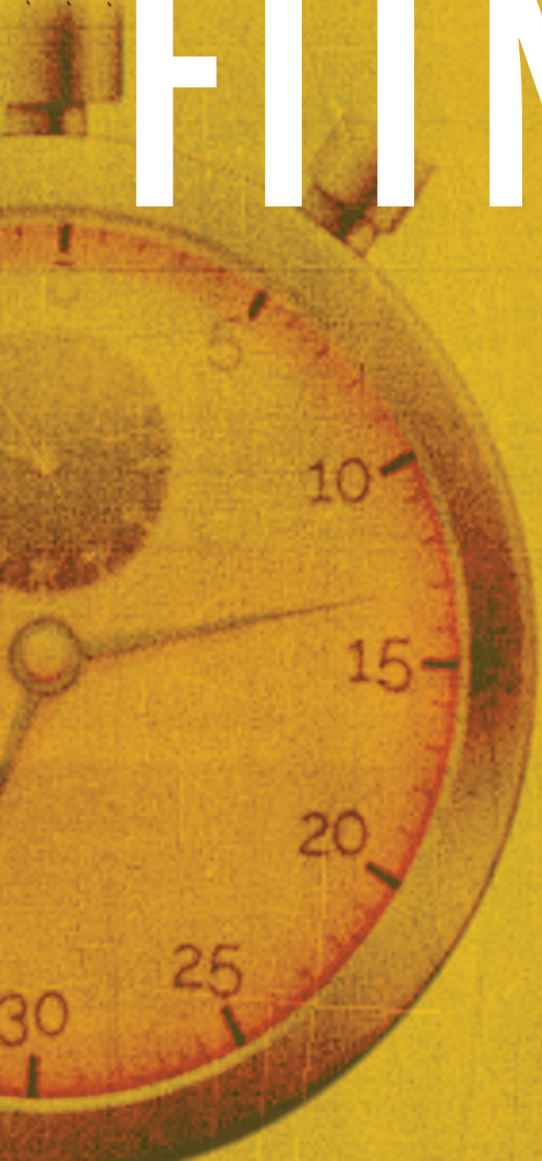
Emotional Fitness

From Challenge to Champion in 60 Days



Douglas Weiss, Ph.D.

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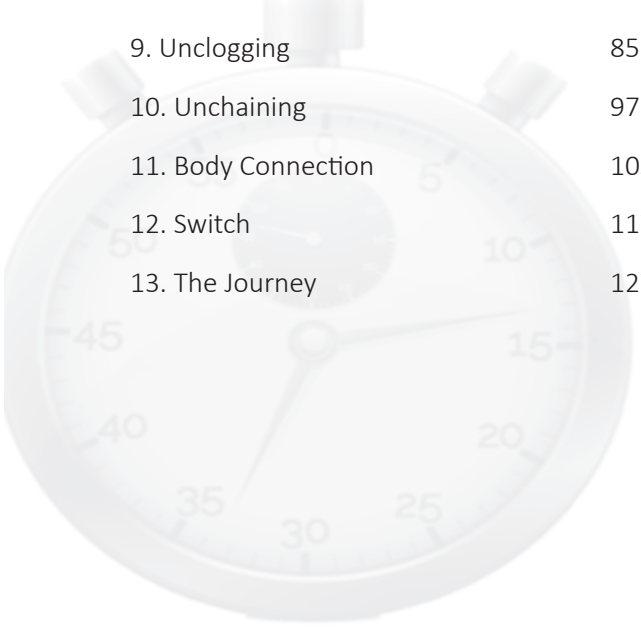

Introduction

One universal, dynamic malady affects many of us, regardless of where we live on this vast planet we call Earth. Though this malady inflicts untold damage upon our lives and the lives of those we love, it often goes undetected.

I am not talking about global warming, war, or political corruption. No, I am talking about something more personal: an epidemic lack of emotional fitness. To put it another way: emotional cluelessness.

A man sitting in my office, headed toward divorce but seeking a miracle to save his marriage, admitted with wisdom and humility, "I wouldn't know a feeling if it hit me in the face." His sentiment expresses a universal problem, a problem I have encountered in the men, women, and teens I have counseled over the last twenty years.

However, I encounter the lack of emotional intelligence not only in my practice, but also in my own life. Like the man just mentioned, at one time, I couldn't recognize my feelings. I came from a family like many of the families my readers grew up in; we never talked about feelings except in an extreme or dysfunctional manner. Like many others, this emotional cluelessness left me unequipped and unprepared for life. As a result, as a teen and young adult, I walked straight into multiple addictions and dysfunctional relationships.

Though I had a spiritual awakening at nineteen, I still remained emotionally unfit through college and even into adulthood. As a future counselor, I knew I would need to understand my emotions, because only then could I counsel others toward understanding their own. Motivated, I looked into option after option in an effort to learn about my feelings, only to come to the conclusion that no class, teacher,

or book could teach me what I wanted and needed to learn. I was totally dysfunctional and totally unable to identify or communicate my feelings. I was, quite literally, emotionally out of shape and in need of a trainer, but no trainer could I find.

Then and there, I decided I would need to serve as my own trainer, my own teacher. I created tools to help me start to manage my emotions. Over time, I found success, moving from a novice to an emotional black belt. I started to understand my feelings, and in turn, myself. The best part was, my newfound abilities (which I will teach you about in the following pages), impacted every aspect of my life, from my marriage to my business to my relationship with my God.

Given their impact on my life, I realized the tools I had created for my personal use could impact others. They were transferable and could be used to teach others how to move into an emotionally fit lifestyle!

