

- D was eight years of age, when her father went to work in another country. When he returned several years later, he never came home but went to live with another woman. D was crushed and lived with the constant fear of having deep relationships. When she got married, she found it hard to trust her husband and as a result had a troubled marriage. She felt a deep sense of insecurity. This was because she had an unconscious fear that her husband would leave her for another woman.
- Take G, for example. He did very well in school, scored good grades in most of his subjects, however his parents always compared him to his cousin who got distinction in his class and expected G to rise up to their expectations. They often criticized him and said he would never make it if he did not try harder. He grew up feeling that whatever he did was never quite good enough. As an adult he still feels that what he does isn't good enough either. He suffers from a deep sense of inadequacy and from a constant fear of failure.
- S is the only daughter to her parents, who are both preoccupied with their elitist lifestyle and friends. They had no time for S, and she would always see her parents either drunk or fighting. When she was 16 yrs. old she found herself pregnant and was forced by the boyfriend to abort the baby. S was completely broken with guilt and shame and emotional pain.
- Z is 16 years old and has lived in a large, close knit joint family for the last ten years. She has been sexually abused by her uncle from the age of 8yrs. When she understood what was happening to her she was too ashamed to talk about it and was fearful that the family would not believe her story. So she ran away from home, unable to bear the guilt and shame.
- J has been lately feeling very low, feeling exhausted and fatigued. She does not feel like talking to anyone, has been having thoughts of hopelessness and worthlessness. She feels she is of no use to anyone and there is no purpose in her living. She also has thoughts of ending her life and she says she cannot control these thoughts.
- F started smoking and drinking just for 'fun', because his friends convinced him he can get out of it anytime. He soon realized that it was not true, but it was too late. He lost his job because he was unable to cope. One day, he lost two of his friends in a bad crash after a reckless night out. F was devastated, wanted to desperately find freedom from the bondage of addiction, but the pain of breaking free was not easy...

- N has been married for the last 3 years, and has been in an emotionally abusive relationship. Her husband says he never loved her and never will and that she should leave him forever. All her dreams of marriage have been shattered and she is unable to come to terms with the situation. She is desperate and refuses to leave. She believes that an abusive relationship is better than no relationship at all.

These are real people, real lives, and real issues. And each of them is hurting and in need of healing if their hurt is not addressed it can lead to serious physical, emotional and psychological problems.

*To simply define emotion, it is a very deep and instinctive feeling which reflects your state of mind. Our emotions are governed by circumstances, events, our relationships with people etc. It is also associated with mood, temperament, personality, disposition and motivation.*

John D. (Jack) Mayer says, “Emotions operate on many levels. They have a physical aspect as well as a psychological aspect. Emotions bridge thought, feeling, and action - they operate in every part of a person, they affect many aspects of a person, and the person affects many aspects of the emotions.

Every human being has the capacity to feel deeply. Emotions are like barometers which tell us what is going on inside of us. Feelings reflect what is going on inside our bodies.

Our emotions play a major role in determining whether our life is meaningful or miserable. We experience both healthy and unhealthy emotions. In a general sense, we don't have direct control over our feelings. We cannot will ourselves to feel good or, to like somebody we hate. However, we do exert indirect control over our emotions by the way we think and believe. Our emotions are therefore products of our thoughts and beliefs.

*Our thinking pattern:*

One of the most interesting aspects of behavior is the way in which unacceptable emotions rise and develop within our personalities. This works in the following way: Our belief system and attitudes to life are assimilated from the environment in which we are raised. The home, family, friends, our culture... all influence our thinking patterns. Secondly we also assimilate attitudes from all the traumatic life experiences like dysfunctional families, physical and emotional abuse, death of a loved one, etc. These impressions get ingrained into our minds either by repetition or because of the intensity of the experience itself. We also live our lives based on what we have chosen to believe about ourselves and the world around us. The (unreal) goals we set for

ourselves are easily thwarted and when our plans go unrealized, we experience certain 'signal emotions'.

