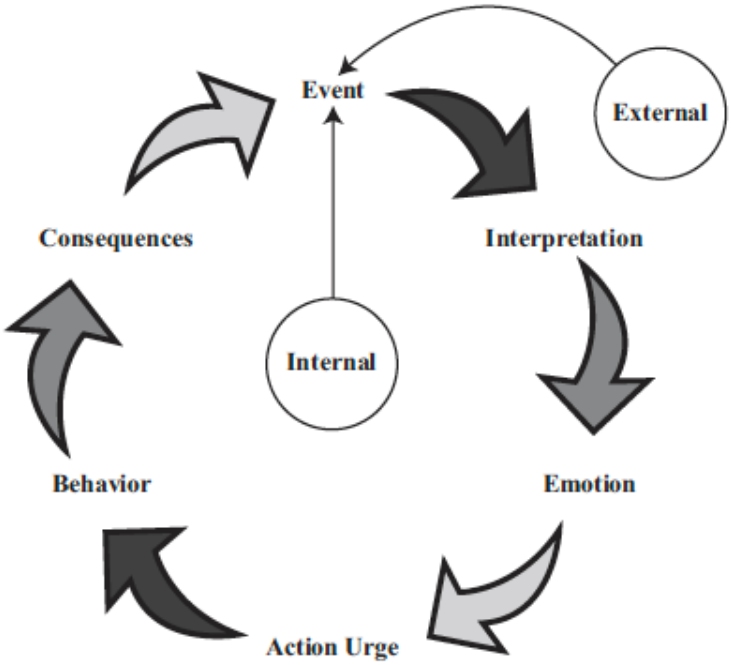
MODEL OF EMOTIONS

CORE CONCEPT: Knowing how emotions happen helps us influence them.

Emotions seem to happen out of the blue for many people, complete with ineffective and reactive behaviors that flow from those emotions. Fortunately, you can learn to influence and even change many emotions and resulting actions by understanding how emotions happen in the first place. The model of emotions below will assist your efforts. At any given time, you can stop and use your mindfulness skills to reflect on this model and how it relates to your emotions, and then make any necessary changes.



Event

Events begin the cycle of emotion, and they can be internal (within us) or external (in our environment). Use your mindfulness skills to connect an emotion to its source.

Interpretation

How we interpret events has a tremendous influence on what we feel. Step back and Observe and Describe the available facts to check your interpretation (also called self-talk or automatic thoughts) of the event. Ask yourself whether the interpretation works in the situation and consider other ways of looking at the situation. Is the interpretation from Wise Mind? Is Nonjudgmental Stance needed? Are there dialectical alternative interpretations?

Emotion

Use Observe and Describe to notice your emotional experience. What is happening in your body (e.g., muscle relaxation or tension, heart rate)? What is happening externally with your body (e.g., facial expressions, posture)? What are you communicating both verbally and nonverbally? Use the available information to name your emotion. Remember to Observe and Describe the emotion nonjudgmentally.

Also, try to see whether another feeling is underneath what you Observe and Describe on the surface. For example, hurt or embarrassment might underlie anger or guilt, and shame might underlie depression. Getting to the emotions underneath the surface emotion increases understanding, and increased understanding creates more options.

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Action urge and Behavior

What is the emotion urging or pulling you toward? Or is a behavior already happening? From what state of mind are your action urges and behaviors flowing? Remember to validate your emotion(s) and choose behaviors from a centered, Wise Mind place. Participate with Effectiveness and respond rather than react. Delay your behavior if you anticipate that it will be ineffective. Note that some action urges can be effective, and it is important to act on those, but other actions should not be acted on because they will be ineffective. Can you think of examples of each?

Consequences

Observe and Describe what consequences result from your behavior. Evaluate what worked and what did not work, and learn from your experience.

Emotions and choices in response to them influence what happens with subsequent events, perpetuating the cycle. Use this knowledge to continue positive emotions with Mood Momentum or break out of ineffective emotions with Opposite to Emotion.