

5 myths about depression

MYTH 1:

Hard Work Beats Depression

Depression affects nearly one in six people at some point in their lives, so folk remedies and half-truths about this common illness abound. One such idea: throw yourself into work and you'll feel better. For a mild case of the blues, this may indeed help, but depression is a different animal. Overworking can actually be a sign of clinical depression, especially in men.

MYTH 2:

It's Not a Real Illness

Depression is a serious medical condition - and the top cause of disability in adults. But it's still confused with ordinary sadness. Biological evidence of the illness comes from studies of genetics, hormones, nerve cell receptors, and brain functioning. Nerve circuits in brain areas that regulate mood appear to function abnormally in depression.

MYTH 3:

Depression is always triggered by a traumatic event

A range of factors can increase the risk of developing depression, including traumatic events such as major life changes, grief, and accidents. However, traumatic events are a risk factor or potential trigger of depression, not the root cause of it. Also, not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will develop depression. The condition can also develop when everything in someone's life seems to be going OK.

MYTH 4:

Men do not develop depression

Cultural and societal stereotypes have maintained the myth that men

do not or should not develop depression. As a result of this, many people overlooked male depression for a long time.

Although depression seems to affect women more frequently than men, men do experience it, even if some of the symptoms may be different.

Men might seem angry or aggressive rather than sad, and they may also engage in high risk activities. Men also tend to be less open to talking about their feelings and therefore may be less likely to seek help.

Men with symptoms of depression should speak with a doctor or mental health professional as soon as possible to prevent serious complications. Men are also more likely than women to die by suicide associated with depression.

MYTH 5:

Taking antidepressants is a lifetime commitment

It is true that some people with depression will take antidepressants for many years in order to manage their symptoms, but doctors very rarely prescribe antidepressants for life.

It typically takes around 2–4 weeks for antidepressants to begin to work. It is important to point out that it is not safe for people taking antidepressants to suddenly stop taking them. This is due to the risk of withdrawal side effects associated with certain medications.

Most people make a plan with their doctor or mental health professional to slowly start reducing their dosage. This tapering off method is common practice once a person's symptoms have resolved.

Usually, this would be after taking the medication for around 6–12 months.

5 myths about suicide

MYTH: SUICIDE ONLY AFFECTS INDIVIDUALS WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION.

FACT: Depression affects nearly one in six people at some point in their lives, so folk remedies and half-truths about this common illness abound. One such idea: throw yourself into work and you'll feel better. For a mild case of the blues, this may indeed help, but depression is a different animal. Overworking can actually be a sign of clinical depression, especially in men.

MYTH: ONCE AN INDIVIDUAL IS SUICIDAL, HE OR SHE WILL ALWAYS REMAIN SUICIDAL.

FACT: Active suicidal ideation is often short-term and situation-specific. Studies have shown that approximately 54% of individuals who have died by suicide did not have a diagnosable mental health disorder. And for those with mental illness, the proper treatment can help to reduce symptoms.

The act of suicide is often an attempt to control deep, painful emotions and thoughts an individual is experiencing. Once these thoughts dissipate, so will the suicidal ideation. While suicidal thoughts can return, they are not permanent. An individual with suicidal thoughts and attempts can live a long, successful life.

MYTH: MOST SUICIDES HAPPEN SUDDENLY WITHOUT WARNING.

FACT: Warning signs — verbally or behaviorally — precede most su-

icides. Therefore, it's important to learn and understand the warnings signs associated with suicide. Many individuals who are suicidal may only show warning signs to those closest to them. These loved ones may not recognize what's going on, which is how it may seem like the suicide was sudden or without warning.

MYTH: PEOPLE WHO DIE BY SUICIDE ARE SELFISH AND TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT.

FACT: Typically, people do not die by suicide because they do not want to live—people die by suicide because they want to end their suffering. These individuals are suffering so deeply that they feel helpless and hopeless. Individuals who experience suicidal ideations do not do so by choice. They are not simply, “thinking of themselves”, but rather they are going through a very serious mental health symptom due to either mental illness or a difficult life situation.

MYTH: TALKING ABOUT SUICIDE WILL LEAD TO AND ENCOURAGE SUICIDE.

FACT: There is a widespread stigma associated with suicide and as a result, many people are afraid to speak about it. Talking about suicide not only reduces the stigma, but also allows individuals to seek help, rethink their opinions and share their story with others. We all need to talk more about suicide.

