

Paul Solomon Lectures

Emotions

CALL IT WHAT IT IS

Mastering our emotions, then, is a matter of reprogramming our computers and changing our minds. Once we have recognized that emotions are not something that happen to us, but are rather choices that we make, we are ready to take the next step. The next step is deciding to make other choices.

Decision is a combination of thought and action. As we sit and read this book, we can make a decision to move our arm, but the decision is not complete. When it is the arm will move. Decision is calling on the energy within us to respond in a different way to a pattern that we have set up. When we act upon the pattern, it is a decision. It is a release of energy to produce a result that we have selected.

So, too, with emotions. Our venting of emotions through words, facial expressions, the movements of muscles, is a communication of emotion. What we call “emotions”, in fact, are not emotions at all. They are communications of emotion.

GOAL ORIENTED COMMUNICATIONS

What we call our emotions are devices through which we communicate to other people in order to get their responses. Even before we can walk we learn that by projecting particular emotions or feelings through our physical body, we get responses to our wants and needs from the world around us. The physical communication of emotion is a communications device. The look of anger is not anger itself, it is the expression of anger. The sounds and words we release through the physical are not the emotion, they are a result of the emotion. The emotion itself is contained within a belief system which says, “I have this particular need and through the communication of that need I may be able to get it fulfilled.”

When we habitually communicate a need through a movement of muscles, it becomes a pattern or a program and we begin to associate that communication with the need for the rest of our lives. The result is something which we call “automatic emotions.” They pop up and we express them through our face and body before we know that we are even having them. They happen in a split second. The pattern for the emotion and the expression or communication of that emotion, then, are not the same.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

It is observable that if we communicate the emotion we begin to feel it. Even if it didn't arise from our belief system, it will impose itself upon our belief system. There are three stages in this cycle: The belief system which we have created. The communication of emotion, and a result of that communication which is a reinforcement of the pattern. It is like a wheel. It goes from pattern to expression to reinforcing pattern to expression to reinforcing pattern. To change our emotional construct, we have to break that cycle.

That is done by deciding to feel a different emotion in response to a particular stimuli, not pretending, but by making different decisions. The completeness of the decision is what determines the extent of repatterning. A complete decision will produce transformation.

We are not putting a value judgment on which decision is made.

None of these decisions are right or wrong. We are talking rather about what serves us and what does not. Of course, once we examine it, it may seem rather foolish to make decisions that cause our muscles to tighten, our faces to become lined and constricted, our bodies to build symptoms ranging from arthritis and heart disease, to cancer, but it is not wrong; it is simply choice and we must live with the result of our choices.

Contrary to our modern psychologists, we are looking at suppression as a viable option, at least temporarily. Fifty years ago, suppression was a way of life and now in this day and age it is seen as detrimental. Those are two binaries and neither one of them is truth.

Suppression is an appropriate device if we want to use it and it may serve us if it is used responsibly. We know that energy is going to come up again at a later time and we can suppress it in the moment with a willingness to deal with it later. The decision not to slam doors and yell while we figure out our option or do our Nine Step Process to change our beliefs may even be the most serving response. We can brush aside the emotion and put the energy into something more constructive for the moment. This is not even necessarily suppression. We may have just put the emotion on hold to deal with it at a more appropriate time, under more appropriate circumstances.

BUT WHAT ABOUT FEARFUL THINGS IN THE WORLD?

We can use all of the rationalization we choose to keep old beliefs that are not serving us, but the choice still is up to you. For example, we may say, "There are nuclear bombs in the world. I don't want to be afraid of them, but still I am." What we can recognize is that there is not a nuclear bomb going off in our environment right now and fearing it is creating nuclear bombs that don't actually exist. They are a result of our fear. What we can decide to do is enjoy this room in this moment, which is free of nuclear bombs. And if a blast goes off, we still don't have to fear it. We have to find an appropriate action, if there is one available. Even if we are killed by a nuclear blast in the future, it is not going to do us any good right now to fear it. The fear will only drain us of the joy we can have now in our experience of life in this moment.

