With you in the weeds

Managing Your Emotions

YOUR EMOTIONAL DASHBOARD

WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

Emotions are signals on the dashboard of your brain that are an important source of information. They are neither good or bad, they are simply automatic physiological reactions to your environment and critical indicators of what's going on deep in your heart.

Emotions are a window to your soul, so you can't know yourself well unless you know what you are feeling, why you are feeling it, and how to communicate your feelings with others. However, your emotions are not the ultimate truth about reality, so they cannot tell you all the truth you need to live a life of wisdom.

HOW DO THEY WORK?

Break down the word, E - MOTION. It's energy moving through your body that's meant to be noticed, processed, and passed on through your body.

The left hemisphere of the brain directs the logical, linear and language functions and the right hemisphere of the brain directs the emotional, sensory, and visual images you experience. Both sides of the brain are needed for you to mature into a healthy adult.

HOW DO THEY WORK?

People tend to think of emotions as disruptive or unproductive instead of a fundamental part of health and well-being. If you ignore your emotions, you're ignoring the half of your brain that contains essential information to your safety and well-being, as well as your emotional and spiritual maturity.

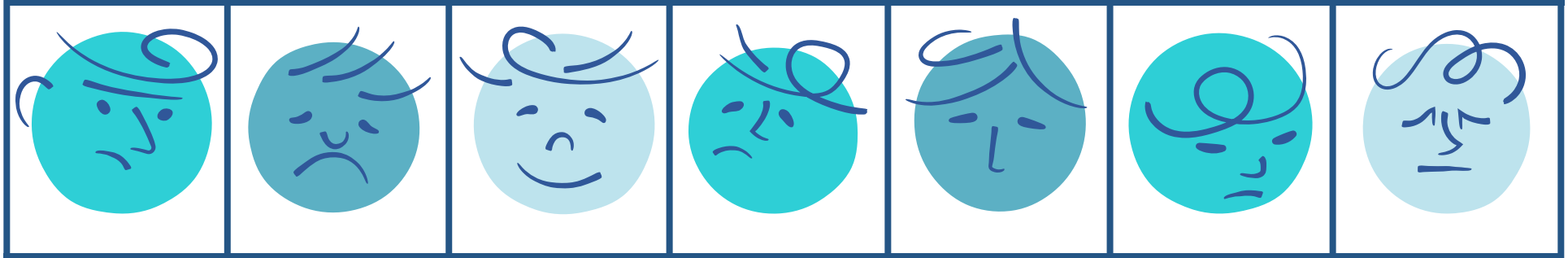
Your emotions are there whether you choose to recognize them or not. You are most vulnerable to being overrun by your emotions when you fail to detect them, minimize them, or don't have the language to express them.

HOW CAN YOU START TO UNDERSTAND YOUR EMOTIONS?

- Slow down & self-reflect
- Get curious with yourself and be honest about your feelings
- Use a feeling word sheet to identify your emotions
- Start to connect what you're feeling with what you're thinking and wanting
- Communicate your feelings with someone you trust
- Bring your feelings into your relationship with God

"You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom."
Psalm 51:6

FEELING WORD SHEET



MAD	SAD	GLAD	AFRAID	CONFUSED	ASHAMED	LONELY
Bothered	Down	At Ease	Uneasy	Curious	Uncomfortable	Out of Place
Ruffled	Blue	Secure	Apprehensive	Uncertain	Awkward	Left Out
Irritated	Somber	Comfortable	Careful	Ambivalent	Clumsy	Unheeded
Displeased	Low	Relaxed	Cautious	Doubtful	Self-Conscious	Lonesome
Annoyed	Glum	Contented	Hesitant	Unsettled	Disconcerted	Disconnected
Steamed	Lonely	Optimistic	Tense	Hesitant	Chagrined	Remote
Irked	Disappointed	Satisfied	Anxious	Perplexed	Abashed	Invisible
Perturbed	Worn Out	Refreshed	Nervous	Puzzled	Embarrassed	Unwelcome
Frustrated	Melancholy	Stimulated	Edgy	Muddled	Flustered	Cut Off
Angry	Downhearted	Pleased	Distressed	Distracted	Sorry	Excluded
Fed Up	Unhappy	Warm	Scared	Flustered	Apologetic	Insignificant
Disgusted	Dissatisfied	Snug	Frightened	Jumbled	Regretful	Ignored
Indignant	Gloomy	Happy	Repulsed	Unfocused	Remorseful	Neglected
Ticked Off	Mournful	Encouraged	Agitated	Fragmented	Guilty	Separated
Bristling	Grieved	Tickled	Shocked	Dismayed	Disgusted	Removed
Fuming	Depressed	Proud	Alarmed	Insecure	Belittled	Detached
Explosive	Lousy	Cheerful	Overwhelmed	Dazed	Humiliated	Isolated
Enraged	Crushed	Thrilled	Frantic	Bewildered	Violated	Unwanted
Irate	Defeated	Delighted	Panic Stricken	Lost	Dirty	Rejected
Incensed	Dejected	Joyful	Horrified	Stunned	Mortified	Deserted
Burned	Empty	Elated	Petrified	Chaotic	Defiled	Outcast
Burned Up	Wretched	Exhilarated	Terrified	Torn	Devastated	Abandoned
Outraged	Despairing	Overjoyed	Numb	Baffled	Degraded	Desolate
Furious	Devastated	Ecstatic		Dumbfounded		Forsaken

