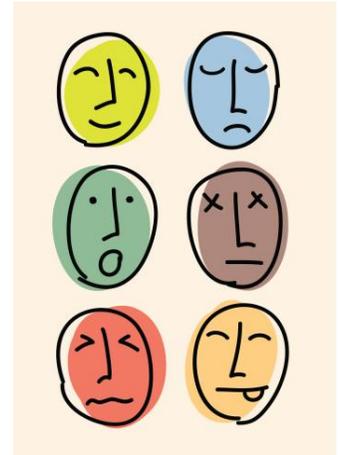


Emotion self-coaching

Emotions come and go. They are like the weather! We can't dismiss them easily. They are there to be felt and to be known. They give us valuable information about ourselves and our surroundings. We can develop emotional coaching for ourselves and others which become sound emotional hygiene. We can have extreme emotional outbursts to quite minor triggers as we learn the difficult task of managing our own emotions. We will make mistakes, we will over-react, this is part of the human condition: "Not our fault", but we are still responsible for our emotional reactions. We can choose to react less and to respond in a way that serves others and ourselves better, to gain more resilience and to create stronger relationships with more harmony in our dealings with others.

We can learn to better regulate our own emotions by practising emotional coaching so we can be calmer and better able to problem-solve. Key is to first acknowledge, empathise, then validate, normalise, name/label the emotion, have self-compassion and then problem solve. Emotional coaching is something we can practice ourselves so we can better help our children to manage their own emotions to promote emotional intelligence and resilience.



1. Acknowledge, recognize the emotion. We can notice the emotion as it arises before it becomes too intense before our amygdala is over-engaged, so we can think more clearly. Emotions give us a tunnel vision and narrow our focus of thinking and perspective.

- Notice, acknowledge your emotional reactions to certain triggers. Finding the words to describe how you are feeling, using a calm, quiet inner voice, saying something like:
"What am I feeling now?", "Am I feeling fearful, frustrated, disappointed or angry?"
- You can also explore how this feeling is being felt in your body and in your mind. Asking yourself:
"How is this emotion expressed in my body?"
"Where are the areas of tension or discomfort in the body?"
- you can explore the self-talks that are behind this emotion, asking yourself:
"What am I saying to myself about this situation?"

2. Recognising the struggle, validate: We acknowledge having this emotion and that it is difficult and unpleasant. In a moment of mindfulness, we recognise that this situation is a struggle saying something like:

"This is difficult", "ouch this hurt" or "this is stressful". "But I can meet the emotions with kindness and courage".

3. Normalise: Sensitively, recognising our common humanity, that is, that we are not alone or different. Recognising that other people in a similar situation would feel those emotions or react in this way. Saying this to ourselves, not in a dismissive way, but, more as an acknowledgement that we are together in feeling those difficult emotions. Just like me others struggle and suffer in this way. We can say to ourselves when appropriate: "in a similar situation, other people would feel like that", "it is a normal way to react", "I am not alone", "I am in company".

4. Naming/labelling the emotion with acceptance: Being aware of the emotion and then naming it gently, realising that we are more than this emotion. This emotion does not define you and is only one part of you, not the whole of you. In this way, you can become the observer of your emotion rather than

being fused with it. For instance instead of saying “I am angry” saying softly and gently “This is anger”, “This is how anger feels”. Or again instead of saying “I am scared”, you can say “This is fear” or “Fear is arising in me”, or this is how fear feels”.

6. Compassion and self-compassion. If you are reacting to someone else’s action, you can ask yourself why this other person reacted in this way. Asking yourself: What were their struggles, their fears, their grief? It may be helpful to take the time to explore their perspective even if you don’t agree with them, then wishing to help and support yourself and possibly the other person involved. You can have compassion for yourselves being in this difficult situation and practising the self-compassion break (see another handout).

7. Problem-solving. It is not the feeling that is the problem but sometimes it is our reaction to the feelings that cause the problems. Remembering that we are more than our feelings, we can notice our feelings and then decide to respond in ways that are helpful and constructive, according to our good intentions.

You can focus on managing the feelings by using practices such as:

- breathing out and belly breathing
- mindfulness of present moment: using the 5 senses to be in the here and now
- soothing, comforting touch
- notice the sole of your feet: focus on sensations of the feet touching the ground
- going for a walk, having a glass of water and so on.

8. We can attend to ourselves by asking: “what does this feeling need now?” or “what are the ways to deal with this?”, “what would I do next time?” and so on. Asking yourselves how you can resolve this situation in a positive, constructive way.

9. We can also ask ourselves **what would I say to a friend** who would be in a similar situation and then say that to ourselves.

10. We can journal the whole process of emotion coaching and then end it with a compassionate letter from the perspective of a good friend who is supportive and encouraging, who knows our strengths and good intentions. That is we can write what we would say to a good friend who is experiencing this, to support and encourage them in the form of a letter. Once we write it down, we can then read it as if it was addressed to ourselves.

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

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