

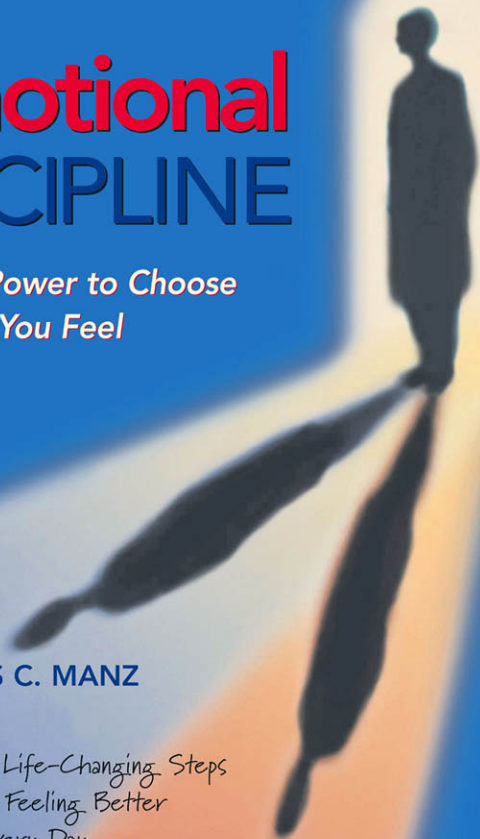
By the bestselling author of  
*The Power of Failure*

# Emotional DISCIPLINE

*The Power to Choose  
How You Feel*

CHARLES C. MANZ

*5 Life-Changing Steps  
to Feeling Better  
Every Day*



An Excerpt From

***Emotional Discipline:  
The Power to Choose How You Feel***

by Charles C. Manz

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# Discovering the Power of Emotional Discipline



*The vast majority of men [and women]  
lead lives of quiet desperation.*

—Henry David Thoreau

*Cecil T. Barkly, the division manager, had just returned to his office after attending what he experienced as a grueling meeting with his subordinate managers. He felt irritable and exhausted as he gulped down a cup of coffee and a candy bar and stared at a new report on his desk. He had stayed up late the previous night. In fact, he hadn't allowed himself a good night's sleep in days and always seemed to be eating on the run to one meeting after another (which was about the only form of exercise he had taken time for in years).*

*As he studied the report his face turned red with anger, he*

clenched his fists. In his unfocused emotional state he misread some data on a graph, thinking that it indicated a negative trend when in fact it showed marked improvement. He sensed that he should take more time to digest the report and to try to put things in perspective before he acted on this new information. But it was too late, his emotions had already taken over and he stormed out of his office, report in hand, and back toward the meeting that he had just left in progress.

When he entered the room, despite an air of excitement in the wake of just having reached a solution to a problem that had haunted the division for months, the group quickly became tensely silent. Barkly felt overwhelming tension in his body and his mind was filled with angry thoughts as he stood and scowled at the group. He was miserable and he was mad and he was going to let this group know how he felt in no uncertain terms!