I am not going to tell you such a move does not take work. It takes a lot of work—hard work—but by doing the work, you can change from emotionally unfit to emotionally fit, and it will benefit all aspects of your life. Now, are you ready to get fit?

What Is Emotional Fitness?

This is a journey. Though perhaps unfamiliar to you, it is a road that has been traveled by many, many I have come into contact with both through my clinical practice and through speaking at conferences.

I live in Colorado, and part of living here is daily seeing a visual symbol of the unfamiliar journey: Pike's Peak, the beautiful behemoth, rising in my view whenever I look west. It's a mountain for the hiker to conquer—or at least attempt to conquer. Every successful trip, though, starts at the bottom of the trail and moves upward, one step at a time. So let's start this journey together, not up Pike's Peak, but to another kind of summit: emotional fitness.-

Once you reach the summit, you will have an emotional fitness that allows you to see the world as it truly is: a spectacular place. Congratulations for your willingness to begin this journey, a journey that requires courage.

Before we start this journey, you will need to know what to bring with you. Every traveler must be prepared.

Right now, we are at the base of the mountain and reaching the top seems daunting, but for those willing to work, impossibility is merely an illusion. With the right attitude and the right preparation, seekers can reach the summit of emotional fitness and even have fun while doing it.

You might be tempted to fixate on how out of shape you are or how lacking in resolve. Or, you may be eager for the hike. Whether you are sure you can do this or not, relax and focus. Get ready to pace yourself. You can and will make it!

Skills

"Dr. Weiss, if all of us have feelings, then why can't most of us do this emotional stuff?" Carol, a forty-two-year-old, highly successful executive and mother of three asked me, sitting in a small group of her peers. Her question is one I have heard so many times I have lost count.

So let me digress for just a moment and draw an analogy. Let's talk about diets. Typically when you think about dieting, you think about your carbs, proteins, sugars, calories, and fats. You think about your metabolism and regimen of physical exercise.

There was once a day, generations ago, when people did not think at all about the healthiness of what they ate. They ate whatever and whenever they wanted, without a thought to any kind of consequence for their behavior. People in those generations often died young due to the lack of information and skills that would have helped them determine the appropriate diet for an optimally healthy life.

Just as our Western culture entered an era of awareness of diet and physical fitness, our culture is about to enter a new awareness of the role of emotional fitness, how it affects human life, human relationships, and even physical health.

Being emotionally fit is a skill to be acquired but it can only be acquired after the reality of feelings and emotional fitness is presented. Typically, when someone wants to talk about their feelings, we might be intrigued but easily become confused.

The feeling evoked is almost like the one we experience watching Olympic gymnasts competing. We are amazed at how the athletes move. However, then something in our thinking changes and fear enters in. We ask ourselves, *How is it that the athletes jump around with no apparent fear of getting hurt? or How do they look confident as they go through routines that are so obviously dangerous?*

An athlete's safety net is skills developed through practice, through drills. I have known many athletes, especially in Colorado Springs where the Olympic Training Center is located, and they all rely on skills to become some of the world's elite.

Like a gymnast's skills, emotional fitness must be developed. And this development often comes through the observation of a mentor, someone who has developed emotional skills. Often, frustratingly, most of us have not known someone emotionally fit.

Think about your own life for a moment. Let's start early: junior high. Think about the emotions you had at that time and your experience of others articulating emotions to you. Most remember expressions of anger but not much else beyond that. In many cases, the same is true for your high school and college experiences: almost no expression of any emotion except anger or a scant few other feelings. Therefore, most of us grew up emotionally impoverished.

Learning skills is the first key in understanding emotional fitness. However, skills alone do not produce world-class champions.

Work

This is where the rubber meets the road. Those who hope to accomplish their goals are different from those who actually do accomplish their goals. Those who accomplish their goals actually do the work to achieve their success.

Now that I'm over fifty, I periodically gain weight. Most of you are familiar with the problematic habits of eating late, making poor eating choices, and avoiding exercise—all of which lead to weight gain.

These problematic habits caused my weight gains, anywhere from a few pounds to as many as twenty. When I realized my weight gain, I was faced with a decision: Do I keep my newly gained weight, or do I decide to lose it?

It will do me no good to desire to lose the weight unless I implement changes in my behavior, setting goals that are realistic and attainable and use my willpower to change my behavior to reach these goals.

When I choose to change my behavior to lose weight, I lose it successfully every time.

Let's go back to our gymnasts. Olympians choose to forgo much of their social lives just as they forgo making large amounts of money and submit themselves to grueling daily workouts so they can achieve excellence. Because they choose hard work, they are successful.

Work is the single divider between those who master a new skill and those who don't. As an example, let me present to you my son, Jubal. When Jubal was five years old, he was introduced to the world of martial arts. During practices, he was given the skills necessary for a black belt in the making. At each belt testing, Jubal was given a choice: continue to work toward the black belt or give up.

A 60 DAY CHALLENGE TO EMOTIONAL FITNESS

Everyone has unlimited amouts of emotions but few have been trained to identify, communicate, master and choose their emotions. What you are holding in your hand is more than pages guiding you toward emotional fitness and mastery its a guide to a much more fulfilling life.

WHEN YOU ARE EMOTIONALLY FIT YOU CAN!

- Know what your emotions are
- State your emotions respectfully
- Feel your emotions without fear
- Manage and change your emotions at will

Emotional Fitness will not only change your life, it can change who you are in every area love, family, professional or friendship you are in. In just 60 days! You deserve to be emotionally fit and now you can be in 60 days from now!

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$16.95
ISBN 978-1-881292-14-2
51695>
9 781881 292142

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