

Master Your Emotions: A Practical Guide to Overcome

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MASTER YOUR EMOTIONS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO OVERCOME NEGATIVITY
AND BETTER MANAGE YOUR **FEELINGS**

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WHY THIS BOOK

Many books discuss emotions and how they affect your life, but they rarely provide a comprehensive view of what emotions are, where they come from, what is their role, or how they affect your life.

Emotions are among the trickiest things to deal with and, unfortunately, too often you and I will fall prey to their mystical power.

We find ourselves unable to break their spell. Because they affect every aspect of our lives and determine the quality of it, our inability to understand how emotions work can prevent us from designing our ideal life and from fulfilling our potential.

By the end of this book, you will know how emotions work and, more importantly, you will be better equipped to deal with them.

If you struggle to deal with negative emotions, or want to learn how emotions work and how you can use them as a tool for your personal growth, this book is for you.



INTRODUCTION

The mind in its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of Hell, a hell of Heaven.

— J

M

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We all experience a wild range of emotions throughout our lives. I had to admit, while writing this book, I experienced highs and lows myself. At first, I was filled with excitement and thrilled at the idea of providing people with a guide to help them understand their emotions. I imagined how readers' lives would improve as they learned to control their emotions. My motivation was high and I couldn't help but imagine how great the book would be.

Or so I thought.

After the initial excitement, the time came to sit down to write the actual book, and that's when the excitement wore off pretty quickly.

Ideas that looked great in my mind suddenly felt dull. My writing seemed boring, and I felt as though I had nothing substantive or valuable to contribute.

Sitting at my desk and writing became more challenging each day. I started losing confidence. Who was I to write a book about emotions if I couldn't even master my own emotions? How ironic! I considered

giving up. There are already plenty of books on the topic, so why add one more?

At the same time, I realized this book was a perfect opportunity to work on my own emotional issues. And who doesn't suffer from negative emotions

from time to time? We all have highs and lows, don't we? The key is what we *do* with our lows. Are we using our emotions to grow? Are we learning something from them? Or are we beating ourselves up over them?

So, let's talk about *your* emotions now. Let me start by asking you this:

How do you feel right now?

Knowing how you feel is the first step toward taking control of your emotions. You may have spent so much time internalizing you've lost touch with your emotions. Perhaps you answered as follows: "I feel this book could be useful," or "I really feel I could learn something from this book." However, none of these answers reflect how you feel. You don't 'feel like this,' or 'feel like that,' you simply 'feel.' You don't 'feel like' this book could be useful, you 'think' this book could be useful, and that generates an emotion which makes you 'feel'

excited about reading it. Feelings manifest as physical sensations in your body, not as an idea in your mind. Perhaps, the reason the word 'feel' is so often overused or misused is because we don't want to talk about our emotions. So, how do you feel now?

Why is it important to talk about emotions?

How you feel determines the quality of your life. Your emotions can make your life miserable or truly magical. That's why they are among the most important things to focus on. Your emotions color all your experiences. When you feel good, everything seems, feels, or tastes better. You also think better thoughts. Your energy levels are higher and possibilities seem limitless. Conversely, when you feel depressed, everything seems dull. You have little energy and you

become unmotivated. You feel stuck in a place (mentally and physically) you don't want to be, and the future looks gloomy.

Your emotions can also act as a powerful guide. They can tell you something is wrong and allow you to make changes in your life. As such, they may be among the most powerful personal growth tools you have.

Sadly, neither your teachers nor your parents taught you how emotions work or how to control them. I find it ironic that just about anything comes with a how-to manual, while your mind doesn't.

You've never received an instruction manual to teach you how your mind works and how to use it to better manage your emotions, have you? I haven't. In fact, until now, I doubt one even existed.

What you'll learn in this book

This book is the how-to manual your parents should have given you at birth. It's the instruction manual you should have received at school. In it, I'll share everything you need to know about emotions so you can overcome your fears and limitations and become the type of person you really want to be.