“I just received information,” he began as he thrust the report out in front of him, “that despite our massive attempts to the contrary, managers in this division are still using a directive punitive style of management! You all know our instructions from upstairs to improve employee productivity by adopting a supportive and participative leadership style. You mark my words,” he continued, now shaking his fist at the group for emphasis. “You will be more supportive and participative or, dammit, heads are going to roll!”

~~~~~

It's true that how you feel can have a dramatic impact on what you do and say and how you experience life in general. The good news is that there are practical ways to gain *The Power to Choose How You Feel*. Do you believe this statement? Can you imagine what it would be like to be able to choose how you feel?

How would you like to be able to make choices that naturally replenish your energy so that you no longer feel drained by work and life? How much value would you place on an ability to change feeling bad into feeling good? How might this ability contribute to your personal effectiveness and fulfillment in life and work? The reality is that much of the time you possess this very ability. All you need is the awareness that you possess this power and effective tools to put it to work. What you need is *Emotional Discipline*.

It is a common tendency to attribute the way we feel to such factors as mood swings, hormone fluctuations, and especially external events. Much of the time it can seem like our quality of life is largely at the mercy of invading feelings that are outside our influence. We hear people say "Sorry, I'm in a lousy mood today," "I feel exhausted," "I can't figure out why I feel so down," or "I don't know what's gotten into me but for some reason I feel great." It's as though we simply have little or no choice regarding how we feel. Emotional Discipline, on the other hand, offers an empowering alternative.

And yet, at least at first glance, the idea of being disciplined about your emotions may seem like a rather unattractive proposition. When I submitted the proposal for this book, a person on staff at my publisher initially had a rather

strong and negative reaction. She felt that the idea of emotional discipline was a kind of oxymoron. Her view was that feelings are something to express freely, not to suppress, and that the words “emotion” and “discipline” didn’t seem to go together. In fact, the combination left her with an image of something rather stifling and confining. Her view was that “emotional discipline” was certainly not for her.

A couple days later, after a difficult phone call with a business associate, she found herself surprisingly upset and strongly affected by her feelings. As she reflected on her emotional reactions, with a bit of humor thrown in for good measure, she concluded that maybe she needed some emotional discipline after all.

I encourage you, at least for the moment, to let go of whatever initial skepticism or resistance you might feel about the concept of *emotional discipline*. Please allow me to share some of the compelling information surrounding this subject that may open a whole new world for you as it has for me. I ask that you keep an open mind for now to the possibility that it might have something worthwhile to offer you that could help you to live and work with greater personal effectiveness and fulfillment. And I invite you to explore with me the abundant healthy choices that you have available every day that can help you gain *the power to choose how you feel*.

### *What Is Emotional Discipline?*

The simplest, most straightforward answer to this question is that “Emotional Discipline consists of the intentional



choices we make to gain the power to choose how we feel.” But to define Emotional Discipline with a bit more depth we need to understand the words “emotion” and “discipline.”

**Emotion.** The New World Dictionary defines *emotion* (derived from French and Latin roots meaning to disturb or stir up) as “. . . any specific feeling; any of various complex reactions with both mental and physical manifestations . . . .” Similarly, Salovey and Mayer, authors of the article “Emotional Intelligence,” describe emotions as “organized responses, crossing the boundaries of . . . physiological, cognitive, motivational, and experiential systems.”<sup>1</sup> Together, these definitions point to “feelings” as the primary vehicle of emotions and suggest that feelings are manifest both physically and mentally.

Consistent with this view, in their recent best-selling book *The Heart of the Soul: Emotional Awareness*, Gary Zukav and Linda Francis describe our experience of emotions as having a physical component, such as pain or discomfort in a location of our body in response to a negative emotion.<sup>2</sup> A positive emotion, on the other hand, will create a pleasant sensation. They explain that these physical feelings are accompanied by thoughts. For example, before making a public speech a person might experience the emotion of anxiety through physical discomfort (such as stomach tightness and/or “butterflies”) accompanied by related thoughts (“How did I get myself into this awful situation . . . I’m just going to embarrass myself . . . they’ll laugh me out of the room”).

And I particularly like the simple description of emotion offered by best-selling author Eckhart Tolle that elegantly captures the spirit of this discussion. He says emotion is “a reflection of your mind in the body.”<sup>3</sup>

By viewing emotions as consisting of physical sensations and related mental activity, this means that any given emotion can be identified and examined by studying the sensations in the body (their location, nature, and intensity) and the thoughts that accompany them. For example, imagine that you are swamped with emotion in response to what you perceive as a significant betrayal by a close friend or colleague. Consequently, you notice pain and tightness in your chest accompanied by angry internal self-statements (“How dare she do that . . . after all I’ve done for her and the way I trusted her . . . she knifed me in the back . . .”).

**Discipline.** The New World Dictionary defines *discipline* as “a branch of knowledge or learning, . . . training that develops self-control, character, orderliness, . . . submission to authority and control. . . .” If we study these words carefully we can recognize the role of knowledge, learning, and training that broadens the often oversimplified view of discipline. Rather than a stifling, constraining process that limits our choices, discipline can more constructively be viewed in terms of its empowering potential. It can help us transcend the limits of our current learning and overcome disorganized and ineffective responses to powerful forces (such as overpowering emotions) in our life and work experiences.

In her book *Hooked on Feeling Bad*, Joyce Moskowitz similarly describes discipline as “to train or develop, train-

ing that corrects, molds and perfects . . . .” And she points out that it stems from the same Latin root as disciple—*discipulus*, which means student—and thus concludes that discipline means “the training of us.”<sup>4</sup> In this sense we might think of discipline as a process of self-education and self-training that helps us to enhance our level of effectiveness and the quality of our overall experience in the world.

