

EVERYONE CAN WIN audio script edition

Skill 6: Managing Emotions

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*‘Anyone can become angry – that’s easy.
But to be angry at the right person,
to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose,
and in the right way – that’s not easy.’*

The ancient Greek sage, Aristotle, said that.

This is skill number 6 Managing Emotions

It’s from the book, *Everyone can Win*, about handling conflict constructively. We manage our emotions when we respect them, listen to their message for change, so that we choose wisely how and when to express what we feel; Managing other people’s strong emotions is to acknowledge them without over-reacting, disengage where necessary, and become a source of positive feelings for others.

Have you felt:

- So overwhelmed you couldn’t think or speak clearly?



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- So outraged you thought, ‘I’ll show them. They’ll never do that to me again’?
- So hurt by someone, you felt you could never forgive them?

I’m talking here about BIG emotions, like these. We’ll want to handle them very well indeed if we’re to make our conflict situations better, not worse. And that means we:

***Don’t indulge them and don’t deny them.
If we can accept our emotions and use them wisely,
they can strengthen our relationships.***

Our emotions are a bridge between our physical world and our personal assessment of what’s going on. They’re the filter we use to interpret our relationship between what’s happening out there and inside us. Usually that’s helpful – our emotions guide our responses.

But our emotional filter is also very prone to distortion. Sometimes our social conditioning that tells us it’s not okay to feel some feelings. Sometimes we push them down because they trigger reactions that can damage the relationship; or because we can’t afford to feel them while we attend to the ‘must do’s’ of living. Sometimes we don’t yet have the courage or strength to open to a great emotional wave of sadness, regret or anger and listen to its message.

We also add extra layers to our emotional filter to reduce complexity, giving ourselves a simpler handle on all that’s going on. We might create them to protect ourselves, to smother the feeling itself or to blame ourselves or condemn the other person. We tell ourselves a **story to simplify our picture**. We say to ourselves: ‘I feel this, that must mean...’ ‘I feel anxious. So, *I can’t handle this situation.*’ ‘I’m feeling abandoned. *I just knew he didn’t care about me.*’ ‘I’m furious. *It just proves she has no respect for me.*’ ‘I’m depressed right now and I was yesterday too. *Life is not worth living.*’ Story after story. The raw feeling is not the problem. It just is, however uncomfortable. But these extra stories get us into real trouble. They distort our view of reality.



The Buddhist author, Pema Chodron, says:

‘Feel the feelings and drop the story.’

Whenever I can, I take note of my added story and then work on dropping it. I want to be aware just of the raw ‘undressed up’ feeling. I try to get the other person out of the equation. Yes, my feeling may have been triggered by them, but my emotion is mine. I choose to take responsibility for how I feel. If I’m feeling cranky, my story often goes: *‘I’m cranky... because they’re just sooo insensitive!’* I just return to the raw feeling: *‘Ah, that’s me being cranky right now.’* I interrupt my extra story, and my judgements about the other person. I may have to pull myself up several times to quieten my story down. Gosh, my stories can be insistent! But I keep returning to the body sensation of crankiness without any dressing up. The unadorned feeling is my real ground. That’s what I want to listen to.

To be able to respond to conflict constructively, we need to catch hold of our so-called negative emotions long enough to *assess* them. That way we take charge of what we say and what we do about them. We might need to channel them into the relationship quite carefully, so that we protect ourselves and our connection with others. That’s where our social-emotional intelligence comes in. Let’s look at some skills that can boost it – so that we steer our passionate conflicts more effectively.

If we can be clear about what we feel and what’s the matter, then:

We can use our emotions for positive change.

#

THE MESSAGES OF OUR FEELINGS

An emotion, positive or negative, is a disturbance to our usual equilibrium. Sooner or later we’ll want to return to neutral. In Western societies, the most common way that people learn to release emotions is by expressing them to the people directly involved. But it’s not always fair or wise to dump them on the relationship. I know it doesn’t



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help to inflict my crankiness on the other person. But all my emotions, even my irritation, are acceptable and valuable to *me*.

Each has a *message* to deliver.

And I want to know about that, NOT the *story* overlay I might have been running.

Anger, for instance is just our fire for change. Its purpose is to let others know their behaviour is unacceptable to us. If we're furious, we may need to monitor how we express it so we're appropriate to the situation. Some people respond better when you talk more about your hurt and less about your anger. Is there hurt underneath my anger? I also want to acknowledge that, at least to myself.

