

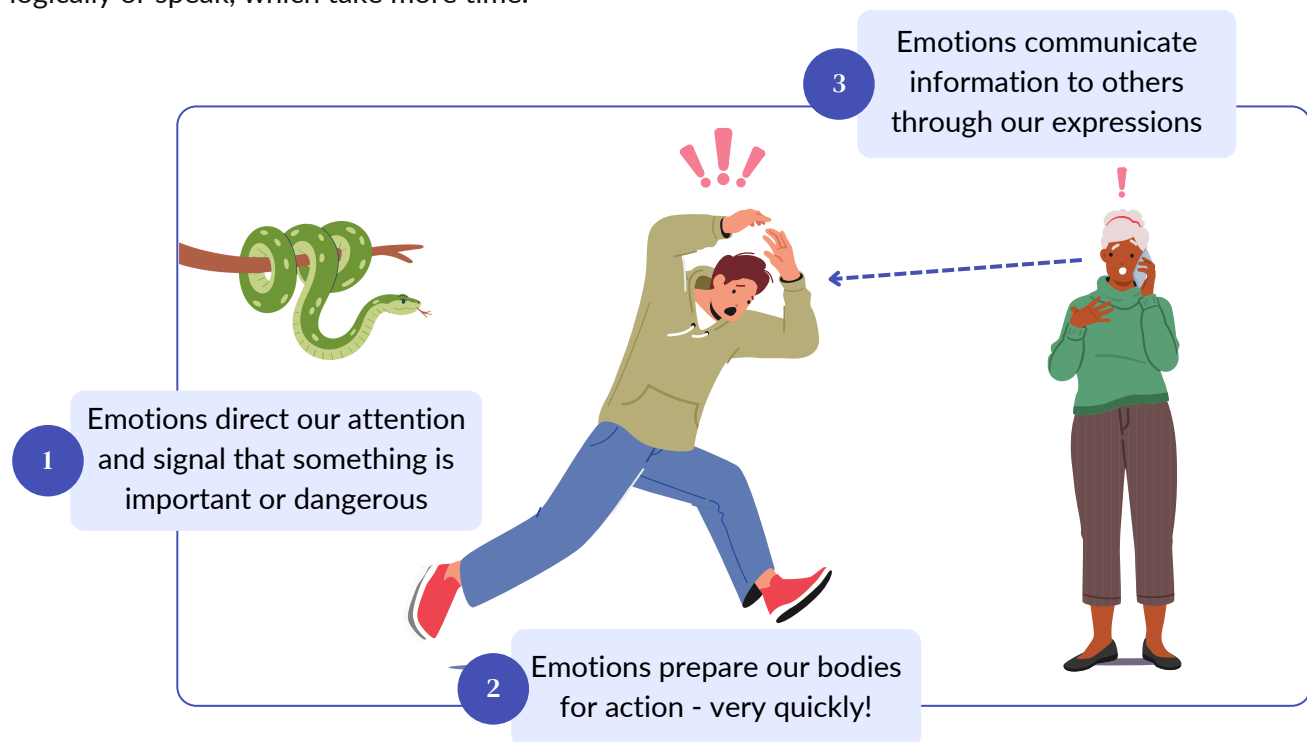
# Function of Emotions

## DBT: Emotion Regulation Skills

When we are overwhelmed with difficult emotions like sadness or anxiety, it can be tough to see the “function” of these feelings. However, emotions give us important information, even if they feel unpleasant sometimes. In this worksheet, we’ll learn why we have emotions and what they do for us.

### Why do we have emotions?

Today, humans have many complex emotions. But originally, our most basic emotions like fear, anger, and disgust evolved to keep us alive. Emotions *very quickly* help us identify what is important (or dangerous!), get our bodies ready to act, and communicate to others - without having to think logically or speak, which take more time.



Before looking at the next page, take some guesses. Why do humans have the following emotions? How do they help us survive?

Fear:

.....

Anger:

.....

Disgust:

.....

Sadness:

.....

Shame:

.....

*\*This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*



DBT teaches us that emotions (1) are prompted by events in the environment, (2) create biological changes in our bodies to prepare us for action, and (3) communicate to others through our expressions and behaviors. Below, you can read about each step in the process, and check your answers on the last page about how specific emotions help us survive.

Emotion	1 In the environment, when...	2 Your body prepares to...	3 And others may see you...	This emotion helps us survive because it...
Fear	there is a threat to your safety or wellbeing	escape or hide	shake, cry, sweat, run	helps us and others escape danger
Anger	there is a threat or offense to someone you care about	fight or defend	frown, clench your fists, yell	helps us fight back and defend ourselves or our loved ones
Disgust	something might make you sick or contaminated	recoil or get away	gag, turn "green," grimace, cringe	helps us and those around us avoid illness or contamination
Sadness	you lose (or might lose) someone or something forever	slow down and grieve	cry, wail, shut down	signals to others that we need support
Shame	you do something that others may think is wrong	hide, shrink, withdraw	blush, slump, cover your face	helps us avoid rejection from the group

We'll call this part of the situation prompting the emotion

We'll call this part the **urge**

We'll call this part the **expression**



Scan or [click here](#) to learn more about DBT:

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# Function of Emotions

## DBT: Emotion Regulation Skills

Think about the last time you *strongly* felt one of the five basic emotions. Check off the emotion you will be writing about:

- fear    anger    disgust    sadness    shame

What was the situation that led you to feel your emotion so strongly?

.....

.....

.....

(1) **Facts:** What was happening in the environment to prompt your emotion?

- A threat to your safety or wellbeing  
 A threat or offense to someone you care about  
 Something that might make you sick or contaminated  
 The (potential) loss of someone or something forever  
 Your actions might be seen as wrong by others  
 Other: .....

(2) **Urge:** What was your body preparing you to do?

- Escape or hide  
 Fight or defend  
 Vomit or get away  
 Slow down and grieve  
 Hide, shrink, or withdraw  
 Other: .....

What did that feel like in your body?

.....

.....

(3) **Expression:** Even if no one was around you at the time, how could your expression or behavior communicate your emotions to others?

- |                                       |  |   |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> shaking      | <input type="checkbox"/> crying          | <input type="checkbox"/> sweating           | <input type="checkbox"/> running      | <input type="checkbox"/> other: ..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> frowning     | <input type="checkbox"/> clenched fists  | <input type="checkbox"/> yelling            | <input type="checkbox"/> other: ..... |                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gagging      | <input type="checkbox"/> turning "green" | <input type="checkbox"/> grimacing          | <input type="checkbox"/> other: ..... |                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> crying       | <input type="checkbox"/> wailing         | <input type="checkbox"/> shutting down      | <input type="checkbox"/> other: ..... |                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> blushing     | <input type="checkbox"/> slumping        | <input type="checkbox"/> covering your face | <input type="checkbox"/> other: ..... |                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: ..... |  |   |                                       |                                       |

Did your experience of your emotion match the description on the previous page?

- Yes    No    Other: .....

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# Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

## You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



**325+**  
Companies Reviewed



**3,625+**  
Hours of Firsthand Experience



**1,545+**  
Data Points Analyzed



### [Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

### [Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



### [Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

### [Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





# Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://choosingtherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

## [Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



## [Free Mental Health Worksheets](#)

Search our collection of therapy worksheets by mental health topic, therapy modality, or demographic group. Our free, psychologist-developed worksheets make therapy exercises understandable and relevant to daily life. Find worksheets for help with ADHD, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and other common mental health challenges.