



# Managing emotions



Experiencing strong emotions is a normal part of life. However we may feel overwhelmed when intense feelings such as anger, sadness and anxiety arise.

Although we cannot avoid experiencing these feelings, we can develop ways of managing them. Strategies that help us to pause and respond rather than automatically react can be helpful.

Identifying and naming what you are feeling can help you to understand your emotions better and differentiate between different feeling states.



## Understand why you are feeling the way you feel

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Try to think about the purpose of these feelings and emotions. For example, if you are feeling angry, see if you can identify what is driving the anger; often it can reflect some form of hurt or perceived rejection or disappointment. Paying attention to the following may help you to get some understand of why you might be feeling the way you do.

- Name the event that prompted the emotion – e.g. the way my friend looked at me
- Notice how you interpreted the situation – e.g. she looked at me in a funny way, therefore, she must be angry with me
- Notice some of the physical sensations that you are experiencing – e.g. tension in the shoulders, heart racing, feeling hot, or a burning sensation in the face
- Notice how you behave in response to feeling angry – e.g. speak to my friend rudely or dismissively
- Notice how others respond to you in the after-effects of your emotions – e.g. my friend replies aggressively and then an argument begins, or he/she withdraws and distances themselves from me

Remember that some emotions are reactions to events in your environment e.g. anger at being criticised, while other emotions are primarily reactions to your own thoughts or feelings e.g. fear of having a panic attack.

Rather than beat yourself up about how you are feeling, accept your emotions as part of who you are. Be curious about what you are experiencing rather than judging your feelings as good or bad. Take some time out. When feeling angry or attacked, it is common to say the first thing that comes into your head. Slow down, listen to the other person, and where possible, think through what you would like to say before responding. You may need time on your own before doing this.

Looking after yourself may also help to reduce the impact of strong emotions – eat well, get adequate sleep, engage in some exercise, and avoid drugs and alcohol.

It may also help to talk to your doctor or other health care professional about how you are feeling if you think that this is impacting significantly on your life.

\* Information sourced from the Project Air Synergy Strategy factsheets

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## Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

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caps.admin@sydney.edu.au  
[sydney.edu.au/counselling](http://sydney.edu.au/counselling)

Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building  
Opening hours: 9am to 4.30pm,  
Monday to Friday

### Crisis contacts

Ambulance/Fire/Police: 000  
Lifeline (24 hours): 13 11 14  
Mental Health Access Line: 1800 011 511