



HeForShe

MALE ALLIES GUIDE for GENDER EQUALITY

Tips for
**UNDERSTANDING
AND MANAGING
YOUR EMOTIONS**



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INTRODUCTION

This guide provides concrete actions on how to understand and manage overwhelming emotions. Men are often taught that being a 'real man' means ignoring their feelings and emotions. Yet, emotions are natural and all part of the human experience. Emotions empower us to make decisions and give us the ability to manage difficult moments. If overwhelming feelings are not dealt with properly, they can induce violence and alienate people. It is therefore helpful to be understand how to manage your emotions in a positive way.

BENEFITS OF MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS

- Reduces the likeliness of aggressive actions
- Enables you to be more compassionate towards others, thus prevents social exclusion
- Increases your emotional intelligence and mental well-being
- Empowers you to constructively disagree with others in a respectful manner

UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONS

Emotional reactions are normal, and the degree to which we experience them depend on the individual. When strong emotions take place, our physical and physiological reaction chains change. Our brain functions alter, and different areas of our brain become active, compared to when we are in a neutral state. When we face strong emotions, we tend to take the low road, focusing mainly on staying alive, consequently losing the sense of time, control and rationality. Certain factors can increase feelings of aggression, many of which occur in everyday life, like fatigue or stress.

Risk Increasing Factors:

Fatigue, stress, personal experiences of disappointment and violence, alcohol and drugs, some medicines, hereditary factors and low blood sugar.



CONCRETE WAYS TO MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

A key factor of emotion management is to collect information before the emotion becomes overwhelming. This enables you to make informed decisions. Here are five practical actions to manage your emotions.

1. KNOW YOUR BOILING POINT

Knowing your boiling point enables you to foresee risks and identify hazards before they arise. A boiling point is something that immediately brings you strong emotions and can make you lose control. Take time to identify your boiling point, as it differs from person to person.



2. BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

When emotions become overwhelming, being active can help reduce the build-up of anger. When you feel the need to vent, use your body physically through exercise such as running or jumping. Utilize easily accessible activities that can help you calm down, allowing for the emotion to pass.

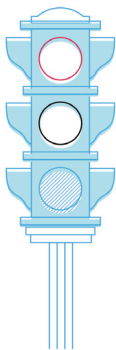
3. TALK TO SOMEONE

It is unhealthy to keep a heavy emotional load to yourself. Talking about your emotions is helpful, as it enables your brain to deal with the matter in a new way. Talking to someone enables you to gain new perspective of the situation and reassures you that you are not alone with your emotion. You can speak to a friend, a family member, spiritual leader or seek professional help, such as a psychologist.

**Effectively communicate your emotions;
explain to the other person**

1. Why you are angry
2. How you are feeling
3. What you want the other person to do
4. Why it is beneficial to cooperate with you

4. THINK RATIONALLY



When your emotions are in turmoil, your rationality can easily deteriorate. The Traffic Light Model can help you think more rationally. Imagine a traffic light. First is red, where you stop immediately and try to calm down. Then comes yellow, where you name your emotion, allow it to happen and research available options. Last is green, where you focus on proceeding cautiously. This process enables you to take time to stop and consider all options available before proceeding.

Stop! Permit the emotion to take place. Proceed.

5. CREATE A CALMING MENTAL IMAGE



A mental image provides calming and clear headspace when a strong emotion takes over. It is a familiar thing or place that feels peaceful and relaxing.

The tool requires concentration and repetition to be successful. For the mental image to effectively calm your body and mind, focus on the image for one minute or more by closing your eyes and imagining details.

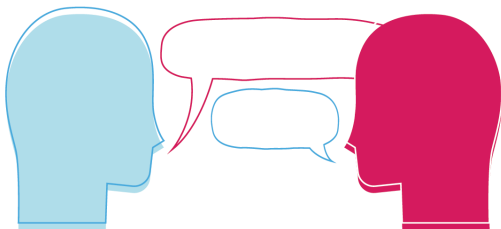
HOW TO BE AN EMOTIONAL ALLY FOR OTHERS

It is easier to manage our own emotions than managing other people's emotions. However, as all people experience emotions it is helpful to know how to support others when they experience overwhelming emotions.

