

Transforming Emotions

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Have you ever been told that you “shouldn’t” feel a certain way? Maybe you’ve told yourself that you shouldn’t have to experience frustration, anger, or grief. What would it be like if people weren’t moved by their emotions?

Consider a community of people who do not experience emotions:

- × Emma does not feel joy when she is given love, support, or affection.
- × Jacob does not feel sadness when he loses his son to death or his wife to divorce.
- × Ethan does not feel angry when he is mistreated.
- × Sophia does not feel guilty when she violates her own values.
- × Ryan does not feel anxious during a dangerous situation.

Emotions clearly serve a precious purpose.

Instead of trying to “stop” a feeling, try the following suggestions to transform them:

- Pause, slow your bodily reactions, and observe what is happening.
- Ask yourself “what do I need right now?” Then try to meet that need.
- Identify alternative and/or comforting ways to think about the situation.
- Choose behaviors that make the situation better and have positive consequences
(makes you feel proud now *and* later).
- Avoid judging yourself and your feelings.
- Practice self-care (sleep, exercise, treat illness, etc.)
- Use distraction. Divert your attention to something else (enjoyable activities or other people). Distract with other thoughts (counting, praying) or other sensations (hot, cold, soft, smooth).
- Soothe yourself with your senses such as being in nature, music, scented candles, cooking, or a bubble bath.
- Work on improving this moment. Use your imagination, prayer, relaxation, positive self-talk, or find some meaning in why you are experiencing your current feeling or situation.
- Accept, not fight, what you are experiencing.
- Reach out to others. Do not isolate.
- Use silence. Be still and listen for God’s instructions, support, and guidance.

A good quality of life requires that we cope effectively with our reactions to our experiences. Others may mistreat us and awful things will happen. But we can choose to react in a helpful way that takes care of the situation, and does not harm us or others.

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