Debunking these common myths about suicide can hopefully allow individuals to look at suicide from a different angle—one of understanding and compassion for an individual who is internally struggling. Maybe they are struggling with a mental illness or maybe they are under extreme pressure and do not have healthy coping skills or a strong support system.

As a society, we should not be afraid to speak up about suicide, to speak up about mental illness or to seek out treatment for an individual who is in need. Eliminating the stigma starts by understanding why suicide occurs and advocating for mental health awareness within our communities.

Checklist:

15 signs that you need psychological help

01 SLEEP. Sleeping too much or too little than your usual sleep.

02 ANGER. When you feel strong anger towards things or people but later you realize that your response to the situation was out of proportion, and this happens repeatedly.

03 EATING PATTERNS. Sudden overeating or under eating phases, or random changes in eating timetable.

04 ROUGH PATCH. You find yourself making more and more mistakes that you normally wouldn't, or are going through 'bad day' for many days at a stretch where you are finding it hard to accomplish normal day to day tasks

05 DIFFICULTY IN FOCUSING. This is a common and normal occurrence in most people in short bursts, usually caused by fatigue or stress or hunger or even hormonal changes like during menopause and pregnancy, sometimes it can also be as a side-effect to medication. But it is a particular cause of concern if the degree is high or the duration is long without any specific obvious cause.

06 DEPRESSION OR FEELING OF SADNESS OR CONSISTENT LACK OF MOTIVATION.

Research shows that normal emotional turbulence gets better with time but if you are not able to get away from it or the emotion is heavier than what you would deem appropriate given the situation you are in, could be an indication of an underlying illness. You should especially be careful if the emotions last longer than 2 weeks.

07 EMOTIONAL NUMBNESS. Emotional Numbness is described as an emotionless state, feeling isolated or a barrier between you and life in general. It becomes difficult to engage in conversations or being a part of a group. It can also present itself as if you are living life on auto-pilot.

08 SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL. Some personal time is usually good for your mental health. But if you find yourself consistently cancelling plans of being with others, or make

excuses to get away from people, not because you don't like them but just because you don't feel like it.

09 MOOD SWINGS. Normally emotions change every other day or depending upon the situation, but if you find yourself in a swing of mood that is extreme or unwarranted and random, then this needs to be looked at.

10 WORRIED THOUGHT PROCESS. If you find yourself worrying about something, well in itself it is normal, but if you can't stop yourself and it is not a rare occurrence, but rather something that happens on and off without any specific significant cause that could deem the worry appropriate.

11 PANIC ATTACKS. The panic attack triggers your body's fight-or-flight response. When this happens without a genuine cause, that is when it becomes a sign of worry. This is one sign that should not be ignored when you have panic attacks (plural), you should visit a Mental Health Professional.

12 SUBSTANCE ABUSE. Casual consumption of substance is not of worry till you start abusing them.

13 DELUSIONS. Delusions are immovable beliefs that not real or based on reality. These beliefs that could be true but aren't, they aren't bizarre, they lie in the realm of reality but are not possible for the person having these thoughts.

14 HALLUCINATIONS. Hallucinations, on the other hand, are sensory experiences, that are merely created by your own mind. These experiences could auditory, visual, olfactory, or taste or even sense of touch.

15 SELF-HARM OR SUICIDAL THOUGHTS. This is one of the serious signs where you should visit a Mental Health Professional. The feeling can get overwhelming and might lead to an act of self-harm. After executing the thought, the emotion of guilt or shame might appear, making them feel like they made a mistake but that won't stop it from happening again.

Helping Someone with Depression

Signs that someone may be depressed

Depression has lots of possible symptoms. You may notice that someone:

- has lost interest in doing things they normally enjoy
- seems to be feeling down or hopeless
- has slower speech and movements or is more fidgety and restless than usual
- feels tired or doesn't have much energy
- is overeating or has lost their appetite
- is sleeping more than usual or isn't able to sleep
- has trouble concentrating on everyday things, such as watching TV or reading the paper

Encourage treatment

All too often, people feel ashamed about their depression and mistakenly believe they should be able to overcome it with willpower alone. With the right treatment approach, the person you care about can get better.

