

Emotions and Recovery

Strong Emotions in Recovery

Good



You get your emotions back.

Bad



You get your emotions back.

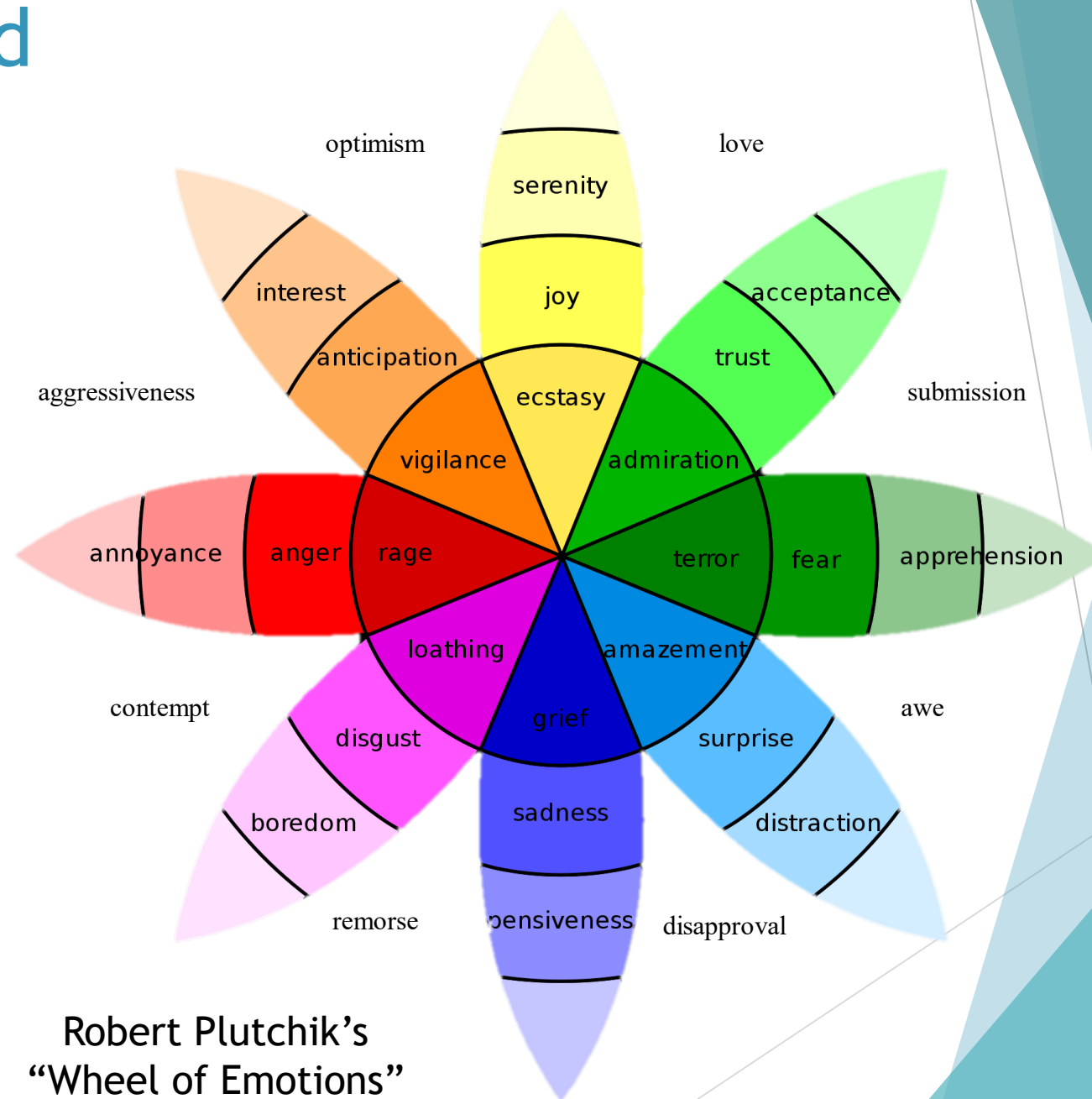


Risk of Strong Emotions

- ▶ When you get caught up in strong emotions, you can struggle to think rationally.
- ▶ Emotions can be a particular risk to those of us who are used to masking feelings with substance abuse.
- ▶ Unless you can find new and more effective ways to deal with your feelings, you will be tempted to resume the destructive coping behavior.

