

Emotion Regulation Process: DEER

Define

- Once you're aware of an unpleasant emotional experience, it needs to be labeled accurately. A good starting place is thinking about combinations of these basic emotions:
 - Happiness
 - Surprise
 - Fear
 - Anger
 - Disgust
 - Sadness
- You might also want to use more specific vocabulary (e.g., relief, disappointment, frustration, terror, hopelessness, guilt, stuckness) or even an image or metaphor to accurately define, describe, and label your experience.

Evaluate

- How accurate is my feeling as a response to the Real World, as best as I can tell? (e.g., is this a legitimate and probable danger?)
- How closely tied are my emotions to actual effects in the Real World? (e.g., do my feelings fluctuate more based on ME, or more based on the Real World?)
- What are the *thoughts* I'm thinking that give rise to these strong emotions?
- What assumptions am I making (that might not be accurate)?
 - Note: with partners, it's almost always a good idea to give them the benefit of the doubt
- You might want to ask someone else, who isn't super close to the situation, to help you look at it more objectively.

Express

- Once you have clearly identified your feeling(s), and evaluated them for reasonableness, chances are that they feel less overwhelming.
- What you're left with now needs to be expressed. Good options for this include:
 - Crying or yelling in an appropriate place
 - Journaling
 - Praying out loud
 - Telling a supportive person about your feelings
- Note: Don't just think about your own feelings. Expression needs to happen in a way that moves the thoughts and feelings from inside your brain/body to *outside*.

Respond

- Remember, emotions' purpose is to tell you something is important and to motivate you to take appropriate action. If you've done the first three steps, you're ready to respond.
- Happiness: Enjoy and safeguard your "resources"
- Surprise: Move toward the surprising element and learn more about it
- Fear: Either approach the feared situation (if you determined that it's not actually dangerous) or run/fight the danger
- Anger: Correct the injustice or unfairness to the degree that you have power to
- Disgust: Remove or repair the source of the offense/damage
- Sadness: Honor the lost "resource" and reach out to current or new resources