

N.E.A.T

'N.E.A.T' is a powerful acronym and process to use when your emotions get a bit challenging & 'messy'. What you do in the **6 seconds** that follow less favourable emotional experiences can have a huuuuuge impact on whether you make the emotional experience (& fall-out) better or worse.



If you can **PAUSE** for these 6 seconds instead of reacting, the majority of the chemistry that your brain and body produced during the emotional experience is re-absorbed. You minimise the influence that chemistry has over your reactions and your nervous system & brain are then in a far better position for you to respond more appropriately to the emotions you're feeling.

If you don't pause & instead react within that first six seconds, evidence suggests that for the next 24 minutes, you'll stay IN the heightened, messy & challenging emotional experience. This can really exhaust you & change your day!

Whereas if you do pause, you can then follow through in a more productive and effective way, minimising the impact the emotions have on you, regardless of which ones you are experiencing.

If you think of these less favourable emotions as being wild & 'messy', the powerful acronym that will help you have a healthier response is N.E.A.T.

The **N stands for NORMAL** - it really is normal to have emotional experiences. They come through very quickly in about 1/12 thousandth of a second, that's faster than a bullet coming out of a gun! So there's no point in trying to stop your emotions.

What you need to do is realise that we all have them and normalise them. With this in mind, you don't want to suppress or deny them, they are a completely normal experience in life, not always enjoyable, but normal.

If you suppress emotions, they are still 'around' & they build up just like water does behind a dam wall. In this state of suppression you are actually full of an invisible tension (well not *always* invisible) & the smallest thing can trigger you into a negative reaction and emotional state. That's less normal and you come across as over-the-top in your reactions to things. So remember the initial expression of emotions is normal. There's no need to hide the fact that you are a normal human being living a normal emotional experience, which includes the good & the bad.

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The **E stands for EXPECT IT** - Expect that you're going to regularly have emotional discomfort & emotional challenges (as well as good emotions, however we are here to talk about the messier times). When you set yourself up with an expectation that you will experience emotional challenges, your brain is partly pre-prepared for when they happen & there's less of a shock when they do, helping you to respond more appropriately.

The **A stands for ACCEPT IT** - When you have embraced the fact that emotional experiences are both **N**ormal & somewhat **E**xpected, it helps you to be more **A**ccepting that there is good reason you're feeling discomfort. The more that you can accept your emotional experiences, the more that you can unhook from the emotions themselves, and be able to move through the experience effectively. With this acceptance, you can start to use the energy of the emotion/feeling & direct it into better thinking and better behaviours, lessening the negative impact.

The **T stands for TIDY IT UP** - Emotions generally do not last longer than 90 seconds. Your response after this 90 seconds determines whether the emotions linger & transform into feelings and then through to behaviours. But if you have followed this process and regulated your response, paused & followed the 3 steps above you are then ready for this final step of tidying up the emotion with simple tools.

IDEAS TO HELP YOU TIDY UP:

- 1) **5 x 5 x 5** = Breathe IN for 5 seconds, breathe OUT for 5 seconds, 5 times (even less than that can still help immensely). You're regulating your heart beat and the nerves around your heart are sending calming messages up to your brain helping to diffuse the emotional experience.
- 2) **Name it - to tame it.** When we name our emotions to someone else, or to ourselves (out loud or by writing them down), we fire up the part of our brain that helps regulate emotional responses. You can down regulate your emotions simply by naming what you're feeling. *Take note* that there are preferred ways to 'name it', for example rather than saying "I am angry", it's better to say "I am *feeling* angry" which gives you some separation from the emotion so that you can learn to respond more appropriately.
- 3) **Go for a walk.** Very simple & very effective. Emotions tend to get stuck in areas of the brain that leave us not thinking logically or reasonably, walking stimulates both the right and left sides of the brain simultaneously and brings them into synchronicity. This helps to stabilise parts of the brain so you can think better. As an additional tip, walk somewhere with an expansive view, like on the beach or in a park where your focus relaxes and becomes more peripheral as this also help to calm the emotional areas of the brain.