

The Emotional Scale

As humans, we all experience a wide range of emotions, from despair through joy. There are hundreds of different words we use to describe these different experiences, but the emotional scale we're going to talk about contains 30 emotions that exist at 12 levels of intensity. The most neutral emotional level is 5—contentment and boredom. This level has the lowest emotional intensity. As you move up or down the emotional scale, the emotions become more intensely felt.

1. Joy/Appreciation/Empowered/Love
2. Passion/Enthusiasm/Happiness
3. Positive Expectation/Belief
4. Optimism/Hopefulness
5. Contentment/Boredom
6. Pessimism/Frustration/**Uncertainty**
7. Overwhelmment/Disappointment/Doubt
8. Worry/**Anxiety**
9. Anger/Revenge
10. Hatred/Rage
11. Sadness/Grief/Guilt
12. **Fear**/Despair/Powerlessness

Everything above level 5 is pleasant, while the emotions listed below level 5 are unpleasant, positive or negative. Notice that it's not about identifying which ones are "good" and which ones are "bad" because all emotions are good. They serve a purpose by reflecting what is going on in our lives or in our minds.

It's about deciding which emotions are "wanted" or "unwanted". Even this can be tricky, because if you're feeling bored you'd obviously prefer to feel passion, however if you're feeling hatred, revenge is actually an improvement. Moving UP the scale is always a relief from where you were and, feels good in comparison to the lower levels. When you move from despair to anger, it feels better, and then when you find your way to frustration, you feel better... then you find hope and you've crossed the threshold into the "wanted" or positive emotions—but ultimately the goal is to keep going.

One important note is that you cannot jump very high up the scale all at once. The thought processes and physiological states of each level have a strong momentum that keeps you feeling the way you do. By deliberately reaching for a better feeling thought you can move your way up the scale incrementally, like the example of despair to anger to frustration to hope above. Just like you can move from hatred to revenge to disappointment to hope. You can also move from boredom to optimism to enthusiasm. But you can't jump from anger to joy or from hatred to love. The gap is too wide.

In this course, we're focusing on overcoming 3 common unpleasant or negative emotions:

- Uncertainty/Insecurity
- Anxiety/worry
- Fear

Fear is the most intense level of emotion. It can be completely overwhelming of our minds and bodies. Fear is caused by the belief that you are under threat or will experience pain or danger. When you're in a state of fear, nothing else matters or exists but to protect yourself and get to safety. You are operating in survival mode. The object of your fear can be real or imagined—more on that in another video.

Anxiety is less intense than fear, and if allowed to spiral out of control it can lead to fear. It's a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease and is almost always about an anticipated future event that is unpleasant or uncertain, whether the future event is imminent or farther in the imagined future.

Uncertainty is less intense than anxiety, however continued thinking along these lines leads to a worsening of the state to anxiety. Uncertainty is a feeling of apprehension, resistance, suspicion, or lack of confidence when you believe outcomes are unpredictable or risky. Often people use the word insecurity to refer to similar feelings.

This course is designed to help you learn to identify these 3 emotional states and use awareness and self-control techniques to help defuse or release the emotions in order to move up the emotional scale.

The more intense an emotion is the more challenging it is to change them. For this reason, the goal is to catch the emotion at “uncertainty” and implement the techniques you learn, before your mind has a chance to spiral you down into anxiety and then into fear. Of course, the tools you'll earn will help you with anxiety and fear as well, but know going into it that the earlier you can intercept the emotional state the easier it will be to change it.

Simple activity to climb the emotional ladder:

You're not trying to solve the problem, you're just trying to find a better way of thinking about the problem that makes you feel better. You're searching for better “feeling” thoughts about the subject that's bothering you. You're looking for incremental relief.

Select a subject that bothers you.

(Example: I am fat.)

Describe what you think about this subject most of the time. What do you tend to think about it? What phrase sums this up?

(I feel stuck, like I can't do anything about it.)

Identify the emotion that represents how this statement makes you feel. (Look at the scale and identify which emotion.) Feel it now.

(Powerlessness)

Identify a thought about this subject that is true that feels slightly better. Either stated it out loud or written it down. You can look at the scale and select an emotion that is higher up the scale and find a new phrase that matches that emotion.

TIP #1: Be general. When something is bothering you, the more specifically you think about the details of what bothers you, the worse you feel. For example, if you think, “Oh my gosh, my bank account just went negative” you’ll probably feel a sinking pit in your stomach. Feels like worry/anxiety. But simply by being more general, you can feel slightly better. For example, “I need to deposit money into my account.”

TIP #2: Don’t try to jump too high. If you do, it won’t be believable. If you hear yourself thinking “yeah right” that’s a sign it’s too big of a jump. You’re not trying to be “positive” here, you’re only looking for something that is “less bad.” For instance, an angry thought is better than a depressed one. With the bank account example, telling yourself, “no worries, I’ll be a millionaire one day” doesn’t help because you don’t really believe it.

(It’s my parent’s fault for feeding me the way they did as a kid.)—Anger (slightly more general, blaming feels better than hopelessness)

Think and feel about this new phrase. Do you feel a sense of relief? You can try out several phrases. For each one, assess if it makes you feel better, worse, or neither. If it feels better—even a little—you’re going the right direction.

Once you find one that is a slight improvement, reach for another thought that’s slightly better.

(I’m tired of being fat.)—Frustration (simple expression of emotion without judgement of the situation)

(Even if I’m fat, I have amazing qualities and a lot to offer and I like myself.)—Contentment (looking for positive aspects)

(I might not ever be my ideal weight but I’ve had success in the past when changing my eating and exercise habits and I felt great—I could do that again.)—Hopefulness (remembering evidence of your own power)