



HOW TO ENJOY LIFE MORE!

By

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Adapted from the book

Escaping Emotional Entrapment:

Freedom from negative thinking and unhealthy emotions

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Do you want to be happier and more fun-loving, feeling centered with a greater sense of confidence? Do you want to have more energy and feel more enthusiasm yet be at peace within yourself? If you want to feel stronger and be in greater control so you will be free to advance in any other area of your life that you choose, unencumbered by unhealthy emotions... **YOU CAN!**

By developing better emotional control and breaking free of the negative unhealthy emotions that bind you, you can learn how to create a change that is so powerful that it will literally transform your life for the better. By becoming emotionally fit you will be happier, more fulfilled, centered and content, and better able to cultivate long lasting healthy relationships.

Remember, emotions rule! No matter what you are doing, if you are having a panic attack, in a fit of rage or sunken into the abyss of depression - your emotions *will* win out and rule.

If you ask yourself what is more important, what you know or how you feel - you can soon see that what you know does not matter if you feel bad. Like with physical health, if you do not have a strong and stable positive emotional life, the quality of your life drops dramatically.

Emotional Control vs. Practical Advice

A myriad of therapists, counselors and well-meaning friends will give you advice on: developing your spirituality, the importance of relying on your intuition, enhancing your parenting skills or improving your relationships. As valuable and well intentioned this practical advice might be, seldom will it be followed if you are in any significant emotional distress.

The average person finds spirituality elusive when anxiety mounts over unpaid bills. Human beings have an almost infinite ability to talk themselves into anything; thus an *overconfidence* in intuition can be problematic if it is influenced by insecurities. The best advice on child rearing and relationships goes out the window if the person has inadequate emotional control getting angry, anxious or jealous easily. When one is in distress the sound practical advice found in many self-help books, heard on TV and obtained from credible sources goes unused. Have you ever given wonderful advice to a friend only to have him or her ignore it?

The problem for many people is that they do not realize how severely their emotions impact on their life. The decisions that people make are more determined by their emotional states than any other single factor. People often think, "It's a logical decision" and that is why they made it. But if an option does not *feel* right, most people will not take it regardless of how sensible it is. The selection most people make is the one that *feels* right - logical or not. That is

why we often observe others coming to conclusions that are clearly illogical and seem utterly absurd to us. This divergence occurs because *we* see their options and their decision in an *unemotional* light. Emotions guide and color our decision process. This happens without being cognizant of it. Subconsciously. Below our level of awareness.

The Essence of Emotional Entrapments

When people have been tested, it's found that their choice of mate, career, vacation, music and lifestyle plus much more are all impacted significantly depending on their emotional state. We are not normally conscious of how much our choices are altered by emotions. This is because our choices - whatever they may be - seem right, fit right and are congruent with our emotions *at the time*. Nothing seems out of place... *at the time*... until sometime the next morning when the feelings have changed and you think, "Why did I do that?"

If a woman is feeling unassertive and unconfident, this will guide her life into a very different direction - personally and professionally - than if she were feeling stronger and more daring. The problem is that after a while, wherever we are, it becomes comfortable. Natural. Seems to fit... sometimes even when it is uncomfortable, like in a difficult relationship. There's a tendency to develop a "that's just the way it is" attitude. We get into a rut, stuck, comfortably uncomfortable and do not know how to get unstuck. This is the essence of emotional entrapment.

But this is not the way it has to be. Emotional entrapments like depression, anxiety and anger are more like bad habits that are subconsciously developed, nurtured and raised without any conscious desire or intent.

Simply put, we were not taught emotional control as children. Do you remember sitting down with your family and your father saying, "Okay family, I'd like for us to talk about the dynamics of how to control our emotions"? It did not happen. They did not teach it in school or in your religion and we sure did not learn it from our friends or siblings. No one knew how to control emotions.

In the mid-1900s, psychology knew very little about emotional control. There was a fair amount of study on how to change behavior, but not emotions. Today, there is an immense amount of available information on emotional control. We can now break free and escape emotional entrapments. Liberate ourselves. Learn to soar like an eagle instead of being destined to hug the ground like a tortoise.

