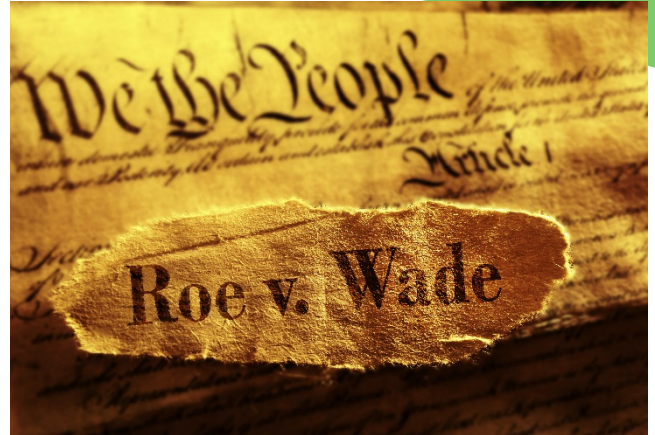


Managing Emotions in Turbulent Times

With the Supreme Court's recent decision, many of us are feeling a variety of raw emotions. If we're not careful, those emotions can drive us to say and do things we'll regret, whether it's an impulsive reply in a meeting, with a loved one, or acting out in unhealthy ways.

All too often, when feeling strong emotions, we feel justified in lashing out. And by doing so, we believe we're addressing the problem. But this usually creates more conflict and escalates the situation.

So, should we internalize our strong emotions? No. By repressing our feelings instead of acknowledging them, we create more stress, which leads to more emotional turmoil around us.



To manage your emotions, please keep in mind the following:

1. **Feelings are fluid and always changing.** When feeling angry, slighted, or defensive, we tend to respond in ways that we later regret. When feeling strong emotions, stop and resist initial reactions.
2. **Don't take it personally.** Be mindful that others around you may also feel strong emotions and end up lashing out at you. Don't take it personally. Realize that they are seeing their reality through a different lens of experience and history. Refrain as best you can from adding fuel to their fire.
3. **Hurt people hurt people.** When someone is angry, that's often the surface emotion with deeper sadness, disappointment, or expectation lying underneath. When we act out in anger, it can indicate a vulnerability that is causing the individual to respond with defense mechanisms, with anger and frustration being common reactions. Trying to see through by listening and being civil.
4. **Feelings aren't always real.** When something out of control happens, we tend to believe everything our feelings tell us: "I'm a terrible parent" or "I knew that they wouldn't invite me to lunch. I must not be that fun to be around." These are all thoughts that can take place in milliseconds and have a long-term impact. The notion that you feel it must mean it's true is blatantly false when in the heat of the moment.
5. **Breathe through the rollercoaster.** Not enough can be said about centered breathing. When feeling strong emotions, allow yourself to feel whatever you feel, accept it, and breathe deeply for several minutes. Focus on your breathing and relax your body with each exhale. This tends to evaporate the strong emotions and replaces them with lucid, calm thoughts and reactions.

To improve your long-term mental health, the following self-care tips can help:

1. **Realize that self-care is a process.** Consider your needs and seek out activities and habits that replenish your energy—so that you can continue to move forward.
2. **Develop good physical health habits.** Commit to maintaining an exercise routine and a healthy diet that works for you.
3. **Practice mindfulness and meditation.** These practices and spirituality also refuel the body and mind.

Keep in mind your Assistance Program is here to provide confidential support during these challenging times.

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