FROM FEAR TO LOVE

In order to make this Nine Step Process for Mastering Emotions work for you, there are two pre-requisites. First, you have to want to be a decider. The second pre-requisite is a question of your values. If you hold as a top priority in your life to be in charge of your life and what you feel, those decisions will be a result of that value.

Changing our whole system of values is called 'transformation', being born again, accepting love. It means recognizing that every decision, emotion, feeling or thought that we will ever have, every stimulus that we will ever experience, is an expression of either love or fear. That includes every thought, action, or motivation.

Unfortunately, most people have chosen as the very basis of their belief system that fear is necessary and essential. If you have enough fear you will behave properly and get the things you need. If you believe in fear as a power to provide for life, then your actions and motivations will be dictated by fear. It is called making fear the lord of your life. Your actions are a response to worshipping fear.

If love rules your life, love being the support of life, as it is, you support yourself as you are. You no longer wish you were different than you are but support who and what you are. If you will give yourself love as a life support system and really believe that love will fulfill you, then you can make a switch of allegiance from fear to love. The transition from fear to love produces transformation.

You are either ruled in life by what you don't have or by what you do have. If you are ruled by what you don't have, you are ruled by desire, lack, limitation and fear and you suffer. Fear motivates you and is the stimulus for everything that you do. It runs your life. If you are ruled by what you do have, then you are ruled by love and you are happy.

The decision then, that will make the Nine-Step Process work for you, is the decision to be ruled by Love. It will work for you to the extent that you decide to be ruled by Love.

THE NINE-STEP PROCESS

Complete transformation of our system of values is our ultimate goal and the Nine-Step Process is a step toward that goal. The transformation from fear to love can happen in an instant, but if you are like most of us you need to have the process complicated sufficiently to understand and work with it.

Here are the Nine Steps:

STEP ONE: RECOGNIZE YOU ARE BEING EMOTIONAL

The First Step in dealing with an emotion is to recognize the fact that you are being emotional, not to recognize the emotion, but the fact that you are being emotional.

For example, sometimes a person will be irritable, angry or pouting and someone says, "What's the matter?" You say, "Nothing!" Or you say, "I'm NOT mad!" You can't deal with an emotion if you refuse to recognize it exists.

One of those emotions that people very often refuse to recognize is jealousy. People are ashamed of being jealous so they won't admit it if they are. If you do not admit that you are feeling an emotion there is nothing that you can do about it. You are just going to have to experience it.

The First Step, then, is to notice that you are not feeling the way you would like to feel. That is really what we are talking about in recognizing the fact that you are being emotional. Recognize the fact that you are not feeling as you would like to feel; that you are not feeling centered, in harmony, joyous.

Then notice where this disharmony is expressing in your body. For example, "My neck feels tight." (Is someone a pain in the neck?) "My stomach is churning." (A gut reaction?) "My eye is twitching." (So angry, you can't see straight) "My back aches." (Feeling unsupported?)

All negative emotions, without exception, have a point of reference in the body. If you can find that point of reference and are continuing with the same negative emotions, you can be certain that an illness will eventually manifest in that area. It seems like that alone is enough motivation to learn to master your emotions.

STEP TWO; LABEL THE EMOTION NEGATIVELY

This means to simply describe that you are feeling in the most obnoxious and derogatory terms you can possibly think of. This is not to imply that emotions are all negative. All of the emotions, the whole

range, have a positive counterpart. There is no such thing as an emotion that is useless. It is the way that we experience the emotions, using them inappropriately makes them negative. It is not the emotions themselves.

When they are negative, it is important to label them for what they are. For example, instead of saying, "I am angry," you might say, "I am trying to manipulate someone who hasn't done what I want him to do by acting ridiculous and obnoxious". That's what anger usually really is, feeling out of control and trying to manipulate the situation to the way you want it to be and getting someone to do what you want him to do. When you have to admit that is what you are doing, it takes away the acceptability.

