

Emotional Rx Guide

A Prescription for Symptomatic Applications

To Maintain Your Sense of Well-Being

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Managing Your Ego with Mindfulness

The practice of mindfulness has been used throughout the ages to discern between the voice of the Soul and ego and to promote spiritual insight and growth. Psychotherapeutic professionals have recently turned to the practice of mindfulness to promote psychological insight and growth which can foster a healthy posture of mind and a sense of well-being. The most recognized use of this practice is called *Cognitive Therapy* which was popularized by Dr. David D. Burns' book, *The Feeling Good Handbook*. Wherein Dr. Burns states, "Individuals get caught in downward spirals of emotional turmoil when their thinking is biased toward negative interpretations of reality."

As stated, your ego is innately inclined to interpret reality in pessimistic and negative ways due to its fearful and guardian nature. So, it tends to initiate these negative themes and downward spirals of thought which foster scary stories and fight or flight emotions to secure your safety. However, Dr. Burns confirms "10 cognitive traps" that distort thoughts which fuel *unnecessary* and negative or painful emotions. These cognitive traps are outlined in the Emotional Rx Guide on page 44 to help you recognize and transcend the 10 cognitive traps that can impede the success of your Quest toward the greater good.

How does the Practice of Mindfulness Relate to Your Quest?

Your Ego views the unknown as a threat, so it will typically challenge your efforts to explore new territory which is an essential part of any Quest. So, you can benefit from adequate wisdom and strategies to discern and manage the egoic or pessimistic and distorted thoughts that can hinder your Quest. The most effective way to manage these cognitive traps is to practice mindfulness toward the content of your thoughts — so you can recognize and restructure a distorted thought with a more realistic perspective toward the true nature of life which is filled with fluctuating variables.

Managing Distorted Thoughts with Mindfulness

The following guidelines for the Practice of Mindfulness can help you to maintain your sense of well-being.

- *Deliberately pause—relax for a moment—and take a deep breath*
- *Now imagine that you are stepping back to observe yourself through the eyes of your Soul*
- *Observe the thoughts in your mind, without judgment or resistance to the content of your thought*
- *When you recognize a thought that is or may be distorted, question the validity of the thought*
- *If the thought is not valid, take a moment to thank your ego for sharing its perspective*
- *Relax and refute or negate the accuracy of the invalid thought*
- *Then consider and choose a more realistic view of the person, place, thing or event*

It's only a thought, and a thought can be changed.

~ Louise Hay

Managing Emotions with Mindfulness

Many people assume that feelings and emotions stem from the same place because the terms “feeling” and “emotion” are used interchangeably. However, as a spiritual seeker, you need to be able to recognize the difference between authentic feelings that stem from your body or intuitive insight — and — emotions that can stem from false hopes or assumptions, so you can recognize and respond to your Soul’s guidance.

Fortunately, the root cause of your feelings and emotions are quite distinct, so you can discern between them when you understand the dynamics that trigger — and reveal them. Feelings are triggered by external stimuli that activate one of your six senses toward the dynamics of reality. Essentially, there are three primal feelings: pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. Emotions are triggered by your interpretation of external stimuli which activate the true and fictional stories that your egoic mind perceives which can generate a multitude of emotions, such as happiness, sadness, anger and so forth.

Psychologist Gilles Farcet states, *“Emotions are a feeling turned savage, gone wild. Whether it is being so madly in love that we cannot pay attention to the rest of the world or whether we are driven uncontrollably by our hate, greed, anger or desire, we become completely identified with an event and are driven away from our basic integrity rather than toward it.”*

So, what can you do if you slip into a cognitive trap and trigger a savage or undesirable emotion that is driving you away from your basic integrity or your ability to recognize your Soul’s guidance? In her book, *My Stroke of Insight*, Neuroanatomist Jill Bolte Taylor, MD states, *“the chemical component of an emotion completely dissipates from the brain and bloodstream in about 90 seconds.”* If you remain in that emotion after 90 seconds, it is because you have chosen to focus on the negative thought that created the emotion or you are overwhelmed with a thought-based challenge or loss. Dr. Taylor also supports the practice of mindfulness to manage emotions. However, she states, *“You need to give your body at least 90 seconds to allow the emotion and physical reaction to run its course.”* You can then refute or negate your ego’s perspective or interpretation of what is causing distress with more success. Nevertheless, you may need to manage the distress for an extended period of time as you cope with the discomfort of a difficult challenge or loss.

The negative or egocentric storytelling part of your brain is about the size of a peanut. So, take heart, you can short-circuit destructive emotions by choosing a realistic posture of mind or a positive affirmation that can snap your attention away from the peanut and toward the soulcentric nature of your True Self. Becoming aware of and realistically evaluating your thoughts can also help you to manage a *real* challenge or loss more effectively, so you can sidestep the drama of your clever but fictional storyteller.

The following Emotional Rx Guide can help you to choose a more realistic perspective toward the unrealistic perspectives that contribute to the symptoms of emotional chaos that we all endure — so you can recognize and transcend the *“10 cognitive traps”* that your ego falls into when tries to interpret or control outcomes from its limited perspective.

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Choose a more realistic perspective for the following distorted thoughts:

All-or-Nothing Assumptions

*You embrace “black or white” theories by categorizing reality as completely good or bad.
If a situation is flawed in any way, you perceive it as a failure.*

Generalizing Reality

You use unrealistic always-or-never assertions when you evaluate a situation.

