

NewsHealth And Wellness How to beat negative emotions with self-acceptance

How to beat negative emotions with self-acceptance

When we want to feel accepted, and instead feel rejected, then our mind (thoughts and feelings) is in conflict. If we choose to accept ourselves as we are, then there is no conflict, says Rachna K

Written by Rachna K June 26, 2023 13:26 IST



The brain is where the neurons are fired together, resulting in thoughts, feelings and action. (Source: Unsplash)

The mind has two basic functions, to help us survive and keep us away from pain. Out of over 34,000 emotions, the four basic emotions are those of happiness, sadness, anger and fear. Interestingly, three of these basic emotions are considered as negative emotions; sadness, anger and fear. Our mind is wired to alert us of negativity. Keeping us away from pain means having the tools to become more aware of pain.

We cannot believe everything the mind thinks up. Its nature is primarily to warn and protect, not encourage and prosper. We have to reassess the thoughts of the mind and quieten it when it doesn't serve our needs.

The brain is where the neurons are fired together, resulting in thoughts, feelings and action. In order to operate efficiently, it forms neural network patterns that fire together. How does this affect us? When a young girl was a four-year-old and colouring her book, perhaps the mother gently admonished her, "You must colour within the lines. That's not good enough." The mom's intention was encouragement, but the child's perception was "I'm not good enough." A few more similar instances and the brain can set up a neural pathway to fire the neurons together in the brain, "I'm not good enough when I colour." Every time she colours, a feeling of "not being good enough" arises.

Children absorb everything from 0 – 7 years. Looks of disappointment, especially from an authority figure, can lead them to believe disappointment in themselves early on. Thoughts and feelings are, however, separate. The thought of colouring and the feeling

of disappointment became connected here. Thoughts are cognitive, and feelings are a way to express our emotions.

Depression is an issue of thought. When we tend to ruminate in similar negative thoughts, we build stronger neural connections to those thoughts. These negative thoughts then give rise to our negative feelings. Disappointment is a negative emotion when our expectations don't match up to our outcome.

Feelings associated with disappointment are sadness, anger, frustration, loneliness. Feelings come in waves. Every time they surface, we must accept their existence. Feelings are all about us. Knowledge is usually acquired. We feel a certain way because we feel a certain way. That's it. Acceptance of our feelings is true self-acceptance. This is one of the destroyers of depression. If our young girl accepted her childhood scenario, as an adult she would have reasoned like this: "Colouring out of the picture at age four is age-appropriate behavior. It shouldn't matter so much. What's more important is that I tried. My mother shouldn't have been so critical of my colouring. I'm not a disappointment. I accept myself and my efforts. As a four-year-old, I felt ashamed colouring out of the line. I must have also been angry with my mom, making me feel inadequate. I must have felt lonely not having anyone else to share with. I must have carried all those feelings within myself for years. But now I choose not to. I choose to free myself, accept that I did nothing wrong, I choose to accept myself as I am."

When we want to feel accepted, and instead feel rejected, then our mind (thoughts and feelings) is in conflict. If we choose to accept ourselves as we are, then there is no conflict. Self-acceptance also means that we accept our mistakes. It gives respect to our emotions at that moment of time. It gives us permission to not accept anyone else's judgement on ourselves.

The mind is not wired for self-acceptance, so it is something we must practise and develop as a fortitude, as an armour to live within the world. The mind is neuroplastic: it can change its neuron firing patterns and create new patterns in our Mind. If our young girl now chooses to associate colouring with happy thoughts repeatedly, then the thought of colouring and the feeling of happiness can fire together in the mind. And she can feel happy when she colours. She has consciously altered her thinking and the associated feelings. By habit, we must daily re-affirm our own self-acceptance. The world today isn't designed to have us think this way.

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First published on: 26-06-2023 at 13:26 IST TAGS: [Mental Health Positivity www.indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)
https://indianexpress.com/article/health-wellness/beat-negative-emotions-with-self-acceptance-8686652/?utm_source=whatsapp_web&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=socialsharebuttons