To reinforce this idea it is helpful to consider the word *disciplines*, which is often associated with spiritual and/or religious practices. For example, the disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, study, solitude, and service are usually self-imposed with the intent of experiencing personal growth of mind and spirit. In his classic best-seller *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster argues that disciplines should not be thought of as “dull drudgery aimed at exterminating laughter from the face of the earth . . . the purpose of the disciplines is liberation from the stifling slavery to self-interest and fear.”<sup>5</sup>

I will refer to the various strategies for applying emotional discipline included in this book simply as “choices.” If you find the concept of “disciplines” helpful, you might think of them as emotional disciplines. Overall, I view *discipline* as a form of self-training and a path to personal growth that stems from entering into (or for those that prefer a bit firmer and more definitive language, submitting to) a process designed to constructively address our experience of life and work.

**Emotional Discipline.** All this leads to a more comprehensive definition. *Emotional discipline* consists of the various

choices you make, both to meet the challenge of current situations as well as to prepare for the future, that provide you with self-training, a path to personal growth, and a repertoire of strategies that you can draw upon as needed, that equip you with *the power to choose how you feel*. This book will offer a specific approach to introducing emotional discipline into your life. It consists of:

- ~Selecting (identifying, creating, or customizing) the emotional discipline process that will be used.
- ~Working with the process as you encounter work and life challenges that arouse significant feelings.
- ~Choosing appropriate strategies (choices) for applying emotional discipline to constructively influence your reactions to situations that trigger significant feelings, as well as to help create future constructive and healthy feelings.

Later in this chapter I will talk more about the various choices that can be made to practice emotional discipline. But first it is important to address the question “why go to the trouble?” That is, what does emotional discipline have to offer that can benefit your life?

### *The Promise of Emotional Discipline*

Why should you bother with emotional discipline in your life and why should you go to the trouble of introducing emotional discipline choices into your daily living? The most simple and direct answer is that they can vastly en-

hance your experiences of work and life and your overall fulfillment. Making emotional discipline choices not only can enrich your present-moment living and help create a more satisfying and effective future, but can enable you to enjoy a naturally re-energizing lifestyle that can help you avoid feeling depleted and burned out. In addition, by constructively working with and helping to create your feelings, you can vastly contribute to your effectiveness in meeting life's problems, in your interactions and relationships with others, and in growing into your fuller potential.

For example, research has suggested that emotions have the capacity for helping us to successfully face uncertainty, visualize a positive future, and to speed up decision making. Emotions can also help us to bridge between the rational and nonrational, gain a sense of self-relevance, and facilitate personal adaptation and change.<sup>6</sup> One prominent researcher has suggested that emotions represent the "wisdom of the ages" and provide responses to recurrent problems that have withstood the test of time.<sup>7</sup>

Further, significant research has pointed to the many potential benefits of constructive management of emotions. A growing area of research has been grouped under the umbrella term "emotion regulation."<sup>8</sup> Researcher James Gross has commented, "emotional responses can . . . mislead us . . . . When our emotions seem to be ill-matched to a given situation, we frequently try to regulate our emotional responses so that they better serve our goals."<sup>9</sup> And he defines emotion regulation as "The processes by which we influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express them."<sup>10</sup> Research in this

area has indicated that effective strategies can be applied for meeting difficult emotional situations that reduce both our negative emotional experiences and our dysfunctional behavioral responses.

Effective regulation of emotions has also been shown to significantly enhance learning. For example, researchers Isen, Daubman, and Nowicki have found that positive emotions can positively impact problem solving while negative emotion inhibits it.<sup>11</sup> It appears that positive emotions engage higher brain mechanisms and enhance processing of information and memory, while negative emotion inhibits higher cognitive functions. For these reasons, as well as evidence that emotions are quite “contagious” and thus easily passed from person to person, Professor Edward Vela argues that teachers should monitor their own emotional state and model and encourage positive emotion for their students.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, a great deal of research supports the value of constructively working with our emotions.

Emotional discipline is worth the trouble because it can be the key to harnessing the power and energy of emotions rather than being wounded and drained by them. And this can help us to have the kind of life and career we’ve always dreamed of, even if this result stems more from changes in the way we experience life on the inside as opposed to changes in our external life circumstances.

*Emotional discipline* addresses our most powerful lens for experiencing life—how we feel. Think for a moment. Everything we experience is colored by the way we feel. We all know this at a rational level, but it can be very challenging to identify and implement practical ways of applying

this knowledge to positively affect our daily living. When we are in a bad mood, the world can look dark and gloomy. And we can end up acting in ways that alienate others and make our life and work more difficult in the future. When we feel stressed and anxious, everything around us can seem threatening, leaving us psychologically paralyzed and exhausted. We may avoid reasonable and necessary risks for making progress or shy away from great opportunities. If we feel sad or lonely, the world can seem like one big melancholy soap opera robbing us of the joy of the present moment. When we feel tired and apathetic, we may find it difficult to do almost anything at all. And so it goes.

Our life experience is greatly influenced by how we feel, which in turn can play a major role in determining not only our level of satisfaction but how we connect with our work and with other people. Learning the art of *emotional discipline*, and the many tools (*emotional discipline choices*) available for making its potential power a practical personal reality, can create the foundation for an immensely satisfying, fulfilling, energized, and effective life.

