

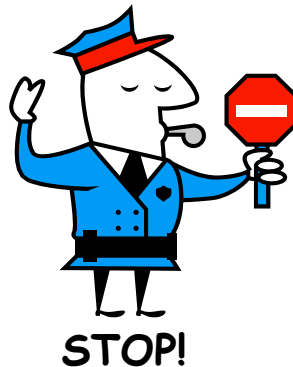
3. RECOGNISING YOUR FEELINGS

Who's in control: Your mind or your emotions?

God has given us a heart with feelings, life would certainly be miserable without them. As one writer put it, "a life without passion would be a dull wasteland of neutrality"¹. I do believe that God wants us to have joy in our life and be happy. God will give this to us if we ask for it (John 15:11; John 16:24), He often tells us to rejoice in Him (Philippians 3:1 and 4:4), He came as the Son of God to bring us His joy (John 17:13), God also said His Spirit will fill us with joy (Romans 15:13), that joy in the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10), and that positive feelings give good health (Proverbs 15:13). You can see why it so important to understand our emotions and enjoy our walk with the Lord. The Bible tells us that this is what emotions are for. The aim of this chapter is to help you understand your emotions more fully and gain insight as to how to have a healthy emotional balance. It's time to 'enjoy the journey'.

WHY DO WE SUFFER SO MUCH EMOTIONALLY?

I believe that we are in a powerful spiritual battle involving our emotions (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:12). The Bible clearly points out that sin is the source of our emotional suffering and this started when Adam and Eve fell from grace in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:16-19). In a very good little book called Resolving Stress², the author points out that a common definition of sin is self, and it is evident that self-centredness is the source of all the emotional problems we have in our life. It leads us to being very self-destructive and then stress becomes inescapable. It isn't difficult to see then, why we suffer so much emotionally. The devil wants to destroy us, and delights in tricking us into focusing on self that can only result in such emotional distress.



DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU ARE ON THE EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER?

Many people I have helped often can't identify their emotions and initially have very little insight as to what their emotions are doing most of the time. They know that they are suffering emotionally, but don't usually know what to do about it. They are caught in an emotional trap and don't seem to be able to get out of it. This is what I call the emotional roller coaster and is exactly what the devil wants. So to help that process of identifying where you are emotionally at any given time, try working with the following steps:

STEP 1: Understand the following formula or proportion that your mind and feelings require to function in balance

REASON - CONSCIENCE
PASSION - APPETITE - EMOTIONS

REASON: thought, intellect, logic, being rational, making sense of
CONSCIENCE: sense of right and wrong, moral value system
PASSION: strong and intense feelings/emotions
APPETITE: hunger, longing, desire, level of eagerness
EMOTION: feelings e.g. happy, sad, depressed, anxious, angry, joyful etc.

The above formula or proportion has the correct balance so that you can be in control of your mind and emotions and maintain a healthy balance. When reason (logical thinking) and conscience (knowing right from wrong) work together, the Holy Spirit can prompt your conscience to be able to discern good from evil and work with rational healthy Bible based values, beliefs, attitudes and thoughts. This in turn keeps a check on the intensity (appetite) of your passion (intense feelings) that gives a healthy balance of emotions or feelings at any given time. This means you are not driven by your emotions and can have self-control. This is when God can work more fully in you with His Spirit. You can then be Spirit led and Spirit filled. The mind is free to focus on Christ instead of being oppressed by negative thoughts and feelings that create a downward spiral.

STEP 2: Understand that the formula or proportion of mind and emotions can flip over and you then step onto the emotional roller coaster where your mind and feelings are functioning out of balance (that is, you are being emotionally driven and lose all sense of reason)

