

The Umbrella of Unpleasant Experiences

Some experiences can be complex and overwhelming. Whether experienced as stress, anger, anxiety, or irritability, the Umbrella of Unpleasant Experiences is designed to help break down difficult experiences into manageable parts.

EMOTIONAL DISTRESS
[Stress / Anger / Anxiety / Irritability / Upset / Etc.]

Step 1: Identify a time when you experienced a significant amount of Emotional Distress (Stress, Anger, Anxiety, Irritability, etc.) and write it on the line below:

EVENT: _____

Sadness

_____ %

Disappointment

_____ %

Fear

_____ %

Embarrassment

_____ %

Hurt

_____ %

Step 2: Consider all of the emotional distress associated with the event as a whole and equal to 100%. How would you divide that 100% into each of the unpleasant emotions under the umbrella (sadness / disappointment / fear / embarrassment / hurt)? Write the corresponding percentage under each. *Notes: All five percentages should add up to 100%. Although there will be overlap between the categories, use the “How to Tell the Emotions Apart” page to help distinguish and decide between them.*

Step 3: Start with the emotion with highest percentage (or one of them if two or more have the same percentage) and answer the questions for it from the “How to Handle Each Emotion” page. Then work down until all emotions with a percentage other than 0% are addressed.

Step 4: Repeat Steps 1-3 for however many distressing events and correlating emotions you are able to do. Feel free to take it as slow (one emotion for one event once a week) or as fast as you choose, just don't give up or overwhelm yourself. Doing this will lead to a much greater understanding of your experiences, help equip you with lifegiving useful skills, and ultimately build up your ability to effectively handle these unpleasant experiences and walk in freedom.

How to Tell the Emotions Apart

Sadness - The essence of sadness is a **sense of loss**. This might be an opportunity that has past, something or someone once held dear that is now gone, or a significant sense of emptiness.

Indicators of sadness (loss) - in addition to focusing on what has been lost, sadness will usually include a strong component of time, such as thoughts or statements wishing to go back in time and do something different, hopelessness for the future, or a present sense of an unfillable void.

Disappointment - the essence of disappointment is **unmet expectations**. Disappointment has aptly been described as the difference between expectations and reality, and often is experienced as frustration.

Indicators of disappointment (unmet expectations) - will usually include strong components of unfulfilled hopes, wants, or desires. Thoughts or statements indicating disappointment will include expectations words such as “if only _____”, “I wanted” “I just wish _____,” “ I hoped,” “We needed,” or “I just thought _____ ...”

Fear - the essence of fear is **uncertainty and doubt**. Fear can be very unsettling and is often experienced directly as fear or more subtly through anxiety or worry.

Indicators of fear (uncertainty and doubt) - will usually include a sense of worry or impending harm, but can also be identified by their sense of movement. This includes racing, oscillating, or cycling (ruminating) thoughts (thoughts that seem elusive, bounce between extremes, or keep getting stuck back in the same place even when trying to think of other things, respectively), as well as frantic speech or body movements. Be mindful, however, that because such movement can be exhausting and draining, there may also be simply an overall sense of fatigue, strong feelings of being worn out, or a seemingly apathetic and depressed feeling.

Embarrassment - the essence of embarrassment is **insecurity or an insecure sense of self**. Where fear is often centered on uncertainty or doubt about external things (such as what could happen or what others could do), embarrassment is focused on insecurity of the self (i.e. internally or regarding one’s identity). Deeply internalized embarrassment is shame.

Indicators of embarrassment (insecurity)- can usually be identified by a failure to differentiate between the situation and/or behavior and the self (For example, if someone fails a test they see themselves as a complete failure rather than a person who failed a test; or if someone gets rejected for a date they see themselves as a total reject rather than simply not good match for that person at that particular time.) Desires to hide, disappear, or crawl into a hole are typically indicators of embarrassment, as is taking responsibility for others faults and actions.