Here's what you can do to help:

- Talk to the person about what you've noticed and why you're concerned.
- Explain that depression is a medical condition, not a personal flaw or weakness — and that it usually gets better with treatment.
- Suggest seeking help from a professional — a medical doctor or a mental health provider, such as a licensed counselor or psychologist.
- Offer to help prepare a list of questions to discuss in an initial appointment with a doctor or mental health provider.

Provide support

Remember that your loved one's depression isn't anyone's fault. You can't fix the person's depression — but your support and understanding can help.

- Be willing to listen. Let your friend know that you want to understand how he or she feels. When the person wants to talk, listen carefully, but avoid giving advice or opinions or making judgments. Just listening and being understanding can be a powerful healing tool.
- Give positive reinforcement. People with depression may judge themselves harshly and find fault with everything they do. Remind your friend about his or her positive qualities and how much the person means to you and others.
- Offer assistance. Your relative or friend may not be able to take care of certain tasks well. Give suggestions about specific tasks you'd be willing to do, or ask if there is a particular task that you could take on.
- Help create a low-stress environment. Creating a regular routine may help a person with depression feel more in control. Offer to make a schedule for meals, medication, physical activity and sleep, and help organize household chores.
- Make plans together. Ask your loved one to join you on a walk, see a movie with you, or work with you on a hobby or other activity he or she previously enjoyed. But don't try to force the person into doing something.

What you can do for yourself:

- Learn about depression.
- Take care of yourself. Supporting someone with depression isn't easy.
- Finally, be patient. Depression symptoms do improve with treatment, but it can take time.

Benefits of meditation

Now neuroscientists are finding more and more evidence that meditation is an effective way to improve your well-being.

When is meditation effective?

REDUCE STRESS. A study of over 3,500 people confirmed that different meditation techniques can help manage stress. Another study, lasting eight weeks, showed that mindfulness techniques reduced the body's response to stress. In a study of 1,300 people, meditation was found to be especially helpful for people with high levels of stress.

Meditation can help relieve stress-related disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

CONTROLLING ANXIETY. An eight-week study of the effects of meditation showed that participants' feelings of anxiety were reduced. This effect was confirmed in a large study of 2,466 people.

Meditation also helps to cope with the manifestations of anxiety disorders — phobia, social anxiety, paranoid thoughts and panic attacks.

IMPROVE ATTENTION. Even a little meditation experience helps you focus better — just four days are enough to improve your concentration. What's more, mindfulness practices help stop brain activity associated with restless wandering thoughts and poor attention.

IMPROVE SLEEP. Oftentimes, you cannot fall asleep due to many different thoughts or concerns. Meditation can help you deal with them, relieve tension, and calm down. The group of study participants who practiced meditation fell asleep faster and slept longer than non-meditators.

DEAL WITH PAIN. One large study looked at the effects of meditation in 3,500 participants. It turned out that meditation is associated with a decrease in complaints of chronic or coming pain.

Another study using MRI found that meditating patients had increased activity in the region of the brain that controls pain. Also, these patients reported less pain sensitivity.

In each of these studies, meditators and non-meditators experienced pain for the same reasons. But meditators dealt with pain better and felt less pain.

Everyday ways to practice meditation

BREATHE DEEPLY. This technique is good for beginners because breathing is a natural function.

FOCUS ALL YOUR ATTENTION ON YOUR BREATHING. Concentrate on feeling and listening as you inhale and exhale through your nostrils. Breathe deeply and slowly. When your attention wanders, gently return your focus to your breathing.

SCAN YOUR BODY. When using this technique, focus attention on different parts of your body.

WALK AND MEDITATE. Combining a walk with meditation is an efficient and healthy way to relax. When you use this method, slow down your walking pace so that you can focus on each movement of your legs or feet. Concentrate on your legs and feet, repeating action words in your mind such as “lifting”, “moving” and “placing” as you lift each foot, move your leg forward and place your foot on the ground.

5 steps to mental wellbeing

Evidence suggests there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

01 Connect with other people

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth;
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences;
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others.

02 Be physically active

Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness. Evidence also shows it can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- raising your self-esteem;
- helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them;
- causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood.

03 Learn new skills

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem;
- helping you to build a sense of purpose;
- helping you to connect with others.

Even if you feel like you do not have enough time, or you may not need to learn new things, there are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life.

