

This is an excerpt from
At the Heart of Leadership
by Joshua Freedman.

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EXERCISE FOR PUTTING IT IN PRACTICE

Think of a decision you have to make, or a situation you are facing right now in your work or life. Something where you could really use your full wisdom. Perhaps you have a challenge with a colleague, a new initiative you are developing, a major organizational or life change, or a similar significant opportunity? This

exercise works with any decision, so it does not need to be monumental – in fact, it may be easier to start practicing with an important-but-not-critical situation.

In 30 seconds, note down the situation in a few bullet points.

Now apply the model.

1. Know Yourself: What are you feeling?

You always have more than one feeling, but it can be hard to identify. It may help you to focus on the situation, then notice your own body's reaction – where are you tense? How does your stomach feel, etc. Now write down some feelings. To help you, on the next page there is a list of basic emotions and some of the less and more extreme feelings that go with the emotion.

What are your feelings about the situation? (It is helpful to identify 2-3; sometimes feelings are paradoxical).

FIGURE 4.4: NAMING EMOTIONS

EACH EMOTION HAS A WIDE RANGE OF VARIATION / INTENSITY:

Emotion	Low Intensity	High Intensity
Anger	annoyance	rage
Anticipation	interest	vigilance
Joy	serenity	ecstasy
Trust	acceptance	adoration
Fear	concern	terror
Surprise	distraction	amazement
Sadness	pensiveness	grief
Disgust	boredom	loathing

There are many different theories about emotions and lists of the “basic” emotions. This model comes from a researcher named Robert Plutchik who focused on the physiological aspects of emotion (how they work in the body). More detail on his model and emotions is in chapter five.

2. Choose Yourself: What are your options?

It can be very difficult to find options when you are in reaction (for example, when you are fighting or distressed). Using your skills at Consequential Thinking, Navigating Emotions, Intrinsic Motivation, and Optimism, you can identify three or more choices of what you could think, feel, and do. Consider what you want to achieve in the short term, decide what results you'd like to get right now.

If you find it challenging to identify multiple options, try changing your mood by watching a funny television show, talking to a good friend, or having a walk. Often we get stuck in “this is the only way” when we're stressed, frustrated, afraid, hurt, etc. Breaking the cycle of escalation (see chapter six) lets you step out of reaction and innovate.

Get out of reaction and then identify three or more options:

3. Give Yourself: What is the empathic and principled choice?

Empathy is an emotional response to others' emotions. What are the other people involved thinking and feeling? If you let yourself be open and a little vulnerable, what do you feel in response? Empathy is basically non-analytical, it's an openness to another's experience and perspective. Being empathic does not mean your choice should make everything feel nice for others, it just means that you are experiencing the feelings and are taking those into account. The reason empathy is part of "Give Yourself" is that it is only when you really put yourself in a kind of Servant Leader mode – when you give of yourself – that you can open yourself to another's feelings. In so doing, you gain tremendous insight and influence – but if you do it for selfish reasons, you don't get the benefit. If you accept that person is doing the best they can, and set your intention to support her or him, and you truly give yourself to the person, you will gain deep understanding.

Now, reflect on your own abiding sense of purpose. Why are you in this world? What is your legacy? We will explore this more in chapter seven, and you will see why this is the hallmark of an exceptional leader. Which of your options sustains your Noble Goal and supports the other people in the situation to be and do their best as well?

Which option is most empathic and aligned with your purpose?

What conclusion did you come to?

Did reflecting on the situation through these three steps help you find clarity?

Now that you've gone through these steps, can you better communicate your decision with strength and compassion?

End of Excerpt