

Are Your Emotional Problems Preventing Life Being Enjoyable?

Self Help to Help You Overcome Emotional Limitations

Eliminating the Negative



We all want to experience constant happiness. Most people experience negative emotions that prevent them performing at their full potential. These limitations may occur in response to a particular situation or the possibility of one.

Our brains seem programmed to remember negative emotional experiences more easily than positive ones. While in the short term these can be useful in avoiding some kind of danger, they can outlive their usefulness.

Negative emotions are generally stored in the deeper, subconscious parts of the right brain. This is the part of the brain that acts like a sponge when we are younger. It tends to associate a negative emotional response with particular features of something. So for example as a child we may be bitten by a dog and as an adult we may be scared of dogs but also have a fear response when we are subtly threatened or to something the same colour, texture, loud noise or other association. These negative emotional responses trigger the stress responses in the body such as increased heart rate, blood pressure etc; which would help us physically escape a dangerous situation. This is the 'Freeze, Fight or Flight Response'.

There are various ways to help overcome these fears and free ourselves from the habitual emotional responses that colour our lives and limit our potential enjoyment of it. Neurological research has discovered various ways in which these over active negative emotional areas, can be turned down.

The basic mechanism is that the front part of the right brain, which only matures in our early twenties, is able to switch off these negative emotions. Until these areas mature, we are vulnerable to these emotional habitual responses. These areas only mature with use. When we choose to learn to use these areas of the brain we can start to become free of our negative emotional habits and become a parent to our younger, more vulnerable self.

The front right part of the brain has an important role in attention. It also has a relatively simple language ability, which involves the emotional vocabulary. Research has found that paying attention to the emotion and naming them can turn down the activity in the negative emotional areas of the brain. This helps trigger the 'Relaxation Response'. A note of caution – this attention is looking at them in a way so you are not claiming the emotions as you, i.e. it is a 'non-judgemental' awareness.



It is said many people these days have short attention spans, so learning techniques to increase attention can be a useful means to escape the prison of negative emotions. Techniques which may be used to help improve attention could be meditation, but there are many others including learning new skills such as playing a musical instrument, learning to dance or painting or simply placing your attention outwards.

Overall, these techniques should help you to 'keep calm and carry on' and in triggering the 'Relaxation Response', help recharge your batteries and reduce some of the physiological effects of stress.



Below I'll outline some of the techniques. It's practise that is important. It's no good expecting to be able to perform at the Wimbledon final if you've never played any tennis before. It's the old scout metaphor "be prepared". Depending on your attention ability you will be more or less successful. However some of the techniques are more easily applied in situations where the more sophisticated techniques may appear to be way beyond you.

I offer these techniques based on my understanding on 3 decades of learning about the brain and nervous system. Though these techniques have often been drawn from different spiritual traditions – they have either neurological evidence of effectiveness or make sense from a neurological perspective.

SNM Technique – Recognising the Conflict

The left part of the brain is involved in planning and forming goals. We may have a desire for something to be true. But due to our programming or experiences might be in conflict with our ability to achieve this goal - our right brain may be saying "No Way". Simply by reflecting on what it is you want and what is concerning you emotionally can be helpful in moving towards resolving.

- 1. Reflect on your emotional state.**
- 2. Ask yourself "What is my poverty here?"** – what area of my life am I feeling uncomfortable about - is it my attitude, relationships, beliefs, physical, chemical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, financial etc. ?
- 3. What is it that I want/ desire (to be true, that doesn't appear to be true at the moment)?**
- 4. What is it that I am bound to?**
e.g. I might desire to go on an holiday. I might not be able to afford it financially or time wise.

This is self-help in a nutshell version of the Neuro-Emotional Technique (NET). It combines a few different approaches but I call it SNM Technique in honour of an 'Eastern Sage' Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj who recommended these questions.