What's the *message of anger*? *'I need change. That's what I've got to work towards.'*

Resentment is immobilised anger. It is our way of holding ourselves apart, telling ourselves to be extremely cautious around this person. Good point. But it's keeping us stuck, blaming them for how we feel and for the situation we're in. We're holding onto us being right and them wrong. Is there something we can forgive them for now so that we can break out of this holding pattern and really move on in our lives? Are we unconsciously waiting – for *them* to fix things? Is that realistic? It may not be, but is there something we can say or do to shift this stand-off.

The Messages *it brings* are: *'I need to take charge of my resentment.'* *'I need to help this situation move along now.'*

Hurt tells us that our needs are not being met, or that our self-esteem has been injured. It's best to look squarely at the wound. And certainly before we withdraw, get angry or take revenge. Can we communicate our hurt without too much resentment.

The Messages: *'I need to heal.'* *'I need to feel safe in our relationship again.'*

Offence. Our sense of face, our dignity or our reputation has been attacked and we're offended. Perhaps, someone alleges that we have done wrong and we feel deeply insulted. Everyone's social standing requires a certain level of deference from others



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to maintain it. If they treat us like rubbish, we freeze the other person out. It's our survival mechanism, but not always productive. Yes, I will honour my feeling of offence. It maintains my dignity and protects my self-esteem. But do I go further and plot revenge? Can I save myself from an inappropriate reaction by considering *what* has triggered their lack of respect for me – the pressures on the other person or perhaps their ignorance, or, heaven forbid, something I've done? What message *does offence deliver?* *'I deserve to be treated with respect.'* *'I would prefer harmony to be restored.'*

Fear warns us that we can't control this situation, that danger threatens and we need to proceed with caution, or to seek help, or more information, or to withdraw. Do we need to separate fantasy from reality? What's really the worst that can happen here? How would I deal with that? Messages of fear: *'I need to be careful.'* Or *'I need support.'* Or perhaps: *'I need to consider my alternatives.'*

Guilt comes about when we do or even contemplate something less than we expected from ourselves. It is productive when we feel it, take on board its message and then move on. But it can be self-destructive if it continues to gnaw at us long after the event. Is there something else here we still need to learn or to fix? Guilt's purpose is to show us a better way to behave. The Message might be: *'I need to make amends.'* Or perhaps just: *'I will do things differently next time.'*

Regret is a huge feeling that encompasses pain and sorrow. It may follow after anger, resentment or guilt. It's a healthy conclusion to these feelings. It acknowledges the unfulfilled potential of the situation. It's a slow fire, gently burning off the pain behind 'if only it were different.' We can safely revisit our regret, whenever we are ready. It says: *'I acknowledge my pain and accept how it was, or still is'* *'I don't need to deny, defend or do anything. I am almost complete about this.'*



FIVE QUESTIONS TO MANAGE EMOTIONS

All these emotions can become destructive. But they can also be our fire, our energy, for *positive* change. Have we really heard that part of the message? We can choose to transform them from the negative. Anger offers us power for action; hurt can deepen our appreciation – of the enormity of experience and of its beauty; fear when mastered fuels new excitement, even exhilaration.

Sometimes, we'll prefer to convert our feelings with an indirect response. For example, this time your anger may be best transformed into building into a better system for passing on information. My crankiness of the other day had been directed at my friend. That shifted the moment I mentioned to her a completely different problem that was troubling me. But generally, we'll be more direct.

These FIVE QUESTIONS help you manage your emotions so that you communicate them wisely:

1. Why am I feeling this?

Ask yourself: 'What triggered this response?' 'What did someone do? Have they touched on a sensitive issue for me?'

2. What do I want to change?

Your emotions tell you what you do and don't want to change. Emotions are often misused to prove the other person wrong and hold grudges.

Instead, ask yourself: '*What change do I want?*' '*Does that sound reasonable and viable?*'



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3. What do I need in order to let go of this feeling?

Once we get hold of an emotion, we can have trouble finishing with it. If someone makes us angry, we stay angry, or if something has hurt our feelings, we stay hurt. Emotions should do their work and then complete.

Ask yourself: *‘What will help me let go?’ ‘Explain myself? An apology? Do I need to see them making an effort?’*

4. Whose problem is this, really?

How much is mine? How much is theirs?

