

These slides were created by Jennifer Keluskar, Ph.D. They draw upon evidence-based interventions for anxiety and depression.

MOOD SMOOTHIE

**Use what you
have to make
something
awesome**

Chapter 1:
Understanding
Emotions





The Brain and Emotions

***In order to better control our emotions, it is important to understand them.**

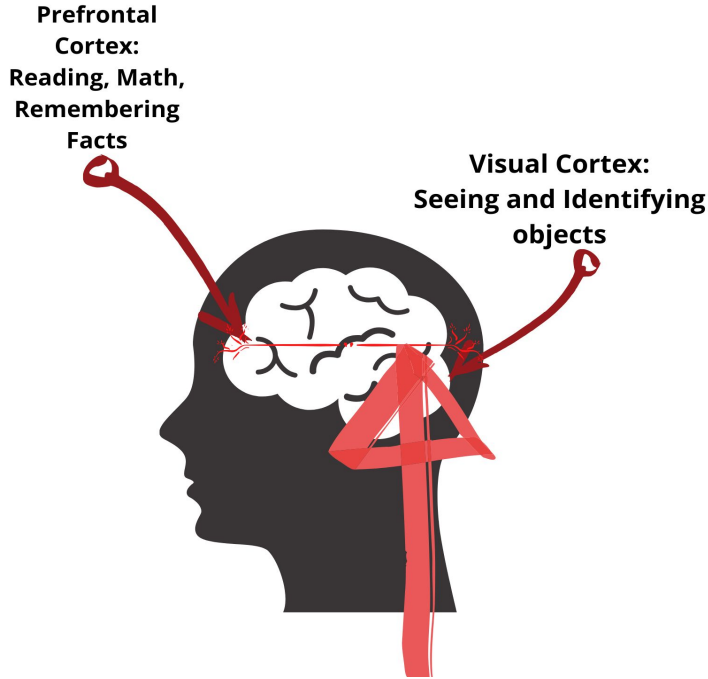
***Part of understanding emotions is knowing the role the human brain plays in creating emotions and in directing how we react to them.**

The human brain is a complex organ that has evolved over the course of millions of years. It controls everything from vital functions like breathing to how we go about solving complex problems.

Emotions come from the more primitive parts of the brain. Just like other primitive parts of the brain, these parts work fast and at the same time in simple ways. For example, seeing someone else frown can trigger uncomfortable emotions within milliseconds.

The more developed parts of the brain, which evolved over time, help us solve problems in creative and rational ways. When we are emotionally balanced, it means that our rational thoughts are working together with our emotions in a productive way.

Our emotions alert us to both problems and rewards. Our rational thinking helps us understand how to find more rewards and how to solve problems that get in the way of positive outcomes. Both our rational and emotional minds need to actively listen to each other in order to keep each other in balance.



For example, when the prefrontal cortex and visual cortex work together, they help you solve math problems. What is this road like for you? Is it like a highway (mental math is fast for you) or like a bumpy road (you can do it, but it might take longer)?

Amygdala

Emotion-driven part of the brain.

When the amygdala, the temporal-parietal area, and the hippocampus work together, they help people understand social situations (e.g. Was he offended by my joke?), to think of possible solutions, and to choose the best solution for them.



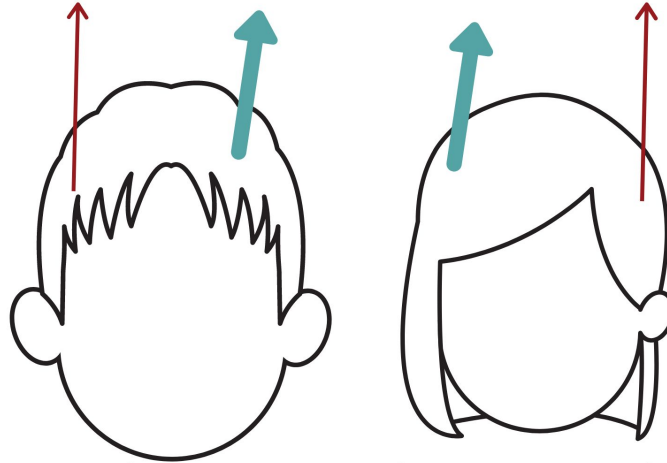
Temporal-Parietal

Judgment; Important for social problem solving.

