



Opposite Action

Use opposite action when your emotions do NOT fit the facts
or when acting on your emotions is NOT effective.

EVERY EMOTION HAS AN ACTION URGE.

CHANGE THE EMOTION BY ACTING OPPOSITE TO ITS ACTION URGE.

Consider these examples:

<u>EMOTION</u>	<u>ACTION URGE</u>	<u>OPPOSITE ACTION</u>
Fear	Run away/avoid	Approach/don't avoid
Anger	Attack	Gently avoid/be a little nice
Sadness	Withdraw/isolate	Get active
Shame	Hide/avoid	Tell the secret to people who will accept it

HOW TO DO OPPOSITE ACTION, STEP BY STEP

- Step 1. IDENTIFY AND NAME THE EMOTION** you want to change.
- Step 2. CHECK THE FACTS** to see if your emotion is justified by the facts.
Check also whether the intensity and duration of the emotion fit the facts.
(*Example: "Irritation" fits the facts when your car is cut in front of; "road rage" does not.*)
An emotion is justified when your emotion fits the facts.
- Step 3. IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE YOUR ACTION URGES.**
- Step 4. ASK WISE MIND:** Is expression or acting on this emotion effective in this situation?
If your emotion does not fit the facts or if acting on your emotion is not effective:
- Step 5. IDENTIFY OPPOSITE ACTIONS** to your action urges.
- Step 6. ACT OPPOSITE ALL THE WAY** to your action urges.
- Step 7. REPEAT ACTING OPPOSITE** to your action urges until your emotion changes.



Figuring Out Opposite Actions

FEAR

Fear **FITS THE FACTS** of a situation whenever there is a **THREAT** to:

- A. Your life or that of someone you care about.
- B. Your health or that of someone you care about.
- C. Your well-being or that of someone you care about.
- D. Other example: _____

Follow these suggestions when your fear is **NOT JUSTIFIED** by the facts or **NOT EFFECTIVE**:

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Fear

Do the **OPPOSITE** of your fearful action urges. For example:

1. Do what you are afraid of doing . . . **OVER AND OVER**.
2. **APPROACH** events, places, tasks, activities, and people you are afraid of.
3. Do things to give yourself a sense of **CONTROL** and **MASTERY** over your fears.

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Fear

4. Keep your **EYES AND EARS OPEN** and focused on the feared event.
Look around slowly; explore.
5. Take in the information from the situation (i.e., notice that you are safe).
6. Change **POSTURE AND KEEP A CONFIDENT VOICE TONE**.
Keep your head and eyes up, and your shoulders back but relaxed.
Adopt an assertive body posture (e.g., knees apart, hands on hips, heels a bit out).
7. Change your **BODY CHEMISTRY**.
For example, do paced breathing by breathing in deeply and breathing out slowly.

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ANGER

Anger **FITS THE FACTS** of a situation whenever:

- A.** An important goal is blocked or a desired activity is interrupted or prevented.
- B.** You or someone you care about is attacked or hurt by others.
- C.** You or someone you care about is insulted or threatened by others.
- D.** The integrity or status of your social group is offended or threatened.
- E.** Other example: _____

Follow these suggestions when your anger is **NOT JUSTIFIED** by the facts or is **NOT EFFECTIVE**:

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Anger

Do the **OPPOSITE** of your angry action urges. For example:

- 1. **GENTLY AVOID** the person you are angry with (rather than attacking).
- 2. **TAKE A TIME OUT**, and breathe in and out deeply and slowly.
- 3. **BE KIND** (rather than mean or insulting).

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Anger

- 4. **IMAGINE UNDERSTANDING** and empathy for the other person.

Step into the other person's shoes. Try to see the situation from the other person's point of view.

Imagine really good reasons for what has happened.

- 5. **CHANGE YOUR POSTURE.**

Unclench hands, with palms up and fingers relaxed (**WILLING HANDS**).

Relax chest and stomach muscles.

Unclench teeth.

Relax facial muscles. Half-smile.

- 6. **CHANGE YOUR BODY CHEMISTRY.**

For example, do paced breathing by breathing in deeply and breathing out slowly.

Or, run or engage in another physically energetic, nonviolent activity.

