

Six steps to deal with difficult emotions

1. Become aware of your emotion and pause. Breathe slowly and ground yourself in the present moment.

Notice what is there as it is, avoiding pushing away or criticising yourself unduly.

- How is this emotion expressed in your body?
- Where is the tension in your body?
- What are your thoughts in this situation?



2. Identify and label the emotion as the observer.

Instead of saying: “I am anxious” try saying: “Anxiety is here” or “This is anxiety... this is how anxiety feels” without judging or reacting to it. If you are angry try saying: “This is anger”, “This is how it feels when there is anger”. Naming the emotion, like you would tell a friend with acceptance and kindness.

If there are a few emotions can you name the main one?

Can you just be with the emotion with curiosity and acceptance without wanting to push it away?

3. Noticing your common humanity.

You can realise that you are not the only one to feel this emotion. In similar situation other people would feel and react in a similar way.

- Can you validate your struggle?
- What would you say to a dear friend who is in a similar situation and then say that to yourself?

4. Treating yourself and others with compassion and kindness

This emotion does not define you. You are more than your thoughts or experience. You can notice it, be still a moment, breathe intentionally, ground yourself, mindfully step out of thoughts and turn toward your inner source of wisdom.

- Can you be kind to yourself for having those feelings?
- Can you become aware that this feeling will come and go?

5. Inquire, investigate, perspective taking.

Once you are calmer can you ask yourself:

- Can I see this in a different way?
- What was triggering me in this situation?
- Can I think this in a way that is true, kind, helpful and pointing to a solution?
- If there is another person involved, why were they reacting in this way?

6. Problem solving

Finally, can you ask yourself:

- How do I keep myself and others safe here?
- What is in the best interest for myself and others here?
- What is important for me in this situation?
- What is my intention here?
- What do I need now?
- How can I act according to my values in this situation?

This advice is of a general nature only and does not take into account particular conditions. For further assistance contact a general practitioner or psychologist

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