Label any emotion in a derogatory manner and you'll feel differently about it. For example, "fear". "Fear" is socially acceptable. It's alright to be afraid of almost anything, unless, of course, you are playing the big macho role. So, instead of saying, "I am afraid of that," you say, "I am masochistically entertaining my consciousness with fantasies of that awful thing happening to me and I am creating that dreadful event that hasn't happened yet." This is what "fear" is.

"Fear" doesn't exist. There is no such thing as "fear" What "fear" is, is a label for people creating fantasy in their minds and pretending that something is happening to them that is dreadful, having an emotional response to it, poisoning their system, and upsetting their chemical balance. "Fear" is entertaining negative images deliberately. "Fear" is faith in evil.

DEPRESSION.

Don't say, "I'm depressed". Say, "I am trying to manipulate people around me by withdrawing, looking sad, and requiring of them that they feel differently in my presence, dragging them down into the mire." Take a good look at the emotion that you are feeling and describe it for what it is. Chances are that when you do, you won't need the other Seven Steps.

Guilt. Guilt is not something that you should throw out and try never to feel. Guilt is an emotion that can serve you, as can each of the emotions.

It is another area that psychology is going to have to come to grips with soon. They have put 'guilt' in the position of a whipping boy, and there are people all over the world, psychologists, new age teachers, seminar leaders, saying that 'guilt' is an absolutely useless emotion! You should never experience it, they say.

In the first place, their premise is not practical. 'Guilt' is something that you will, in fact, feel even if you decide not to and 'guilt' is an emotion that you should feel on occasion because it can serve you. However, 'guilt' is one of the most misused emotions of them all. Its purpose is to serve as a tool for recognition. When you have done something that does not serve your best interest, 'guilt' is an emotion that labels that as being not in your best interest. That is what 'guilt' is for. As soon as 'guilt' delivers its message it is finished. The second that it causes you to recognize what you need to look at, it is finished. It is a messenger, a point of reference, a point of identification. That's all.

What most people do with 'guilt' is to try to use it as a purification device, as punishment. When they feel it, they cling to it and punish themselves by beating themselves over the head, believing that it will make them less guilty and will make up for what they've done. That is the inappropriate use of 'guilt'. Don't use 'guilt' to punish yourself, use it as a point of recognition. As soon as 'guilt' has told you that what you did was inappropriate, it is finished. Dismiss it and send it on its way. Don't cling to it another second.

People who don't know how to deal with 'guilt' don't recognize it. They deny it. That doesn't work either. The 'guilt' is felt anyway and it manifests in some way through the body or through the life. Anyone who misuses 'guilt' is going to be taught by it eventually. It may take them a number of lifetimes.

The negative definition to use for 'guilt' is, "indulging in concern over past situation in order to avoid taking action now." Holding on to 'guilt' will assure one thing; that you will do the same thing again.

Jealousy. What is jealousy? What are you doing when you are feeling jealous? First of all, you are making a statement of your belief in your inferiority to a competitor. You are describing the fact to that person you want to impress that you are inferior to someone else. The very fact that you are feeling jealous is a statement of that. You are saying to the person who you really want to impress, "I'm inferior to that other person, therefore I am feeling insecure because you are giving that person attention".

That makes me insecure because I know that he is more than I am, and if you give him very much attention, then you'll notice that. Then I'll be in a world of trouble!" Jealousy is a statement of inferiority. If you look at it that way and describe it that way, then perhaps you will recognize how inappropriate your action is.

Describing your emotion for what it is can be hard because chances are when you are there you tend to believe you have a right to be there. For example, if someone has insulted your family, you do have the right to become angry. But think of it another way. You have a right to poison your system, right on cue, because another person said what he said. You have a right to be a slave – jumping through the hoop at the command of someone who is being unkind. Sure, you have a right to do all of those things. You have become a victim and a slave and what have you gained?

