

Practicing Emotional Awareness

The first step in changing how we experience and respond to our emotions is to practice accurate awareness of our emotions.

Components of “emotional awareness”

1. Allowing oneself to fully experience emotions as they happen.
2. Focusing on being in the present moment, not “living” in the future or in the past.
3. Noticing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are occurring at that moment.
4. Allowing emotions to come and go, without trying to push away feelings or trying to hold on to certain feelings. When you allow yourself to experience a negative emotion, then you are able to process it and move forward. If you don't give yourself permission to experience the emotion but push it away, then it becomes a “tidal wave” of emotion that feels very out of control.
5. Being aware of your emotions does not always “feel good.” However, it will allow you to move past the experience, instead of getting stuck trying to push it away, which only reinforces its power.
6. Awareness does not necessarily mean acceptance of the situation or environment. Instead, we are focusing on acceptance of one's emotional reaction to it, before possibly acting in a different way.
7. Having some understanding for one's own emotional experience. Getting “mad” or “frustrated” with yourself or saying “I'm so stupid for feeling this way” will only make you want to control and resist emotional experience even more. This treatment focuses on increasing the range of emotional experience, instead of attempting to restrict it. This includes allowing oneself to be sad, frustrated, anxious, as well as *letting it pass*.