How people handle emotions:

1. Suppress Emotion: Whenever we experience painful and difficult emotions and we are afraid to face them we end up either avoiding them or substituting them for something else, eg, substituting food for lack of love in a relationship. These emotions don't go away, but remain buried in our conscious/sub conscious minds and over time begin to manifest as physical and emotional dysfunctions.
2. Repress Emotions: These are those emotions which we shut out and not know they exist till it is manifested in some form of behaviour and interpreted by someone. Eg childhood trauma of physical/emotional abuse which manifests in some way.
3. Express Emotions: One may have different ways of expressing both positive and negative emotions and usually have their own rationale for doing so. They may be socially acceptable or unacceptable ways of expressing them.
4. Acknowledge and Confess Emotions: Acknowledging and confessing emotions means , accepting an emotion and owning it , choosing to take responsibility for the behaviour and the emotion behind it.

'Signal Emotions' is a warning system designed to draw attention to things which are going on inside us. Our emotions play a major role in determining whether our life is meaningful or miserable. By way of our emotion, we experience either the worst or the best. We experience some emotions in the form which is unhealthy and unhelpful. These incapacitating and debilitating emotions can be narrowed down to three main groups:

### **1. Anger and Resentment**

This includes all similar emotions such as irritation, hostility, frustration, contempt and so on. These types of emotions arise because some external circumstance has blocked the goal we have been pursuing. When we perceive that the goal we believe we must reach in order to "feel good" about ourselves has been blocked by someone or something outside of us, the usual emotional reaction is anger, frustration and resentment. We refer to this as an 'undermined goal'

## 2. Guilt and Shame

This includes such feelings as embarrassment, self-pity, contempt, etc. When these emotions arise, they indicate that the goal we are pursuing is unattainable. When we believe that attaining a certain goal brings life, a failure to reach it produces a sense of guilt which sometimes reaches the level of despair. This is because we believe that life is found by our own efforts and when we fail to reach the goal we are unconsciously setting for ourselves, the emotion of guilt floods our being. We feel guilty or ashamed that we are not reaching the standard we set for ourselves. We refer to this as an ‘unreachable goal’.

## 3. Anxiety and Fear

This category includes such feelings as doubt, apprehension, uncertainty, etc. These emotions rise because of fear of failure that we may not be able to get to the goal which we believe we ought to reach to “feel good” about ourselves. The goal is reachable but we are plagued with doubts that we will be able to reach it and that doubt triggers off the feelings which have been described. We refer to this as an ‘uncertain goal’.

Everybody has some damaged emotions .Every person experiences some level of ‘emotional dysfunction’. Some are more dysfunctional than others, but every person has been affected. It is also true to a great extent that we tend to repeat in one form or another those dysfunctions we fail to resolve, or take out our hurt and anger on the ones we love-and then pass on our dysfunctions to our children!

### *Emotions and physical health*

Emotions affect your physical bodies as much as your body affects your feelings and thinking. When we ignore, dismiss, repress or just ventilate their emotions, we are in danger of disrupting the balance of our mind and body. The bio-chemical balance of the body changes with every change in our emotions.

Negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, negativity, frustration and depression cause chemical reactions in our body that are very different from the chemicals released when you feel positive emotions such as happy, content, loved, accepted. Chronic, unresolved negative emotions are the underlying cause for most physical illness. We all need to want healing badly enough to be willing to face our pain and resolve it rather than bury it.

## Emotional Wholeness

- Emotional wholeness is experienced when renewed thinking patterns begin to change the way we feel and behave- integration of thought, feelings, and behaviour.
- Emotional wholeness is not an end stage but a continual process of change and growth.
- It is an increased awareness of one's own emotions, the ability to express feelings freely and manage emotions effectively so as to maintain a positive emotional state.
- An emotionally whole person is able to function independently, but aware of his personal limitations and therefore understands the value of seeking interpersonal support and assistance.
- Emotional wholeness also helps a person form interdependent relationships based upon mutual commitment, trust and respect.
- The emotionally well person is willing to accept challenges, take risks, and acknowledge conflict as being potentially healthy.
- An emotionally whole person copes and manages stress effectively, has the ability to maintain a positive approach to life and has a sense of personal responsibility and the ability to live life in personally fulfilling ways.