You'll learn what emotions are, how they are formed, and how you can use them for your personal growth. You'll also learn how to deal with negative emotions and condition your mind to create more positive emotions.

It is my sincere hope and expectation that, by the end of this book, you will have a clear understanding of what emotions are and will have all the tools you need to start taking control of them.

More specifically, this book will help you:

Understand what emotions are and how they impact your life
Identify negative emotions that control your life and learn to overcome them

Change your story to take better control over your life and create a more compelling future, and

Reprogram your mind to experience more positive emotions.

Here is a more detailed summary of what you'll learn in this book: In Part I, we'll discuss what emotions are. You'll learn why you are wired to focus on negativity and what you can do to counter this effect. You'll also discover how your beliefs impinge upon your emotions. Finally, you'll learn how negative emotions work and why they are so tricky.

In Part II , we'll go over the things that directly impact your emotions. You'll understand the roles your body, your thoughts, your words, or your sleep, play in your life and how you can use them to change your emotions.

In Part III , you'll learn how emotions are formed. You'll also learn how to condition your mind to experience more positive emotions.

And finally, in Part IV , we'll discuss how to use your emotions as a tool for personal growth. You'll learn why you experience emotions such as fear or depression and how they work. You'll then discover how to use them to grow.

Let's get started.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I encourage you to read all the way through this book at least once.

After that, I invite you to revisit the book and focus on the section(s) you want to explore in more depth.

In this book, I include a number of different exercises. Though I don't expect you to go through them all, my hope is you'll pick some and apply them in your life. Remember, the results you'll get out of this book depend on how much time and effort you're willing to put in.

If you feel this book could be of any use to your family members or friends, make sure to share it with them. Emotions are complex and I believe it would benefit us all to deepen our understanding of the topic.

PART I

WHAT EMOTIONS ARE

Have you ever wondered what emotions are and what purpose they serve?

In this section, we'll discuss how your survival mechanism affects your emotions. Then, we'll explain what the 'ego' is and how it impacts your

emotions. Finally, we'll discover the mechanism behind emotions and learn why negative emotions can be so hard to deal with.

1

HOW YOUR SURVIVAL MECHANISM AFFECTS YOUR EMOTIONS

Why people have a bias towards negativity

Your brain is designed for survival, which explains why you're able to read this book at this very moment. When you think about it, the probability of you being born was extremely low. For this miracle to happen, all the generations before you had to survive long enough to procreate. In their quest for survival and procreation, they must have faced death hundreds or perhaps thousands of times.

Fortunately, unlike your ancestors, you're (probably) not facing death every day. In fact, in many parts of the world, life has never been safer. Yet, your survival mechanism hasn't changed much. Your brain still scans your environment looking for potential threats.

In many ways, some parts of your brain have become obsolete.

While you may not be seconds away from being eaten by a predator, your brain still gives significantly more weight to negative events than to positive ones.

Fear of rejection is one example of a bias toward negativity. In the past, being rejected from your tribe would reduce your chances of survival significantly. Therefore, you learned to look for any sign of rejection, and this became hardwired in your brain.

Nowadays, being rejected often carries little or no consequence to your long-term survival. You could be hated by the entire world and



still have a job, a roof and plenty of food on the table, yet, your brain is still programmed to perceive rejection as a threat to your survival.

This is why rejection can be so painful. While you know most rejections are no big deal, you nevertheless feel the emotional pain.

If you listen to your mind, you may even create a whole drama around it. You may believe you aren't worthy of love and dwell on a rejection for days or weeks. Worse still, you may become depressed as a result of this rejection.

In fact, one single criticism can often outweigh hundreds of positive ones. That's why, an author with fifty 5-star reviews, is likely to feel terrible when they receive a single 1-star review. While the author understands the 1-star review isn't a threat to her survival, her authorial brain doesn't. It likely interprets the negative review as a threat to her ego which triggers an emotional reaction.