04 Give to others

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- creating positive feelings and a sense of reward;
- giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth;
- helping you connect with other people;
- it could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.

05 Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.

Some people call this awareness “mindfulness”. Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

Stress:

Why It's Not Always a Bad Thing

Is stress always dangerous?

For the first time the definition of the word “stress” was given by the doctor Hans Selye. This is the body’s response – “fight or flight” – to any impact that requires response or adaptation. It was considered as the cause of the depletion of the body and, as a result, disease. Selye’s work has extended an attitude towards stress as a dangerous condition.

Indeed, scientific evidence suggests that extreme or traumatic stress is harmful to health. But Selye’s definition of stress includes almost any event, not just trauma and violence.

Besides “fight or flight”, there are several types of reactions. Each of them activates its own biological mechanisms that trigger useful behavioral strategies.

What are the benefits of stress?

GIVES STRENGTH TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULTIES.

If your life is not threatened in a moment of stress, your body and brain switch to a goal-seeking response.

This reaction is similar to “fight or flight”, but different in that the person feels focused, not fear. The level of the stress hormone dehydroepiandrosterone is also increased, which helps to recover faster and absorb useful experiences.

You become more alert and ready for action. The liver releases lipids and sugars into the blood, which serve as fuel. Breathing deepens, heart rate accelerates, nutrients flow faster to muscles and brain. The stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol help the muscles and brain use this energy more efficiently. As a result, you are ready to overcome any obstacles.

In addition to physical strength, the brain processes signals from the senses faster. The person becomes focused. Less important tasks temporarily become irrelevant.

HELPS COMMUNICATION AND STIMULATES SOCIAL CONNECTIONS.

The stress response does more than provide energy. She makes you connect with other people. The pituitary gland at this time releases oxytocin, which makes the brain more receptive to social contacts. You seek support and strengthen the bonds that matter to you.

Scientists call this a nurturing and friendship reaction. Unlike “fight or flight”, this response motivates you to protect those you care about and get support.

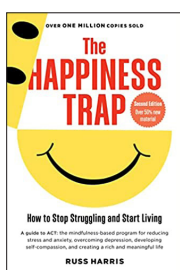
HELPS TO LEARN AND DEVELOP.

The last stage of stress is recovery. During the recovery process, dehydroepiandrosterone and neuronal growth factor, a protein that stimulates the activity and development of neurons, increase neuroplasticity. Therefore, the brain learns the right lessons from the stressful experience.

People who release more hormones during stress recover faster and with fewer consequences. For example, women who had higher blood cortisol levels recovered faster after rape.

In the first few hours, the brain reconfigures, memorizing and assimilating the experience. At this time, stress hormones are more actively produced in the areas of the brain responsible for learning and memory. The brain becomes more flexible and can rebuild based on the experience gained.

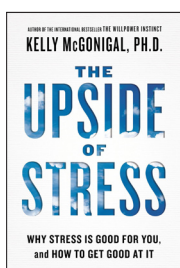
5 Psychology Books To Change Your Life



R. HARRIS
«THE HAPPINESS TRAP: HOW TO STOP STRUGGLING AND START LIVING: A GUIDE TO ACT»

The techniques presented in The Happiness Trap will help readers to:

- Reduce stress and worry;
- Handle painful feelings and thoughts more effectively;
- Break self-defeating habits;
- Overcome insecurity and self-doubt;
- Create a rich, full and meaningful life.



K. MCGONIGAL
«THE UPSIDE OF STRESS: WHY STRESS

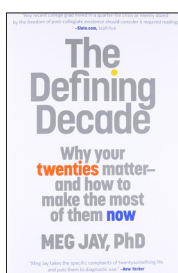
IS GOOD FOR YOU, AND HOW TO GET GOOD AT IT»

McGonigal shows readers how to cultivate a mindset that embraces stress, and activate the brain's natural ability to learn from challenging experiences. Both practical and life-changing, The Upside of Stress is not a guide to getting rid of stress, but a toolkit for getting better at it — by understanding, accepting, and leveraging it to your advantage.



