Emotions such as joy, anger, sadness and happiness often occur in our daily lives. Emotional reactions are particularly common in adolescents who are undergoing rapid physical, psychological and social development. Therefore, if adolescents can express and handle their emotions well, their psychological health and interpersonal relationships will be enhanced.

**How much do you know about emotions?**

Emotions are subjective human feelings which dictate mood. They are driving forces for our human behaviours.

*Positive emotions include all feelings that are pleasant and soothing such as :-*

- happiness
- satisfaction
- appreciation
- gratitude
- concern
- expectation
- surprise
- admiration

*Negative emotions include :-*

- anger
- bitterness
- dissatisfaction
- sadness
- anxiety
- fear
- shame
- guilt
- jealous

People with positive emotions are optimistic, competent, ready to help others and able to cope with stress. On the other hand, negative emotions will make people unhappy, depressed, discouraged, withdrawn and indignant.

**When will you experience negative emotions?**

1. when insulted or threatened ....................... } anger
   facing resistance or obstacles ..................... }
   when rejected or treated unfairly ................ }

2. losing of beloved persons, pets or belongings .... } sadness
   lacking successful experiences ................... }
   lacking care ........................................ }

3. body changes occurring in puberty ............... }
   sudden changes occurring in the family .......... }
   facing unfamiliar places and situations .......... }
   worrying about disclosure of mistakes .......... }

4. when criticised or blamed ....................... }
   having failure or being defeated ............... }
   when rejected or isolated ...................... }
   suffering from physical illnesses or disabilities }

5. having regret for wrong doings ..................
   committing a mistake ............................. }
   unable to meet expectations ..................... }

**Three Steps in Handling Emotions**

1. **Know your emotions**
   - identifying your emotions accurately helps you understand yourself.
   - understand the triggers for your emotions.
   - be sensitive to others’ feelings so as to minimize misunderstanding

2. **Express your emotions appropriately**
   - learn to express positive emotions such as appreciation, care, forgiveness, satisfaction, happiness, etc. These emotions make life more enriching and meaningful. They also make interpersonal relationships more successful and harmonious.
   - negative emotions should also be expressed appropriately. Suppression of anger or losing temper are not proper ways of expression. It is better to express negative emotions calmly and sensibly so as to avoid hurting yourself, other people and things.
3. Handle your emotions effectively
   a) manage your anger
      – keep away from the sources that stir up your emotion in order to claim down yourself.
      – distract yourself by other pleasurable activities.
      – undergo relaxation activities, e.g. listening to music, doing aerobic exercises.
      – be optimistic and humorous. Look for the positive sides of the incident.
   b) reduce sadness
      – understand the reason for sadness. Face the problems bravely
      – avoid ruminating on our failure or set unrealistically high expectation for yourself.
      – be optimistic and look forward to a bright future
      – establish supportive networks with your parents, teachers, schoolmates and friends so that they can help and encourage you
   c) relieve anxiety and fear
      – be psychologically prepared for the adolescent change
      – take part in social activities to reduce fear about unfamiliar places
      – be well-prepared for examinations or competitions
      – undergo relaxation exercise and deep breathing in anxiety provoking situations.
   d) get rid of shame
      – face reality. Learn to accept yourself and your limitations
      – Appreciate the effort that you have paid
      – don’t be frustrated by failures. Try to improve yourself and learn to rebuild your self-confidence and self-esteem
   e) free yourself from guilt
      – don’t over-react to your failure or mistakes
      – try to find out the reasons for failure and make improvements to avoid repeating mistakes
      – avoid regretting repeatedly over past events. Be courageous and ready to face new challenges

Emotional reactions are common. By knowing the effective ways of expressing your positive emotions as well as handling the negative ones, you will not hurt yourself or those around you.