



Moods & Emotions

We use these two terms interchangeably quite often, but they are actually quite different. In this piece we will briefly explore the difference. Even if it seems trivial or obvious, it is good to be reminded of the difference and in my experience understanding how we work, including our moods and emotions, can sometimes be very useful to help us in our quest to develop our resilience, or other competencies we wish to improve.

If you want to put together a self-assembly cupboard or fix your car or something else you will likely and generally tend to first figure out how it works and how it was put together and only once you understand those principles are you able to problem solve and repair something or improve its performance. Without being too mechanistic about us as human beings, it is really no different. When we understand how we were put together and how we operate, we are able to understand our on and off switches and navigate through our emotions and moods more successfully.

When you page through psychology textbooks you'll come across many different definitions, theories and descriptions of emotions and moods, however, the purpose of the 'Deal With It' material is to make all of these and other sources easier to understand and to apply without needing the academic understanding or the research expertise. So here we go, what follows is a simple explanation of moods and emotions.

Emotions are quite specific and they usually relate to a specific event, set of circumstances and so on. In essence it means you feel something based on how you perceived it, whatever it is. It can be sadness because a loved one died or joy because you got promoted, or anger because someone swung their vehicle in front of you, or excitement because you won an award after working very hard for it.

Moods, on the other hand, are less specific and less directed. Whereas emotions can come quickly and can also be quite intense in a short space of time, moods are usually just a general feeling of whatever you may be feeling. Moods are often undirected. For example, you could just be in a miserable or a good mood for no particular reason. Have you ever just been in a good mood but couldn't link it to something specific? If so, you'll know what I mean. Inversely, have you ever been in a bad mood where everything just seems to irritate you for no particular reason - yes that is a bad mood, undirected and not specific at all.

After you have finished reading this piece, reflect on and then also write down events you have experienced or are currently experiencing as well as the emotions you have experienced. Try to also

focus more on the positive things you have experienced. We tend to revert to thinking about all the negative things we experience or have experienced and simply forget how many things there are to be thankful for. This exercise is a useful one to help you position yourself. Knowing where you're at and why is a useful step. The next powerful step in the quest for emotional control is to actually also acknowledge the good things in your life. I am sure you might be quite surprised how many there are. Sometimes we overlook them because they have somewhat become expectations rather than blessings.

Ask anyone who cannot breathe properly or someone who cannot walk properly... those are things some of us take for granted, but they are things to be truly thankful for. You may be more blessed than you think. Only when we lose something we rely on do we realize how valuable it really was. Appreciate it now, daily and several times per day if you need to.

This is about rewiring your brain. We'll cover that topic also at some stage. Remember to write down what you have experienced and your emotions associated with it. Remember to also write down the things you are thankful for. Do not underestimate the value of writing things down.