Say your teenage son’s room is untidy. If you have to find something in there, it’s a problem, *yours*. But as it is your son’s room, the mess is largely *his* problem.

You’ll communicate your anger more effectively if you’re assertive about your part of the problem, and minimise your suggestions about theirs.

5. What do I think this situation implies?

What story am I telling myself about this? Is it that ‘They don’t like me’, ‘They don’t respect me’, ‘They don’t appreciate me?’ The conclusions we draw about someone else’s behaviour often make us feel worse, quite out of proportion to the actual situation. Recognise that you, not they, have added this story. Reassess how realistic it is.

#

FIVE GOALS WHEN COMMUNICATING EMOTIONS

1. Avoid the desire to punish or blame.

Take responsibility for how you feel. If you plan action, check that it is not vindictive. Are you blaming someone for your feelings? People do what they do, we react how we do. There’s an important difference between ‘You make me mad’ and ‘When you do that, I get mad.’ I’m taking responsibility for how I feel.



2. Improve the situation.

High emotions indicate where change is wanted. We want to make the situation better.

3. Communicate your feelings appropriately.

If something hurts or angers you, you do have a right to say so. But you don't want them to become *too* defensive. A well-chosen 'I' statement is your best bet. For example, 'When you leave suddenly without talking about our problems, I feel hurt. I'd like us to discuss our problems more openly.' (Check out skill number 4, Appropriate Assertiveness)

4. Improve the relationship and increase communication.

Bottling your feelings up withdraws something of yourself from the relationship. When you talk about your feelings, you are offering something precious to the other person – the opportunity to know you. When someone tells you about their feelings, they offer you the same gift. Treat their feelings with care.

5. Avoid repeating the same situation.

Your aim is to prevent this problem from recurring. So, say what you've found difficult; ask to be treated in a particular way; work on fixing the problem. You're looking after yourself and the relationship.

#

Once when my daughter was a child we were arguing and she said to me: *'I hate you!'*
And I said to her: *'Right now I don't like you very much either! But in our family, that's a start of a conversation, not the end of it.'*

**Say what you need to say to the other person,
but don't put them out of your heart.**

#



Emotions have a natural cycle: they arise, we recognise and accept them, we respond and their energy releases, and we're then back at equilibrium. If we can't or don't choose to respond with a communication or appropriate action at this time, how do we return to equilibrium? This normal cycle has been interrupted. So, do we:

EXPRESS, SUPPRESS ...OR CONTAIN?

Perhaps we are fearful of being overwhelmed by an emotion or we're avoiding the conflict that comes in its wake. We suppress our hurt or anger and try to deny it. The cycle has not been completed. We breathe more shallowly. Our overall levels of stress build. There's a direct connection between our psychology and our physiology.

Pent-up, suppressed emotions don't disappear – they can *implode*, causing illness and burnout or, *explode*, sooner or later causing embarrassing scenes.

Our emotions are experienced through our body. It's our instrument of emotional awareness. When it's not appropriate to EXPRESS our emotion, we're doing damage to it if we SUPPRESS it, refuse to be aware of it. We dull our body's mind. We've clogged up that filter between ourselves and the outside world! If we've locked too many emotions away from our awareness, we don't read accurately what's going on. We might act unconsciously, out of control and sometimes completely out of whack with the current situation.

If we can't find a safe way to access what we feel, we are liable to self-medicate to dampen down our sensitivity. We can do it in all sorts of ways - with spite, anger, over-eating or self-harm or legal or illegal drugs. We can even become addicted to conflict itself if it deadens a deeper pain.

When it doesn't seem right to bring our emotions into the relationship, our best alternative is to CONTAIN them for the time being.

How's that different to suppressing?

'Containing' means we remain aware of the emotion, but we don't fully respond to it, yet. We make considered choices about our best words and actions for now. The



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requirements of workplace and social decorum will often prevent us going public with our feelings.

The energy of that contained emotion may still be running high. It's like a wave running into shore. It will stop naturally when it runs out of momentum...as long as we don't embroider it with story.