1. CALMING SOMEONE DOWN

Sometimes you might be negatively impacted by other people who are struggling to manage their emotions. This can occur when you have disagreements or heated discussions with people. When you can manage your own emotions, you can support others in calming down. As disagreements and overwhelming emotions can easily get out of hand, these steps are helpful and can reduce the likeliness of aggressive behavior.

1. Listen actively
2. Vocally accept the outburst
3. Show sympathy
4. Agree on how to proceed



2. DEALING WITH DISAGREEMENTS IN AN INTIMATE OR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

Disagreements with people who you deeply care about can be difficult to manage. Although disagreeing with an intimate or personal partner is natural, it can be destructive for the relationship if it is not properly managed. Here are some tools on how to constructively sort out a disagreement, preventing further conflict or violence.

TRY TO:

- Recall the long-term objectives of the relationship
- Give each other the right to speak in turn
- Respect your partner's emotions and opinions
- Calm the situation to prevent damaging actions
- Listen without interrupting and aim for a compromise
- Leave the room if you cannot think clearly
- Seek out professional help if necessary

TRY NOT TO:

- Allow strong feelings to cloud your head
- Verbally insult or name-call your partner
- Be overpowering or dismissive
- Retaliate or lecture your partner

CONCRETE WAYS TO AVOID TAKING VIOLENT ACTIONS

Although it is possible to manage your emotions, at times they can become overwhelming and ignite a desire to act violently. The following are some ways to identify and deal with violent behavior. As violence also includes self-harm, concrete ways to deal with suicidal thoughts are laid out as well.

1. DEALING WITH VIOLENCE

Violence is all oppressive and abusive behavior, either targeted at one self or others. It is never justified and always has serious consequences.

Examples of violent actions

- Physical: hitting, kicking or scratching someone
- Psychological: insulting, name calling or belittling
- Social: excluding, gossiping or insults on social media
- Targeted objects: stealing, breaking or soiling objects

What to do if You Have Been Violent

1. Stay away from made-up excuses
2. Admit your mistake and offer a proper apology

Five Steps to Avoid Using Violence

- 1.** Limit the aggressive feeling.
- 2.** Take a break and calm your emotions.
- 3.** Ask yourself, "Why am I choosing violence?"
- 4.** Identify and accept the emotion to let it pass.
- 5.** Decide to act in a constructive manner.



2. DEALING WITH SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

Close to 800,000 people die due to suicide annually, with most victims identifying as male. For people between the ages of 15 and 29, suicide is the second leading cause of death*. Overwhelming emotions can result in thoughts of violence, including self-harm. If you have suicidal thoughts, know that you are not alone. Overwhelming emotions can distort your mind, disabling you to see other options than suicide to become free from depression. However, suicide is a poor option. If you have suicidal thoughts, the best way to manage these emotions is to talk to a family member, spiritual leader, close friend, partner or a suitable professional.

**If you have suicidal thoughts,
contact the national suicide
prevention hotline.**

*World Health Organization, 2018 Data

SUMMARY

This guide provides tools to understand and manage overwhelming emotions. It can be used as a guide for managing your personal emotions or as a guide in how you can support others who are experiencing overwhelming emotions in calming down. Remember that emotions are natural and part of the human experience. Successfully managing your emotions will result in constructive and positive actions.

CONCRETE WAYS TO MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

- ✔ Know your boiling point.
- ✔ Be physically active.
- ✔ Talk to someone.
- ✔ Think rationally.
- ✔ Create a calming mental image.

Share your story as a male ally on social using:

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Got any tips?

Email: **HeForShe@unwomen.org**

Join the movement at

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