



Emotional Childhood + Emotional Adulthood

Most of us live in **Emotional Childhood** until we decide to start taking ownership of our lives. Emotional Childhood is a state where we are relying on external things to change or people to behave a certain way in order for us to feel better. It is blaming others or circumstances for how we are feeling.

A lot of our living in Emotional Childhood as an adult is due to our conditioning. As children, we don't have the capacity to regulate our emotions by understanding what we are thinking and why we are thinking it. Because children cannot reflect on their thoughts, they are unable to decide what to think and what to feel in a situation. Therefore, they think that everything that's going on in their lives is what causes them to feel a certain way. This is perpetuated by comments we heard from others as a child such as, "Did she hurt your feelings when she said those mean words to you?" By these kinds of messages, we were taught that other people are responsible for how we feel, and it becomes so ingrained in us that we don't even question it or recognize that we're giving our power (agency) away to someone else to dictate how we're going to feel at any given moment. We are disempowered. We make ourselves miserable because, as we know, people are not always going to behave the way we want or expect.

Again, because this is so ingrained in us throughout our lives, we end up living our lives giving our power away to someone else based on their words or actions or beliefs or behaviors. This creates co-dependency, as we are looking to others to solve for our emotions.

We can also recognize that we're living in Emotional childhood when we are taking responsibility for someone else's emotions/feelings. An example of this would be a girl not wanting to break up with her boyfriend because she's afraid he might get depressed if she did. Or angry. Another example would be not saying what you really believe or like or desire because you're afraid someone might get mad at you or be disappointed in you. Saying "yes" out of some kind of fear when you really want to say "no" is also a form of Emotional Childhood.

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Instead, we need to live in **Emotional Adulthood**.

Emotional Adulthood means:

- Having “agency” - or ownership over yourself
- Taking responsibility for the way you think and feel about every event/circumstance/person
- Not expecting people/circumstances to “make” you happy or feel loved or secure, knowing that emotions are generated from within yourself.
- Understanding that you are the only one who can hurt your feelings and that you do so with your own thoughts.
- Being empowered and able to decide for yourself how you’re going to feel.

Taking responsibility for yourself can be a challenge at first. Especially if you’re so used to giving your power away. But it’s worth every effort to keep from feeling like a victim at the mercy of other people and their thoughts, words, actions, and behaviors. It’s worth it to get to decide what kind of person you want to be, how you want to show up in your life and relationships, and what kind of feelings you want to experience daily. You are empowered to then take the kinds of actions that produce the results you really want in your life.

WORK IT OUT:

Fill out the Taking Responsibility For Your Emotions worksheet