Many emotions simply discharge during our daily activity. We also discharge some of our pent-up feelings nightly in our dreams. We might discharge incomplete emotions while exercising, writing a journal, meditating, or talking out the events of the day with someone close to us. While we seem to be addicted to sudoku or computer games we may in fact be slowly metabolising our grief or shock. We might express our innermost feeling through movement or dance or by listening to or making music or by painting. Deep emotions have always served as a rich fuel for the arts. For the really big issues, we may need to talk with someone professional who won't judge us and will give us the safe space we need to go in depth into what we have experienced.

Just a warning however, we can become fixated on our anger, worry, pain, misery, depression and other challenges. And that's no more helpful than trying not to feel these emotions at all. We keep stirring them up, rather than allowing them to dissipate. They can become the narrative that defines who we are. Managing our emotions well is not about repeating tired stories any chance we get.

Often, we can complete a troubling emotion in private. If our thoughts about it won't settle down, a playful exercise might stop our constant revisiting. We might release our anger by play acting it out – over-doing it, stomping around the house, dramatising groans, pretending to puke, or blow raspberries at that situation and at the anger itself. Definitely best done alone! Make it a game. Be childlike. It's a great way to break our fascination with an emotion that really should pass through us, not stick around to get in our way.



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Sometimes we're in a rut. We can't pinpoint our feelings exactly, and we keep rolling the same old thoughts about a problem and get nowhere. That's a perfect time for using a wonderful technique for deeply listening to ourselves called:

FOCUSING

I'll give you a quick explanation here. If it appeals, I highly recommend Eugene Gendlin's book called *Focusing*. It's been constantly in print since 1988.

Focusing is the art of paying attention to the way your body feels a problem – your thoughts and emotions. It takes you out of the mind chatter and into the 'here-and-now'. I use it to deepen my own understanding of how things really sit for me. It often changes the way I decide to tackle a conflict.

To focus well, you need to grasp just two basic concepts:

- felt sense and
- body shift.

Your body registers everything that is going on in very subtle muscular responses and energy flows and resistances. Different issues *feel* different. They have *different felt senses*. Just like holding an orange feels different to holding a tennis ball. Our whole body is doing our thinking. If we want to understand better how a problem is affecting us we can tune into its felt sense in our body.

Try this.

- Think for a moment about your mother. Or you could choose a mother figure in your life. Not a whole lot of detail, just 'all about my mother.' Just get the essence of 'her'. And see if you can sense where in your body you hold those sensations. Take the time you need.



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- Next, switch to thinking ‘all about my father’, or father figure. Can you feel a difference? Switch between both of them several times if that helps you locate a different felt sense for each of them.

‘**Body shift**’ happens when we first find accurate words for something that was previously unconscious. There’s a release of energy and a subtle change in our body’s state. Say, we know we’ve forgotten something but we just can’t think what it is. It niggles away until it springs back to mind. It might be: ‘Ah, that’s right! I want to take that book with me.’ There’s a noticeable release of tension that comes just from bringing it to mind. Possibly you’ll readjust your position, take a deeper breath or tap your head. That moment of relief is a *body shift*.

A similar relief and release of energy occurs any time you tune into the felt sense of something troubling you, and up pops a new set of words that just describes the matter exactly. The accurate labelling undoes a knot inside you and you resettle yourself a bit. Your label might be: ‘Oh, the real problem is ...I’m not sure I can trust him.’ Or ‘Oh, that’s it!... I really want her to like me.’ And there’s a body shift because there’s a real change in how we understand the problem now.

OK. That’s body shift and felt sense. You’re ready to start Focusing

I’ll probably run through these instructions a bit fast for you. Focusing takes a bit of time. You might want to play this section again and then turn me off for a while to practise. But here’s the gist of it.

Bring to mind some current difficulty. Get in contact with *its felt sense* somewhere in your body. Actually, the more troubling the problem or the conflict, the *easier* it is to find it. But don’t go into it. Don’t rehash all you already know about it. Just get a global sense of ‘all about this problem’ and where you hold it in your body, probably somewhere in your torso. Ask those physical sensations: ‘What’s the main thing here?’ or ‘What’s important here?’ ‘Why am I uncomfortable.’ Don’t answer with your previous thoughts. Let your body tell you where it’s at right now. Stop the mind chatter. Feel, listen and wait.