Paying Attention – But Not Claiming

The emotional bit of the brain can and will keep firing over and over again until it is switched off. Research shows that this part of the brain can be switched off by the activating the right frontal parts of our brains, that usually matures only in our early 20's. The front right part of the brain is important for attention. So



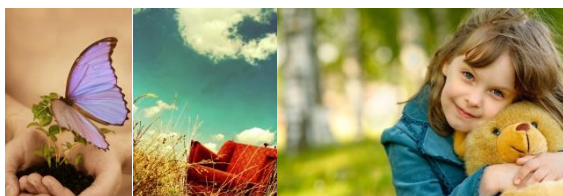
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one technique which has been shown to work is just to gently place your attention to the feeling, non-judgmentally. Very importantly this is not to claim the feeling and believe it is you, but to look at it, observe it, as if you were sensing something outside of yourself. Sometimes this can be difficult. Certain schools of Buddhism also teach techniques similar to this (Loving Kindness and Mindfulness). Also there is a secular version of these referred to as Mindfulness.

Naming The Feeling

Another aspect of the front right part of the brain is that if the emotion is named, this has the effect of switching on the front right part of the brain, which then helps to switch off the emotional centre causing trouble. The right brain has a relatively simple language system compared to the left side of the brain. So for example, you may look at the emotion and if you know what it is – name it for example “fear” or “distrust”. This is obviously easier if you have a good understanding of your emotional being, that is you have a well developed emotional intelligence and vocabulary.



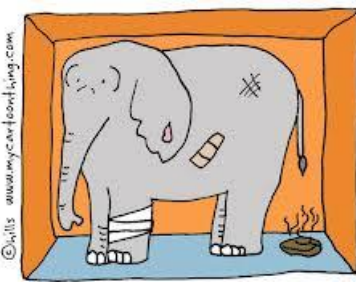
The 4 R's: Recognise, Remember, Reason and Respond

One way to simplify the range of language required, is to use the following technique, which has been sourced from Practical Philosophy. The advantage is it works with three primary emotions.

1. **RECOGNISE:** What is engrossing the mind now? Is it fear, anger or desire? (What's the FAD?)
2. **REMEMBER:** Your Highest Self is: **Pure, Perfect, Complete**
3. **REASON:** What are the identifications to: fear, anger or desire?
4. **RESPOND:** Coming back to the present:
 - a. To what is in front of me now?
 - b. What is the world for me now?
 - c. Come to the senses.
 - d. What service is required here now?

Practical Philosophy sees that emotions such as fear, anger and desire can sometimes spend our energy resources and reinforces limiting views about ourselves. Desire can also be seen as superimposing unnatural attractiveness over a real situation. For more about Practical Philosophy please check out www.practicalphilosophy.co.uk.

3-2-1 Shadow



The elephant in the room

Another important role of the right brain is that it helps you look at things from different perspectives, relate to others, to put you in their shoes and empathise. It also switches on when you think about your own character.

Shadow is the elephant in the room, the repressed parts of your unconscious. These are aspects of yourself that you are not aware of - areas you've disowned, hidden or project onto others. However they can subtly shape and affect you, sabotaging many aspects of your life.

Undoing the repression and reintegrating these areas helps to improve your



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psychological health and clarity. One of the greatest benefits is that it frees up energy that would otherwise be spent shadow boxing with yourself and camouflaging your undesirable aspects.

Though we often don't want to see our shadow it seems we either own it or are owned by it. We get bruised, cramped and injured, wounded in many ways, causing us to contract and close in response to life.

3-2-1 Shadow helps us to spring clean, become more open, and improve our compassion and expand our self-awareness. It's sourced from Ken Wilber's work on Integral Psychology.

Repression and projection can be mapped in three ways.