Finally, the primary tenet of emotional discipline challenges us to recognize that our emotions are not beyond our control. This holds us accountable for how we feel and how that affects others by means of what we say and do based on those feelings. Such accountability can be not only a good thing but a necessary thing in human relationships. It can help us to better meld together as a society including in our families, friendships, workplaces, neighborhoods, communities, and nations. It offers the potential to help us better live together for the good of one another.

## *The Key Decisions of Emotional Discipline*

Effective practice of Emotional Discipline is founded on four primary decisions. Being truly effective in this practice requires that you decide to commit to:

1. Taking responsibility for how you feel.
2. Doing things now (in the present) that will prepare you (help fill your emotional energy reservoir) for the future.
3. Reacting to emotionally challenging situations in a new, more balanced and healthy way.
4. Making specific choices (applying strategies) to effectively deal with challenges as they arise.

Thus, emotional discipline requires a commitment to preparing for, facing, working with, and responding to emotional challenges constructively. It includes both making choices that equip you to effectively deal with your emotions in the future and addressing immediate issues. Part of Emotional Discipline involves applying a systematic process (such as the one introduced in Chapter 1). But a key part also involves making the decisions above and thereby committing to creating a personal lifestyle in which you can enjoy its benefits on an ongoing basis.

## *Choices for Gaining in Power to Choose How You Feel*

Focusing directly on our emotions in the heat of the moment is not the only way to gain emotional discipline. A



variety of choices, which I organize into the categories of mind, body, spirit, and emotional discipline foundations, can help us to calm or manage negative feelings and stimulate positive ones. In practice these choices overlap, but I will examine them separately in this book for the sake of clarity.

*Emotional Discipline* choices consist of moment to moment, day to day, intentional and proactive strategies we use that can directly or indirectly affect how we feel. They can make a big difference in how we experience events, our effectiveness in life and at work, and our overall sense of fulfillment.

Sometimes the choices involve taking actions that may seem relatively unattractive in the short run but that can make a world of difference in how we feel later. For example, eating a healthy serving of vegetables rather than a thick piece of chocolate cake, or stopping and facing our difficult feelings about a colleague and learning from them rather than losing ourselves in another more appealing but less important task, may not seem like an obvious way to feel better at the time. But, of course, in the long run, we can feel much better and our lives can benefit a great deal if we make these kinds of disciplined choices.

Nevertheless, it is not simply a matter of using disciplined strategies to bolster our willpower or to help us make short-term sacrifices. *Emotional Discipline* also involves discovering the joy of making positive and healthy choices by finding ways to enjoy actions now that will help us to feel even better later. Fresh vegetables cooked creatively can be a culinary delight and taking a brisk walk in

a beautiful park, to reflect on thoughts and feelings about a problem we need to address with our colleague, can be a freeing experience.

The amazing thing is that the world is full of healthy and constructive choices that can help us build a life that feels better and that is more effective and fulfilling. And many choices are available to help us more constructively cope and react to our feelings when they are already upon us. The array is as varied as learning techniques for creatively reframing the way we see problems, directly facing and purposely feeling our feelings to lessen their power over us, practicing emotional Kung Fu to put the potency of feelings to work for us, learning some simple and effective meditation techniques, and applying the power of silence.

This book offers 25 specific emotional discipline choices, or ways to gain *The Power to Choose How You Feel*, including selecting an overall process that serves as the foundation for emotional discipline. For the most part these practical strategies are relatively simple, well known, and have proven to be very effective for many people. They represent a solid beginning set of alternatives that you can expand upon and adapt to your needs. The specific strategies (choices) are designed to help uplift the way you feel about your work and life by equipping you to better respond to your feelings in the present and help you constructively shape them for the future. Together these practical strategies can establish a solid beginning repertoire of choices for bringing the many benefits of emotional discipline into your experience.

As stated previously, the various choices/strategies of-

ferred are divided into four areas: emotional discipline foundations, mind, body, and spirit. Hopefully you will find some of these practical strategies especially helpful for your particular life circumstances. Feel free to “jump around” in your reading after you read Chapters 1 and 2. Those two chapters address selection of a fundamental emotional discipline multi-step process and the key characteristics of emotional discipline, and thus should be read first. The strategies in the rest of the chapters don’t need to be read in any particular order.

Strategies also work across more than the application area they are grouped under. For example, you may find some of the techniques for addressing the mind are very helpful with issues of the spirit or vice versa. You may also discover that certain strategies for enhancing the way your body feels also calm your mind or that better coping with your troubling thoughts relieves all kinds of symptoms in your body. As already pointed out, emotions are manifested as physical sensations in the body (such as butterflies in the stomach or tightness in the chest) along with various patterns of thought (for example, worrisome mental images or euphoric internal self-talk). Also, many believe our feelings are the primary language of the spirit. For example, the information about what is truly right for our lives may be contained more in an inner wisdom that is communicated through intuition and feelings as opposed to conscious rational analytical thinking.

Please experiment and adapt the suggested emotional discipline choices to your own particular needs and situation. You can combine strategies or use only the parts that

resonate with you. I hope the practical choices contained in this book will also inspire you to create some of your own that are specifically customized to your unique needs and perspective. Think of this book as a living document that you can help create, mold, and incorporate into your life and work as you see fit.

# Choice 1

## Create Your Emotional Discipline Process