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After a few moments a label for something important about the problem will pop into your mind, and the sensation you're feeling changes a little. That's a subtle body shift. And your cue to ask that new sensation: 'So, what's the main thing about that?' And after a little while, there'll be another insight and another little body shift. And on you go: feeling for the next body sensation, asking it to explain itself, receiving a label and noticing any body shift it produces. If the label you received doesn't seem *quite* accurate, ask again and wait. As you get your labels just right, it's like untangling knotted fishing line. As each piece is freed by being correctly described, the next bit becomes available.

You may come to an insight that is particularly significant, and you suddenly feel hot or get a rush of goose bumps. That's not a subtle body shift, it's a big one. The trapped energy of what was previously unconscious is discharging, like a burst boil. Allow it time to drain. Sometimes, there may be tears. But they're good ones! You're letting go of something that has held you back.

Keep repeating your focusing cycle until it feels like it's enough for now. Some problems are so complex they can take months or even years to untangle completely. You can always return to focusing another day.

Focusing of itself doesn't resolve an issue – it is concerned with clearly *identifying* it. But that will often help us move forward. Perhaps you're worrying about a thorny problem at work? Focusing just might help you make that creative leap. Perhaps you're troubled about a shifting tide in one of your friendships, and you want to clear about what you feel about that. Focusing might be the tool you reach for. It doesn't mean that you will always *act* on what you discover through focusing or perhaps even talk about it to anyone else. But can you honour your emotions as they arise in your life – allow them into conscious experience?

Let's take a moment to listen to Rachel's story. She told me how she found focusing particularly helpful.

#



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RACHEL

...is an Australian woman. She is married to a Greek man, Dmitri. She told me this story about while they were still living in Greece, but were preparing for Dmitri to make the big step of migrating to Australia with her. In those last months before the big move, her husband was surrounded by family and friends and there was very little time for privacy between them as a couple.

Easter was coming and Dmitri suggested they go away for a few days. He had been really busy organising the move to Australia and she was excited to have some quality time together at last. However, when she heard that his plan was to go with his brother to visit his uncle in a nearby town, her heart sank. She could just see myself trailing after three macho men. Not her idea of a romantic holiday!

So she asked Dmitri if they could do something else, just the two of them?'. Dmitri replied gruffly, 'I don't want to leave my brother while his wife's away.' Rachel agreed, but very reluctantly. And Dmitri grumbled, 'Don't worry. It's better we just stay here'.

They left the issue but she felt really angry and hurt. Later, alone, she decided to try focusing. She described to me how she'd used it to help with her pent-up feelings. She tuned into their conflict, felt for where she was holding it in her body and asked her inner sense of it all, what was the real issue for her. Then she waited. Words started to flow to her:

'I feel so disappointed ...I feel like I'm giving our relationship more than he is...I'm tired of trying so hard... I feel lonely ...I miss everyone in Australia... No, that's not quite right ... Ah, I feel hurt because it seems he just prefers to spend his time with his family and friends ... I feel let down.'



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She knew that was the crux of the problem because a wave of tears came with that. When they passed, she went back to focusing some more. She wanted to refine how she felt about the problem now. So she went back into her body's sensations of how it felt to her right now, and let the thoughts arise again from that new place. Her main issue became: 'I feel unappreciated when Dmitri doesn't make time to nurture our relationship'.

Then some perspective on his issues washed in: she understood that he felt so responsible towards his family; and how he felt torn, leaving his friends too to move to Australia with her. She wondered if this was why he wanted to spend every spare minute with them before leaving?

Her emotions settled. She still felt neglected and hurt, but now she had some clarity. And she knew that they would need to talk about this issue again.

The final surprise came when Dmitri arrived home that day. Normally, after an argument, normally he'd give her the silent treatment for a while. He'd be a bit resentful. But this time she said he came in, warm and affectionate. She wondered if he was responding to internal shift that she'd made during her focusing time?

The following day, they were able to discuss the holiday and her needs in the relationship quite calmly. She encouraged him to open up about his sense of responsibility to his family too, and what he could do about that once they'd made the big move. They really cleared the air.

I don't actually know how they spent that last Easter break in Greece. It didn't seem that important to Rachel anymore.



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We've looked at how best to handle ourselves, now what about others?

What's the best way to:

RESPOND TO OTHERS' POWERFUL EMOTIONS?

Even if you love and respect someone deeply and would never wish to hurt them, sooner or later you probably will. Their "hot buttons" are pressed and a wave of their angry and hurt emotion breaks over you. They are now in reaction.