## The Road to Recovery:

- ✓ How do we deal with our deep sense of brokenness and the emotional pain in our lives?
- ✓ How can we move on in life and begin to experience wholeness again?
- ✓ Becoming whole again is often illusive to the one who is going through emotional pain; however, we must believe that it can become a reality.

One needs to find a safe place with a trusted friend, professional counselor, therapy group, or recovery group where we can confidentially experience and express our feelings of hurt, guilt, shame, anger, fear, etc.

- Being aware of one's painful feelings is only the first step in the recovery process.

- Whatever our problems are, to resolve them we need first of all to be truthful and admit them. Accepting and acknowledging the painful emotion gives the strength to move forward.
- Being able to recognize and monitor negative thoughts or distortions of reality is critical to healing process. Understanding the connection between these negative thoughts, the emotions they create, and the behaviour pattern that follows. For example .a child who is raised with criticism and ridicule will grow to be an adult lacking in confidence and a poor self-esteem.
- Need for change in the thinking patterns, by examining the evidence for and against distorted thinking patterns and the resulting painful emotions.
- Change the way you think... substitute the old thought pattern for renewed and positive ways of thinking.
- We should take the road to discovering what is emotionally incomplete or unfinished in all our relationships and interactions with significant ones and complete it by processing them/thinking through them.
- Crying helps release the sorrow, pain, anger and other pent up emotions. The tears alone will not release the pain, but the thoughts and words spoken while crying is what helps the person communicate the depth of the feeling and feel the release.
- Each of our healing process is unique and therefore the time taken will vary from person to person. Instead of thinking how hard or long the process is going to be, one needs to take it one day at a time.
- Keep a journal of your feelings and record them spontaneously and be specific about your emotion.
- You can release your pain and anger through more acceptable and creative ways such as painting, sketching, dance etc. It is very therapeutic for children and adults.
- Forgive others and yourself: Forgiveness often triggers a deeper level of emotional release; it is not condoning what was done to you or even denying the feelings of hurt. Forgiving someone who has hurt us is difficult. It is more like lancing a painful boil; it allows the poison to be released.

- Physical activity like working out, playing games, etc also help in releasing pent up emotional negative energy and release good endorphins in the body.
- Give your body and mind the rest it needs, and make sure your diet is healthy, balanced and regular.

### To help those who are hurting

- By being available: When we are unsure of how we can help, we tend to shrink back from those who are in pain. Being available is a very powerful way that we can contribute to calm people in pain. It's not our words or our insights they want, but just our presence!
- Being a good listener: Offer a listening ear, the comfort of knowing that someone is willing to take a few hours off to just listen can be very therapeutic to those who are hurting.
- Dispense grace: Be that someone who understands the hurt another person is going through and a friend who does not judge or condemn or even give your point of view of the problem.
- It also important to ascribe meaning to pain, acknowledge that pain one is going through is valid and worthy of empathetic response. Perhaps the greatest way to give a suffering person time is being patient with him/her-giving room to doubt, cry, question and help work through strong and often extreme emotions.
- Help the hurting person keep his focus on moving forward instead of looking back at what has been. Instill hope and courage in the suffering person. Hope, they say cannot be taught, it has to be 'caught'. Share words of hope with the hurting person. A noted psychologist Harold G. Wolf put it this way, "Hope, Faith and a purpose in life, is medicinal. This is not merely a statement of belief but a conclusion proved by controlled scientific experiment."
- Finding meaning in suffering: will always be a lonely walk. The search for meaning in suffering will always be a lonely walk for the sufferer. However just by sharing in their suffering and standing beside the hurting person helps in one another's search for meaning and restoration.
- Pray for those who hurt, another powerful way of being available to those in emotional pain-

*God give us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change. Courage to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference.*

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