~~~~~

*If I had my life to live over again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once a week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would have thus been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature.*

—Charles Darwin<sup>14</sup>

The first and most important emotional discipline choice is to select an overall process for applying emotional discipline. Ultimately you will need a process that is designed specifically for you. This chapter will introduce the five key components or steps that need to be addressed in the process that you create to fit your specific needs. To help you get started, a sample of a complete process for practicing emotional discipline will be presented along with a case example that illustrates how it might be used.

The five components or steps of a complete emotional discipline process were derived from several key sources. They are partly based on the work I have been pursuing with colleagues on the topic of self-leadership over the last twenty years.<sup>15</sup> This source of input draws upon my personal knowledge gained from research, consulting, and teaching experiences. Over the past two decades I have had the opportunity to study and facilitate learning for thousands of people regarding their self-leadership practices, including the incorporation of positive discipline in their work and lives. Beyond this direct input and experience I drew upon several other key sources that I have found to be particularly helpful in the literature on personal growth and improvement. I have personally tried many of the strategies that these sources suggest (and all of the ones included in this book) and observed them in many others.

First, I will describe in detail the five key components or steps of a complete emotional discipline process and provide a sample process that incorporates all of them. Learning these steps, adapting them to your specific cir-

cumstances (customizing them to your individual needs), and using them as a source of inspiration to create your own emotional discipline process, is key. It represents the foundation for, and the first of, the 25 *choices* (strategies) that make up the primary content of this book.

Then I will provide a concrete case example that demonstrates how the process might be applied to a specific challenging situation. Later, in the chapter on Emotional Intelligence (Chapter 4), some of the books that were helpful with the development of the process and that can further add to your knowledge for effective practice of emotional discipline are listed. I recommend that you consider reading some of these books for additional information and guidance on the emotional discipline process.

