

Shift



How to Manage Your Emotions
So They Don't Manage You

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Shift

BOOK HIGHLIGHTS

Why We Feel

Sometimes our emotions are so subtle we don't even notice them; they feel more like background music in the waiting room at the dentist's office

We even catch other people's feelings, also called emotional contagion, which happens online & offline- It is emotions spreading quickly like a virus-person to person

Our emotions don't blend; they also interact.

Sadness fuels anger. Joy makes grief more tender. if you've ever laughed at a funeral / cried at a wedding, you've experienced the complexity firsthand

'Emotion' is an umbrella term that describes a loosely coordinated response that includes what we feel, think, & experience in our bodies in response to events we judge to be meaningful

Once you encounter a meaningful situation, a cascade of responses is unleashed within you:

1- Physiological reactions, involving your nervous system and other bodily processes

2- Cognitive appraisals, which reflect how you make sense of what is happening

3- Outward facing motor behaviors, that communicate how you're feeling to others, such as your facial expressions & vocal tone

When it comes to emotions, there are 2 common sources of confusion.

Despite the cultural trope depicting emotions as the antithesis of rational thought, cognition- what we colloquially refer to as thinking- is a key building block of emotion

How we think about our circumstances shapes the emotions we experience; then those emotions reverberate back to influence how we think

A second source of confusion: the relationship between feelings & emotions

While thinking often gets pitted against emotions as if they were perpetually at war, feelings and emotions tend to be thought of as one & the same and used interchangeably

Feelings are also a unique expression of our emotional experience, which is why no 2 people “feel” an emotion the same way.

For some people anger feels like being under pressure, your insides ready to burst through your skin. For others- anger feels like hollowness- a dark hole in the middle of chest

No matter how painful & overwhelming our emotions can sometimes be.

It is essential to remember that we evolved our capacity to experience them for a reason: They help us navigate the world, thus emotions are functional, even the ones we don't like

Negative emotions as remarkably sophisticated sets of software programs stored by evolution in the hardware of psychology that helps us achieve our goals

The Indicators

Emotions that begin as functional can easily spiral into dysfunctional.

These emotional misfires happen more often than we'd like and can usually be traced back to 2 key indicators; think of them as check-engine lights on your dashboard

1st Indicator: *Intensity*

Intensity

Responding more intensely to day to day life experiences that trigger negative emotions predict a higher risk of mental health disorders 10 years in the future, and impoverished well being over time

Duration

2nd Indicator: *Duration*

Sometimes our negative responses don't subside but instead linger

One of the key features used by the mental health professionals to diagnose mental disorders is how long symptoms last, which makes duration a helpful marker

Duration

A study published in 2015 found that sadness lasted 240 times longer than shame

The more meaningful an experience is, the longer the emotions associated with it last.

Sadness tends to be about something that affects our world-view/identity, and this is one reason it's stickier than anger, which is mostly about something specific

The Myth Of Universal Approach

A significant part of emotional lives isn't about what we're currently facing; it's about the aftermath of an event/ anticipation of the future

Face what you're scared of, and when you do, you'll see it's not as bad as you think.

Approaching the feared object or experience repeatedly will update the mental health representation, which will change the emotional experience and stop the looping tape

The Myth Of Universal Approach

Studies show that coping with stressful situations by chronically avoiding, denying, or downplaying can make the problem more upsetting & is strongly linked with anxiety & depression

Talking about your experience, working through your emotions with other people, & getting professional help are all considered the status-quo regimen for how to cope in a healthy way.

Much of the time, that is exactly what you need

3 Forms of Avoidance

When we talk about unhealthy signs of avoidance, there are 3 signs to watch for

Warning 1: You try not to think about the problem, but keep thinking about it

Warning 2: You find yourself chronically relying on substances like drugs, alcohol, or gambling

Warning 3: You find yourself constantly seeking reassurance. This behavior looks like approach but is avoidance

Easier Said Than Done

Change the filter, change the way you feel about what's unfolding

You can't always change the adverse events you experience- but you can always change how you think about it to change how you feel

When we speak in 2nd language we are less affected by the emotional weight of words, making it easier to keep a cool head

Easier Said Than Done

Using the word “you” to silently refer to yourself is called ‘Distanced Self-Talk’.

“You” is a word we almost exclusively use to think about and refer to other people

So when you use that word, it gives you distance & shifts your perspective

It gets you to think about the way you’d think about something else

Time Travel

The next time you find yourself in a moment of crisis, try leaning on your capacity for time travel

Fall back into the past

What other times in your life have gone through that similar to this one? How did you get through them? What've you gained from past experiences that you can use now?

If you've gone through worse, you CAN get through this. If not, your experiences have prepared you

Disclaimer

This is just a summary. This summary is as per my interpretation and learning Please excuse any errors

For a better understanding, reading the book is highly recommended

Please excuse any errors

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