

LOVERS

A Christian model for dealing with negative emotions

Lift up your heart to God

“Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven” (Lam 3:41)

We begin by going to God, reminding ourselves that he is here with us, that he loves us, and that he’s revealed in the Bible that he is interested in our lives and our struggles (Mt 10:29-31), and wants to draw us into his love.

Open up your negative emotion to God, experiencing it in his presence, *regardless of its quality*.

“Pour our your heart like water before the presence of the Lord” (Lam 2:19).

Emotions are signs of meaning and evaluation. Positive emotions signify perception of good; negative emotions signify the perception or memory of something bad (Here we focus on experiencing the emotion as fully as possible, to understand its meaning (present or past meaning, and often both). This requires identifying the negative emotion and its meaning (anger: injustice/frustration of goals; fear/anxiety: harm, danger; sadness: loss of something good or the presence of something bad; shame: there’s something wrong with me; guilt: I’ve done something wrong; emotional pain is just painful). Learning to tolerate one’s neg. emotions and its distress is an important part of the healing. The goal is to find the place of honest emotion experience between the extremes of overwhelming emotion and emotion-shut-down.

Part of the evaluation involves determining whether the emotion is basically legitimate or sinful (like bitterness, hatred, envy), and sometimes there is both). Christians can do this without fear, because they are perfect in Christ (Ro 3:24; 5:1). This involves recognizing their union with Christ in his crucifixion (Ro 6:1-11; Mt 8:17; Gal 2:20; 2Co 13:4).

Verbalize your emotion to God

“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord” (Ps 130:1); “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1; Mt 27:46)

In light of previous evaluation, we seek to describe the emotion, as best as we can, putting it into words, in two ways
We might also use our imagination to symbolize the emotion (anxiety: rock in the stomach; anger: blowing up)

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Lament or **Imprecate** (If emotion is legitimate) or **Confess** (if sinful, and it can be both)

We tell God about our struggle, sharing it with him, maybe asking for justice, sometimes even questioning him about it..

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We tell God what we have done wrong, taking responsibility for what we have done, w/out excuse.

Empty out the heart of the negative emotion

“Cast your anxiety on the Lord, because he cares for you” (1Pe 5:7); “Cast your burden on the Lord...” (Ps 55:22)

Here the goal is to release the negative emotion, placing it in God’s hands, and letting it go.”

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Surrender (if basically legitimate) or **Repent** (if sinful, and it can be both)

If the emotion is basically legitimate, we surrender it to God, trust him with the outcome of the situation.

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This involves turning away from the sin, disidentifying with it, and consciously committing oneself to not do it again

Replace the former emotion with the appropriate positive emotion or modify it into a “mixed emotion”

“If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation” (2Cor 5:17); “Put on the new self.” (Eph 4:24)

This involves participating in and identifying with Christ’s resurrection, and receiving from him the emotional sign of his salvation/resolution. Take some time to drink in the new creation emotion, perhaps listening for God’s condolences.

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Contentment and communion with God or **Forgiveness and communion with God**

Serve God and others

“The Lord is my fortress, my deliverer” (Ps 18:2); “...serve the Lord...” (Ro 12:11); “...serving one another...” (Gal 5:13)

Finish up by receiving God’s love for you and your perfection in Christ, and then purpose to do the best you can today, knowing you’re not perfect in yourself, but God is on your side and your protector and healer (Ro 8:31-39).