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Articles

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5: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: HOW TO MANAGE DEPRESSION

Daniel Goleman tells us in his book *Emotional Intelligence* that the human being has two distinctively different brains: "one that feels and one that thinks". The emotional/rational dichotomy approximates the folk distinction between "heart" and "head". These two minds operate in tight harmony intertwining their two different ways of knowing to guide us through the world.

When it comes to managing emotions, there are two main categories: (a) arousal emotions and (b) emotions that slow down or suppress. Emotions that arouse include: anger and anxiety. These emotions need to be managed by soothing and calming. On the other hand, emotions that slow down include: depression and sadness. These emotions need activity and stimulation. It is the thinking of the left prefrontal lobe that modifies these emotions which enables the response to be emotionally intelligent.

The processes of emotional intelligence include:

First – the **intra-personal skills** that enable the person to form an accurate picture of oneself, access one's own feelings and draw upon the emotions to guide behavior, and ...

Second – the **inter-personal skills** that provide the ability to understand other people and to discern, respond appropriately to moods, temperaments, motivations and desires of other people.

Emotional intelligence combines the following steps:

1) **INTRA-PERSONAL ABILITIES:**

- a) **Knowing** one's own emotions – self-awareness or recognizing a feeling as it happens.
- b) **Controlling** one's own emotions – the capacity to control and soothe one's self so that feelings can be responded to appropriately.
- c) **Managing** one's own emotions - the capacity to marshal emotions in the service of a goal.

2) **INTER-PERSONAL ABILITIES:**

- a) **Empathy** – the capacity to listen to and be attuned to another person.
- b) **Relate** – the capacity to interact with others smoothly by coordinating moods and dealing effectively with the other person's emotions.
- c) **Optimism** – the capacity to live out of the creative, co-operative, positive approach of "how" to make things happen.



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The intra-personal emotional intelligence is needed first before moving to the interpersonal emotional intelligence. As you will see in the following examples, the principles of agape love are integral to the practice of emotional intelligence.

Example of Dealing with Depression

1) INTRA-Personal (with self)

a) Self-awareness

- know and recognize the feeling of depression
- express the depression by putting it into words (I feel discouraged, tired, hopeless, sad, dejected, confused, unable to concentrate, listless, suicidal)
- understand the causes of the depression – current story

b) Self-control (all feelings are OK, some responses are not)

- see a doctor to check if there is a chemical imbalance
- take medication as prescribed
- eliminate all alcohol, non-prescription drugs and cigarettes
- bring the depression under control by scheduling activity
- make limited goals and progress in small steps
- ask Jesus for the gift of self-control (Galatians 5:23)
- choose to stop ruminating on negative thoughts and focus instead on scriptures –
- Philippians 4:13, Isaiah 43:4, Colossians 1:13-14

c) Self-manage

- confess any sin and receive forgiveness
- forgive self and eliminate all guilt, self-criticism, self-judgment and self-punishment
- forgive others for what they have said and done
- get up and out and do things – be active
- exercise regularly – especially aerobic exercises
- ask Jesus to reveal his will and truth in the situation
- find new meaning in the Lord's truth and create a new story share the new meaning with others

2. INTER-Personal (with others)

a) Empathy (needs calmness and receptivity)

- get outside of self and attend to others
- with humility, actively listen to other people's stories



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2. INTER-Personal (with others) / contd

- with care and compassion, understand other people's stories and validate their feelings
- connect with other people's feelings and reflect them back

b) Relate

- do things with other people, especially physically (go for walks, runs, exercise together, garden, golf)
- help other people – supporting and serving them
- schedule organized events with other people
- be sensitive to appropriate and acceptable behavior
- look for ways to up-build and uplift others
- offer acceptance, respect, compassion, love, and nurture the growth of others for their well-being

c) Optimism

- ask the Lord to give strength through Psalm 40:1-5 and Jeremiah 29:11
- review success in life and use the resources in the successes to move forward with confidence
- dwell on **Philippians 4:8-9**, *"Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy – think about such things."*