Take a look at what the emotion really is. If you are angry because someone insulted your family, then what you are really doing is reacting to the fact that the other person is not behaving as you would like him to behave. Therefore, you are going to use an overpowering emotion called "anger" to try to manipulate him into restating his views otherwise.

When you fully recognize that emotion is not something that happens to you, but is something that you do for a purpose, you will just stop doing your emotions that do not serve you.

STEP THREE. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EMOTION.

Don't make somebody else responsible for what you are feeling. Now, even while you are feeling, for example, jealous, which means making a negative statement about yourself, recognizing your inferiority to a competitor, you are saying, "She made me jealous by flirting with him." Taking responsibility for your emotions you would say, "I decided to feel jealousy in response to what she was doing." Taking responsibility means recognizing that the emotion did not happen to you, but you decided to do it, did it, and are doing it now.

To take responsibility for your emotions requires some changes of beliefs and it may be difficult to do because we have been taught that emotion is something that happens to us. We can't help it. Your challenge is to make this Step a new belief in your life. Once this Step does become your belief, you will be able to go from Step One to Step Nine of the Nine Step Process automatically. You will recognize when you feel an emotion that it is something you decided to do and you will be totally in control of whether you do it or not. Your belief system will be reconstructed.

STEP FOUR; IDENTIFY THE CATALYST

The catalyst is what you have probably been calling the cause. Identify what you thought caused you to feel the emotion. You have now identified the catalyst. In other words, if your wife, flirting with another man was your excuse for feeling jealous, then that was your catalyst. It is not the cause.

STEP FIVE; IDENTIFY THE CAUSE

The cause was your belief. In the case of jealousy, the cause of your jealousy may be a belief that not to act jealous when your wife flirts with another man is dishonorable. It is a common, ridiculous belief in our society. The cause of your jealousy was not the fact that she flirted, that couldn't cause anything. That has no effect upon you unless you hold a belief about it. But if you hold a belief that that dishonors your manhood, then that belief cause you to feel jealousy.

All emotion, especially negative emotion, comes as a result of beliefs that you hold. The cause of your emotion is your belief and if you want to change the emotion, you need only change the belief about it. When you change what you believe about your wife flirting with someone else, then you will change your response to flirtation. You can change it to something that follows your new belief.

STEP SIX: IS YOUR BELIEF VALID? DOES IT SERVE YOU?

The belief that caused your emotional reaction, may, in fact, be valid.

If it is a valid belief, you will want to keep it and perhaps keep the emotional response that follows it. Examine the validity of the belief that caused your emotional reaction. You will almost always find that the belief is invalid. Most beliefs that cause negative emotions in our culture are based purely on protocol, inappropriate beliefs that go on in our culture, little things that are supposed to matter and don't really.

If you determine your belief to be valid, the next question you will want to ask is, "Does this belief serve me?" You may still want to affirm that it is valid that, "It is dishonorable not to be jealous if my wife flirts with another man," but does it serve you? Do you want to keep it? Does this belief bring more joy into my life and into the lives of those around me? If no, you probably will want to decide to replace it.

STEP SEVEN; IDENTIFY THE CARROT

Here you are identifying what you hoped the emotion would accomplish (as in the image of a donkey led by a carrot). In the case of jealousy, if your wife has flirted with someone else and you responded with anger, then what you hoped to get as your carrot was to have her pay attention to you instead of that other person. Perhaps your carrot also was to intimidate the other person.

STEP EIGHT; DID YOU GET YOUR CARROT?

This Step is the establishment of the cause/effect relationship of your emotion. We do this in two ways. First ask, "Did this emotion get me my carrot? If not, what were the effects of your emotion?"

If, in fact, your wife was speaking with another man in a manner that you interpreted as flirtatious, which she probably didn't see that way at all, and you lose your temper, stomp your feet and drag her away, it is highly unlikely that you would get the above carrot. You probably would get her attention, but in a derogatory manner. She probably will become angry, intimidated, and insulted that you even

thought she was flirting. It probably will accomplish all of the things that you didn't want it to accomplish in your relationship with her.

