



Emotional Tune-Up

Name it & Tame it

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YOUR EMOTIONS

ARE PART OF YOUR

SURVIVAL KIT.

**TUNE IN AND TURN ON
YOUR POTENTIAL.**



Emotions Are Part of Your Survival Kit

For too many, emotions are the black box in the aircraft. You look at them only when there has been a crash or a tragedy. Emotions are the driving force behind thoughts, beliefs and behavior. It is natural to have a stream of thoughts running in the background of your mind that are triggered by emotions. These generally are ignored.

It is estimated we have between 50,000 and 80,000 thoughts per day, and they include fears, self-doubt, and negative self-talk. To deal with these thoughts, you must be aware they are there, so you can dismiss those that are not aligned with where you want to go. Awareness allows you to shift into a mindset that will take you to your goal.

Because of many of these assumptions (old beliefs), emotions get ignored. Do you subscribe to any of these?

- Emotions should be neither seen nor heard
- It is impossible to manage them, so it is best to ignore them
- Emotions get in the way of strategic decisions
- Emotions are a sign of weakness
- Emotions are not safe

How many times have you said, “I keep my emotions in check!” And how many times do you find yourself overreacting, falling flat in a conversation, or at a loss for empathy?

Damasio, researcher and author on emotions, defines emotions as “complicated collections of . . . responses, . . . [with a] regulatory role to play . . . to assist the organism in maintaining life.”¹⁵ He acknowledges that emotion and reason are related; in other words, we all come equipped with a collection of emotions as part of our survival kit.

In other words, emotions are hardwired and necessary for our survival. Darwin found emotions were expressed in a similar way across cultures. Emotions ensure survival. The message that “one can separate one’s emotions and still function well” is a myth. We are biologically hardwired to use emotional cues to make decisions and get through our day. Survival depends on the recognition of emotional cues.

Physically, the limbic system is where emotions live in the brain. About the size of a walnut, the limbic system is made up of parts of the brain involved in emotional memory and motivation. Structures such as the amygdala, olfactory bulb, and hippocampus (to name a few) play an important role in the expression of emotions. This region of the brain, sometimes called the “feeling” brain, sits underneath the cortex, or the “thinking brain.”

The size of the cortex might imply power over the smaller structures of the brain; however, as we mentioned before, the survival instinct of the primitive brain triggers an emotional hijacking, and the cortex cannot stop it.



Emotional Hijacking (The Runaway Stress Reaction)

If your nervous system was an operating system, there has not been an upgrade in 100,000 years. When stress is chronic and the ability to withstand stress (resilience) is underdeveloped, there are several consequences, such as the loss of emotional control, slower information processing, and a decrease in working memory, impacting long-range planning and creativity.

Under stress, the amygdala—the part of the brain that monitors the environment for fear-inducing stimuli—is triggered, swamping more rational thought processes. This is the fast track of the stressed response.

Stress tolerance means you operate more from your higher function of your brain (cortex) and avoid triggering the primitive survival instinct of the amygdala.

This is focus. This allows for systematic, methodical processing, critical thinking, and an evaluation process, making decisions better through-out.

Stress tolerance does not mean you take whatever comes at you without flinching!

Chronic, unmanaged stress interrupts the ability to think clearly, remember, and retrieve important data. This is hard-wired physiology, and the impact of too much cortisol circulating through your body. Many, in hindsight, recognize that stress contributed to decisions that were not well thought-out or to emotional reactions uncharacteristic of their usual behavior. They are left with the challenge of damage control because of their reactions and poor decisions.

How much time is wasted on repairing the fallout from hijacked reactions? Have you lost relationships because of being hijacked?

When you cannot think straight under pressure you will undermine teamwork, morale, and successful outcomes, adding to the pressure. This problem can be prevented by learning to identify your emotions.

Go through the exercise on the next several pages. Research has shown when you can name your emotions, you can tame them!



Emotional Awareness (Name It and Tame It)

Most people go through their day locked into a habitual pattern of reacting. It is only when you begin to question your reactions and emotions that you begin to understand what you are feeling and why. Research shows that when you can identify your emotion, give it a name, you are able to slow your reaction.

Naming your emotion allows you to tame it.

Take a moment and reflect on the history of your emotional patterns. In reflecting you can breakthrough any patterns that no longer work for you.