Hurt - the essence of hurt is **relational pain and discomfort**. Hurt generally occurs due to the actions (or inactions) of someone or something else. This relational component, or presence of an “other” or “someone/something else”, is an important aspect of hurt and serves as the key factor in differentiating hurt from sadness and embarrassment.

Indicators of hurt (pain and discomfort) - Relational conflict, distrust, bitterness, vengefulness, and anger towards someone or something else are typical signs that hurt is present. These components may be observed as aggression, argumentativeness, withdrawal (isolating or separating from the other), or other self-protective strategies such as denial (using phrases such as “I don’t care.” or “I’m fine.”) and reaction formation (behaving in an opposite manner or taking pride in oppositional behaviors).

How to Handle Each Emotion



Sadness - use *Grieving & Gratitude* (John 11:35, Romans 5:3-5, James 1:2-4)

- What has been lost? (both “what was” and “what might have been”)
- What is not lost or gone? Has there been any redemption? What redemption is still possible?

Key Elements - You can't skip the grieving part! We live in a world that is not as God created it to be, but acknowledging the brokenness helps to sweeten the redemption. Allow sadness, gratitude, and opportunity to exist.

Disappointment - use *Grace & Guarding your Heart and Mind* (Philippians 4:7, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

- What were your expectations for the situation or person?
- How realistic are those expectations in light of God's truth? Are they gracious for all?

Key elements - Grace for yourself and grace for others. The closer our hearts and minds are to God's truth, the less disappointment and hopelessness we will experience. Taking every thought captive to obey Christ, which also helps guard our hearts, keeps the hope we have in the Gospel and the reality of our broken world in the proper perspective.



Fear - use *Faith & Remembrance* (Romans 8:31-38, Isaiah 63: 7, Psalm 139:13-14, Matthew 10:30-32)

- What are you afraid could happen or will happen?
- Have you considered potential positive/desirable outcomes to the situation? What growth opportunities are there?
- What skills/resources/talents/gifts do you have that you could utilize to help impact the outcome? What from your past might help you shape the future?



Key Elements - Fear has a tendency to make things seem bigger than they are (like a microscope), leading us to lose sight of the bigger picture. We often lose sight of the ways God has gifted us, our relationships (with God and others), and past victories or helpful lessons learned from failures. God came to give us a hope and a future, and desires good things for us.

Embarrassment - use *Truth & Repentance* (1 Corinthians 6:11, Galatians 5:1, 2 Chronicles 7:14, John 3:17)

- What are you feeling/thinking/believing about yourself? Was it the outcome you are embarrassed with or your intentions/desires/motivations or actions in the situation? [Use a chart like the one below to help separate these]
- How might those things be untrue given your identity in Christ and the sovereignty of God?
- Is there anything you might need to repent of in the situation? Did you learn anything you might use in a similar situation in the future? Are you allowing yourself room to learn and grow or just sitting in condemnation?

Key Elements - Although embarrassment and shame can stem from ungodly intentions/desires/motivations, or from inappropriate or unfitting actions, we often think in a backwards fashion and use the outcomes/results of an event to determine whether our intentions/desires/motivations or actions were godly. This backwards approach can lead to all kinds of untrue self-condemning thoughts and beliefs. Not knowing how to do something and not being able to predict the future are nothing to be ashamed of. Godly desires can still end up with undesirable outcomes (the Cross) and vice-versa. Godly conviction will always have a learning/growth component, while condemnation leaves you only accused.



Hurt - use *Forgiveness, Conflict Resolution, & Reconciliation* (Romans 12:18, Romans 3:23, Proverbs 19:11)

- How were you hurt? What was the pain or damage that was caused? Was the hurt intentional?
- What might help repair the damage? Have you done “as much as it depends on you”?

Key Elements - Try your best to separate the action/behavior from the person, or in other words the sin from the sinner. Empathy, compassion, conflict resolution, and forgiveness are invaluable skills to learn and practice (Matthew 9:36). Make sure to also separate forgiveness from reconciliation.

