

RESOLVE CONFLICT:

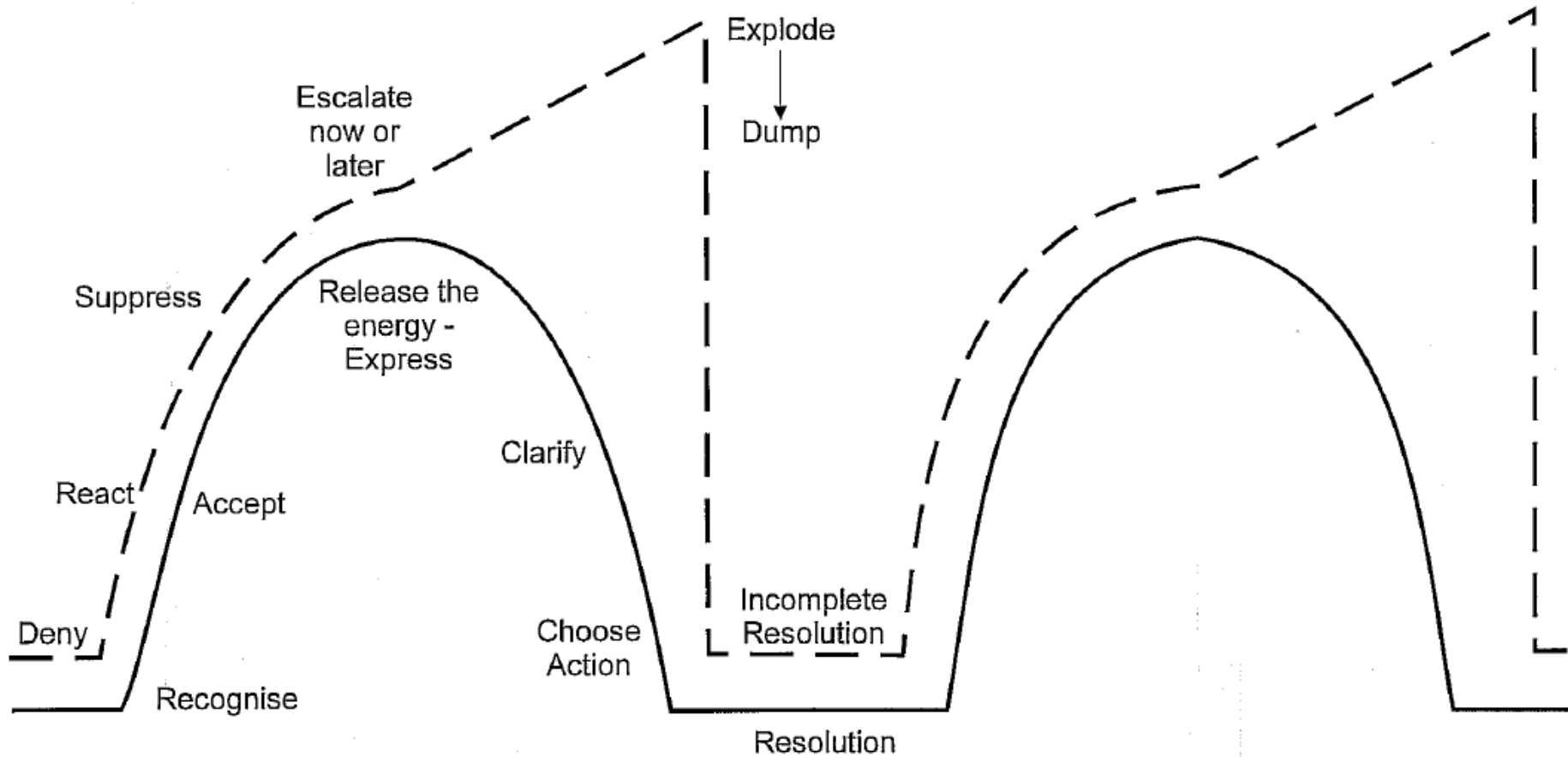
EVERYONE CAN WIN

Skill 6: Managing Emotions

Extra study materials



Cycle of Emotion



_____ effective management of emotions
 - - - - - less effective management of emotions



Express, suppress or contain, release

Our emotions are our filter between ourselves and the outside world. Our emotions should arise, roll into to our awareness, guide our actions and then naturally dissipate, like waves running into shore.