R.L. LEAHY
«ANXIETY FREE: UNRAVEL YOUR FEARS BEFORE THEY UNRAVEL YOU»

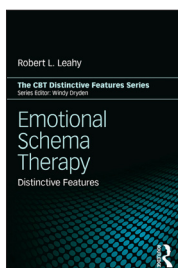
Anxiety Free explores how preprogrammed rules of reaction, which are a product of the evolutionary process, keep us in the grip of anxiety. For each anxiety disorder, Leahy shows how our fears and unchallenged assumptions stand in the way of our freedom. Using Leahy's methods, which are based on the best psychological treatments available, you will be able to work toward a life free from the apprehension, tension, and avoidance associated with anxiety.



M. JAY
«DEFINING DECADE: WHY YOUR TWENTIES MATTER AND HOW TO MAKE THE

MOST OF THEM NOW»

Dr. Meg Jay, a clinical psychologist, argues that twentysomethings have been caught in a swirl of hype and misinformation, much of which has trivialized what is actually the most defining decade of adulthood. The result is a read that provides the tools necessary to make the most of your twenties, and shows us how work, relationships, personality, social networks, identity, and even the brain can change more during this decade than at any other time in adulthood—if we use the time wisely.



R.L. LEAHY
«EMOTIONAL SCHEMA THERAPY»

This book presents innovative tools for helping patients to understand their emotional schemas — such as the conviction that painful feelings are unbearable, shameful, or will last indefinitely — and develop new ways of accepting and coping with affective experience.

10 Ways to Protect Yourself from Toxic People

Ways to protect yourself

AVOID PLAYING INTO THEIR REALITY. Some people have a tendency to see themselves as the victim in every situation. You might feel tempted to nod and smile in order to prevent an angry outburst. This might feel like the safest option, but it can also encourage them to see you as a supporter.

Try respectful disagreement instead. You might say, “I had a different take on the situation”, and describe what really happened. Stick to the facts, without making accusations.

DON'T GET DRAWN IN. The person might constantly complain about others, always have a new story about unfair treatment, or even accuse you of wronging them or not caring about their needs.

Resist the urge to jump on the complaining train with them or defend yourself against accusations. Instead, respond with a simple, “I’m sorry you feel that way”, and leave it at that.

PAY ATTENTION TO HOW THEY MAKE YOU FEEL. Sometimes simply becoming more aware of how someone’s toxic behavior affects you can help you better navigate interactions with them.

Ask yourself if put-downs, lies, or other types of emotional and verbal abuse characterize most of your interactions.

TALK TO THEM ABOUT THEIR BEHAVIOR. An open conversation may help them realize this behavior is unacceptable. To keep things neutral, try to stick to “I statements”, which feel less accusatory for the other person, and set boundaries that work for you.



KEY SIGNS OF TOXICITY

Self-absorption or self-centeredness.
Manipulation and other emotional abuse.
Dishonesty and deceit.
Difficulty offering compassion to others.
A tendency to create drama or conflict.

Here are some examples of this in action: “I value trust in friendship, so I can’t continue this friendship if you lie to me again”.

PUT YOURSELF FIRST. Maybe the person in question “desperately needs” your help to get them out of a bind — every time you see them. You might value your relationship with this person, but don’t offer support at the risk of your own well-being.

Taking care of yourself involves making sure you have enough emotional energy to meet your own needs. This may not happen when you’re giving everything to someone who doesn’t offer anything in return.

REMEMBER, YOU AREN'T AT FAULT. Toxic behavior can make you feel like you did something wrong, even when you know you didn't.

But remind yourself their behavior has nothing to do with you. Restate your boundaries and try not to take their spite personally. Take deep breaths to calm yourself or mindfully acknowledge their words so you can let them go without being affected.

LIMIT YOUR TIME TOGETHER. Do you dread seeing a particular person? Feel anxious or stressed



10 Ways to Protect Yourself from Toxic People

beforehand? Take these feelings as a sign you may want to see them less.

People who behave toxically tend to focus on themselves and what they want. They might blame you or other people for any problems they have and show little interest in your feelings or needs. This can make spending time with them unpleasant.

If you're dealing with someone who picks fights with you or repeatedly pushes your boundaries, consider scaling back the amount of time you spend with them.

HAVE AN EXIT STRATEGY. If you're stuck in a toxic conversation and don't see an easy way out, you might worry that leaving seems rude. But it's entirely possible to leave politely. If it helps, consider coming up with a few go-to lines ahead of time that you can pull out as needed.

Try something like, "I'm sorry, but I have to stop you. I've got a lot of work, so I can't chat right now".