The fear of rejection can also lead you to over-dramatize events. If your boss criticized you at work, your brain may see the event as a threat and you now think, "What if I'm fired? What if I can't find a job quickly enough and my wife leaves me? What about my kids? What if I can't see them again?" While you are fortunate to have such an effective survival mechanism, it is also your responsibility to separate real threats from imaginary ones. If you don't, you'll experience unnecessary pain and worry that will negatively impact the quality of your life. To overcome this bias towards negativity, you must reprogram your mind. One of a human being's greatest powers is our ability to use our thoughts to shape our reality and interpret events in a more empowering way. This book will teach you how to do this.

Action Step

Complete the corresponding exercise in the workbook (*Section I.*

What Emotions are - 1. Bias towards negativity).



Why your brain's job isn't to make you happy Your brain's primary job is not to make you happy, but to ensure your survival. Thus, if you want to be happy, you must take control of your emotions rather than hoping you'll be happy because it's your natural state. In the following section, we'll discuss what happiness is and how it works.

How dopamine can mess with your happiness

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter which, among other functions, plays a major role in rewarding certain behaviors. When dopamine is released into specific areas of your brain—the pleasure centers—

you get a high. This is what happens during exercise, when you gamble, have sex, or eat great food.

One of the roles of dopamine is to ensure you look for food so you don't die of starvation, and you search for a mate so you can reproduce. Without dopamine, our species would likely be extinct by now. It's a pretty good thing, right?

Well, yes and no. In today's world, this reward system is, in many cases, obsolete. While in the past, dopamine was linked to our survival instinct, the release of dopamine can now be generated artificially. A great example of this effect is social media, which uses psychology to suck as much time as possible out of your life. Have you noticed all these notifications that pop up constantly? They're used to trigger a release of dopamine so you stay connected, and the longer you stay connected, the more money the services make.

Watching pornography or gambling also leads to a release of dopamine which can make these activities highly addictive.

Fortunately, we don't need to act each time our brain releases dopamine. For instance, we don't need to constantly check our Facebook newsfeeds just because it gives us a pleasurable shot of dopamine.

Today's society is selling a version of happiness that can make us *un* happy. We've become addicted to dopamine largely because of marketers who have found effective ways to exploit our brains. We receive multiple shots of

dopamine throughout the day and we love it. But is that the same thing as happiness?

Worse than that, dopamine can create real addictions with severe consequences on our health. Research conducted at Tulane University showed that, when given permission to self-stimulate their pleasure center, participants did it an average of forty times per minute. They chose the stimulation of their pleasure center over food, even refusing to eat when hungry!

Korean, Lee Seung Seop is an extreme case of this syndrome. In 2005, Mr Seop died after playing a video game for fifty-eight hours straight with very little food or water, and no sleep. The subsequent investigation concluded the cause of death was heart failure induced by exhaustion and dehydration. He was only twenty-eight years old.

To take control of your emotions, it is essential you understand the role dopamine plays and how it affects your happiness. Are you addicted to your phone? Are you glued to your TV? Or maybe you spend too much time playing video games. Most of us are addicted to something. For some people it's obvious, but for others, it's more subtle. For instance, you could be addicted to thinking. To better control your emotions, it is important to shed the light on your addictions as they can rob you of your happiness.

The 'one day I will' myth

Do you believe that one day you will achieve your dream and finally be happy? This is unlikely to happen. You may (and I hope you will) achieve your dream, but you won't live 'happily ever after.' This is just another trick your mind plays on you.

Your mind quickly acclimates to new situations, which is probably the result of evolution and our need to adapt continually in order to survive and reproduce. This is also probably why the new car or house you want will only make you happy for a while. Once the initial

excitement wears off, you'll move on to crave the next exciting thing.

This phenomenon is known as 'hedonic adaptation.'

