

## Emotional Equilibrium

By Dr. Tanja Haley

Emotional equilibrium is a phrase that is often used, but what exactly does it mean? It isn't as easy to gauge your equilibrium as it is to take your blood pressure, but most of us know when we are out of whack. You feel like there's no energy for anything extra, your patience is very thin, and you find yourself getting frustrated or angry over little things. Emotional equilibrium is not the same for everyone, and it's important that you find just the right balance. Before you can find your balance, you need to assess yourself in three areas (ABC): 1) **A**ffective – how you have been *feeling*, 2) **B**ehavioral – what you have been *doing*, and 3) **C**ognitive – what you have been *thinking*.

**Step 1:** Engage in an Emotional Checkup (Affective). What is the predominant mood that you've been experiencing – angry, joyful, stressed? Do you seem unusually down lately? If so, is there a good reason for it? You might think that these questions are common sense, but most people don't take the time to do an emotional checkup on themselves. Also, it's important to check your expectations of yourself, situations, and others. Are they realistic? Often people have expectations that just can't be fulfilled, and they set themselves up for feelings of disappointment or frustration. Make sure that what you want is realistic and achievable.

**Step 2:** Are you practicing mood-balancing strategies (Behavioral)? The key to emotional equilibrium is to behave in ways that create balance. Ask yourself if you have been doing anything on a regular basis that helps you to feel grounded. These strategies generally fall into three categories:

- Mind: Let yourself take a "mental break". Some examples include daydreaming, listening to music that you enjoy, or taking a day for yourself.
- Exercise: Research shows that exercising regularly three times per week for at least 6 months can yield the same benefits as taking an antidepressant.
- Food: There is an abundance of research documenting the link between what you eat, and how you feel.

**Step 3:** Are you thinking for success (Cognitive)? We always have a running dialogue going in our minds, even if we aren't aware of it. It's important to tune into your inner dialogue every now and again, and make sure that the messages you give yourself are healthy. Having a positive attitude goes a long way to creating an optimistic outlook on life.

If you scored lower than you would like to in the three areas, don't panic. Emotional equilibrium is something that is ongoing. Choose a few small steps that you'd like to try, and go from there. Making very small adjustments to your routine or consciously changing what you think about yourself can make a huge difference!

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