

Healthy Lifestyles

February

Health Hub

Emotional Literacy

What: Emotional literacy is the ability to understand and label emotions in ourselves and others. It allows us to identify how we are feeling. Emotional literacy also gives us the tools to cope and express our emotions appropriately and empathetically.

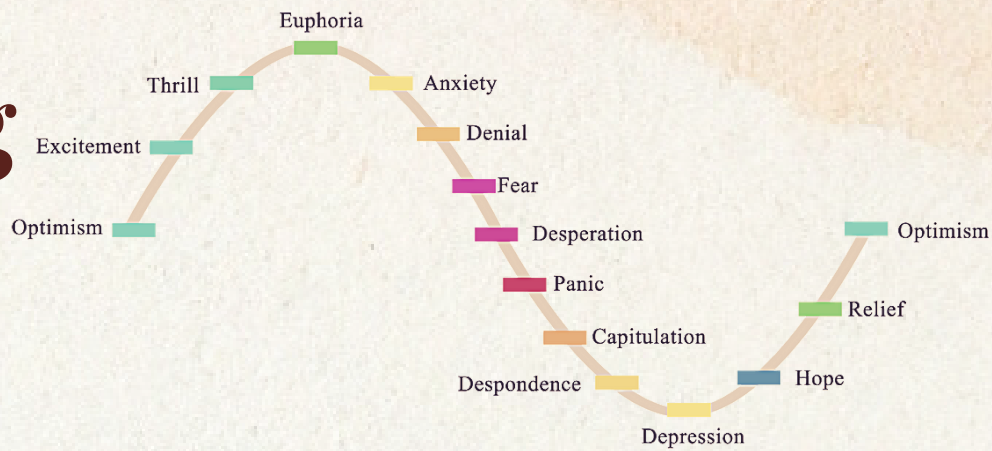
Why: Emotions are imbedded into our every day actions and decisions. Ultimately we all make choices according to how we feel in that moment. If we are happy, we may smile, wave, initiate positive human interaction. When we are stressed or overwhelmed we may answer a question too sharply, or be short and quick to temper. No matter where we are at in life we all make decisions, good and bad, based on our current emotional state.



How: Emotional literacy is a tool that takes effort to develop. It requires mindfulness and reflection. To develop and achieve stronger emotional literacy we must be aware of our feelings and resulting actions. This takes effort but is crucial to our physical, financial, social and emotional wellbeing.



Identifying and Moving through Emotions



Studies have shown that we feel at least one emotion 90% of the time. This means it is crucial that we are able to properly identify what we are feeling at any given moment.

Above is a graph of emotions we may feel throughout the day and the highs and lows that they can create in our mental state. (There is a more comprehensive list of emotions on the resources page at the end of this article.)

Identifying our emotions is the first step in our emotional literacy journey. After identifying the emotion we need to then know how to react. The ability to appropriately react to our emotions is a process we are calling "moving through our emotions".

The first step of this process is acceptance. This does not mean we have to like what we are feeling or even enjoy the emotion, it simply means we acknowledge its presence in our mind. After we accept the emotion, we can turn to mindfulness.

Mindfulness occurs as we turn inward and learn to 'sit' with our emotion. We can do this through self-reflection. Ask yourself these questions: How does this emotion make me feel? How is my body experiencing this emotion? What reaction does this emotion trigger? As we turn inward we create a plan on how we are going to act on the emotion.

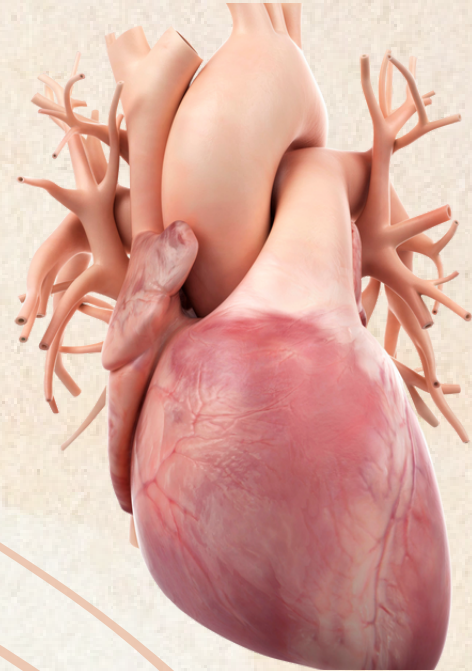
Moving through the emotion is the action part of emotional literacy. It does not mean dismissing or ignoring the emotion. It means accepting the emotion, reflecting on its affect on our mental and physical wellbeing and then creating and acting on a plan instead of simply reacting without reflection.

For some emotions this experience can take 30 seconds. For others it may take minutes, hours or even days depending on the type and severity of the emotion. However, the act of moving through our emotions is an important process in emotional literacy that allows us to become more self aware and in-tune with our minds and bodies.

Emotions and Heart Health

February is Heart Awareness month. Did you know that your emotions impact your heart health?

When our body is in distress, meaning whenever it feels stress, anxiety, fear, fatigue and depression it kicks our body into fight or flight mode. This experience results in our body dumping the hormones cortisol and adrenaline into our blood stream. If our body is constantly experiencing these emotions then our body never gets a chance to recover. This chronic pumping of hormones has been shown to put an increased amount of stress on our heart and in some cases can lead to arterial damage.



But never fear! We can lower the risk to our heart by being open and willing to seek help with our emotional and mental wellbeing. There is never any harm in admitting we need help maintaining a healthy range of emotions. You wouldn't hesitate to see a doctor about your heart, so do not hesitate to ask for help regarding your emotional wellbeing. The county has made this easier through its partnership with BluNovus. BluNovus has many options to connect with a Care Connector through text or phone call. The app also offers courses, stories and tips to help with a variety of topics. We encourage all SL County employees to download the app, use the code "SL County," and take advantage of this amazing resource.

**blu
nov
us.**

Resources

Feelings

Word List



Happy	Mad	Sad	Scared	Disgust
Adored	Aggravated		Afraid	Embarrassed
Alive	Accused		Alarmed	Exposed
Appreciated	Angry		Anxious	Guilty
Cheerful	Bitter		Astonished	Ignored
Ecstatic	Cross		Curious	Inadequate
Excited	Defensive		Delighted	Incompetent
Grateful	Frustrated		Enchanted	Inhibited
Glad	Furious		Exhilarated	Inept
Hopeful	Hostile		Incredulous	Inferior
Jolly	Impatient		Inquisitive	Insignificant
Jovial	Infuriated		Impressed	Sick
Joyful	Insulted		Mystified	Shame
Loved	Jaded		Passionate	Squashed
Merry	Offended		Playful	Stupid
Optimistic	Ornery		Replenished	Ugly
Pleased	Outraged		Splendid	Unaccepted
Satisfied	Pestered		Shocked	
Tender	Rebellious		Stunned	
Terrific	Resistant			
Thankful	Revengeful			
Uplifted	Scorned			
Warm	Spiteful			
	Testy			
	Used			
	Violated			



© 2014 Julie de Azevedo Hanks

Wasatch Family Therapy.com Julie.Hanks.com

Websites

What is Emotional Literacy

Increasing Emotional Competence

The Connection between Emotions and Your Heart Health

Workshops

