Young Carens Service – Self Care Series

EMOTION/FEELING

EMOTIONS

Emotions happen before feelings. They are universal and are the body and mind's reaction to an event. This means that if people all over the world were to experience the same situation, the emotional response would largely be the same for everyone. We have no control over our emotions because they are an automatic reaction to an event. They are very intense and overwhelming, and can be extremely irrational, but fortunately emotions are only temporary.

For example, the emotion of fear is something everyone feels, to some degree, when faced with an unknown event that's daunting. A child may be fearful when they start a new school; their heart rate would increase and they may want to run back home instead of going into class.

FEELINGS

Feelings are the meaning you give to the emotion and we can control them. They are influenced by our beliefs, upbringing, family experiences, memories, life experiences and persistent thoughts. They aren't as intense as emotions but they can stick around for a long time.

This can be positive, love for example, but feelings such as depression can be mentally damaging.

Think about the child who was scared to start a new school if their fear wasn't reassured they could start to experience a feeling of anxiety. However, if the people around them took the time to share reassuring thoughts and experiences about daunting events, their fear wouldn't be long-term and would likely not transform into anxiety.

THE BRAIM BIT - LET'S GET TECHNICAL

Emotions are formed in the Amygdala, which is the part of the brain that's in charge of emotional processing and quick, 'instinctual' reaction. It's always on high alert so it can keep you safe and quickly warn you of dangers. For example, you see a t-rex on the back of a truck that's driving down the road. Your Amydgala's split second reaction is to be terrified and your body goes into fight, flight or freeze mode to protect you from being eaten by a giant dinosaur. Completely irrational right? Seconds later, you start to calm down because another part of your brain, the Neocortex, reassures the Amygdala with its rational thought that dinosaurs are extinct, so the t-rex you can see is a model and definitely won't eat you.

CETTING BACK COMTROL - FEELING LIKE YOURSELF AGAIN

As helpful as the Neocortex is, it's calm and quiet, so when a very emotional event happens, the rational thought that's needed to reassure your freaking out Amygdala can be noticed a little too late, or missed all together. This is when our irrational thoughts get super loud and we start to act irrationally; causing a vicious cycle of negative emotions and bad feelings, that have long term affects on our lives and our reactions to people. An example of this is paranoia. How do we break the cycle? We take a second to name the emotion that's landed in our body and give our freaking out Amygdala a conscious, rational thought to process.

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THOUGHT: That wasn't on purpose; the driver just didn't see me. **FEELING:** Annoyed but glad to be OK