How hedonic adaptation works

Let me share an interesting study that will likely change the way you see happiness. This study, which was conducted on lottery winners and paraplegics, was extremely eye-opening for me. Conducted in 1978, the investigation evaluated how winning the lottery or becoming a paraplegic influence happiness:

The study found that one year after the event, both groups were just as happy as they were beforehand. Yes, just as happy (or unhappy).

You can find more about it by watching Dan Gilbert's Ted Talk, *The Surprising Science of Happiness* [here](#).

Perhaps you believe that you'll be happy once you've 'made it.' But, as the above study on happiness shows, this is simply not true. No matter what happens to you, you'll revert back to your predetermined level of happiness once you've adapted to the new event. This is how your mind works.

Does that mean you can't be happier than you are right now? No.

What it means is that, in the long run, external events have very little impact on your level of happiness.

In fact, according to Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of *The How of Happiness*, fifty percent of our happiness is determined by genetics, forty percent by internal factors, and only ten percent by external factors. These external factors include such things as whether we're single or married, rich or poor, and similar social influences.

This suggests, only ten percent of your happiness is linked to external factors, which is probably way less than you thought. The bottom line is this: Your attitude towards life influences your happiness, not what happens to you.

By now, you understand how your survival mechanism impacts negatively your emotions and prevent you from experiencing more



joy and happiness in your life. In the next section, we'll learn about the ego.

Action step

Use the workbook to write down things that give you 'shots of dopamine' (*Section I. What Emotions are - 2. Happiness*)

2

WHAT IS THE EGO

Your survival mechanism is not the only factor affecting your emotions. Your ego also plays a major role in shaping the way you feel. Thus, to gain more control over your emotions, it is fundamental you understand what your ego is and how it works.

Now, let's clarify what we mean by ego. We often say of someone he has a "big ego" referring to the ego as something close to pride.

While pride is certainly a *manifestation* of ego, that's only one part of it. You may show no pride and appear humble while still being controlled by your ego.

So, what is the ego?

The ego refers to the self-identity you've constructed throughout your life. How was this identity created? Put simply, the ego was created through your thoughts and, as a mind-created identity, has no concrete reality.

Events that happen to you bear no meaning in themselves. You give them meaning only through your interpretation of those events.

Additionally, you accept things about yourself because people told you to do so. What's more, you identify with your name, your age, your religion, your political belief, or your occupation in a similar way.

This attachment has consequences. As we'll see later in this book, attachment creates beliefs, and these beliefs lead you to experience certain emotions. For instance, you may become offended when people criticize your religion or attack your political principles.

Note that throughout this book, we'll refer to the ego as your 'story' or your 'identity' using these words interchangeably.

Are you aware of your ego?

Your understanding of the way your ego works depends on your level of self-awareness. People at the lowest level of consciousness are not even aware the ego exists and, as a result, are enslaved by it.

On the other hand, highly self-conscious people can see through their ego. They understand how belief works and how excessive attachment to a set of beliefs can create suffering in their life. In effect, these individuals become the master of their mind and are at peace with themselves.

Note that the ego is neither good nor bad, it's just a result of a lack of self-awareness. It fades away as you become aware of it, since ego and awareness cannot coexist.

Your ego's need for an identity

Your ego is a selfish entity, only concerned about its own survival.

Interestingly, it's rather similar to your brain in the way it operates. It has its own survival mechanism and will do whatever it can to persist. As with your brain, its primary concern is neither your happiness nor your peace of mind. On the contrary, your ego is restless. It wants you to be a go-getter. It wants you to do, have and achieve great things so you can become a 'somebody.'

As we already mentioned, your ego needs an identity to exist. The way it does that is through identification with things, people, or beliefs and ideas.

Now, let's look at some of the things your ego identifies with to strengthen its identity:

Physical items

The ego likes to identify with physical things. Needless to say, it thrives in today's world. Perhaps, we can say capitalism and the consumer society we're living in today is the creation of collective egos, which is why it has been the dominant economic model in the recent decades.

