

# EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

## Take Action!

Can you remember a time when you were so overwhelmed by emotional issues that you acted out of character, or perhaps felt paralysed? Intense emotional experiences can potentially rob us of the freedom of choice – we become the product of the reptilian brain – pure reaction, stripped of rational thought and empathic components of emotion. It is all about survival. Fight, flight, flock, freeze, or frazzle. We revert to ‘all or nothing’ thinking. We either completely ignore the real issue, become incapable of taking action, take aggressive action, socialise too much in order to escape from the issue, hide from real life, act out of character or simply sulk. How many of us are stuck in the past, when we need to let go and start afresh?

So how do we move from desperation to hope and courage? By taking action! Not necessarily big steps and bold moves, but small steps that take you out of your existing situation and help you to get going again. Consistent inputs build self-esteem and create a feeling of hope, which will eventually give your recovery process momentum.

## Emotional action plan

There is the saying that when emotions kick in, the brain shuts down. So, in dealing with challenges, we need to become friends with our emotions and work with them. Dealing successfully with emotions implies several steps and although these steps are not the same as taking a walk, riding a bicycle, or learning new skills, they are in a sense ‘emotional actions’ or processing. Consider them an emotional action plan.

- 1 Allow yourself to become aware of your emotions and acknowledge them. Feel them in your body – become aware of the physical sensation.
- 2 You might feel discomfort in some part of your body. Expect the uncomfortable experience and accept that it will consume energy.
- 3 Try and give your emotions names like ‘disappointment’ ‘hurt’ or ‘loss’. Emotions can be complex and you might experience a combination of emotions at the same time, but the moment you verbalise an emotion and give the experience a name, you break through the so-called verbal barrier, and the emotion starts to dissolve.
- 4 Cry, if you feel like crying. Some people take a walk, listen to music ... different things work for different people.
- 5 Reflect on what caused your emotions. Why do you feel like you feel? An emotion is the result of an event or action measured against your values or beliefs.
- 6 Set your emotions free and make them part of your history. Simply let go and allow the experience to become part of your learning.

## You are not alone - it is ok to ask for help

Another form of taking action is to engage others, when you find that the burden is more than you can carry on your own. The following steps may help you recover from difficulties.

1. Admit to yourself that you have problem that is bigger than you can deal with, and think of people that you can trust, and that you feel comfortable with. Contact this person or

persons and tell the person that you need to talk. (this could be a friend, mentor or professional)

2. During the conversation, explain what happened and how you feel. Break this discussion into chunks. Don't try to tell everything at once. Use a few talks to work through the experience bit by bit.
3. If you feel guilty, angry and cheated, admit that to yourself. Allow yourself to really feel the emotions. Cry, shout into a pillow, beat your fists into a pillow or take a walk, and let go of the feelings.
4. Consciously give up feeling like a loser. Bad things that happen to you do not make you bad. Remind yourself of your good points.
5. Forgive the person or persons who made you suffer. If you brought this upon yourself, forgive yourself. Stop blaming others or yourself, and simply accept what happened. .
6. Learn useful lessons from the experience. Think what you will do differently in future, become wiser
7. Find a short answer that you will use when people ask you about this difficulty.
8. Work on a new positive vision for the future – train your mind to think positive things. Move on with your life, and use the wisdom you have gained from working through this problem.

### **Simple steps to keep perspective**

Sit in a balanced, comfortable position, cross your legs loosely, and fold your arms loosely over your chest. Do belly breathing - count to eight while you gradually inhale, and breathe out slowly, again to the count of eight. Feel your tummy expanding when you breathe in, and subsiding when you exhale, and don't lift your shoulders or your chest. When you breathe in, become aware of the benefits of fresh air. Imagine the 'good stuff' flowing through your body. Then, when you breathe out, imagine getting rid of all the negativity and discomfort. Imagine the 'darkness' vanishing into thin air. Become aware of your surroundings. Appreciate nuances in temperature, colour, sound and even texture. Be in the moment.

To relax, close the door and lie down on the floor. Close your eyes. Concentrate on your body and contract groups of muscles and then relax them - starting from your feet and working up your body to end with moving your ears and scalp. Once you have 'covered' all the muscle groups, consciously relax deeply. Feel your weight on the floor. Now create peaceful images and sounds in your imagination. For instance imagine yourself walking on a beautiful beach, hear the sound of the waves gently lapping the shore, and smell the salty air. Or see yourself in beautiful forest, light shining through the leaves, birds singing in the trees... Spend some time in this pleasing space. Then, take a slow deep breath, and gently open your eyes. Smile. Stay on the floor for a moment, then gently curl your body to the side and slowly get up.

If you can, take a power nap for a couple of minutes – this could be done by lying on the floor or in your chair with your feet lifted and your neck supported.

Regularly take a few sips of water. When you are stressed, you need to replenish fluids more often.

Make a point of doing enjoyable things. Laugh. Smile. Reach out to others without expecting something back. Simply project the essence of who you are.