



## Managing Our Monkey Mind

### Emotional Dexterity – Week 4

#### The bind we are in

Emotions often put us in a bind. We wouldn't be ourselves without them, but they can also drive us to be who we aren't. It's a dilemma because while emotions make life worth living, they can be undeniable trouble; they are often a lot to manage and their urgency can get the best of us. Reactivity is hard to resist and impossible to avoid without the skill of awareness. But as Victor Frankl famously observed, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response."

Awareness is what lives in that space.

And, as all us monkeys know, mindfulness is the key that unlocks the door of awareness. But the thing is, awareness doesn't automatically put us in a position of power or make us the master of our emotions. In fact, awareness is often exactly what has us running far, far away from emotions because feeling them might be the last thing we want to do! If they are too painful and too messy to approach, forget it; we're (so often anyway) "outthere". But while we may be a master at burying emotions, alas, they just pop back up and express themselves in ways that only cause us even more pain. It's like the thing they say about grief: you can do it now or you can do it later; it will wait for you.

But taking a mindful approach to emotions allows us to see them and be with them from a place of grounded-ness. With mindfulness we can both hold the emotion while also getting some self-preserving distance so we aren't so overwhelmed. That critical distance brings the emotion down enough to think clearly and be more able to see what we need to see. This week's meditation recording takes you through that process. I highly recommend that you listen to this one because being guided through the process is an embodied experience while reading about it is intellectually useful but a much flatter one. I will pass along the script as a reference for that process, however, should you want to remind yourself how this process goes.

**One thing leads to another –  
how we come to feel what we feel**

Once I began the deliberate work of developing more emotional awareness later in my life (later than would have been optimally helpful), I had a realization\*. It was a revelatory one and it was this:

**What we think we will feel.**

Being aware that “what we think we will feel” leads us back to the origin of the feeling and gives us the opportunity to agree or disagree with how we had the situation sized up, a good reminder that just because we think something doesn't mean we know what we are thinking – or that we even agree with it!

\*This actually may not have been my realization so much as someone else's. But it's how I remember it and how it **feels** to me, therefore making it the reality that I live. Which says a lot about how we create our own reality. Kind of scary to consider that we could be living a whole different and possibly better reality if we thought differently – or just knew what we were thinking!