Hippocampus

Also involved in processing emotions.

In some people, this is more like a bumpy road, as they feel intense anxiety or anger in response to a situation that is not actually a threat.



What are your bumpy roads?

What are your high speed highways? Make a list of each.

Remember you can use your strengths to drive through bumpy roads more easily, and you can practice exercises to make the bumpy roads smoother.

Example

Bumpy Road:

- Becoming extremely upset after making a simple mistake.

High Speed Highway:

- Being understanding of others' mistakes.

Skill to Practice:

- Showing understanding and forgiveness of one's own mistakes.

Sometimes, the emotion parts of our brain overreact to things we do not need to be scared or angered by. We can practice skills to know when this is happening.



Is NOT



But it might feel like it is.

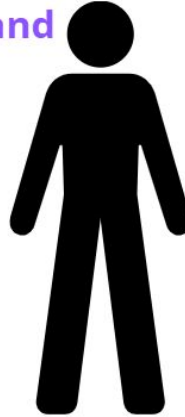
The emotion part of your brain can create physical symptoms.

Head, jaw, neck, upper back

ache; tight

Arms, Hands, and Fingers

Heavy; shaky; hard to control movements, ache; tight; sweaty; cold



Chest

Tight; Heart racing; breathing fast

Stomach

Nausea; heavy like there is lead pulling it down; butterflies; cramps

Legs, Feet, and Toes

Tight; Tingling; Heavy; Like lead; Ache; Wobbly

Next, notice if any of these phrases pop up in your mind when you are feeling uncomfortable:

I can't stand this feeling

I hate feeling this way

It's unbearable

We are more likely to feel emotionally uncomfortable when we perceive ourselves in situations like these, such as:

Being uncertain about the future

Perceiving rejection

**Thinking we are being seen differently
than how we want to be seen**

The Feelings Line



Where I want to be most of the time

How to Go From Feeling Upset to Feeling Comfortable

It requires 3 sets of skills:

1. Telling myself it is OK to feel what I am feeling.
2. Telling myself It is "OK" to think and act in a different way
3. Blending facts with feeling



Keeping track of your emotions helps you become more aware of how you are feeling throughout the day.

Often, uncomfortable feelings build up over time, but you may not notice them until they are very big and intense.

Using colors to represent different feelings is one of many ways to keep track of your feelings.

For some, it may be easier to use colors than to write down a specific emotion word, such as “sad” or “angry.” Also, it might be an easier way to show the intensity of an emotion. For example, yellow can mean “frustrated” and orange can mean “angry.”

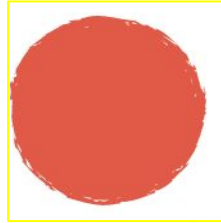


**First, keep track
of what color
you are feeling
throughout the
day.**

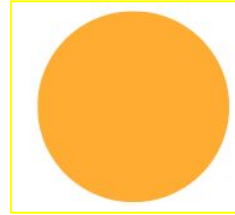
Color code

Comfort Levels

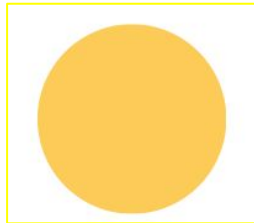
If it is hard to decide which emotion word goes with which color, you can think about how uncomfortable you are feeling instead.



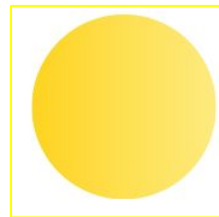
Can't stand it
Uncomfortable



Uncomfortable and
having trouble
standing it.



