



Dealing with Negative Learning Emotions

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As an adult learner, you are likely to experience various negative emotions at different stages of your study. These emotions could be learning-related or non-learning related. Because the emotions you experience can affect your studies, it is very important that you handle them effectively in order to do well in your studies. Research has shown that the strength of a learner's intra-personal skills affects his or her ability to handle negative learning emotions. In particular, a learner with strong intra-personal skills is able to reduce or even overcome the impact of negative emotions that affect his or her learning.

According to Bar-On (2006), there are five specific competencies that determine the strength of one's intra-personal skills. These five competencies (listed below) are presumed to have an effect on a learner's experience of negative learning emotions.

1. Emotional Self-Awareness

A learner has emotional self-awareness when: (1) s/he recognises the negative emotions towards learning; and (2) the learner is then able to identify the circumstances that led to those emotions.

What this means is that unless you are able to recognise the negative emotions you have towards learning, you will probably have a tough time dealing with them. As a result, you are likely to feel both confused and moody at the same time, without understanding why. Therefore, it is important that you thoroughly identify the emotions that caused you to feel moody or unmotivated about your studies. After identifying how you feel, you will be better placed to ascertain the circumstances - e.g., personal, social, study-related, or work-related issues - that led you to experience negative emotions towards your studies.

2. Assertiveness

After achieving emotional self-awareness, the learner is required to react assertively to the sources of the negative emotions instead of avoiding them. This requires you to work vigorously and constructively to resolving the issues that caused you to experience those negative emotions, which would in turn allow you to reduce or overcome your negative emotions.

3. Independence

While being assertive can be helpful to the learner in dealing with the sources of negative emotions, it is not always effective. As such, as a learner, you should learn to be emotionally self-reliant. That is, you should aim to



free yourself from being emotionally dependant on people or issues that caused you to have those negative emotions in the first place

To achieve a certain level of emotional independence, you will need to rationalise and re-evaluate the relevance and importance of these people or issues that caused you to have those negative emotions. If the rationalisation process is successful, the relevance and importance of those issues will be lessened. Although the issues may not be completely resolved at that point in time, the intensity of the negative emotions that came with these issues will likely be reduced. This will help create more mental space, allowing you to better focus on your studies.

4. Self-Regard

A learner who is emotionally self-aware, assertive and independent can further strengthen his or her intra-personal skills through high self-regard. Learners with high self-regard recognise that no one is perfect and that they should accept and to like themselves for who they are, in spite of the flaws they may have.

5. Self Actualisation

The final step to improving one's intra-personal skills is accomplished when the learner is able to see the whole learning process as the fulfilment of his or her potential and personal goals, and not view his or her learning process as being dictated by institutional, societal and social norms and values. This is known as self actualisation. So if you are able to see your studies as a means to attaining your potential and personal goals, your learning would be less affected by your emotions.

From the description of these five competencies above, you might want to do a self-appraisal of your own intra-personal skills, especially if you feel that your academic performance has been compromised due to the negative emotions you have been experiencing. However, we also need to acknowledge that every learner is unique in the way s/he is affected by negative learning emotions. Therefore, as a learner, you have to make your own informed evaluation of your own internal self and to adjust your coping strategies accordingly to deal with any negative emotions you may have towards your studies.

References

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