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ANXIETY

ANXIETY is a physiological state of uneasiness, distress, or dread and is your brains way of telling you there's a problem that needs to be solved. Small amounts of anxiety are healthy and normal and will vary during your lifetime. The potential root causes for feeling anxious are endless and different for everyone.

CAUSES TO CONSIDER

- Fluctuating hormones
- Lack of proper nutrition, vitamin deficiency or underlying disease
- Genetic predisposition
- Trauma or lack of secure attachment in childhood
- Fear of abandonment or loss of control
- Lack of healthy boundaries
- Unexpected or unwanted change in relationships, job or finances

MANAGING YOUR ANXIETY

- Redirect your anxiety into the form of a prayer. Bring God into the anxious moment.
- Recognize that worry doesn't change anything, and most of your worries never happen.
- Respond to your anxiety with kindness, compassion, and curiosity. The harder you try to push anxiety away or avoid feeling it, the more It grows.
- Release your anxiety in a relationship with someone who is a non-anxious presence.
- Remind yourself, "This is not an emergency," and work on changing your thoughts.
- Relax your body by breathing, getting outside, and seeking professional help if needed.

4 PRINCIPLES OF ANXIETY

1. **Anxiety is largely future-oriented.** Your brain wants to be able to predict the future so if something has gone wrong in the past, you're anxious that it will happen again.
2. **Anxiety is experienced on a spectrum.** On one end, you will have the normal worries of life that typically resolve themselves. Those worries can turn into generalized anxiety when you constantly feel on edge or unsafe. That can lead to social anxiety, or progress to obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder or most distressing, PTSD.
3. **Anxiety is not a sinful reaction to life.** Sometimes anxiety provokes feelings of guilt or spiritual failure because we think we're not supposed to get anxious if we are trusting God. God speaks into your anxiety by offering the comfort of His continual presence.
4. **Anxiety is a physiological response to your environment when safety or security is absent.** You might feel your heart racing, your stomach tightening, your throat closing. The greater the perceived threat, the greater and more intense your body reacts.

"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7

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DEPRESSION

Depression is an emotional shut down characterized by feelings of emptiness, hopelessness, joylessness, and lack of motivation and energy. Depression is the result of feeling "cut off" from life or relationships, and this disconnection can have a severe negative impact on your world.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

You may feel:
- Like you're in a fog
- Like you're trapped
- Emotionally numb
- More emotional than normal

You may experience:
- Lack of interest in things you used to enjoy
- Changes in sleep patterns or appetite
- Isolation or loneliness
- A crisis of faith

You may think:
- "I'm a failure."
- "I'm unlovable."
- "Things are hopeless and will never get better."
- "No one understands what I'm feeling."

You may wonder:
- "Is God mad at me?"
- "Am I being punished?"
- "Am I a spiritual failure?"
- "Have I put my hope in the wrong place?"

MANAGING YOUR DEPRESSION

1. **Question yourself:** Ask yourself good questions to get to the root cause of your depression. Be curious about why you may be depressed and look for answers.

2. **Reflect on yourself:** What's the story you're making up in your head about your life? Is it based on truth, or is your thinking distorted?

3. **Talk to yourself:** Be kind in your self-talk. Speak truth to yourself. Journal your thoughts and share them with a trusted friend, mentor, pastor, or counselor to get feedback.

EXPLORING YOUR DEPRESSION

Living in a fallen world means that you will encounter feelings of depression at some point. The cause of your depression could vary from unresolved emotional trauma, loss, chemical imbalance, overwhelming life stressors, poor nutritional health or vitamin deficiency, chronic pain, destructive sin patterns, or a dark night of the soul. A season of depression is a normal response to life's pain and is not a sign of spiritual failure or a loss of God's love.

If you're feeling depressed, the severity of your depression should be evaluated by safe, trusted people around you, and professional help should be sought if your depression persists. This is critical because depression can cause a person to fantasize about death or attempt suicide to bring an end to their emotional pain.

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SADNESS, SORROW & REGRET

WHY DO YOU FEEL SAD?