This exercise is a great introduction to your emotions. These exercises build self-awareness. To help you tune in and become more aware of your emotional experiences, evaluate the following questions:

Anger · Happiness · Anxiety · Fear · Sadness

1. Look at the 5 feelings above. What feeling is usually most intense for you using a 1-10 scale?

0 _____ 10

Feeling: _____

2. What feeling is most frequent on a 1-10 scale?

0 _____ 10

Feeling: _____

3. What is the typical outcome as a result of this feeling? Does it impact your relationships, job, energy levels, or motivation?



Next, we will look at each emotion individually. Take the time to reflect on these questions and write out your answers.

ANGER

How do you know you are angry? What do you feel in your body?

What happens as a result of experiencing anger?

How does it affect other people?

How does it interfere with your goals?

How would you prefer to experience anger?

Who or what flips your anger switch on?



Anger is an important emotion. I want you to get to know your anger. When ignored, anger turns to rage, resentment, heart disease, and worse, it shuts down your ability to be happy and enjoy your life.

Remember, emotions are neither good nor bad. They are designed to inform you.

WHAT ANGER IS TELLING YOU

Remembering that all emotions are designed to flow and inform, know that anger alerts you to set boundaries and facilitate change. That could be simply putting your hand up and saying, "Stop," when someone is attempting to force you to do something you do not want to do or talking at you and disrespecting your space.

Anger is a universal emotion that has cultural and gender differences. Women are more than likely taught to hold it in, while men are taught to express it. Some people see anger as a masculine emotion.

Most people deny their anger for a variety of reasons. When this happens, you can count on it showing up at the worst possible time. Like all emotions, anger is an internal signal to take some sort of action.

Denying your anger can increase the use of sarcasm, passive-aggressive behaviors, and other mixed signals, decreasing your ability to communicate clearly. The reflection exercise on the previous page will help you be aware of when anger shows up and its impact on you and the people around you.

Techniques introduced chapter eight, when practiced regularly, will help you transform your anger.



HAPPINESS

How do you know you are happy? What do you feel in your body?

What happens as a result of experiencing happiness?

How does it enhance your goal?

What would it take to experience more happiness?

What experiences flip your happiness switch on?



Happiness is an individual experience. Thousands of years ago, Aristotle recognized that more than anything, people sought happiness. People seek happiness for its own sake. It can be an experience that defies words.

Defining happiness is difficult, and people often start out by saying what happiness is not. It is not having all the money or time in the world. It is doing something meaningful. It is not feeling good all the time nor is it a destination. It is fleeting, elusive, and takes time. Trying too hard gets in the way of happiness. Happiness is on a continuum and includes feeling cheerful, satisfied, content, as well as optimistic. It is personal.

Boredom is a barrier to happiness. And boredom is telling you to stretch yourself, grow, and learn something new. Happiness is best achieved in the act of reaching for a goal and doing something you did not think you could do.

Be sure to reflect on the questions and journal your answers. The more you cultivate happiness, the less likely you will get stuck in an emotional storm.



ANXIETY

How do you know you are anxious? What do you feel in your body?

What happens as a result of experiencing anxiety?

How does it interfere with your goal?

What would you like to experience instead?

Who or what flips your anxiety switch on?



Fear, when chronic and generalized, becomes anxiety. Anxiety arises from thoughts. It can catch you in an endless thought loop. Did I sign off on that contract? Did I forget something? What if xyz happens—what then? And on and on and on. Many people I talk to experience this type of endless questioning at the end of the day.

WHAT ANXIETY IS TELLING YOU

Anxiety, when not chronic, can serve as a messenger to help you clarify a situation, so you can take action.

When anxiety becomes chronic, it can be the body's way of avoiding something. Chronic anxiety shrinks your world in the effort to avoid feeling the anxiety. Phobias become a way of coping with the anxiety.

Anxiety, as part of the fear emotion, wants you to take some sort of action. Much of the anxiety people experience results from constant distractions and not being able to remember what they've done. Use your phone to create lists or download one of the many apps that will help you stay organized and focused.

Be sure to reflect on the questions and journal your answers.



Be sure to check out the Energy Clearing technique online, in the members.worksmart.club portal. This technique has powerful application for anxiety.



FEAR

How do you know you are fearful? What do you feel in your body?

What happens as a result of experiencing fear?

How does it interfere with your goal?

What would you like to experience instead?

Who or what flips your fear switch on?