Marketers perfectly understand people's need to identify with things.

They know people don't just buy a product, they also buy the emotions or story attached to the product. Often, you buy certain clothes or a particular car because you want to tell a story about yourself. For instance, you may want to enhance your status, look cool or express your unique personality, and choose the products most closely associated with these ideals.

This is how the ego works. It uses things to create a story you can identify with. It doesn't mean things are wrong *per se*. It's a negative issue only when you become overly attached to things, believing they can fulfill you—which they can't.

Your body

Most people derive their self-worth from their physical appearance.

Your ego loves the way you look because it is the easiest thing to recognize and quantify. When you strongly associate with your physical appearance, you tend to identify more easily with physical and emotional pain. Believe it or not, you can observe your body without 'identifying with' it.

Friends/acquaintances

The ego also derives its sense of identity from your relationships with others. The ego is only interested in what it can get from others. In other words, the ego thrives on the way it can use people to strengthen its identity.

If you are honest with yourself, you'll realize most of the things you do are attempts to obtain the approval of others. You want your



parents to be proud of you, your boss to respect you, and your wife to love you.

Now, let's see in more detail how the ego works in the following cases:

Parent/child relationships

Some parents' egos lead to the creation of a strong sense of attachment and identification with their children. This is based on the false belief their children are their 'possessions.' As a result, they try to control their children's lives and 'use' them to live the life *they* wanted to live when they were younger—this is called living vicariously through your children. You see this all the time. Next time you watch a junior soccer (or baseball) game, watch the parents on the touchline to see how some react. Try spotting the parents living vicariously—they are the ones screaming the loudest, and not simply in encouragement. This may happen largely unconsciously.

Couples

The feeling of needing someone is very much a play of the ego as well. Anthony de Mello has a beautiful way to put it when he says: Loneliness is not cured by human company. Loneliness is cured by contact with reality, by understanding that we don't need people.

— A

M

Once you realize you don't actually *need* anyone, you can start enjoying people's company. You can see them as they really are rather than trying to

get something from them.

Your beliefs

Your ego also uses beliefs to strengthen its identity. In extreme cases, people become so attached to their beliefs they are ready to

die to protect them. Worse still, they are willing to kill people who disagree with them. Religion is a perfect illustration of the dangers of excessive attachment to beliefs. The ego will use *any belief* to strengthen its identity, whether these beliefs are religious, political, or metaphysical.

Other objects of identification

Now let's have a look at a (non-exhaustive) list of things your ego generally derives its identity from:

Your body

Your name

Your gender

Your nationality

Your culture

Your family/friends

Your beliefs (political beliefs, religious, etc.) Your personal story (your interpretation of the past, your expectations regarding the future)

Your problems (illnesses, financial situation, victim mindset, etc.)

Your age

Your job

Your social status

Your role (as employee, homemaker, parental status, employment status, etc.)

Material items (your house, car, clothes, phone, etc.) Your desires

The ego's main characteristics

Here are some main characteristics of the ego: The ego tends to equate 'having' with 'being,' which is why the ego likes to identify with objects.

The ego lives through comparison. Your ego likes to compare itself with other egos.

The ego is never satisfied. Your ego always wants more.

More fame, more stuff, more recognition, and so on.

The ego's sense of self-worth often depends on the worth you have in the eyes of others. Your ego needs the approval of other people to feel valued.

The ego's need to feel superior

Your ego wants to feel superior to other egos. It wants to stand out and needs to create artificial separations to do that. Here are some stratagems it employs:

Enhancing its value through people. If you have smart/famous friends, your ego will associate with them to strengthen its identity. This is why some people love to tell others how smart, rich or famous their friends are.

Gossiping . People gossip because it makes them feel different and superior in some way. This is why some people like to put other people down and talk behind their back; it makes them—and everybody else in their gossiping group—

feel superior.

Manifesting an inferiority complex. This hides a desire to be better than others. Yes, even in this case, people want to feel superior.