But our personal history and the social etiquette of the situation get in the way of this natural cycle. It's not always appropriate to EXPRESS how we feel – especially if it's anger, hurt, resentment, guilt, grief and sometimes even joy.

Where do you block off some emotions because it's not appropriate to express them?

Sometimes we try to SUPPRESS unacceptable emotions and try not to feel them at all. We bottle them up, push them down, and self-medicate to dull their pain. Or we may redirect our anger to safer targets and stir up conflict to distract ourselves. Self-harm and addictions are fuelled by suppressed feelings. We eat, work, or drink too much. We stuff those feelings down with legal or illegal drugs. Long term, our habits of suppression are limiting our relationships and causing us ill health.

When you're upset and can't express it, what do you do to push down those feelings?

When we can't bring a particular emotion into the relationship, our better alternative is to CONTAIN it for the time being. We remain aware of it, but make considered choices about our best words and actions for now. The energy of that contained emotion may still be running high. So, we need healthy ways to stay aware of our private feelings while their energy RELEASES naturally.

Check the boxes with your preferred ways to process distressing emotions consciously. Remember them next time you're upset or tense.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking it out with someone close | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a good cry | <input type="checkbox"/> Movement or dance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Painting | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing a journal | <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to or making music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play acting it out in private: stomping, groaning, pretending to puke, blowing raspberries, | |

Write down some other healthy releases that work for you: _____



The messages of our emotions

All our emotions are valuable to us. However, we often we plaster them with unhelpful stories, our faulty attempts to make sense of it all. We add on top of them: 'She doesn't like me', 'He doesn't respect me', 'I'm not good enough.' So, feel the feeling, drop that unhelpful story, and tune in to its useful message instead:

Anger: Anger is our fire for change. It's the charge we need to let others know that their behaviour is unacceptable to us. We may need to direct that charge carefully. Look also for the hurt that is often underneath it. Sometimes it's wiser to talk about that.

Message: *I need change. That's what I've got to work towards.'*

Resentment: Resentment is immobilised anger. We're blaming others for how we feel or for the situation we're in. We're holding onto being right and making them wrong. We wait for *them* to fix things. Can I shift this stuck place now? Am I ready to forgive?

Message: *"I need to take charge of my resentment and help this situation move along now."*

Hurt: Hurt says that our needs are not being met, or that our self-esteem has been wounded. Feel the hurt, rather withdrawing, getting angry or taking revenge. Often it deepens our relationship if we can communicate it without resentment or too much anger.

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

Offence: Your sense of face or reputation has been attacked. You may be furious, but pay-back, no matter how tempting, will not help. Maintain your dignity and self-respect. Consider what has triggered their behaviour – the pressures on the other person or perhaps their ignorance, or something you've done? You need something to change.

Message: *'I deserve to be treated with respect.' 'I would prefer harmony to be restored.'*

Fear: Fear warns us that we need to proceed with caution, to seek help, to get more information, perhaps withdraw or separate fantasy from reality.

Message: *'I need to be careful.' Or 'I need support.' Or perhaps: 'I need to consider my alternatives.'*

Guilt: Guilt comes about when we do or contemplate something less than we expect from ourselves. Take on board that message, resolve to do it differently and guilt should release. It doesn't have to gnaw at us long after the event. Guilt's purpose is to show us a better way to behave, something to learn or to fix, and that we are capable of a better response.

Message: *"I need to make amends or do things differently next time."*

Regret: Regret is a huge feeling that can encompass pain and sorrow. It may be the healthy conclusion to anger, resentment or guilt. It acknowledges the unfulfilled potential of this situation. It is often our last emotion before we fully accept how it is, or was. It is gently burning off the pain locked in defeated hope: 'if only it were different.'

Message: *'I acknowledge my pain and accept this situation. I don't need to deny, defend or do anything. I am almost complete about this.'*



Exploring our response to conflict

Five questions – Five Goals

***Don't indulge! Don't deny!
Create richer relationships!***

FIVE QUESTIONS

to manage your emotions wisely:

Why am I feeling this? What triggered it? _____

What do I want to change? Is that reasonable and practical? _____

What do I need to be complete with this feeling? Would an explanation or apology help? _

Whose problem is this, really? How much is mine? How much is the other person's? _____

What unhelpful story have I been telling myself about this? (e.g. 'They don't respect me',
'I'm unlovable') Can I let it go? _____

FIVE GOALS

for communicating emotions for positive change

- Aim: to avoid the desire to punish or blame
To improve the situation
To communicate my feelings appropriately
To improve the relationship and increase communication
To avoid repeating the same situation

What could I say? _____

If communicating my emotions is not appropriate, what other action can I take?