Will you react too, or will you respond?

Can we treat other people's emotions as we ought treat our own, carefully listening to their messages?

Just because the person has totally lost their cool and is erupting, you don't have to join a free-for-all of flying insults. You'll regret it. You'll say something you can't take back. You might get hit. You might hit someone else. Violence is not OK, violence is never OK. Remember, emotions are contagious. Immunise yourself against the negative and transmit the positive.

How we handle those extreme moments are very driven by culture and family background. If you've grown up in households where extreme blow-ups and reactions are common and noisy, you might think there's no choice but to explode too. But just as our own anger rises towards its bursting point, we do have a split second of choice. To let it rip or not? Choose not. Stay in charge of yourself.

Be tolerant if the other person has exploded. Hear them out. It's a sign of maturity when you can allow some leeway for others to discharge their pent-up emotions without taking offence or reacting in kind.

Try not to defend or explain yourself at that time. Don't attack back, withdraw, or close down the conversation. Do your best to stay kind, generous and open.

Don't try toning them down. This is probably not be the moment to curb their momentum with comfort, advice or criticism, even with the best of intentions. It



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might be read as disrespectful. It might be fine to do that a bit later on. But first, they need us to acknowledge how strongly they feel. We might validate the emotion by naming it. 'Woaw, I can see how angry you are!' Sometimes that's enough to steer the conflict towards problem-solving.

Stabilise your own core. What does that mean? As soon as you can, tune in to your body, breathe deeply, centre and ground yourself. Monitor your own reactions. If you're reasonably calm and accepting, you're transmitting a positive vibe that can help.

Really listen until they have calmed down. Aim to be a caring witness for their anger and distress, and pay careful attention to what you are picking up from the communication. Appreciate both their feelings and the actual content. Let irate remarks pass you by without reacting.

Save your own comments until their whole tone has changed. It will once they feel heard out. Timing is all, as you steer this into a safe and constructive interaction.

You might explore more of the issues involved with **a redirecting question.** 'What can we do now?' It can lead them out of their swamp of feelings and into a thinking state, so they've the chance to re-centre.

Clarify their needs and concerns with them. Can you discuss some of their unmet needs that underlie the outburst? Their needs are valid but *you* don't have to meet every one of them.

Be willing to return to just listening if they flare up again. You do want all the relevant issues out on the table.

Consider the next step:

- Do you need to acknowledge your contribution to their problem?
- Have you ignored a need of theirs or done something that appears disrespectful? Now's a good time to take responsibility for that.
- How might you fix other issues together?



Is it a suitable time to develop options, for you to make an ‘I’ statement about your needs and concerns, or to take time out? You might both need a cup of tea or a walk around the block after all that!

#

People’s behaviour can be very frustrating! The emotions on display feel like **EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL.**

There are situations where offering too much attention to a negative behaviour and emotion driving it is *not* the best thing to do– for instance with:

- power and control issues,
- attention-seeking,
- desire for revenge or
- displays of inadequacy or helplessness.

Child psychologist, Rudolf Driekurs, identified these behaviour patterns in children. In my experience, adults often continue these problematic ways of interacting. How best to respond?

Power struggles, attention-seeking, revenge or helplessness need two to play. Disengage wherever possible.

Yes, you might deliver an ‘I’ statement about what is unacceptable behaviour around you or let them know what you find really off-putting. But you need more long-term strategies.

Support the real needs under the emotions and the annoying behaviours.

Remember that behind this mess of emotional blackmail are *unmet needs or hidden fears*.

If you’re beginning to get caught up in a power struggle, disengage!

People flaunt power to build their self-esteem. It can make you furious if their abilities don’t justify it, or if they test you with typical teenage confrontations such as, ‘You can’t make me!’ Adults might use slightly more sophisticated language as they



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dig their heels in, but fundamentally it boils down to the same thing. Disengage from a power struggle as soon as you recognise it. Both fighting back and giving in only serve to reward the power grab. Divert, praise something they do well. Establish a more respectful connection. You're after co-operative power. That's skill number 5 in this series.

Reward the behaviour you do want. It's easy to react negatively to someone *seeking excessive attention*. Perhaps they jump into the spotlight –big-note themselves, or monopolise conversations. How do you react? Do you remind them they've said enough about that already, or put them in their place? Your attention rewards the attention-seeking. You've been hooked! Whatever you reward, you get more of. So reward what you *do* want. Support their constructive involvement and contributions and ignore their bids for attention, wherever possible.