Emotions Defined

Emotion : a complex state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes that influence thought and behavior.



Robert Plutchik's
"Wheel of Emotions"



Strong Emotions

- ▶ Part of being human is to experience emotions.
- ▶ Emotions such as sadness or despair can cause great suffering.
- ▶ alcohol or drugs served as a means to temporarily escape emotional discomfort.
- ▶ The problem with this strategy is that the discomfort has not been eliminated.

Strong Emotions in Recovery

- ▶ When you enter sobriety these hidden emotions can return with a vengeance.
- ▶ If you are unable to deal with these feelings you can become overwhelmed.

anger
anxiety
fear
grief
sadness
stress





Emotional Rollercoaster

- ▶ You have spent days/weeks/months avoiding your emotions.
- ▶ Withdrawal symptoms can lead to negative emotions.
- ▶ You will no longer be able to turn to alcohol or drugs as a means to escape.
- ▶ Insomnia is common for people in early recovery and this impacts their emotional state.

Types of Strong Emotions Experienced

- ▶ Fear about the changes you need to make.
- ▶ Anger and resentment when things are not going your way.
- ▶ Great joy and relief to have escaped your substance use.
- ▶ Excitement about the future.
- ▶ Feelings of guilt about the past.

Types of Strong Emotions Experienced

- ▶ Worry about the possibility of relapse and the challenges of sobriety.
- ▶ Boredom if you do not have things to do.
- ▶ Loneliness because you have needed to break away from your drinking and drug using friends.
- ▶ Disappointment if you have unrealistic expectations for early recovery.

Dangers of Strong Emotions in Recovery



- ▶ When you are under the sway of strong emotions, it usually means that you are not thinking rationally and may be at a high risk for relapse.
- ▶ When you are highly emotional, you tend to make poor decisions.
- ▶ You can use emotions such as boredom or resentment as a justification for a return to alcohol or drug abuse.

Dangers of Strong Emotions in Recovery

- ▶ If you feel overly joyful, you can begin to think that your problems are over - you can become too confident and take things for granted.
- ▶ When you are subject to strong emotions, you tend to feel out of control.



How to Deal with Strong Emotions in Recovery

- ▶ Learn coping strategies that you can use when strong emotions arise.
- ▶ Journaling is a good way to track emotions, and it can also act as an outlet for strong emotions.



How to Deal with Strong Emotions in Recovery



- ▶ Mindfulness meditation is effective at helping people get a handle on their emotions.
- ▶ Those individuals who belong to a fellowship may find that this gives them an outlet for their strong emotions.

How to Deal with Strong Emotions in Recovery

- ▶ If you develop emotional sobriety, it will mean that you will be far less likely to suffer from the negative effects of strong emotions.
- ▶ If you find that your emotions are holding you back, it may be advisable for you to see a therapist.



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Development Emotional Sobriety

- ▶ Rarely have to deal with strong emotions.
- ▶ Find it easy to live in the present moment. You do not waste time worrying about the future or feeling guilty about the past.
- ▶ You will find it easy to regulate your own behavior. You are unlikely to fall into any behaviors that would be considered maladaptive.
- ▶ You will hold an optimistic view on life.

Development Emotional Sobriety

- ▶ You will have far less stress to deal with in your life.
- ▶ Less stress means that you will be less likely to suffer from stress related illness.
- ▶ The person who is emotionally sober finds it easy to develop deep and meaningful relationships with other people.
- ▶ The emotionally sober feel able to cope no matter what is happening in your life.