You were created for a life of fulfillment, excitement, adventure, and deep relational connection. When sin entered the world, humanity had to face a new and unwelcome adversity: death. But not just the death of your physical body. You will experience the death of close relationships, opportunities, power, beauty, health, dreams, respect, safety, security, comfort, significance. The list of things that you will lose in life is endless.

SADNESS is a gift from God, an emotional first aid kit that allows you to move through losses and not stay stuck. Sadness is a painful emotion that you use a lot of energy to avoid feeling, but it's progressive, and will move you forward emotionally when you're facing loss.

Depending on the depth of loss, sadness can descend into **SORROW**. You may be impacted by loss that is so deep, so gut-wrenching and so horrific that you don't even have words to explain or describe what you feel.

This level of intense suffering is given serious attention in the Bible because a person who is in deep pain, mourning or lament is someone that is described as close to God's heart. He is particularly in tune with the heart of someone who is burdened by sadness and sorrow.

Some forms of loss bring pain that never fully goes away or changes things forever, and the tears you shed will go into heaven with you from prolonged earthly suffering.

When you allow yourself to experience sadness and sorrow you can connect to Jesus in a profound way as you recognize that he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief because he personally entered your brokenness and pain.

"Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows he carried." Isaiah 53:4

REGRET emerges when you are suffering and looking back with hindsight:

"If only I hadn't ignored my daughter's symptoms."

"If only I hadn't listened to that bad advice."

"If only I had left the house 10 minutes sooner."

Some losses are completely outside of your control, while others may be the result of choices you've made. Stinging regret can complicate your sadness and potentially keep you stuck.

Regret is an intersection that can either take you down a path of self-contempt, shame, and hopelessness or down a path of humility and greater dependence on God's grace.

"The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18

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GRIEF

Grieving is God's prescribed way to process the many losses you encounter in life. When you grieve, you are allowing yourself to feel and acknowledge deep heartache and pain. This does not undo the past or reverse the damage, but over time it lowers the intensity of your emotional pain.

Grieving is a process that goes in cycles and waves. Like a fingerprint, grief looks and feels different for everyone, so the way you grieve will be unique to you.

5 PRINCIPLES of GRIEF

1. **You must face reality.** When tragedy strikes, it's normal to be in shock or denial over what has happened. You may be tempted to minimize or dismiss the gravity of the loss. Or use wishful or magical thinking that "having enough faith" or "praying the right prayer" will buffer you from the pain of what is happening. But entering the grieving process means you need to face what reality IS, not what you WANT it to be.

2. **You must protest reality.** Because you weren't designed for loss, your natural response will be to protest what has occurred. You may think "This should not have happened. This is wrong. This is not the way it's supposed to be." Your anger will emerge as you protest brokenness, injustice, wrongdoing, loss or evil. Your anger confirms that the bitter curse of sin has tainted the world and inflicted tremendous harm.

3. **You must let go of what cannot be.** This principle requires a posture of humility and acceptance. "I want this to be different but it's not. I don't like it, I don't understand it, but I accept it." If you don't surrender to reality and let go of what you can't control, then you may cover up your pain through numbing, avoidance, and defense mechanisms. This resistance keeps painful feelings stuck in your body with no way out.

4. **You must let new things in.** As much as you want to shut people out, isolate or gut it out on your own, you will need love, comfort, and support in your grief. When you have safe, compassionate people around you, grief becomes manageable. This also allows for new experiences, perspective, purpose, and seasons of life to emerge. Inconsolable grief keeps you stuck and causes damage to your emotional, spiritual, and physical health. But allowing yourself to be consoled as you grieve allows for movement, growth, and a healthy discharge of pain.

5. **You must willingly enter grief instead of resisting it.** No one likes to go to funerals because they signal the finality of death. Yet, there is a season for everything under the sun: a time to be born, and a time to die, a time to laugh and a time to weep. When you've lost something, the tendency is to deny, ignore, avoid, shut down, blame, numb or resist reality. But having a funeral for the person, friendship, marriage, dream, health, or anything else that you have lost and can't get back, is the healthy way to process and metabolize your pain.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Matthew 5:4

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ANGER

Anger is an internal signal that something is wrong. You could have a need or desire that isn't being met or something feels out of control. Maybe you sense that a threat is on the horizon, or an injustice is occurring, such as someone you love is being wronged or hurt. There are many legitimate reasons to be angry, and you can't avoid it.

EXPERIENCING YOUR ANGER

Physiological: In the face of danger your body automatically goes into fight, flight or freeze. Anger is a powerful energy in the body that you either learn to control or it will control you.

Psychological: The experience of anger serves two important purposes:

- To protect what is good.
- To protest what is bad.

