

3 Powerful Ways To Own Your Emotions Instead Of Them Owning You

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We've all done it. Every single one of us, far more than we'd like to admit.

Taking control of your emotions means taking control of your life

We are going about our day, gliding through life, when something bad happens and suddenly it's as if an alien creature has taken over our body and we are behaving as if we are possessed by a demon. We're yelling at our spouse, we are snapping at our children, we are screaming obscenities at a co-worker or making rude gestures in traffic.

Or sometimes we are marching into our boss's office, ranting and raving, when we find out our nomination for a major corporate-wide award isn't being submitted for consideration by him and after 5 minutes of letting him have it and making all kinds of accusations of discrimination and unfair treatment, he calmly shares that you're no longer eligible for the award because you're getting promoted in 2 weeks. Uh oh.

Ok, we might not have done that, but I sure did. Youch!

And with the advent of social media and video technologies, these are the moments that go viral on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, much to our chagrin.

So what's happening in those moments? What makes us show up as our absolute worst selves?

Without writing a treatise on, here's the high level.

What fear does to us

The earliest part of our brain, the amygdala, is wired to protect us. It lives in fear. When it gets triggered — by that jerk cutting us off in traffic or our boss giving us yet another project we don't have time for — we get hijacked. And a flood of chemicals rushes from the pharmacy in our brain out into our body and we begin to behave as if something evil has taken over.

In fact it has. When we get grabbed by fear, our body is acting as if we are being chased by a bear in the woods. Our primal, lizard brain is suddenly in the driver's seat and our executive brain where rational thought, decision-making, and compassion live is blindfolded, bound and gagged, and shoved into the trunk.

So what do we do? First, it does us no good to deny that this happens. What we resist persists. The longer we try to act as if this isn't happening to us, the longer we will stay stuck in it. So let's just all admit we are human, this happens, and I can choose better. Say it with me: I'm human, it happens and I can do better! YES!

Emotional Capability can be learned

The good news about our emotional capability is that it is something we can learn and develop. Unlike IQ, our EQ is fluid and flexible. Too much has been written about emotions that labels them positive or negative, good or bad. Emotions are simply energy in motion (e-motions) within us. They are feedback to our system about what's going on.

When we learn to partner with our emotions, instead of trying to not feel them, we can shift from our emotions owning us to us owning them. All of our emotions can be useful and helpful when we learn to partner with them. No more judging our emotions. They just are.

And if we want to experience more of our uplifting emotions such as joy, happiness, ecstasy, satisfaction, etc., we cannot tamp down our down-drafting emotions like anger, sadness, and

disappointment. When we turn those hard emotions away, we also turn away the ones that make us feel good. And who wants that?

Three powerful practices

The answer then is to learn to be with all of our emotions — to learn to allow all our emotions to be ok without moving into action too quickly. Here are 3 powerful ways to move past the hijack into choice. In the moment: So you're sitting in a meeting and that annoying colleague is rambling on about something no one cares about and it's the 10,000th time he's done this, and he proposes an idea that means 10 more hours of work for you this week. Our heart's pounding, our hackles are raised, and we want to either fight, flee or freeze.

The most powerful thing we can do in that moment is to engage in a quick 3-step process:

- Breathe: Take a big deep breath or two...or three and notice what you're feeling.
- Name to tame: An emotion named is often an emotion tamed. While breathing, say hello to the emotion you're feeling and that will begin to soften its impact. "Hello, anger, I feel you. I'm with you."
- State you're safe: Talk to the feeling and let it know you're safe. "Thanks for trying to protect me here. I'm good. I'm safe. We've got this."

This quick, internal process will take the intense energy out of the emotion and begin to counteract all those chemicals rushing through you.

Deeper partnership: To truly learn over time to be with and use your emotions effectively, set aside 10 minutes three times a week to be and talk with your emotions.

The Five Ways Forward EmAction Model™ is an effective way to do this. Grab something to write on, sit in a quiet place and tune into that difficult emotional experience you had earlier; relive the moment as if it were happening in the present tense, then:

- Aware: Notice that you are having an emotional reaction (Oh, I feel something), that emotions are present (breathe)
- Acknowledge: Name the emotion(s); "Hello, <sadness, grief, joy, anger> (breathe)
- Allow: "Ok, , I allow you to be here." Don't fight or resist, choose to embrace the emotion.

Choose to feel it. Articulate where in the body it's showing up. "I feel you in my gut today, Anger. And in my head as the blood rushes and I'm becoming a hot head again." Breathe with it and send the breath and awareness to the parts of the body that are engaged.

- Ask: Inquire of the emotion: So, Anger, what are you about today? What brought you here? What messages do you have for me? What are you hoping I will hear or do? What are you afraid of? (Keep breathing)
- Act: Purposefully choose what to do with the emotion. Allow it to flow by or deepen it. Breathe. Then what conscious steps do you want to take beyond that. "What do I choose to do knowing what I know now?"

Then spend some time writing about the experience.

Practicing this over time will help you deepen your connection to your emotional landscape so you can remain in the driver's seat instead of being driven off the road by your difficult emotions.

When all else fails: Sometimes we are just too hot and too angry to do the above. When that happens, we need something else to do.

Your mother was right when she said, "take a deep breath and count to 10." One breathing technique will more quickly override your hijacks than any other.

Take a big deep breath and hold it. Keep holding it. Then hold it some more until you just...can't...hold.....it.....any.....longer. And then exhale big!

The fear of being deprived of oxygen is one of the body's deepest fears and will shift the amygdala from whatever grabbed you so that you can calm down. And, if you are able, say to yourself in your head: Stop! Breathe.

Life – and choice – are in the breath

We know that life is in the breath. More importantly, choice lives there too. When you develop the capability to embrace all of your emotions, you will experience your humanity in fuller, richer ways. And you're more likely to show up as the loving, caring, fair-minded, reasonable person I know you want to be.

There's enough crazy in the world. Let's not contribute to it.
Now, get out there, feel and breathe!

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