1. first person identification - As a child you may be angry with your mother. The difficulty is that if that anger threatens your connection to the security she provides. That means you can't acknowledge or accept it.
2. second person identification - In response you may repress the fury. Denying it of course doesn't get rid of it, but makes them alien. You quarantine part of yourself. They appear 'out there' where they disturb or compel you. It's not you who's angry, it is what you see in someone else. All of a sudden, the world appears full of angry people. Even though the shadow seems out there, it informs your feelings and motivations.
3. third person identification – if the threat becomes overwhelming, it requires total rejection. If it becomes fully repressed, you no longer acknowledge the anger, you banish it as an it, an object that has nothing to do with you. It is pushed from your awareness - it becomes a shadow.

The authentic emotion may be experienced as sadness, fear or depression etc – internal decoys, distancing us from the unacceptable emotion. These secondary emotions may be powerful and sincerely experienced but not being the root cause, can't be effectively processed all by itself. You'll never get over the secondary emotions unless you first recognise the actual underlying emotion and then own it. There's no way to escape it – the only way out is through.

So what is to be done? By definition, shadow is hidden from your conscious awareness, so you have to learn how to recognise the symptoms and reverse engineer a solution. The 3-2-1 Shadow process uses shifts in perspective to identify disowned projections and reintegrate them into conscious awareness. This helps you to confront your hidden aspects by restoring contact with them and fully experience them in a healthy manner. You can become less fragmented and grow in health more easily.

The first stage is to choose something you want to work with. This can be positive or negative. It could be a difficult person, someone to whom you are attracted or are repelled or disturbed. It could be a thing or an event. Or it could be a thought, or feeling, something that triggers an emotional reaction or affects your pervading mood.

Then follow these three steps.

3 – Face It. In 3rd person you bring to awareness and describe what appears to be the cause of your negative or positive reaction. Observe the disturbance very closely. Then write down or verbalise, describing the person, situation or image in vivid detail. Use 3rd person pronouns such as “he”, “him”, “She”, “her”, “they”, “their”, “it,” “its,” etc. Explore the disturbance fully. essentially it is something outside of you which at first appears to be nothing to do with who you are What is it that bothers you about it?

2 – Talk to It. Enter into a simulated dialogue with this object of awareness. Use 2nd person pronouns such as “you” and “yours”. Talk to the person, situation, image or sensation in your awareness directly. Enter



into a relationship with the disturbance. Perhaps ask questions such as, “who or what are you? Where do you come from? What do you want from me? What do you need to tell me? What gift are you bringing me?” Allow the disturbance to respond. Imagine realising what they would say. Write it down or vocalise both sides/ [perspectives of the dialogue.. imagination - you make up what you think would happen if you told them how they make you feel because of whatever trait they possess and also state how you feel going into as much depth and description as you feel necessary. During the 2nd person dialectical process you should have some insight or realisation that this is not just about them - it's something within you!

1 – Be It. Now write in 1st person, using the pronouns “I,” “me,” and “mine”, be the person, situation, image, or sensation, that you have been exploring. See the world, including yourself, entirely from the perspective of that disturbance and allow yourself to discover not only your similarities, but how you really are one and the same. Finally make a statement of identification: “I am ___” or “___ is me.” This might feel discordant – but try it out. Finally complete the process by fully re-owning the shadow. Don’t just see the world from that perspective momentarily, but actually feel this previously excluded feeling or drive until it resonates as your own. Then you can engage with it and fully integrate it. Let it register on multiple aspects of your being. In the 1st person you then embody whatever trait or behaviour seemed to be the cause of your emotional reaction.

You’ll know the process has worked because you’ll feel lighter, freer, more peaceful and open. Instead of projecting our shadows, the process intends to bring them back into our conscious awareness. The point being, they liberate you from others and others form you, giving you more freedom and energy to use for whatever you wish to use it for.

Kissing the Frog – Embracing Experience



Have you noticed your minds tendency to drift off from your immediate direct experience and seek an alternative. If you ask yourself “**Where is my mind going and why?**”, an honest answer is that there is something intolerable or unpleasant about your current experience at some level which you wish to avoid and your mind is roaming the past or the future to find something to alleviate it. You are seeking an object, substance, state of mind or relationship which will bring this discomfort to an end.