### Five Components or Steps for Practicing Emotional Discipline

The effective overall practice of emotional discipline as a lifestyle commitment includes five specific components or steps. Together they can be applied to meet current life challenges as well as to help develop your capacity for meeting emotionally challenging situations in the future. Ultimately they are founded on the powerful idea of *CHOICE*—choosing how you feel through the application of an overall multistep process and specific strategies (emotional discipline choices) to meet immediate challenges. Here are the components or steps:

1. **Cause**—identify the immediate cause of your emotions.

2. **Body**—assess the location and intensity of your physical reactions.
3. **Mind**—identify the thoughts and beliefs that accompany your physical reactions.
4. **Spirit**—note what part of yourself is being revealed in your response to your current circumstances.
5. **Choice**—make an emotional discipline choice and apply it for constructively dealing with your immediate challenge.

The key, at least in the beginning, is to incorporate all five of these into your emotional discipline efforts as you encounter circumstances that trigger your emotions. It is usually very helpful to do your initial work in writing. Writing out your thoughts as you work with the five steps provides a special kind of discipline and can reveal deeper insights than just running through them in your mind.

Eventually, your own customized emotional discipline process should become almost automatic and second nature and will not require that all the steps be used for every emotion-filled circumstance. For example, you may reach the “mind” focused stage and naturally find yourself drawing upon an appropriate emotional discipline choice, such as mental reframing, that addresses your immediate needs. In effect this represents automatically jumping to the final “choice” part of the process as you become more experienced and effective in applying emotional discipline. Or some circumstances (particularly ones you have encountered in the past) may automatically prompt your use of a



specific choice without needing to work through any of the first four steps.

Also, one other point of clarification needs to be made at the outset. In Step 4 of the process (as well as Part Four of this book) the word *spirit* is used, which has been assigned many meanings over the years. In this book I refer to spirit less in terms of its religious and supernatural implications, and more as that part of who we are that represents our best and most constructive self. This view is relatively consistent with many writers and speakers who make the distinction between our ego (which generally includes our more fearful, closed, selfish, and destructive self) and our spirit (which usually reflects our more caring, open, trusting, and constructive self).

Some dictionaries include more than a dozen different meanings for *spirit*. Some portions of the definition contained in the New American Webster Dictionary that capture best how I am using the term here include “The nature of a person . . . vivacity; optimism . . . the essence or real meaning.” In this book, spirit is generally used to indicate that part of ourselves that we recognize as the best that is in us and, from an optimistic stance, the more accurate reflection of who we really are.

### *A Sample of a Complete Emotional Discipline Process*

What follows is a complete 5-step emotional discipline process. This sample process is offered to help you get started. It is possible that you may even find that this specific process adequately addresses your particular needs

and that you can begin to use it to meet your own life challenges. More likely you will need to create a customized process, and use the one offered here as a source of insight and inspiration for creating an approach that is better suited to your own circumstances.

For example, if health issues are especially prominent in your life, you will probably need to create a process that emphasizes constructive ways of addressing your physical needs. If on the other hand, you are struggling with painful mental issues due to a recent loss of some kind, the mind part of the process would receive more emphasis. The 5-step process that follows represents a comprehensive generic approach to practicing emotional discipline.

### **1. What is the Cause?**

*Identify the issue or event provoking the feelings.* What has happened that has triggered significant emotion for you? Have you encountered a setback in your life or work, a disagreement with someone else, a troubling thought or realization in your mind, or some other circumstance? This might be a long-term issue that keeps recurring or it might be an unexpected one-time event. Step 1 involves specifically pinpointing whatever it is that is stirring up feelings that you feel a need to address.\*

\*Note that the “Cause” part of the process is intended to focus on immediate salient events or issues that are triggering your emotional responses and notable feelings. It is not, however, generally meant to address deep psychological problems, such as those that might stem from serious childhood traumas or unconscious or repressed psychological issues, that may require psychotherapy or other professional treatment.

## **2. Focus on Your Body**

*Scan your body.* Determine the location of your physical sensations and whether they are uncomfortable or pleasant. Where specifically are you having the physical feelings? Are you feeling tightness in your chest, butterflies in your stomach, a pleasant flowing warmth throughout your entire body, tingling down your spine, or some other physical sensation? Pinpoint the location of the physical feelings and whether you are experiencing them as pleasing or painful.