Fear is triggered by your primitive part of the brain, the amygdala, the alarm system in your nervous system hardwired to protect us from danger. It is instinctive, and the reaction happens instantaneously. The amygdala sends the trigger to the hypothalamus, which then creates the physiological patterns for that fear. Your heartrate can go up, and you might feel a lump in your throat, tension in your neck, numbness in your hands, and any number of other physical reactions. This reaction is stored to be used over and over, when something close to this experience happens.

Fear triggers the fight-or-flight response in the stress reaction. Your amygdala is the storehouse of all your fear experiences (even those you forget) and responds immediately when it senses an experience like what has been stored. Most of the time, people are not aware of the origin of their fear and may not be consciously aware of their reaction.

Using these stress strategies presented in this program will help you overcome the instinctive pull of this primitive reaction. Fears are usually specific to a person, place, or situation and arise from feelings.



SADNESS

How do you know you are sad? What do you feel in your body?

What happens as a result of experiencing sadness?

How does it interfere with your goal?

What would you like to experience instead?

Who or what flips your sadness switch on?



Sadness is not the same as depression, although it is frequently associated with it. Depression is a more complex experience. There are the clinical definitions of depression—bipolar disorder, postpartum depression, dysthymia, mild depression, atypical depression, and major depression.

Sadness is not the same as grief. Grief shows up in response to losses that are irretrievable. Grief can happen as a result of a physical death or the death of a dream, an opportunity, a period in your life, part of your body—any loss that is gone forever. There are stages of grief, and—as with all emotions—it is best to move through grief, present and mindful to what you are experiencing. Too many people medicate their grief.

I highly recommend having help in moving through grief because one loss will trigger other losses you have experienced, and it quickly can feel overwhelming.

WHAT SADNESS IS TELLING YOU

Sadness, with its heaviness, the desire to withdraw, and the need to cry, is a cue you need time to reflect, review your life, and let go of things that are not working. Sadness gives you a window into what you value. This helps you understand yourself better. When you can acknowledge your own sadness, you increase the ability to demonstrate empathy. By acknowledging sadness and moving through it, you develop courage and the ability to do other difficult things. Sadness is like other emotions and is designed to flow. Acknowledge it, and remind yourself, “This too shall pass.”

When sadness is not acknowledged and is ignored, you can move into despair, which is a mood and lacks the natural flow built into sadness. Crying can often provide the relief needed to let go, and, with the release of tension, you can relax and begin to restore yourself. You have heard the sayings, “I just need a good cry,” or, “Have a good cry, and you will feel better.” This wisdom speaks to the cleansing and refreshing nature of moving through sadness.

Get to know how sadness shows up for you; reflect on the questions and journal your answers.



Fatal Emotions

We have all received some type of disappointing news. Your promotion did not come through, the raise wasn't what you expected, you lost the bid for the job, you did not get accepted into your program—the list can go on.

Disappointment is part of living life. When you do not manage those disappointments and you become discouraged, that can be fatal. Discouragement that goes unchecked destroys self-image, confidence, and expectations for the future.

DISCOURAGEMENT

The dictionary definition of discouragement is “the act of making something less likely to happen.” When discouragement is left unchecked, it can grow into a mood, eroding motivation and momentum.

The erosion can be subtle. The discouragement shifts to a feeling that “things will never work out.” You may try harder only to experience more disappointment, or you may give up altogether. Either way, discouragement kills drive.

When you can identify your feelings, you will be able to take the right action to shift them.

DISCOURAGEMENT

1. **Name it:** Whenever you feel disappointment, identify it and act.
2. **Reframe it:** Identify three things that are going well for you.
3. **Claim it:** Engage the optimist in you and recognize that it is not permanent, and things will change. Denial is what makes this emotion fatal, capable of destroying your mojo.
4. **Talk about it:** (Or, write in your journal.) Find a safe person who will simply listen. At this point, talking it out helps release the heavy emotion. You can find solutions later.
5. **Help someone else:** The tendency with discouragement is to narrow your focus and think only of your problems. Get out of yourself and reach out to someone in need.
6. **Move on:** Let it go and focus on your big vision.

In addition to these steps, do something every day to manage the stressful feelings that come up. You will learn proven strategies to activate your resilience, the more you practice these, the stronger your resilience.

Let's talk about the most fatal emotion, one that only happens to everyone else denial.



DENIAL

It is a defense mechanism we all use to protect ourselves from some perceived threat. Maybe there was bad news and you instinctively minimize it to get through the emergency. This temporary use of denial is helpful.