Become in touch with this impulse, this discomfort at the level of feeling (emotion) or sensation (physical pain). The feeling may be something simple like boredom or maybe something more intense like sorrow, or grief or shame, or lack.

Instead of avoiding that feeling or sensation, do the opposite; go towards it, or invite it to come nearer to you, closer to you. This is not about an image or a memory of the situation in your life that is difficult; it’s about your current experience now of feeling or a sensation that is unpleasant.

Turn towards it; begin to draw it close. As the distance between you and the feeling reduces, as the feeling comes closer and closer, keep asking yourself the question, “**Can I live with this feeling forever?**” This question exposes that part of your current experience that remains intolerable or unpleasant. Go to that part and draw it closer.

Be sensitive to your experience. Some feelings don’t at first appear to be unpleasant. Grief, sorrow, loss, shame are obviously unpleasant, but take the experience of desire. Desire is, by definition, the desire for something that is not present. In other words, desire is a subtle rejection of the current



experience. So, although desire may not register as an uncomfortable feeling, be very sensitive to it. It is based on the feeling that something is missing.

Don't discipline your desire; don't say, "I shouldn't be feeling this." On the contrary, do the opposite: feel the energy of the desire, that sense of lack, the sense of I need something for myself, that is contained in the desire, irrespective of the desire. Bring the feeling close.

In the story of the princess who had to kiss the frog before he turned into the handsome prince, she first had to kiss that which was most repulsive to her. She had to go close to that which she most deeply feared. Similarly in beauty and beast, when the princess returned to the beast and felt compassion and love for him and one of her tears fell on him he was immediately transformed into the prince. She came close to that which she had spent so many years avoiding.

Bring the feeling so close that you can no longer stand back from it and give it a name, let alone a cause. It's just a nameless intense feeling. In other words, kiss the toad. Take that unbearable feeling in your hands. Caress it. If there are no feelings present, just do the same with the current sensation whether it is painful or neutral. Ask yourself the question, **"Is the feeling or sensation that thought used to call sorrow, grief, loneliness, shame, or (if it's a sensation) the sensation that thought used to call pain, unbearable? Is it even unpleasant?"** If there is a trace of unpleasantness to it, it means that you have not yet brought it completely close. Go to the part of the feeling that still seems to be unpleasant. Bring it closer; merge with it more intimately. Ask yourself the question, **"If I were to name this feeling, what name would I give it?"** It is only possible to give something a name if it stands as a distant from us. We can only name an object, and to name that object we have to stand as a separate subject. If you can give your current feeling a name, it means that you have not yet brought it fully close. If it still feels like sorrow etc., it means you're standing apart from it as a separate self. Bring the feeling closer.

It is not the feeling that is intolerable; it is the distance between ourselves and the feeling that is intolerable. The separate self tries to increase the distance between yourself and uncomfortable feelings by moving away from them, towards objects. But the real resolution of feelings it's to do the opposite, to close the distance, to bring the feeling closer and closer until, we can no longer know this feeling.

Keep asking yourself the question from time to time, **"Is there anything unpleasant about my current experience?"** See that the unpleasantness is not in the experience itself; it is our resistance to it. Put that unpleasantness under the microscope. Bring it closer. Don't just think this; feel it. Take the unpleasantness in your hands, caress it, kiss it, open yourself fully to it, until you can say with complete honesty, **"I can live with you forever."**

We have been conditioned for so long to believe that happiness is to be found by avoiding uncomfortable feelings through the acquisition of objects, substances, and so on. It is the very opposite: the happiness, peace all of that we seek is concealed at the very heart of experience.

Ask yourself the question, **"Is there any distance between myself and my experience?"** If there is any distance, that distance is your suffering. The experience of love is the experience of the absence of distance between ourselves and another. Perceptions we resist, and therefore they make us unhappy; we call them ugly. The perception of beauty is the collapse of the distinction or the distance between the object and our self. Happiness is not a pleasant feeling; it is the absence of distance between ourselves and our feelings. In other words, in a pleasant sensation there is a merging of ourselves with



sensation. It is not the sensation that causes happiness; it is the absence of distance between yourself and the sensation.

