Climbing the Ladder of Emotions

Our emotions give us clues to our thoughts and feelings. The lower you feel, the more out of alignment your thoughts and beliefs. Once you are able to identify the cognitive distortions and self-defeating beliefs in a thought, you can move onto the next step: climbing the emotional ladder.

Process:

1. Identify where you are on the emotional scale. You may be feeling many things at once. If this is the case, identify the lowest feeling and start from that place on the ladder. In the For example, you could be feeling frustrated, overwhelmed and powerless. In this case you would start at #22 as powerless is the lowest feeling.

2. Next, identify the thought that support this place on the ladder. For example, “I feel powerless because I don’t know if I have the skills to do the job.”

3. Then identify how many rungs (1-4) you want to climb with your next thought. You can climb one rung or reach up to four rungs up the ladder. Reaching beyond four rungs may be too far of a reach.

4. Identify a thought to help you climb the ladder using the “I feel (emotion) because (reason)” to help you reach this rung. For example, if I want to climb two rungs from powerless, I would be at jealously. “I feel jealous because Joan seems to have no problem doing the job.”

5. Check in with yourself. Are you securely on this rung? If you don’t believe the thought then try again.

   a. If you aren’t securely on this emotional rung, then you can come down the emotional scale and try again. For example, try shooting for insecurity before attempting to get to the jealously rung.

   b. If you are securely on this rung, then keep climbing. To keep climbing, go to step three of this process and keep going.

Things to consider:

- In some situations, boredom is the highest you may be able to climb. For example, if you broke your arm and are feeling discouraged, you may not be able to feel joy but you can certainly get to boredom.

- Remember the connection: Beliefs → Thoughts → Feelings → Experiences

- Think positive. You may be concerned that you didn’t climb enough rungs. This is okay. Contentment is just four rungs away from overwhelmed. Any climbing you can do puts you in a better place.

- This takes practice. Please don’t expect yourself to be a master at this exercise.

- Sometimes it is helpful to talk to someone else about the situation so you can get alternative perspectives. If you are having difficulty climbing, talk to a trusted friend or your therapist about the situation and then try climbing again.

- Use the worksheet on the next page or do this exercise on a separate page. It is helpful to write it out when you are first practicing this tool. As you become more skilled, you can do this without paper.

- The emotional scale is also available on a business card. If this would be helpful, ask Teresa for the wallet sized scale.

The list is from “Ask and It is Given” by Esther and Jerry Hicks
Handout compiled by Teresa Kleffner, MSW, LCSW. St. Louis Counseling and Wellness. www.stlcw.com
Climbing the Ladder of Emotions - Worksheet

1. I feel (circle one) Joy/Knowledge/Freedom/Love/Appreciation because _________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

2. I feel Passion because _____________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

3. I feel (circle one) Enthusiasm/Eagerness/Happiness because ________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________________________________

4. I feel (circle one) Positive Expectation/Belief because _______________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________________________________

5. I feel Optimism because ___________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________________________________

6. I feel Hopefulness because __________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________________________________

7. I feel Contentment because __________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________________________________

8. I feel Boredom because _____________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________________________________

9. I feel Pessimism because ___________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________________________________

10. Frustration/Irritation/Impatience because ___________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

11. I feel Overwhelmed because __________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

12. I feel Disappointment because ______________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

13. I feel Doubt because _______________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

14. I feel Worry because _______________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

15. I feel Blame because _______________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

16. I feel Discouragement because ______________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

17. I feel Anger because _______________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

18. I feel Revenge because _____________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

19. I feel (circle one) Hatred/Rage because ______________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

20. I feel Jealousy because _____________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

21. I feel (circle one) Insecurity/Guilt/Unworthiness because_____________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

22. I feel (circle one) Fear/Grief/Depression/Despair/Powerlessness because ______________________
    _________________________________________________________________________________________

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