

## Negative emotions - coping tips

Negative emotions can be described as any feeling which causes you to be miserable and sad. These emotions make you dislike yourself and others, and take away your confidence.

Emotions which can become negative are hate, anger, jealousy and sadness. Yet, in the right context, these feelings are completely natural. Negative emotions can dampen our enthusiasm for life, depending on how long we let them affect us and the way we choose to express them.

### **Holding onto negative emotions causes a downward spiral**

Negative emotions stop us from thinking and behaving rationally and seeing situations in their true perspective. When this occurs, we tend to see only what we want to see and remember only what we want to remember. This only prolongs the anger or grief and prevents us from enjoying life.

The longer this goes on, the more entrenched the problem becomes. Dealing with negative emotions inappropriately can also be harmful - for example, expressing anger with violence.

### **Emotions are complex reactions**

Emotions are psychological (what we think) and biological (what we feel). Our brain responds to our thoughts by releasing hormones and chemicals which send us into a state of arousal. All emotions come about in this way, whether positive or negative.

It is a complex process and often we don't have the skills to deal with negative feelings. That's why we find it hard to cope when we experience them.

### **How to deal with negative emotions**

There are a number of coping strategies to deal with negative emotions. These include:

- Don't blow things out of proportion by going over them time and again in your mind.
- Try to be reasonable - accept that bad feelings are occasionally unavoidable and think of ways to make yourself feel better.
- Relax - use pleasant activities like reading, walking or talking to a friend.
- Learn - notice how grief, loss and anger make you feel and which events trigger those feelings so you can prepare in advance.
- Exercise - aerobic activity lowers your level of stress chemicals and allows you to cope better with negative emotions.
- Let go of the past - constantly going over negative events robs you of the present and makes you feel bad.

### **Where to get help**

- Your doctor
- Your local community health centre
- The Mental Health Foundation of Victoria Tel. (03) 9427 0406

### **Things to remember**

- In the right context, negative emotions like anger, grief, sadness or jealousy are perfectly normal.
- Long lasting bouts of negative emotions can stop you enjoying life.
- Coping strategies can help to curb persistent negative feelings.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Mental Health Foundation of Australia

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