PASSION + APPETITE + EMOTIONS
REASON + CONSCIENCE

The above formula now has an incorrect balance where your desire or appetite for something drives your passion so intensely that emotions take over and you are no longer in control of your reason (logical thinking) and conscience (knowing right from wrong). Reason and conscience have been over ridden so you can no longer work with the Holy Spirit and your beliefs, values, attitudes and thoughts are irrational. You cannot keep a check on your emotions, you have no self-control and your feelings take over. You are no longer Spirit led or Spirit filled and your mind cannot focus on Christ. Satan is effectively able to control your mind when emotions are riding high. It is a highly stressful state driven by adrenaline and is very self-focused. This is where depression and anxiety can take over your life.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> and deal with them ■ Choose to act on feelings appropriately ■ Appropriate use of will to act on choices, leading to healthy decisions ■ Mind can think clearly and take feelings into account – rational thinking ■ Thinking is more flexible and based on God’s truth ■ Living in the present, deal with emotional pain and fear as it happens ■ Feelings are enjoyed -dealt with if negative, can achieve emotional balance – emotional maturity ■ Internal and God focused therefore have self control and self discipline – healthy sense of self ■ Take responsibility for self and is independent – free to work with God’s will and Spirit ■ Communication is open, negotiable, and logically driven – reflects God’s love ■ Has empathy with others, can set healthy boundaries ■ Healthy self-worth and self-esteem – can be healthily assertive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ride with them ■ Driven by feelings, reflected by your actions ■ Inappropriate use of will, often confused by choices, leading to unhealthy decisions ■ Mind is confused and distorted by feelings – emotional thinking ■ Thinking is rigid or excessive and is based on worldly reality or lies ■ Live in the past emotional pain and fear, projects this into the future ■ Feelings are elevated or at a low, cannot deal with them, no emotional balance – emotional immaturity ■ External worldly focused person, either very rigid or limited self control – poor sense of self ■ Blame others and controls or feels controlled by others – the victim, disconnected from God’s Spirit ■ Communication is closed, uncompromising, and emotionally driven – goes against God’s love ■ Self absorbed, has excessive or limiting boundaries with others ■ Low self-worth and self-esteem - can be passive & suppressed or aggressive |
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DEFINITIONS: Self-worth – value self based on God’s love for you

Self-esteem – healthy sense of self in relationship to God and others



HOW DO YOU GET OFF THE EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER?

Our mind often understands mental and emotional concepts more effectively by having a visual image to work with. Here are some wonderful words of wisdom I found on the Internet. The writer was talking about holes and said the first rule of holes when you are in one, is to stop digging. We usually have a tendency to take over and try harder to get out of the hole when we fall into one, we rely on self, and unintentionally dig the hole deeper or try and scramble out of it on our own so it caves in on top of us. Excessive, out of control emotions are the problem when it comes to falling into a hole, and most

people are not aware of their true state of being. There is a Biblical principle that tells us to “be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10. If we could practice this principle then we would be connected to God, become aware of our state of being, and stop digging the hole deeper or help it to cave in. When our emotions are in control then we are out of control, therefore God is no longer working through us and we have handed control over to Satan.

Another very good principle with a visual image in relationship to understanding the process of getting off the emotional roller coaster is to practice being in the eye of the storm.

A psychologist by the name of Richard Carlson describes it this way:

“The eye of the storm is that one specific spot in the centre of a twister, hurricane, or tornado that is calm, almost isolated from the frenzy of activity. Everything around the centre is turbulent, but the centre remains peaceful. How nice it would be if we too could be calm and serene in the midst of chaos – in the eye of the storm.”³

The Christian principle from this analogy is (see Psalm 107:29; Isaiah 4:6; Isaiah 25:4; and Mark 4:39,40):

- Christ is the eye of the storm – it’s here we can find peace and safety
- The moment our mind disconnects God (like hanging up the phone) then we step back into the storm
- Having God’s Spirit in the heart and mind is the only way we can remain in the eye of the storm, even though the storm is raging around us

Remember to use the Reason/Passion Model to help you stay out of those holes you keep digging and to stay in the eye of the storm with Jesus. It’s the only place you can be safe and overcome those negative feelings. This way you will not let feelings such as anxiety and depression overwhelm you and your mind can stay focused on God. Maybe then you will truly enjoy a little bit of heaven on earth. Something to rejoice about!



AN OVERVIEW OF HOW TO CHANGE THE WAY YOU FEEL FROM Passion / Reason TO Reason / Passion

- 1. RECOGNISE YOUR EMOTIONAL REACTION**
(ask the Holy Spirit to prompt you when you are over reacting emotionally)
Yours and others

Who's in control? You or your feelings?

2. STOP AND THINK

(ask God to help you listen to your thoughts)

Identify problem

Identify associated thoughts

3. CHANGE CORE BELIEFS TO CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS

(ask God to help change your thinking)

Thoughts feed feelings

Feelings feed behaviours

4. FACILITATE NEW ACTION PLAN

(walking with Jesus day by day)

Assess and decide on relevant changes then action them

and keep repeating this process until it becomes a new habit



REFERENCES:

1. D. Goleman, Emotional Intelligence, 1995
2. Concerned Communications, 'Resolving Stress'
3. R. Carlson, Don't Sweat the Small Stuff and it's all Small Stuff, 1997

BOOKS WORTH READING:

1. Dr Caroline Leaf (2007) Who Switched Off My Brain? Controlling Toxic Thoughts & Toxic Emotions
Order Online From: <http://www.lifetoday.org/site/PageServer> Go to Resources (Cost \$15US with postage)
2. Dr Don Colbert (2003) Deadly Emotions: Understand Mind-Body-Spirit Connection That Can Heal or Destroy You
Order Online From: <http://www.christianbook.com> Use their search facility
(Another online website is www.amazon.com - their prices are more expensive than the above websites)