Spiritual: Anger is a God-given emotion and experiencing anger isn't wrong, but how you express our anger can be sinful. "Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires," James 1:20. So looking at motives is important:

- Righteous anger is motivated by a desire to bring about justice for God's purposes.
- Unrighteous anger is motivated by a desire to control outcomes for our purposes.

EXPLORING YOUR ANGER

- Who makes you angry?
- What makes you angry
- When do you get angry?
- How is anger hurting your relationships?

MANAGING YOUR ANGER

A Admit it. "Yes, I'm angry!" Otherwise, your anger will come out sideways.

N Notice other emotions. Anger may be covering over more vulnerable feelings like fear, sadness, shame or hurt. Get curious and look beneath the surface of your anger.

G Get regulated. Breathe. Leave. Change the environment. Reset your limbic system before returning to the triggering event.

E Engage Your Story. Present triggers may be connected to past hurts that haven't been processed. "If you're getting hysterical, it might be historical." What's your history?

R Remind, Repair, Repent. Remember that you are loved even when you explode in anger. You can work to repair the damage your anger has caused by owning your anger and seeking forgiveness when you've blown it.

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SHAME

EXPERIENCING SHAME

Shame is the painful feeling of being defective.

- Shame affects you deeply because it's directed toward who you are, not necessarily what you have done.
- Shame is a global and paralyzing belief that "I am bad."
- Shame shows up as feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, or disgrace.
- Shame feels like you've been exposed.

Shame is a brain state.

- You experience shame in your body and mind in specific and acutely painful ways.
- Unaddressed shame can produce physiological symptoms like fatigue or chronic pain, cause isolation and fuel disconnection.

Shame is a spiritual virus.

- God created Adam and Eve to be fully known, connected and vulnerable with each other and him. "Both the man and his wife were naked yet felt no shame" Genesis 2:25.
- When Adam and Eve sinned, "their eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked; so, they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" Genesis 3:7. Shame entered the world when sin entered the world.
- Shame impacts your relationship with God, others, and yourself.

5 CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAME

S **SNEAKY**, subtle and can go undetected for a long time.

H **HIDES** in the dark and doesn't want to be exposed.

A **ATTACKS** your "image of God Self" and tries to destroy your personhood and identity.

M **MAGNIFIES** your weaknesses, failures, limitations, imperfections, and sinful nature.

E **ERODES** everything and causes problems physiologically, relationally, mentally, and spiritually.

MANAGING YOUR SHAME

"God is in the business of connecting on the way to correcting." – Curt Thompson

To manage your shame, you need both connection and correction. This means that you need healthy connection with people who love you and are willing to engage with your personal story without judgment. And you need people who love you and are willing to offer gentle correction when you have gotten off course.

As important as vulnerability, empathy and compassion are to managing your shame, the primary way to address the root of shame is to receive the love and grace of God through Jesus, who died to break the power of shame in your life.

"Jesus, because of the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" Hebrews12:2. Jesus accomplished something that you could not do for yourself. By "shaming" shame on the cross, you are set free from the curse of shame.

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GUILT

Just because you feel guilty doesn't mean you are guilty. Feeling guilty is different than the conviction of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. Your conscience may condemn you, but this does not equate to God condemning you. The Holy Spirit imparts truth to bring conviction of specific sin and to invite repentance and restoration. This is done to maintain fellowship with God, not to impart judgment and condemnation.

2 SIDES TO GUILT

1. **Guilt is a legal category** that is objective and straightforward: You either stole something or you didn't steal something. You're either guilty or not guilty.
2. **Guilt is a feeling** that comes from your conscience. Your conscience is a God-given internal moral compass that assesses your motives, conduct or character. Violating your conscience produces internal feelings of guilt or failure.

Your **conscience** is subjective, shaped by your family upbringing, cultural and religious influences and is not the ultimate guide to the truthfulness or objectivity of your guilt.

MANAGING FEELINGS OF GUILT

As a Christian, the legal debt of your sin has been paid by Jesus, by his sacrifice on the cross, therefore you are no longer under judgment, but under grace. Your past, present and even future sin has been forgiven and nothing can separate you from God's love.

When you experience feelings of guilt, they need to be brought under the laser beam of the truth as stated in 1 John 3:20, "If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything."

Many Christians believe and teach that guilty feelings and a punishing conscience are needed to grow and maintain a relationship with God. You may believe that you need to perform for God's love, or work your way towards his acceptance, and you live in fear that God is mad at you because you feel guilty when you don't meet these standards.

You may also experience guilt because of messages that your parents, family, or authority figures communicate to you. Burdensome or unrealistic expectations from others, an overactive conscience or a ruthless inner critic can trigger feelings of guilt that need to be analyzed in the light of objectivity and grace.

"**There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**" Romans 8:1.