After giving a lecture on the dynamics of escaping emotional entrapments, an elderly man came up to me, introduced himself and said, "You know, I've lived over 80 years and it never came to mind that I could make a *decision* to change my emotions." That is your challenge in life: Learning to control your emotions so that you may choose a full spectrum of healthy emotions. You can choose to be passionate or pensive, ecstatic and excited or calm and relaxed. YES, HOW YOU FEEL REALLY CAN BE A CHOICE. In [Escaping Emotional Entrapment](#) you are going to learn what countless generations before you did not know.

Your life is about choices. Choosing how to think. Choosing how you feel. Ultimately, choosing how your life will continue to develop. How you think and feel will determine the choices you make and the actions you take.

[Escaping Emotional Entrapment: Freedom from negative thinking and unhealthy emotions](#) is about delivering you from the emotions that can enslave you. These emotions bind you, sometimes subtly but *always* impact on the direction of your life significantly *and* negatively.

Unhealthy emotions help to keep you stuck, immobilized and you will feel trapped in them. By contrast, healthy negative emotions make their mark in your memory to help you learn to avoid the situation in the future; the discomfort created provides the impetus to make change. Healthy negative emotions are appropriate in intensity and duration to the problem and when all is said and done, you have benefited and grown from the experience. It is self-evident that fun and fulfillment are healthy.

Past Focused vs. Present Centered

Many people are surprised to know that there are various approaches in psychology and self-help. In fact, the styles are as varied as the number of counselors. In mainstream psychology there are certain ethical commonalities but the practice of counseling can largely be broken down into a few main categories.

The public is often most familiar with this first category of counseling. It is past oriented. The focus of sessions is on one's past and childhood upbringing. It is Freudian in nature, believing that the past events are the cause of present problems and not just where they originated. An offshoot of this approach is Family Systems Therapy, popularized by John Bradshaw. Here the focus is on the past but within the family system: how the family dynamics developed. There is often a focus on re-experiencing or "revisiting" old painful emotions or unpleasant life events. There are many variations of this type of past oriented therapy. One is to go back in order to go forward.

Although this method has value and merit, there is a different approach available. Instead of taking weeks or months to examine the past events and stir-up old painful memories, one can focus on the present.

When a significant event in the past occurs we learn a lesson and *develop an attitude* from it. If the lesson or attitude is a good one (i.e., Although things went badly for me, I can still like myself) then emotional health follows. If the attitude is irrational or does not make logical sense (i.e., Because things went badly for me, it means I'm a worthless person) then emotional distress follows.

All therapies attempt to create an attitudinal change. Instead of creating change by taking a detour through your past, you can create an attitudinal change by directly focusing on your present attitudes. Learning about your past may not necessarily change attitudes, but working on directly altering your attitudes today, is likely to produce quick results. Throughout [Escaping Emotional Entrapment](#) you will be shown how to feel better and solve problems systematically - step by step.

By showing you how to solve problems by design, you can learn how to solve or avoid future difficulties. In this way you can live with less emotional upset and to some degree, with fewer life difficulties. It is important to do more than to overcome emotional problems that were developed in the past but to avoid problems in the future.

Learning to escape emotional entrapments is, in part, a re-educational process. It is understanding what the actual problem is, finding the solutions to the problem, then actively-directly attempting to change the thinking, feeling and behavior in respect to the problem. The approach is a brief, short-term present centered method that produces long-term results and is easy to understand and easy to use.

Your Benefits

The desired goals or benefits are the same for all of us: to have a minimum of self-defeating behaviors and negative emotions; to maximize constructive behaviors and positive emotions; and just as importantly, to have a method of self-observation and self-assessment that will ensure that you will continue to be minimally self-defeating. Other goals which you will experience are: self-interest, self-direction, tolerance, flexibility, commitment, and self-acceptance.

