

PRINCIPLES OF EMOTIONAL HEALING & MATURITY
in *Applied Thomistic Psychology*

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1. An **emotion** is a special kind of **feeling** which energizes and informs our actions, and which strengthens our wills to choose or attain what is good and to avoid what is not good (or evil) for us.

2. Emotions are "**PSYCHIC MOTORS**," psychological and physical reactions or arousals to the world *around* us and *within* us, which cause us to be moved or which move us to act.

BASIC HUMAN EMOTIONS

I. *Pleasure/Humane/Being/Concupiscible*

<u>"Good"</u>	<u>"Evil"</u>
Love	Hate
Desire	Aversion
Joy	Sadness

II. *Assertive/Utilitarian/Doing/Irascible*

<u>"Useful"</u>	<u>"Harmful"</u>
Hope	Courage
Despair	Fear
Anger	

3. We are *moved* by what we perceive or judge as "good" (LOVE) or "evil", i.e., not good or preferable (HATE); as "worth having" (DESIRE) or "avoiding" (AVERSION); and as "having received a good" or "having avoided an evil" (JOY) and for having "lost a good" or "suffered evil" (SADNESS). These are the pleasure ("*concupiscible*"), happiness or humane emotions that facilitate our *being*.

4. We are *moved* to respond to what we perceive as "useful" (HOPE) or "harmful" (COURAGE); as "difficult to attain" (DESPAIR) or "difficult to avoid" (FEAR); and as "unjust" (ANGER). These are the assertive ("*irascible*") or utilitarian emotions that facilitate our doing, our taking *effective action*.

5. *All* of our emotions are good and necessary for healthy, virtuous living. There are no "bad" emotions, but we may act "badly" under their influence.

6. Since every emotion is based on a judgment of what is good or bad, or helpful or harmful, emotions may be "true" or "false" depending on whether our judgment is correct or not. Every emotion has a *voice* which reveals about what is *subjectively* true about how we perceive or intuit the world.

7. For psychologically healthy, mature living, we need to learn to be comfortable *feeling* both the psychological arousal and the simultaneous physical changes that are part of our emotions.

8. Our emotions have an innate need to be guided by our reason and to be subordinate to our will. Over time and with the proper efforts, even immature or inordinate emotions can be led to cooperate with what we

know and choose is right and best.

9. Emotions must be allowed to grow to full capacity and to become integrated with and subordinate to our reason and will.

10. *Emotional maturity* occurs gradually, as we learn from our successes and mistakes, WHETHER, WHEN and HOW to express or gratify our emotions in particular situations.

11. In order to develop maturely, our emotions need to be "educated" through the affirming presence and example of emotionally mature adults, especially our parents and other regular caretakers.

12. Our emotions need to be *felt* but do not need to be expressed or gratified for our happiness. Rational guidance and restraint of emotions is *not* emotional repression.

13. If we *suppress* (intentionally, consciously put out of our awareness) or *repress* (unconsciously, habitually put out of our awareness) the feeling of an emotion (e.g., anger or sexual desire), the suppressed/repressed emotion remains active but in a state less responsive or sometimes non-responsive to our will.

*** **Repressive "Neuroses"**- emotional disorders caused by repression of one or more emotions by the emotions of fear/despair (*fear repressive disorder*) or hope/courage (*energy repressive disorder*). "Energy" emotions may also "camouflage" or cover a fear repressive disorder.

14. Suppressed or repressed emotions ought never to be forced into awareness but simply allowed to be felt gradually. Choices about whether, when and how to express or gratify them should be made only after we are comfortable feeling them, and are willing and able to practice doing so and to learn from our successes and mistakes.

*****Mortification Therapy** for the repressing emotions allows the repressed emotions to emerge.

15. Emotions make good servants but poor "masters," "enemies" or "slaves."

16. To mature emotionally, each person must experience being affirmed. **Affirmation** is the fundamental human need for being strengthened (confirmed) emotionally, intellectually and morally and for recognizing and "*feeling*" our own goodness, worth, significance, value through the presence, appearance and actions of significant others, particularly our parents. Being affirmed leads to one's second or *psychic birth*.

17. *Being affirmed*: **a)** involves experiencing that we are loved and lovable for our *being*, for who we are (instead of for what we do, achieve or produce). **b)** requires the timely, gentle, and firm presentation of mature emotions, and intellectual and moral truths. **c)** results essentially from someone else *being* affirming toward/with us (i.e., recognizing and being moved by our goodness, truth and beauty) vs. by someone else's attempts to "affirm" us with actions, gestures or words. *Acting* is secondary to *being* affirming.

The ABC's of Affirmation (Affirming Living):

Attentive presence → Being moved → Communion → (Doing/Action ?)

Awareness → Feeling → Revealing → (Expressing ?)

18. Common causes of being *un-/under-/dis-affirmed* (and related emotional immaturity) include:

1. Favoritism, over indulgence, “spoiling” - giving goods prematurely or excessively.
2. Perfectionistic demands or contingent love.
3. Illegitimacy, desertion, divorce by one’s parents.
4. Being neglected or ignored because someone is physically or emotionally unavailable.
5. Physical or emotional aggression.
6. Forcing or not allowing someone to experience, show or express an emotion.
7. Premature, excessive, unreasonable, or permissive guidance.
8. Hasty or superficial compliments or encouragement.
9. Moral relativism and intellectual skepticism about objective truth.
10. Insensitivity to *or* excessive avoidance of hurting another's feelings.
11. Insincere or selfish gestures or techniques of “pseudo-affirmation” or “love.”
12. *Pseudo-self-affirmation*: self-defeating attempts by ourselves or others to feel affirmed.

19. Common **pseudo-self-affirming** behaviors may include:

1. Amassing *money* or material *possessions*.
2. Obtaining academic *degrees* or professional *credentials*.
3. Seeking inordinate professional or occupational success.
4. Attaining *fame* or *prestige*, or associating with famous people.
5. Gaining *power* through positions of authority.
6. *Unchaste* and *promiscuous* sexual behavior.
7. *Alcohol* and other *substance abuse*.
8. Other *obsessive-compulsive* habits (eating disorders, gambling, workaholism...).
9. Unreasonable deprivation *or* indulgence of self or others with pleasurable, delightful goods or experiences.
10. Harboring resentment and emotional or physical aggression *or* withdrawal.

20. Behaviors typical of **affirming living** (and ways of being open to being affirmed) include:

1. Living more patiently, calmly, unhurriedly.
2. Prayer, meditation, contemplation.
3. Spending enough *time* to be present, attentive, and open to others and to ourselves.
4. Noticing, acknowledging and remembering what is good, true and beautiful.

5. Giving and accepting gratitude and appropriate praise.
6. Giving and accepting *timely* encouragement, advice and guidance.
7. Encouraging youngsters to *recognize* and *feel* all of their emotions.
8. Teaching through example and words the reasonable, moral, timely and assertive expression and gratification of our feelings and emotions.
9. Self-restraining love.
10. Balancing "soft" (accepting) love with "hard" (challenging) love.
11. Cooperating and complying with due authority and encouraging others to do so.
12. As charity- toward self and other- and wisdom allow, avoiding or leaving the presence of those who disaffirm us.
13. Understanding and resolving resentment toward others- due to their non-, under- or dis-affirming behaviors- through emotional expression and/or forgiveness, as appropriate.
14. Being co-affirmers with God of everyone who touches our lives, including our selves.

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