

Overview: Changing Emotional Responses

CHECK THE FACTS

Check out whether your emotional reactions **fit the facts** of the situation.

Changing your beliefs and assumptions to fit the facts can help you change your emotional reactions to situations.

OPPOSITE ACTION

When your emotions do not fit the facts,
or when acting on your emotions is not effective,
acting opposite (all the way)
will change your emotional reactions.

PROBLEM SOLVING

When the facts themselves are the problem,
solving the problem
will reduce the frequency of negative emotions.



Check the Facts

FACTS

Many emotions and actions are set off by our thoughts and interpretations of events, not by the events themselves.

Event → Thoughts → Emotions

Our emotions can also have a big effect on our thoughts about events.

Event → Emotion → Thoughts

Examining our thoughts and *checking the facts* can help us change our emotions.

HOW TO CHECK THE FACTS

1. Ask: What is the emotion I want to change?

(See Emotion Regulation Handout 6: Ways of Describing Emotions.)

2. Ask: What is the event prompting my emotion?

Describe the facts that you observed through your senses.

Challenge judgments, absolutes, and black-and-white descriptions.

(See Mindfulness Handout 4: Taking Hold of Your Mind: "What" Skills.)

3. Ask: What are my interpretations, thoughts, and assumptions about the event?

Think of other possible interpretations.

Practice looking at all sides of a situation and all points of view.

Test your interpretations and assumptions to see if they fit the facts.

4. Ask: Am I assuming a threat?

Label the threat.

Assess the probability that the threatening event will really occur.

Think of as many other possible outcomes as you can.

5. Ask: What's the catastrophe?

Imagine the catastrophe really occurring.

Imagine coping well with a catastrophe (through problem solving, coping ahead, or radical acceptance).

6. Ask: Does my emotion and/or its intensity fit the actual facts?

Check out facts that fit each emotion.

Ask Wise Mind.

(See Emotion Regulation Handout 11: Figuring Out Opposite Actions, and Emotion Regulation Handout 13: Reviewing Problem Solving and Opposite Action.)

Examples of Emotions That Fit the Facts

Fear	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a threat to your life or that of someone you care about. 2. There is a threat to your health or that of someone you care about. 3. There is a threat to your well-being or that of someone you care about. 4. Other: _____
Anger	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An important goal is blocked or a desired activity is interrupted or prevented. 2. You or someone you care about is attacked or hurt by others. 3. You or someone you care about is insulted or threatened by others. 4. The integrity or status of your social group is offended or threatened. 5. Other: _____
Disgust	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Something you are in contact with could poison or contaminate you. 2. Somebody whom you deeply dislike is touching you or someone you care about. 3. You are around a person or group whose behavior or thinking could seriously damage or harmfully influence you or the group you are part of. 4. Other: _____
Envy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Another person or group gets or has things you don't have that you want or need. 2. Other: _____
Jealousy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A very important and desired relationship or object in your life is in danger of being damaged or lost. 2. Someone is threatening to take a valued relationship or object away from you. 3. Other: _____
Love	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Loving a person, animal, or object enhances quality of life for you or for those you care about. 2. Loving a person, animal, or object increases your chances of attaining your own personal goals. 3. Other: _____
Sadness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You have lost something or someone permanently. 2. Things are not the way you wanted or expected and hoped them to be. 3. Other: _____
Shame	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You will be rejected by a person or group you care about if characteristics of yourself or of your behavior are made public. 2. Other: _____
Guilt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your own behavior violates your own values or moral code. 2. Other: _____

Intensity and duration of an emotion are justified by:

1. How likely it is that the expected outcomes will occur.
2. How great and/or important the outcomes are.
3. How effective the emotion is in your life now.