For much of our history, people have paid little attention to how emotions are created, sustained and controlled. Emotions, feelings and moods have been the most pleasurable and painful part of the human experience. They have motivated people to write poems, fight wars and create civilizations. Emotions are the fuel of human experience.

In the Beginning...

All through history and likely in pre-historic times, the human being has displayed a unique ability to think about their thinking. In the early 1600's Rene Descartes' famous sentiment "Cigito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am) is but one example of being aware of our own thinking. No doubt philosophers across time have been aware of the ineffable or indefinable quality of thinking and that there is a loss when the experience of thinking is translated into words. "What is thinking?" and "How is this ability to think and perceive utilized?" and "What affect does thinking have upon us?" have been questions of philosophers long before Descartes.

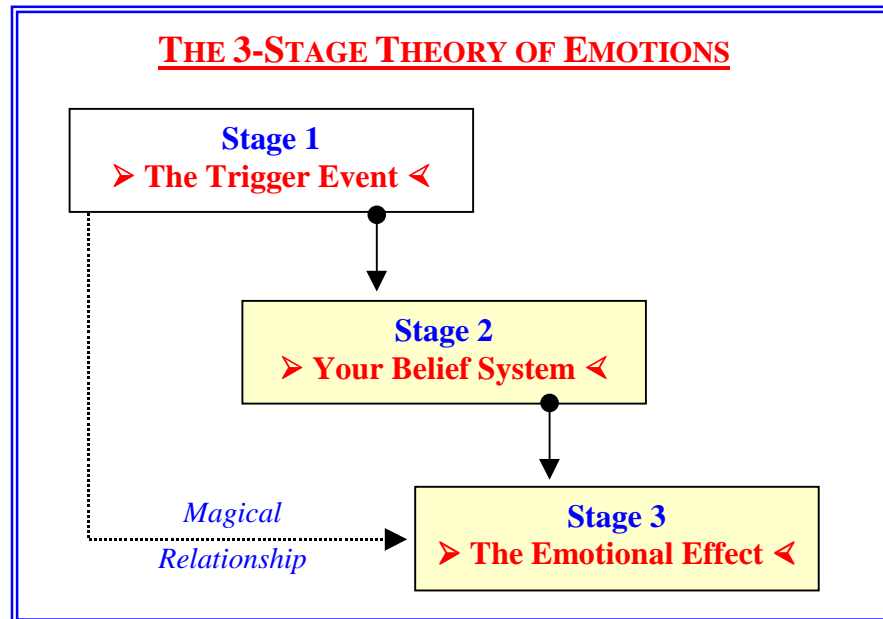
We are active processors of information. The mind and body interact and have impact on one another. Our thinking process involves aspects of how we select information from our environment then modify that information and use our range of knowledge and skills to meet the task at hand. Thinking is often a problem solving activity, though often not well organized and sometimes aimless with no specific productive purpose, such as dreams and fantasies.

If you are feeling down, anxious, worried, guilty or irritated and anger and want to make an emotional change, it is important to not only emphasize the thinking aspect, but also the emotions themselves and the associated behaviors. Thinking, feeling and behavior are never considered as one structure but as separate yet interacting with each other.

How Emotions Are Created

Let's say that you have a "Trigger Event" such as relationship difficulties, loss of a job or an unfaithful spouse. This event is the area of focus that contributes, provokes or precedes the emotional experience called the "Emotional Effect" such as depression, anxiety, and anger. Trigger events do NOT cause a sustained emotional reaction. The emotional effect is the result of an individual's "Belief System" which are the source (see figure 1 – next page). So, when a trigger event occurs, it is how one thinks about, interprets and judges the event that *largely contributes* to their emotional effect or experience. Please note that "largely contributes" is emphasized in italics as there are other aspects that impact emotional experience (i.e., anything physical: hormones, drugs, illnesses, lack of sleep, physical pain, all will contribute to emotional change).