*Rate your physical feelings.* How do you rate the physical feelings you have pinpointed on a scale ranging from -10 for very negative (uncomfortable/painful) to +10 for very positive (comfortable/enjoyable). If, as a result of a heated argument, you have a strong unpleasant knotted feeling in the pit of your stomach, accompanied by rather severe tightness in your chest, you might rate the sensation as a -8 or -9. If, on the other hand, as you sit under a palm tree on a tropical beach with a warm light breeze gently caressing your hair, you are experiencing deep calmness and muscle relaxation along with a wave of contented pleasure throughout your entire body, you might rate this sensation as a +8 or +9.

## **3. Focus on Your Mind**

*Identify your thoughts and/or images that accompany the feelings.* What thoughts are going through your head as you experience these physical sensations? What internal statements (e.g., “this argument is awful . . . he is being

terribly rude and unreasonable . . . this kind of stress could ruin my health . . .”) and/or mental pictures (images of the other person later saying things to discredit you behind your back . . . seeing yourself in an ambulance as a result of having a stroke or heart attack . . .) are running through your mind?

*Identify your beliefs that underlie your thoughts.* What beliefs do you hold that are laying the foundation for your mental and physical reactions? For example, do you believe that things should always go smoothly and that all problems are bad, people should not argue, strong feelings are bad for you, it is important to always keep your feelings tightly under control, when anyone disagrees with you it represents an attack? Pinpoint what you specifically believe that forms the foundation for your stance and reaction to the situation or event.

#### **4. Focus on Your Spirit**

*Determine what part of yourself is being revealed and what part is being hidden.* We tend to have different noteworthy parts of who we are that are more or less engaged at different times. Some of these parts we tend to like and value and others we don't. For example, in your response to this issue or event, are you acting from a state of openness, caring, and love? Or are you acting from a state of fear, defensiveness, and hostility? As you work with this process across different situations, try to become aware of the different aspects of yourself that you live and act from in different situations. Also, work toward gaining a better sense

of those parts of yourself you would like to have more revealed and activated and those that you would not.

## **5. Make a Choice**

*Choose your actions and reactions (your emotional discipline strategies).* The greatest value of emotional discipline is in its potential to increase your power to choose, and most notably, to choose how you feel. In response to the issue or event that you have pinpointed, how would you like to be able to respond? What actions and reactions (in terms of physical sensations, thinking, and action strategies) would you like to have? More specifically, what emotional discipline *choices* have you built into your repertoire that you can draw upon to constructively address your current feelings and to help you create constructive future feelings? What choices can help you to experience and live from your more constructive, effective, and empowered self a greater amount of the time and in more situations?

### *An Example of the Process in Action*

(Note: The following case was written to illustrate the complete 5-step process, but it is inspired by actual events.)

*The founder and beloved leader of an emerging service-oriented software firm unexpectedly passed away about three weeks ago. Since that time the organization has been largely paralyzed and ineffective and experiencing a business-threatening downturn as a result. Today the remaining 21 members of the management team of this rapidly growing enterprise have gathered to support one another and to begin to*

sort out the implications of their former leader's death and how they can proceed from here. This is the first time they have been together in the primary meeting room at their main corporate office without their deceased leader. No specific agenda was set for the meeting. Mostly, some key members of the management team felt a time was needed to get everyone together in one place to begin the process of moving forward.

A sense of despair filled the room. Some people had tears in their eyes and others spoke of the deep sadness they felt and their anxieties about the future of their firm. Kris Woltuf's initial reaction had been much like that of the other managers. She was overwhelmed by difficult feelings, including deep sadness and anxiety, when she first heard the news. She felt an uncomfortable tightness in her chest and a knot in her stomach. In her mind she focused on all they had lost by the passing of their very compassionate and inspiring leader. She was not able to think clearly and was ineffective in her job. And she was unable to be the way she wanted for her husband and two children, especially when significant family challenges arose. She just seemed to lack the strength and will to be fully present in her life. That is, until she made a conscious choice to work with the emotional discipline process.



For *Step 1*, it was easy for her to identify the triggering event as the loss of her friend and leader. She then pinpointed the primary location of the physical discomfort as residing in her chest and stomach in *Step 2*. And she felt the intensity of the physical sensations was pretty high.

