

# EMOTIONS

Part of our series of **Rolling Workshops**

## Introduction

Emotions are important because they can help us to communicate with others. Some of our most useful emotional responses include anger, fear, sadness and guilt.

Sometimes the way we manage our emotions can cause us problems. We may feel anxious just at the thought of a particular situation and this can make it even more problematic. At these times we need useful strategies to help us better understand our emotions.

In today's session we will discuss how a diary can be a useful way to manage and keep track of our emotional states. Keeping track of the date and time, the situation, the emotion(s) experienced and the meaning of the situation can help us to process and understand our emotions better.

*Talking*  
**Therapies**  
*Southwark*

## Sneak Peek

What triggers emotions

How they can be useful

How emotions can  
become problems

Nature of emotions

Strategies

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## MAIN 'NEGATIVE' EMOTIONS

	<b>Anger</b>	<b>Sadness</b>	<b>Fear</b>	<b>Guilt</b>
What kind of situations can trigger each?				
How are they useful?				
How can they become a problem?				

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## Emotions are useful

- Anger helps us to ...
  - Sadness is helpful because ...
  - Fear is useful when ....
  - Guilt is useful when ....
- 
- Useful emotions are called primary adaptive emotions
  - See Daniel Siegel talking about importance of emotions and emotional life:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T8\\_dBq4x18](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T8_dBq4x18)

## But emotions can become problems if...

1. They are triggered in the 'wrong' situations. These are called maladaptive emotions.

**Example:** a phobia of water after an experience of nearly drowning.

2. Secondary emotions (emotions about emotions) cause confusion and block awareness of underlying needs associated with primary emotions.

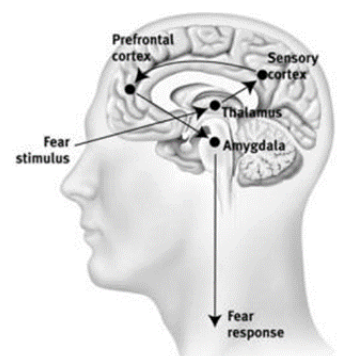
**Example:** getting angry at ourselves when we feel sad because we don't allow ourselves to feel vulnerable, and so we push people away when in fact we need to feel close.

3. Expressing emotions when the 'downstairs brain' is in the driving seat.

**Example:** shouting at someone when we are angry without realising the effect we are having (or even whether it was their fault).