People's attempts at *revenge* can be tough to handle, especially when you are their target! But, **don't retaliate** Sometimes their urge to pay you back, harks back to old injustices in their history. Notice it as a tactic, you might even expect it if you recognise their triggers. Your distress feeds their impulse to hurt you, and it's often best to act unaffected. Consider instead how you could build more trust; how you can show that you respect their needs. Justice is their big issue, so make sure you *are* being just and fair with them. Nonetheless, your best efforts may not work, then you just have to back away.

You may be driven mad by someone who *acts helpless*, when really they're not. **Don't succumb.** Remember the professional Victim we discussed in skill number 5. Co-operative power. The child who plays dumb to avoid chores; the co-worker who acts clueless to avoid an extra task and entices you into doing a lot of their work; the parent who's too needy, constantly phoning their adult children. It's so tempting to just give in and do whatever they want. Watch out! You're rewarding the negative behaviour. You'll get more of it! Perhaps instead you react by nagging or criticising, but this doesn't help either. You are more likely to cut through the manipulation by supporting any positive attempts they make, however small, to help themselves and to get on with managing their own lives.



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Manage the emotions fuelling manipulative behaviours by supporting the legitimate under-fed needs behind them.

NOURISH CORE NEEDS

Become a source of positive emotions. In fact, can we become a *constant* source of positive emotions for those around us – well before any problems arise? It's how we can harness co-operation, creativity and trustworthiness in the most difficult of people. We can do it all the time, with everyone.

Fisher and Shapiro in *Beyond Reason* recommend we nourish five core underlying needs that are common to most people.

Five core needs? What are they? Great question!

- Express **appreciation** of the merits in how the other person thinks, feels and acts; and express your appreciation of the difficulties they're facing. Nourish their self-esteem.
- Help them build a sense of **affiliation** or connection with us and their team; we all need to feel we belong.
- Indicate our respect for their **autonomy**, their need and ability to make decisions for themselves. They need some independence to build their identity.
- Respect their **status**. Don't demean them in any way; they need our respect.
- Help shape **fulfilling and meaningful roles** for them whenever appropriate and especially when designing solutions. They need to feel significant and that their contributions are valued.

We forestall negative feelings with an overlay of positive ones. They're more likely to want us as their partners, rather than their opponents. We want them to value our relationship and they will if they feel good in our company and nourish us in return!

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SUMMARY

- Don't over-indulge or deny your emotions.
- All our emotions are worthy of our attention. Just don't dress them up with stories.
- Each has a message for us. In particular, we can ask ourselves what we want to change. We can then decide what to communicate to others.
- An 'I' statement tells the other person we're taking responsibility for how we feel. You might want to review its format in Skill 4, Assertiveness.
- To return to equilibrium, we may need to release pent-up feelings away from the other person.
- Try focusing to find the crux of the problem, name it clearly for ourselves and find out what's underneath. Our emotions grow us if we allow them into our awareness.
- Respect other people's strong feelings. Handle a blow-up with really good listening. You might want to review that method too. You'll find that topic in Part 1 of Skill number 3, Empathy.
- Don't reward manipulative emotions and behaviours. Instead support the under-fed needs driving their emotional blackmail.
- Become a source of positive feelings for others. Protect and nourish their self-esteem. Help them feel they belong, they're appreciated, and that they are making a significant contribution.

When we learn how to manage emotions, our own and other people's we build richer, more meaningful relationships.



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If you'd like more details on all of this, have a look at our website, at Conflict Resolution Network. Our headquarters are at crnhq.org. You can download a transcript and explore our study notes on managing emotions. There's a free [manual for trainers](#) there too. And for ongoing reference, you might want to purchase the book, [Everyone Can Win](#). It's the inspiration for this series.

In this episode, we've explored tools for managing emotions we can use right now, but in truth there might be no real resolution until we're ready to forgive and move on. What fuels ongoing resentment? We look into how we work on and around this in the next episode on **Willingness to resolve**.

So do press your 'Play' button for that one, sometime soon. Perhaps subscribe to this series wherever you listen to podcasts. And you can really help us spread the word if you leave us a review there, and let your friends know about it too. Good conflict resolution skills do make an enormous difference to people's lives.

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