Focusing

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’. It helps you unfold the deeper issues locked in your discomfort – what’s really the matter.

- 1. Preparing:** Find a time to sit undisturbed and comfortably for a while. Possibly close your eyes.
- 2. Clearing a space:** Scan your body for anywhere there is a disturbance. Perhaps something is troubling you – perhaps a conflict. But your focus might be drawn to something quite different than what you expected. Don’t go into its emotions, just notice the overall sense of it. Greet each thing that comes, and breathe deeply.
- 3. Feeling for the problem:** Pick the problem, or the aspect of it you would most like to focus on right now. Just attend an overall, global **felt sense** of it: "all about the problem", no details.
- 4. Finding the crux:** See if you can locate the core of the problem, the main thing in it – probably just a body sense at this stage without accompanying words. Stay with that feeling of ‘the main thing’. Let whatever comes come. LISTEN, rather than tell yourself what it’s about. WAIT.
- 5. Labelling:** Keep focusing on the felt sense of it and allow words or images to arise from that place. If the feeling about the main thing changes, just follow the change and allow new labels or descriptions for ‘the main thing about this’ to emerge.
- 6. Checking back with the feeling:** As you’re doing this, ask that place in your body ‘Is this label exactly right, or not quite?’ If it’s not quite right, focus again (as in step 5). When you do get a perfect match, the words really name this feeling well, stay with that good label for as long as it needs. You may be experiencing a body shift – perhaps it’s subtle, but it might come with a sense of significant physical relief or even heat. Trapped energy from that previously unnamed place is discharging.
- 7. Another round starting from 3:** This may open up some other aspect of it all. Start another round of focusing on that. Stop when it’s enough for today.

Reference:

Focusing: How You Gain Direct Access to Your Body’s Knowledge by Eugene Gendlin



Handling extreme emotions in others

If you react to others defensively by attacking back or withdrawing, conflict often increases. Stay in charge of yourself. If you are in physical danger, leave. But otherwise, there are things you can do that can help another person's extreme emotions to discharge safely. Then you can both deal with the issue more constructively.

- | | |
|---|---|
| Be tolerant about their explosion | Give them some leeway to discharge their pent-up emotions without taking offence or reacting in kind. |
| Don't defend or explain yourself YET | 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 not the time for comfort, advice or criticism. Just acknowledge how strongly they feel. Validate their feelings. Perhaps: 'I can see how angry you are.' |
| Get centred | Tune in to your own body. Monitor your reactions, breathe deeply, centre and ground yourself. If you're reasonably calm and accepting, you're transmitting a positive vibe that can help. |
| Really listen until they have calmed down. | Say nothing for the moment. Just be a caring witness to their anger and distress, even if it's directed right at you. What is their communication? Separate feelings from content. Consider what has some validity. Let irate and unfair remarks pass you by without reacting. |
| Save comments until their whole tone has changed. | Listen really well. When they feel heard out their tone will change. Only then, begin steering this outburst into a safe and constructive interaction. |
| Clarify their needs and concerns with them. | What's behind this outburst? Discuss their unmet needs in this. Their needs are valid but <i>you</i> don't have to meet every one of them. |
| Ask questions to shift the focus to exploring the issues | Questions such as 'What can we do now?' might lead them out of their swamp of feelings and into a thinking state, and give them the chance to re-centre. Focus on connecting to the other person and fixing things between you. |
| Return to just listening if they flare up again | You do want all the relevant issues out on the table. Let them have their say if they don't feel 'done' and there's more they need you to hear. |
| Consider next steps | Acknowledge it if you've contributed to their problem. Have you ignored a need of theirs or done something that appears disrespectful?
Develop options so that the problem is not repeated.
Perhaps make an "I" statement if now seems a good time to fix other issues together.
Do you both need some time out? |



Managing emotions

Recommended

Books

Beyond Reason: *Using Emotions as You Negotiate* by Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro

Focusing: *How You Gain Direct Access to Your Body's Knowledge* by Eugene Gendlin

Emotional Intelligence: *Why it can matter more than IQ* by Daniel Goleman

When Things Fall Apart: *Heart Advice for Difficult Times* by Pema Chödrön

The Places That Scare You: *A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times* by Pema Chödrön

The Wisdom of No Escape: *How to love yourself and your world* by Pema Chödrön