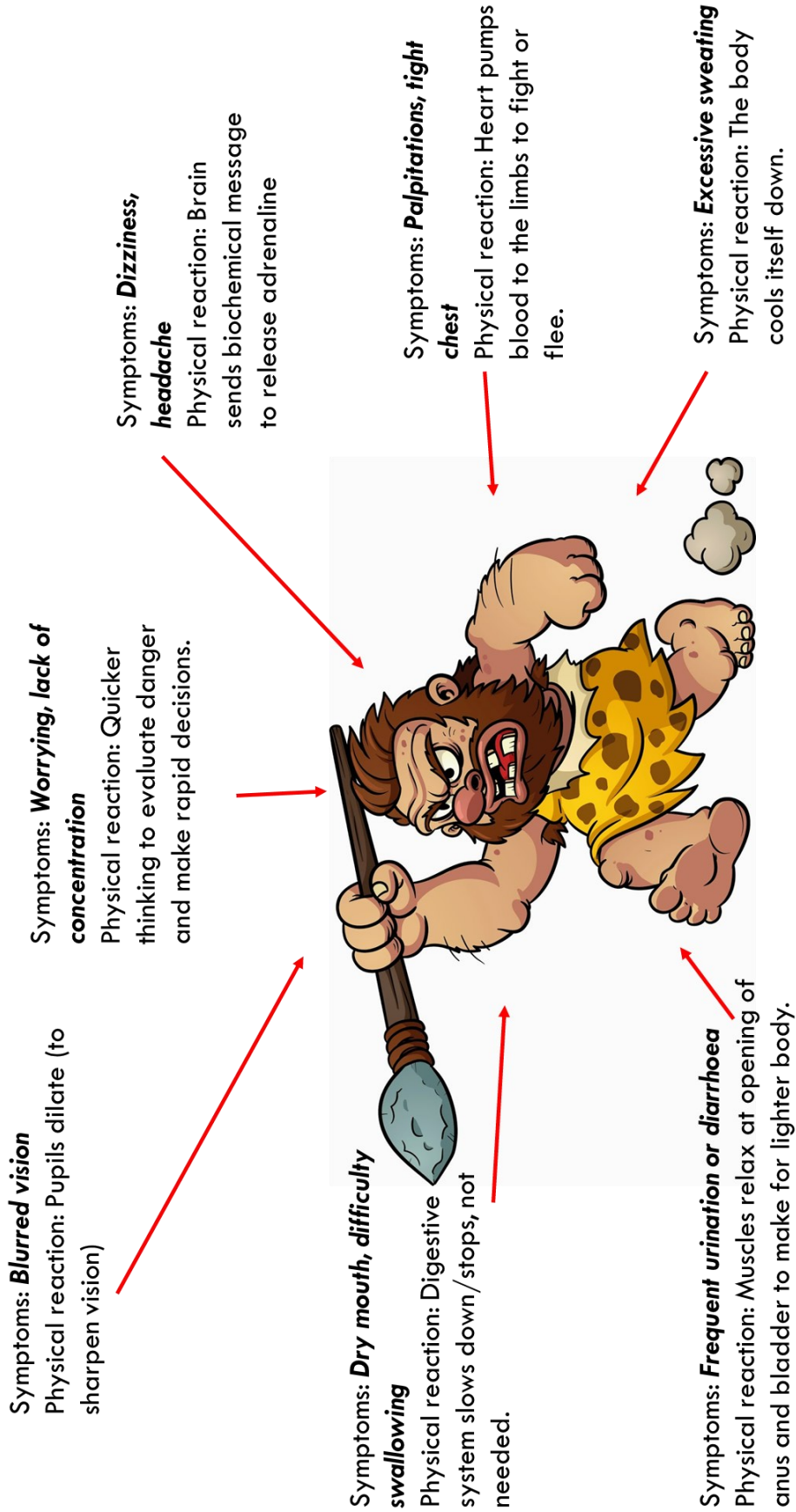
## Emotions are triggered very fast

Automatically, faster than conscious awareness and therefore outside our control; but what we do next has a big effect too. Using the higher brain centres we can either ramp up and prolong the emotion or we can allow the emotion to flow and get a broader perspective on what is going on.



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## Strategies for understanding secondary emotions

Keep an 'emotions diary' like the one below for several weeks and then look for themes to get a deeper understanding of what is going on.

Day & time	Situation	Emotion(s) and feelings (even the ones there are no single words for)	What was it about the situation that fed into these emotions or feelings?	Comments e.g. what sort of emotional response was it?

# CBT EMOTION DIARY

DAY & TIME	SITUATION	EMOTION	INTENSITY 0-10	WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THE SITUATION THAT TRIGGERED THE EMOTION?

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## Strategies for fears and phobias:

### **1. When the fear has already been triggered**

- Use the higher road to understand what is happening; see Daniel Siegel talking about 'name it to tame it' – bringing the 'upstairs brain' online to regulate the 'downstairs brain':  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcDLzppD4Jc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcDLzppD4Jc)
- Don't fight it; see Les Greenberg describing intense emotion as a wave  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKzf1pQKqgU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKzf1pQKqgU)
- Let your self-talk be kind and reassuring rather than catastrophising or self-critical; remind yourself that emotions are normal and can't harm you

### **2. To enable the brain to learn that the situation is safe**

#### **EXPOSURE THERAPY**

1. Take yourself into the situation so that your brain can re-learn that the situation is safe
2. Behave as if the situation is safe (regardless of how you feel)
  - Don't catastrophe
  - Don't take lots of unnecessary precautions or engage in rituals or superstitions
  - Don't run away if you get anxious (the anxiety doesn't mean the situation is dangerous even though it feels as if it does)
3. Stay there long enough for the brain to see that the situation is not dangerous
4. Go back again soon, and then again, and again (it takes a while)

It is often good to do this in small steps, e.g. if you have a fear of travelling in lifts, start with an 'easy' lift, only travel one floor, go with someone. Do this many times. Then take the next small step, and so on.

**THIS WORKS!**



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**My notes:**