A little
uncomfortable, but I
can stand it.

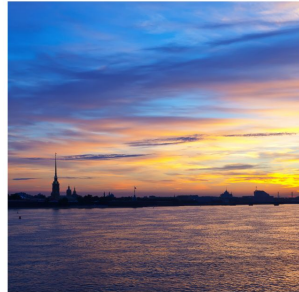
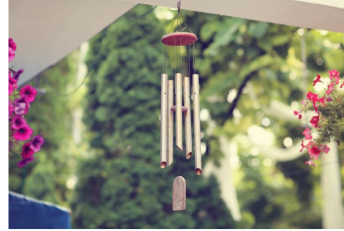


Comfortable

Once you have identified how you are feeling throughout the day and what might be contributing to uncomfortable feelings, you can practice skills for having a “Flexible Stance”

Tell yourself it is OK to feel what you are feeling. Then, slow down with what you are doing in the moment and try doing something else, such as: Getting a drink; listening to music; etc. are all strategies that help us soften the blow of uncomfortable emotions.





Use the 5 senses

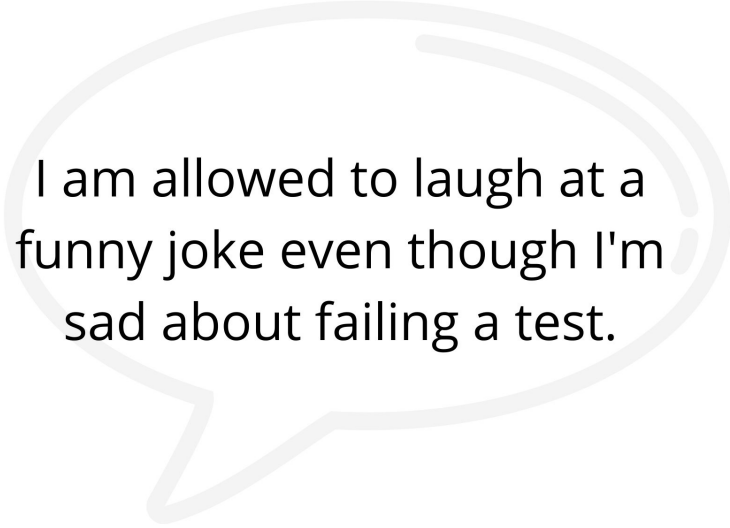
To bring you back to Comfortable



Make a Mood Smoothie



**This means
"blending" uncomfortable emotions with
soothing statements, images, and practices.**



I am allowed to laugh at a
funny joke even though I'm
sad about failing a test.

Say and repeat, "It is OK to act differently than I have in the past, even if people may be surprised. It does not change what I value, my personal goals, who I am as a person, etc."

Example: Feeling nervous is important for caring enough to study and succeed academically. Taking a break and feeling confident will not change my values for high achievement and strong work ethic.

**Last, but not least:
Emotions, even
uncomfortable ones, can be
our superpower if we
respond to them with
openness as opposed to
rejection.**



When we are in tune with our emotions, we grow the ability to learn from instinct before we know for sure what the facts are. This is known as:



Fear -- Alerts us to danger and allows us to protect ourselves.

Anxiety -- Motivates us to action (to study; find solutions to problems; perform better).

Anger -- Alerts us to situations in which we may be getting taken advantage of and in which it is in our best interest to stand up for ourselves.

Sadness -- Alerts us that we may need to connect with others.

But then when there is still
uncertainty....

I thought I was
supposed to listen to
facts. The feelings part
of my brain makes me
think twigs are snakes!

It is important to consider the facts of the situation. When there is still uncertainty, intuition can be tapped into to help us come up with lots of different thoughts and things to do that will help us feel better.



When you use intuition, you blend knowledge and feeling in a creative way. Creativity is a great way to get back to comfortable AND solve problems!

Stay tuned for the Mood Smoothie Chapter 2 to learn more strategies!