Denial becomes fatal when you use it to avoid dealing with situations that require action. Drinking too much, avoiding dealing with financial strain, avoiding your bullying coworker, or signs your teenager is using drugs, ignoring the fact you are using food to compensate for your disappointments—these are all examples of denial that is fatal.

You can deny your own behavior or that of others. Denying your own behavior shows up in chronic blaming. If you persistently accuse others of doing something wrong, chances are the problem lies with you.

Here is an example. A client came to me distressed and ready to quit her job because her boss was blaming her for misplacing reports in the office. He was disorganized and never put anything away, so piles would grow on his desk. He would call her and accuse her of taking the document and not returning it. She did not want to talk to him about it and decided to avoid any conflict.

It is helpful to realize that in any interaction, both people are responsible for the outcome. Are you contributing to a situation by trying to avoid it?

When you avoid taking any action, you are denying your responsibility in the situation. If you feel like a victim and complain, “Things always happen to me,” chances are you are using denial to avoid acting.

Denial allows problematic situations and health risks to continue, ultimately creating more serious issues. If you have been exposed to traumatic events or are reaching exhaustion and you continue to push yourself, the body’s ability to adapt reaches its limit and you can hit the wall. It is important to address the signs of burnout long before you crash.

It is important to address issues with your staff and followers before they become a much bigger issue. When denial can operate within a culture, you turn off creativity and initiative. In a culture steeped in denial, people essentially go to sleep.

What beliefs keep you from seeing problems as they show up?

Being realistic and facing the challenge is a characteristic of a high Ei leader.

The value of denial is as a short-term defense mechanism.



SUGGESTIONS TO GO BEYOND DENIAL

1. **Be open to feedback.** Before you shut out what someone tells you, consider this: is there any truth to what they are saying?
2. **Get in touch with your fears.** Does change threaten you? Afraid to succeed? What are your fears?
3. **Talk to someone—counselor or coach.** Your friends or family are not going to move you ahead. Talk with a professional.
4. **Evaluate your life to date.** Is it working out the way you expected, or has it fallen short? If so, in what way? Be objective. Have your beliefs held you back? What are they?
5. **Journal every day.** Use the Daily Review to reflect on what is working and what isn't. Keep this for a year, and you will have a timeline review you can use to evaluate patterns of success, avoidance, progress, or resistance.



About Work Smart Consulting

Ei Leadership provides executive and organizational development, consulting, and leadership training, utilizing Emotional Intelligence (Ei) tools and practices. We assess, coach, and train for high performance.

Contact us today and schedule a complimentary session to find out what program is best for you and your work group.

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HERE IS WHAT ONE PARTICIPANT HAS SAID:

Danielle F., DNP,

Director of Emergency Services

This program changed my life. I have concrete tools I can use with my team and I have finally learned to honor my strengths. This confidence takes the struggle out of my day since I no longer have to second guess myself.

**Coaching is the single greatest
accelerator for change.**



Other Books Written by Dr. Howard

What's Stopping You Today?
6 Keys to Everyday Success
Create Your Best Life

EVERYDAY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
Fatal Emotions, Drama, Conflict, Bullying... A Guide to
Better Communication

The C.A.R.E. Method Rewire your Stress Reaction

365 Power Thoughts: The Mindset Difference

HEAL: Healthy Emotions. Abundant Life.
From Superhero to Super Self-Empowered. Master
your Emotional Intelligence.



CENTER FOR WORK AND WELL-BEING

The Work Smart Club is your online resource to make work more satisfying and more productive and life more fulfilling. We provide resources, coaching and support to help you achieve BIG goals.

Courses include getting more done, problem solving, lean sigma tools, resilience, emotional intelligence and so much more.

Technology has changed the way we live, work and communicate. It is time to change the way we think about work and leadership. After 20+ years as Executive Coach, Dr. Cynthia Howard recognizes leaders, business owners and savvy professionals need different experiences to engage their potential and learn new ways to succeed in their efforts.

Cynthia Howard RN, CNC, PhD, Executive Coach, Performance Expert

Dr. Cynthia Howard has worked with thousands of individuals to transform stress into resilience, conflict into opportunity and mediocre into high performance. As an entrepreneur and leader in high pressure environments, she understands how to help you optimize your internal resources to thrive, despite the pressure.

She founded the Work SMART Club, center for work and well-being, to support leaders and high achievers in their desire to be their best. This membership offers top level resources, usually only available in expensive coaching programs through online, live events, 1:1, and group coaching. The future is here now. Be ready.

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