Embracing Negative Mental Filters

You completely focus on the negative qualities of an issue or outcome.

Discounting Positive Perspectives

*You fail to value positive qualities as important elements to reality.
If you do, something well, you tell yourself that anyone can do it, or I was just lucky.*

Jumping to Conclusions

*You interpret issues and outcomes with incomplete facts to support your conclusion.
You engage in mind reading and arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting to you negatively.
You engage in fortune telling and assume that things will turn out badly.*

Minimizing or Maximizing Alternatives

You promote exaggerations by minimizing good qualities and maximizing deficiencies.

Emotional Reasoning

*You insist that your negative emotions reflect the way things really are.
You think that feeling inadequate is the same as being inadequate.*

Should/If Only Proclamations

*You obsess on an image of the ideal self instead of the Essence of your authentic Self.
You thus focus excessively on what you wish to be true.*

Unrealistic Labeling

*You assume that a negative thought or event reflects who you are.
Instead of saying I made a mistake, you attach a negative label to yourself by saying, I am a mistake.*

Fault-Finding

You focus on blaming yourself or others instead of focusing on solutions to the problem.

Transcending the Trap of Ego Identification

As you travel through the luminous light and scattered shadows of your labyrinth journey the ego's cognitive traps or fear-based thoughts may lure you into the swampy bogs of confusion, guilt or despair. However, in his book, *A New Earth*, Eckhart Tolle states, "*The moment you become aware of a negative state within yourself, it does not mean you have failed. It means you have succeeded. Until that awareness happens, there is identification with inner states, and such identification is ego.*"

So, the instant you become aware of an *unfounded fear, negative thought or emotion*, you automatically initiate the process of disassociating from and transcending an egocentric sense of identity. You thus transfer your sense of identity away from your ego which is the thinking object of consciousness within your mind, and place your sense of identity within your Soul which is the authentic *subject* of consciousness within your being.

As you shift from assuming that you are *the thoughts in your mind*—to an awareness that thoughts appear in your mind with *or* without your bidding—you cease to identify yourself as the object of consciousness that your egoic mind transmits. You then justly assume the seat of your Soul and true Self as the sovereign subject *and* center of consciousness that can observe the egoic thoughts in your mind.

If it's difficult for you to discern between your ego as the object of consciousness in your mind and your Soul as the subject of consciousness in your being, you're not alone. So, take a moment to do a simple exercise in consciousness that Michael Singer, author of *The Untethered Soul* suggests as follows. "Just start saying hello inside, over and over. Then notice that you are aware of that thought. Don't think about being aware of it; that's just another thought. Simply relax and be aware that you can hear hello being echoed in your mind. That is your seat of centered consciousness." As you can see, you instantly embodied the subject of your own consciousness which is the soulcentric witness to the object of consciousness echoing hello in your mind.

Understanding the object vs. the subject state of consciousness within you can help you to skillfully recognize and manage the cognitive traps that hinder your journey. So, we'll explore additional ways that you can recognize the difference between these two states of consciousness in the following sections.

Nowhere can man find a quieter or more untroubled retreat than in his own Soul.

~ Marcus Aurelius

Transcending Ego Identification with a Light Heart

The sagacious teacher Buddha used humor over 25,000 years ago when he used the jesting phrase *Monkey Mind* to describe the ego's tendency to carry on like dozens of drunken monkeys clamoring for attention by jumping around, screeching, chattering and creating cognitive chaos in the mind. This chatter may include thoughts about the past or future, a list of things to do or "what if" scenarios, which can serve a practical purpose or be disregarded as insignificant data.

An ego-antic vocabulary can provide you with a more objective way to view the ego's chatter and dramatic displays of self-importance, so you can transcend ego identification with a light heart *and* a soulful sense of dignity. For instance, if you spend a lot of time in nature you can refer to the ego's perennial mind chatter as a *Babbling Brook* which can help you to unite the ego's chatter with the rambling sounds of nature so you can sidestep the ego's tendency to ramble on and on and on.

Most of the time, the voice of the ego's Monkey Mind chats with the voice of a rational adult to gain attention in self-assured ways. However, the ego embodies the emotional maturity of a child with fears and wounds that diminish its sense of power, security and esteem which ignites its obsessive need to gain power, security, self-esteem and the esteem of others. So be kind and use humor in a soulcentric and loving way as you employ efforts to transcend the cognitive entrapment of ego identification. The following list provides a few light-hearted examples of an ego-antic vocabulary that you can employ, so you can dissociate from the Monkey Mind and an egocentric sense of identity.

Ego Vocabulary

Definition of the Ego-antic

Ego-spasm Ego keeps interrupting your thoughts about a person, place, outcome or event.

Ego-conniption Ego is in the process of flipping out and consumes a lot of your energy.

Ego-psychosis Ego is *adversely fixated* on an aspect of life, and it's time to call a therapist.

Now take a moment to be playful and lighthearted about how your ego can churn and disturb the rivers of your life by creating a humorous addition to this ego vocabulary list, along with a brief definition of the ego-antic ploy that you succumb to from time to time – and send it to lauren@isoulquest.com if you want to make me laugh!

Happy is he who can laugh at his own folly, for he will never cease to be entertained.

~ Unknown