselves about whether the outcome of our emotionally-induced actions is good or bad for us can be very important for making a change. Phase Experience Describe the situation I had a usual day at work, I came home where I live alone, and had an evening by myself. There was nothing extraordinary about the day. What caused the situation? I live a boring life, I avoid everything that is out of my comfort-zone. So just like every other day, nothing exciting happened. Primary and secondary emotions At first I felt really bored, but this grew into a feeling of sadness and disappointment about the lack of interesting things going on in my life. By the end of the day I just felt really empty. Identify your urges I didn't feel like doing anything useful, I just wanted to sit in front of the TV and drink wine. What did you do? That is exactly what I did. Outcome I drank more than I wanted to, I woke up the next morning, hung-over with a terrible migraine. I had to call in sick and I missed work. Sometimes, you just need a long List of Emotions. This printout is just that. The 57 emotions listed in this worksheet range from basic (e.g., happiness, sadness) to complex (e.g., inadequate, disdain). It can be helpful to have one of these worksheets handy when you're working with clients who have difficulty verbalizing how they feel. Let them choose from a list so they can better express themselves, and teach some new emotion words in the process. If you want to get creative, this worksheet can be used for a number of other purposes, as well. For example, you might ask group members to take a few minutes to circle the emotions they have experienced within the past week, and then to share their responses. This sort of activity serves as an excellent icebreaker, or an activity to improve emotional literacy. For illustrated emotion activities for children, check out the Emotion Faces handout and interactive therapy tool: Emotion Cards: Questions interactive tool Printable Emotion Faces worksheet Emotions are helpful and important. They communicate information to us about our environment and our experience. Goals of Emotional Regulation include: naming and understanding our own emotions, decrease the frequency of unpleasant emotions, decrease our vulnerability to emotions, and decrease emotional suffering. STOP Opposite Action ABC Please Build Mastery Cope Ahead Positive Self Talk Triggers lead to... Emotions ...lead to Action 2025 © DBT.tools | Website made & designed by: JW-Design The information contained on this and subsequent pages is intended for informational purposes only. Much of the information is based on the work of Marsha Linehan who developed DBT. If you or someone you know is struggling with sadness, depression, or any difficult emotion, please contact a local professional for psychological therapy. Does the definition sound similar to Distress Tolerance? Let's explore the difference further. Both skills are crucial, and they help you handle your emotions in different ways. Emotion Regulation is more about managing your emotions on a day-to-day basis, while Distress Tolerance is about getting through those high-stress moments without falling apart. Here is an analogy: In Emotion Regulation, you are a chef. But instead of food, you are cooking with your emotions. Like ingredients, you identify your emotions, know where they came from, peel them, prep them. You get to know what triggers your emotions and you learn to identify them. You also follow a recipe to cook your emotions, maybe turn down the heat at intervals and add some seasonings of various activities to find the balance. As a chef, you are also in charge of preventing kitchen accidents by employing habits like sleeping well, eating nutritious food, and avoiding your emotional triggers. In Distress Tolerance, you are the captain of a ship. Your emotional crises are the storm and your aim is to get through them. Like the tools and parts of the ship, Distress Tolerance also equips you to brave through the storm without the ship tipping over. It also helps you employ techniques to not panic or become too emotional and make things worse. In essence, they both let you deal with emotions but in different ways.