Consequently, she rated the physical discomfort as a negative 6 on the physical feelings rating scale.

Next, in *Step 3* she identified her corresponding thoughts. She recorded on a note pad some of her more prominent internal statements. These included, “This is an absolute tragedy to lose such a wonderful and inspiring man” . . . “The firm will be lost without his leadership” . . . “Why even bother with our work.” And she noted some of her mental images such as picturing a sense of hopelessness and despair hanging over the company for years to come and even eventual bankruptcy for the firm.

She also recognized some of her underlying beliefs including the following. “Good people shouldn’t die, especially unexpectedly.” “The entire strength of the firm was tied up in one single person who is now gone.” And “extreme situations like this are entirely destructive and beyond our ability to constructively respond to.”

Recognizing these dominant thoughts and beliefs helped her with *Step 4*. She recognized that she was mostly responding to the situation from a part of herself that was fearful and that felt and acted like a helpless victim. She knew that acting from this part of herself would not enable her to be of much help to others who were affected by the death nor to effectively perform her job or to be supportive of her family the way she wanted.

Consequently, for *Step 5*, she made some specific choices for applying emotional discipline to turn things around. For example, in addition to choosing to *work through the 5-step emotional discipline process*, she chose to allow herself to really *feel her feelings*. Up to that point she

had tried to avoid her feelings as much as possible. She had been largely tuning out life as an unconscious way of avoiding feeling any more than she had to. Now she moved in closer to her feelings and faced them squarely. It was rather frightening and uncomfortable at first, but she practiced deep *abdominal breathing* to help her calm herself. As she began to recognize the location and nature of her physical sensations and the kinds of thoughts and beliefs that were attached to them, her new awareness seemed to lessen the intensity of her emotions. It was as though she had pointed a flashlight into a dark eerie corner of a room. When she could more clearly see and understand the nature of her feelings, their power over her was greatly diminished.

And she made some healthy choices to care for her body in a way that lifted how she felt physically. Since she was finding it especially difficult to initiate new activities in her current state of mind, she kept these choices very simple. She made a conscious commitment to get some *exercise* at least once every day. Mostly she took 20 to 30 minutes at lunch time to walk around the small lake and through the wooded grounds of the office park of her company's building. Other times she used an exercise bike or worked out with a yoga video that had been collecting dust on a shelf at home. And she made a conscious choice to *cut down on sweets and caffeine* which she knew adversely affected her mood, especially when she was under stress.

She also used *mental reframing* of the event. Instead of viewing the situation as a seemingly endless catastrophe calling for mourning and suffering, she chose to view it as a time to be grateful for all that the leader had brought to her



and others and the way he had enriched their lives. She also viewed it as a chance to carry on his legacy. Essentially she had practiced *emotional Kung Fu* by redirecting her emotional energy to help the situation work for her rather than against her. This caused her to begin sharing many positive memories with her colleagues and parts of the inspiring vision that had helped launch the company.

As she did this in the current gathering, she noticed that the tone of the whole room began to gradually turn around. Soon others were also telling positive stories about what the leader had done for them and what they had accomplished together. And they began to reconnect with the mission and purpose they had felt under the inspiration of their leader. As this process unfolded, the beginning of a healing process had begun. The managers, for the first time since their leader's death, focused on how they had in fact been left with a great deal of strength, inspiration, and vision. They also began to see that they were very capable of successfully carrying on together.

### *Concluding Comments*

Now I invite you to read about, try out, adapt, and add to the emotional discipline choices contained in the following chapters. Some of these strategies especially match up with a particular step of the process. Note that the four parts of the book are divided into emotional discipline foundations, mind, body, and spirit. The latter three of these correspond with the key parts of the emotional discipline process that was introduced in this chapter.

Also remember that any of the emotional discipline choices can be applied directly during any step of the emotional discipline process. Again, this is essentially jumping to the final “*choice*” stage of the process when you find yourself ready to do so. Sometimes working through all five steps of the process (or all the steps of your customized version) can be very helpful. Other times it will be obvious that a specific choice is just what you seem to need after only working part way through the steps. And most importantly, as you incorporate these kinds of constructive emotional discipline choices into your life and work you will increasingly gain in your ongoing capacity to have *the power to choose how you feel*.

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