STEP NINE

As far as intimidating the other man, it will probably only cause him to realize how insecure you are in your relationship with her. This may even cause him to believe that there is a problem in your marriage and he does possibly have a chance with her.

If you really look at the carrot that comes from negative or uncontrolled emotion, you will find that it almost always accomplishes exactly the opposite of what it was designed to accomplish. Most negative emotions backfire. Rarely do they ever accomplish the carrot.

You might, however, insist that your emotion did accomplish what you wanted it to accomplish (especially if you still are being emotional about the situation). You may say that your emotional response did first separate her from the man with whom you believed she was flirting, and that it did get you attention from her, although negative, (before she wasn't even around you), and it also showed her how you would respond in those kinds of situations, that you just wouldn't put up with it.

If you find yourself still going after a negative carrot, ask yourself this. Do you want to get attention from someone you love by deliberately making his or her life more miserable? Does your belief system give you permission to hurt another person if you believe he or she hurt you? Do you want to be a person who brings more pain into the world?

When looked at a bit more honestly, your response – when not clouded by an emotional charge – will undoubtedly be that you did not get your carrot.

STEP NINE: NEW RESPONSE

There are several possibilities for a new response. One is to change your belief structure to the point that you are not affected if your wife flirts with another man. That is one possibility and one you do not want to ignore. The new response may be to do nothing – if your belief structure is changed, you will look at the incident entirely differently -- but it does not have to be.

By suggesting that you change your emotions that are not serving you, we are not suggesting that you change from being a strong, highly passionate assertive person into a Casper Milktoast or, in more modern terminology, a wimp. That is binary and will not serve either.

We are suggesting that you stop being a victim; that you make your decisions on purpose. A new response in this situation could be to walk over to your wife and the other man, unemotionally, with an air of calm confidence and mature assurance. That will be effective for both you and them. First of all, it is guaranteed to intimidate the other man if you are confident and not threatened emotionally. And, as far as getting your wife's attention, it is very likely that it was exactly what she was trying to accomplish when she flirted with him in the first place – to get you to be calm, mature and attentive, without being angry and losing your temper.

There are always several possible decisions that would be effective. It is important that you find what will work for you.

USING THE NINE-STEP PROCESS

Of course, when an emotion is happening, it feels very powerful, We have experienced so many times being overcome by our emotions that it may be difficult at first to believe that something could work in such a calculated way in a rational process such as this.

What, in fact, does actually happen when you start to apply the Nine-Step Process to your emotions? The first time that you try to apply this process, when you are having a strong emotional reaction, it may not work right then.

It may not be important that it does. What is important is that after you experience that emotion, you look at everything about the situation and its results and then take it through the Nine-Step Process. The Process does not necessarily have to happen while you are experiencing the emotion. It is probably better done, at first, after you experience the emotion so that you see what you have just done and how absurd it was. You can be absolutely certain that after you have examined your response and have seen a new way to handle it, that you will have the opportunity to face the situation again, probably within the next 24 hours.

You have had a challenge and you have experienced it emotionally. Maybe you blew it. You have put it through the Nine-Step Process and you have seen a more appropriate way to respond. You have determined, "This time I will not react." Then the situation hits you smack in the face and before you even have a conscious thought, you blow up again. Don't be surprised if that happens. You almost certainly still will feel automatically an emotional response because you have spent so much of your life experiencing emotions involuntarily. They have been assigned to particular areas of your life.

The ability to change your relationship to emotions will come gradually. The next time that situations come, with the same people or with others, you are going to know while the emotion is happening that it is something you already have processed. You are going to realize that you had made a decision to respond a new way and you are going to try that new way. You may have some moderate success, you may have no success, or you could be totally successful.

Whichever one is not important at the moment. It is only important that you have come a little closer to taking voluntary control of how you feel, to understanding your emotions and to making a decision that will serve you.