Come back to your feelings and perceptions. **Is there the slightest impulse in you to move away from the current feeling or perception?** See what happens to thinking when there is not the slightest impulse to move away from the current feeling or perception. The separate self is not an entity; it is an activity. Allow the activity to come slowly, effortlessly, naturally to rest in this disinterested contemplation of experience.

Notice that we haven't touched our experience; we have manipulated it or disciplined it anyway whatsoever. The disciplining of experience is the activity of the ego. We are seeing into the heart of experience, not trying to change or manipulate it. What we seek, what we long for, lives at the heart of all experience. It can never be found by avoiding experience.

Is there the slightest impulse to leave the now? And if there is no impulse, where is there for thought to go? The only place thought, cannot stand is the now.

Sourced from Rupert Spira.

A Simpler Method For When it's Hard to Think Deeply?

Another technique, which has been shown to help to switch off the emotional centre, is reciting what is known in the East as "The Prayer of the Wise". This is simply by saying **"May all beings be happy, may all beings be well, may all beings be free from disease, may all beings be without misery of any sort."** It is said the wise remember these words, first thing every morning. The last 2 parts can be replaced in positive terms if you prefer people e.g. "may all beings be full of love and peace."

First Aid?

Various supplements, herbal remedies and tinctures that may be of benefit, are available from local Health Food Shops. At Back-in-Action we stock a supplement called DSF (De-Stress Formula), full of the kinds of vitamins and minerals your body uses up a lot when it's stressed. A cheaper alternative, that is likely to be helpful is increasing the amount of B vitamins in your diet – perhaps by taking a 'B-Complex' supplement.

Helping to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system (the rest and digest 'Relaxation Response') is also a good idea. A physical approach, that is thought to do this, is to simply hold the forehead. How many people have you seen do that before when they are emotionally traumatised? It's quite intuitive. Another way that might help is just to very gently stroke (almost tickle) the inside softer surface of the wrists, for a ½ a minute or so. Breathing exercises may also be beneficial. As with everything – practise is essential.

Other ways to switch off the fear centres (amygdala) in the brain are attentive listening and attentively working with your hands. The centres of the brain involved in good balance also affect the amygdala, so yoga exercises to practise balance, good spinal health and being still can be helpful. In the long term, sitting still and practising meditation is an excellent way to calm down the amygdala. Conversely some moderate or gentle aerobic exercise should also be very effective – particularly if you've been physically inactive.

WARNING

If you have more serious problems, none of these techniques are a replacement for medical help, medicines, help from a GP, psychiatrist, psychologist or counsellor. These techniques may be useful complementary help for milder problems. If you are having serious difficulties please consult appropriate professional help.



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Do You Still Need Some More Help?

We have various practitioners at **Back-in-Action** that may be able to help you relax emotionally:

- Neuro Emotional Technique – practised by Louis
- Hypnotherapy – Pat Dix
- CranioSacral Technique – practised by Lea Miller

If you want more help or information please call **Back-in-Action** on **01772 749245** or e-mail reception@back-in-action.com.

Other Options – Local and Internet:

- Counselling, Psychotherapy etc.
- Mindfulness Training classes – developed from Buddhist practises into a secular approach.
- Emotional Freedom Technique – how to info available on the internet (U-Tube) and various practitioners locally.
- Buddhist Centres – helpful in learning meditation and other practises.
- For more info on Integral Health – Google “Ken Wilber Integral Life” on the internet.
- Christian Meditation Group – meets at St Mary’s church
- Yoga Classes
- Practical Philosophy Classes – I would highly recommend these classes as being helpful, they introduce a range of techniques and practises which help to cultivate attention and calm the mind.



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