ENCOURAGE THEM TO GET HELP. It's often difficult to understand why people behave in toxic ways. But it might help to consider that they might be dealing with some personal challenges that are causing them to lash out. This doesn't excuse problematic behavior, but it can help explain it.

If you have a close relationship with someone who behaves in a toxic way, consider pointing out some harmful behaviors and explaining how they affect others. If they seem receptive, encourage them to talk to a therapist about why they act the way they do.

DON'T GET PERSONAL. Toxic behavior can involve gossiping, oversharing personal details, or using personal information to provoke reactions.

If you know someone who does these things, keep your conversations light and insignificant. Shut down attempts at prying or oversharing with, "Actually, I prefer not to talk about my relationship at work".

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence helps you build stronger relationships, succeed at school and work, and achieve your career and personal goals. It can also help you to connect with your feelings, turn intention into action, and make informed decisions about what matters most to you.

Emotional intelligence is commonly defined by four attributes:

- **Self-management** – You're able to control impulsive feelings and behaviors, manage your emotions in healthy ways, take initiative, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances.
- **Self-awareness** – You recognize your own emotions and how they affect your thoughts and behavior. You know your strengths and weaknesses, and have self-confidence.
- **Social awareness** – You have empathy. You can understand the emotions, needs, and concerns of other people, pick up on emotional cues, feel comfortable socially, and recognize the power dynamics in a group or organization.
- **Relationship management** – You know how to develop and maintain good relationships, communicate clearly, inspire and influence others, work well in a team, and manage conflict.

Why is emotional intelligence so important?

Intellectual ability or your intelligence quotient (IQ) isn't enough on its own to achieve success in life. Yes, your IQ can help you get into college, but it's your EQ that will help you manage the stress and emotions when facing your final exams. IQ and EQ exist in tandem and are most effective when they build off one another.



WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OR EQ?

Emotional intelligence (otherwise known as emotional quotient or EQ) is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict.

Emotional intelligence affects:

- **Your performance at school or work.**

High emotional intelligence can help you navigate the social complexities of the workplace, lead and motivate others, and excel in your career.

- **Your physical health.**

If you're unable to manage your emotions, you are probably not managing your stress either. This can lead to serious health problems. Uncontrolled stress raises blood pressure, suppresses the immune system, increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes, contributes to infertility, and speeds up the aging process.

- **Your mental health.**

Uncontrolled emotions and stress can also impact your mental health, making you vulnerable to anxiety and depression. If you are unable to understand, get comfortable with, or manage your emotions, you'll also struggle to form strong relationships. This in turn can leave you feeling lonely and isolated and further exacerbate any mental health problems.

- **Your relationships.**

By understanding your emotions and how to control them, you're better



The Importance of Emotional Intelligence

able to express how you feel and understand how others are feeling. This allows you to communicate more effectively and forge stronger relationships, both at work and in your personal life.

• **Your social intelligence.**

Being in tune with your emotions serves a social purpose, connecting you to other people and the world around you. Social intelligence enables you to recognize friend from foe, measure another person's interest in you, reduce stress, balance your nervous system through social communication, and feel loved and happy.

How to start developing emotional intelligence?

Being able to connect to your emotions—having a moment-to-moment connection with your changing emotional experience—is the key to understanding how emotion influences your thoughts and actions.

Do you experience feelings that flow, encountering one emotion after another as your experiences change from moment to moment?

Are your emotions accompanied by physical sensations that you experience in places like your stomach, throat, or chest?

Do you experience individual feelings and emotions, such as anger, sadness, fear, and joy, each of which is evident in subtle facial expressions?

Can you experience intense feelings that are strong enough to capture both your attention and that of others?

Do you pay attention to your emotions? Do they factor into your decision making?

If any of these experiences are unfamiliar, you may have “turned down” or “turned off” your emotions. In or-

der to build EQ — and become emotionally healthy — you must reconnect to your core emotions, accept them, and become comfortable with them. You can achieve this through the practice of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment—and without judgment. The cultivation of mindfulness has roots in Buddhism, but most religions include some type of similar prayer or meditation technique. Mindfulness helps shift your preoccupation with thought toward an appreciation of the moment, your physical and emotional sensations, and brings a larger perspective on life. Mindfulness calms and focuses you, making you more self-aware in the process.