Figure 1



Your “Beliefs System” consists of attitudes, philosophies, morals, values, ethics and, to some degree, conditioned responses. Your belief system can break down into two basic categories: 1) logical, sensible, rational and 2) illogical, nonsensical and irrational. A logical behavior or belief is one that promotes an individual’s survival and happiness, while an illogical behavior or belief is one that unnecessarily blocks, inhibits or works against one’s survival or happiness.

To truly make a desired change from depression to happiness, from anxiety to calmness or from anger to acceptance and assertiveness, it is important to make an attitudinal or philosophic change. There are, however, many methods available to help you change your undesirable emotional effect: avoiding the trigger event; using methods of distraction; rationalizations; taking drugs (alcohol, marijuana, etc.) to name only a few of the more problematic ways. The preferred and healthier methods for changing sustained strong negative emotional reactions is identifying and then changing the beliefs responsible for those emotions.

When you experience *sustained* feelings of being down, blue, listless, bored, restless, agitated, worried, anxious, irritated and anger you are likely clinging to one or more of three problematic beliefs. These emotions may exist but be less noticeable because they express themselves in behaviors like: addictions, overweight, procrastination, sleeplessness or over sleeping, perfectionism, affairs, workaholism, and other forms of “acting out.” Almost always you are unconsciously and unknowingly re-indoctrinating yourself with these unhealthy beliefs.

Problematic, nonsensical beliefs are beliefs that are not practical, not scientific, or are untrue and non-conducive to your happiness and well-being. It is important to clearly recognize and understand why certain beliefs are nonsensical, illogical and irrational. Once identified, then it is important to change ineffective and destructive beliefs to those that are sensible, logical and healthy (discussed in detail in [Escaping Emotional Entrapment](#)).

FUN-damentals of Emotional Freedom

I do not know if you have ever been to see a therapist. When I would go to conferences or symposiums, I found many therapists rather... well... stuffy. They so often felt so serious. I know psychology and clients' issues are important, but being serious, solemn and somber helps no one to feel better.

Oscar Wilde once said that "Life is too important to be taken seriously." I believe he is right.

This is why after more than twenty years as a therapist, I have transformed my role to one of a "Personal Emotion Trainer": training individuals to gain excellent emotional control. It's my belief that psychology can do far better than just helping someone not to be depressed, not to experience anxiety or not to get angry. Psychology can be used to advance each individual's primary goal: to be happy and have a long, fun and fulfilling life.

The founder of the Humanistic movement of the 1970s - Abraham Maslow - believed that if you were going to study the human being, it was important to study the high achievers as well as those who struggle through life. It allows for a basis of comparison and provides a goal to aim for. [Escaping Emotional Entrapment](#) is designed to help you take the struggle out of your emotional life and at the same time to provide you with the tools to enhance and enrich your daily experience.

If I went to a therapist and she was not having more fun than me, I would question how much she has to teach me. With over two decades working as a therapist myself, I am acutely aware of how important it is to do the anti-depression, anti-anxiety or anti-anger work. What I have found is that people who are depressed are not playing and laughing enough. People who are angry are taking themselves and life far too seriously.

Remember that *importance* does not equal *seriousness*. Your vacations, I assume, are important to you, but God forbid that you treat them seriously. So I would invite you to read a light-heartedness into the most important words on the pages of [Escaping Emotional Entrapment](#). Reread the last section on "Fun and Fulfillment." Perform the section exercises with a playfulness and you will go much further.

Adults almost seem hesitant to be playful and most definitely do not treat "play" as a way of life. The philosopher Voltaire said,

*"God is a comedian playing to an audience
that's afraid to laugh."*

Do not be afraid to be childlike and to laugh at the absurdities of life. Do not be afraid to look inside and ask the difficult questions either. You will find the answers to be truly freeing and empowering.

Michelangelo said that in a mound of clay the statue of perfection already exists, he simply removes the clay that hides the masterpiece. [Escaping Emotional Entrapment](#) is about removing the emotional clay that hides a masterpiece: you.

You really are a masterpiece... unique and exceptional in many ways. Believe in yourself. Trust in yourself. And in the same vein as Socrates: Know yourself... there is no-thing and no one more important to know.

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