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DISGUST

Disgust **FITS THE FACTS** of a situation whenever:

- A.** Something you are in contact with could poison or contaminate you.
- B.** Somebody whom you deeply dislike is touching you or someone you care about.
- C.** You are around a person or group whose behavior or thinking could seriously damage or harmfully influence you or the group you are part of.
- D.** Other example: _____

Follow these suggestions when your disgust is **NOT JUSTIFIED** by the facts or is **NOT EFFECTIVE**:

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Disgust

Do the **OPPOSITE** of your disgusted action urges. For example:

- 1. **MOVE CLOSE.** Eat, drink, stand near, or embrace what you found disgusting.
- 2. Be **KIND** to those you feel contempt for; step into the other person's shoes.

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Disgust

- 3. **IMAGINE UNDERSTANDING** and empathy for the person you feel disgust or contempt for.
Try to see the situation from the other person's point of view.
Imagine really good reasons for how the other person is behaving or looking.
- 4. **TAKE IN** what feels repulsive.
Be sensual (inhaling, looking at, touching, listening, tasting).
- 5. **CHANGE YOUR POSTURE.**
Unclench hands with palms up and fingers relaxed (willing hands).
Relax chest and stomach muscles.
Unclench teeth.
Relax facial muscles.
Half-smile.
- 6. **CHANGE YOUR BODY CHEMISTRY.**
For example, do paced breathing by breathing in deeply and breathing out slowly.

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ENVY

Envy FITS THE FACTS of a situation whenever:

- A. Another person or group has what you want or need but don't have.
- B. Other example: _____

Follow these suggestions when your envy is NOT JUSTIFIED by the facts or is NOT EFFECTIVE:

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Envy

Do the OPPOSITE of your envious action urges. For example:

- 1. INHIBIT DESTROYING what the other person has.
- 2. COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS. Make a list of the things you are thankful for.

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Envy

- 3. COUNT ALL your blessings.

- Avoid discounting some blessings.
 - Avoid exaggerating your deprivations.

- 4. Stop EXAGGERATING others' net worth or value; check the facts.

- 5. CHANGE YOUR POSTURE.

- Unclench hands with palms up and fingers relaxed (WILLING HANDS).
 - Relax chest and stomach muscles.
 - Unclench teeth.
 - Relax facial muscles.
 - Half-smile.

- 6. CHANGE YOUR BODY CHEMISTRY.

- For example, do paced breathing by breathing in deeply and breathing out slowly.

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JEALOUSY

Jealousy **FITS THE FACTS** of a situation whenever:

- A.** Someone is threatening to take a very important and desired relationship or object away from you.
- B.** An important and desired relationship is in danger of being damaged or lost.
- C.** Other example: _____

Follow these suggestions when your jealousy is **NOT JUSTIFIED** by the facts or is **NOT EFFECTIVE**:

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Jealousy

Do the **OPPOSITE** of your jealous action urges. For example:

- 1. **LET GO** of controlling others' actions.
- 2. **SHARE** the things and people you have in your life.

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Jealousy

- 3. **STOP SPYING** or snooping.

Suppress probing questions ("Where were you? Who were you with?").
Fire your "private detective."

- 4. **NO AVOIDING.** Listen to all the details. Focus on sensations.

Keep your eyes open; look around.
Take in all the information about the situation.

- 5. **CHANGE YOUR POSTURE.**

Unclench hands with palms up and fingers relaxed (**WILLING HANDS**).
Relax chest and stomach muscles.
Unclench teeth.
Relax facial muscles.
Half-smile.

- 6. **CHANGE YOUR BODY CHEMISTRY.**

For example, do paced breathing by breathing in deeply and breathing out slowly.

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LOVE

Love (other than universal love for all) FITS THE FACTS of a situation whenever:

- A. Loving a person, animal, or object enhances quality of life for you or for those you care about.
- B. Loving a person, animal, or object increases your chances of attaining your own personal goals.
- C. Other example: _____

Follow these suggestions when your love is NOT JUSTIFIED by the facts or is NOT EFFECTIVE:

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Love

Do the OPPOSITE of your loving action urges. For example:

1. AVOID the person, animal, or object you love.
2. DISTRACT yourself from thoughts of the person, animal, or object.
3. REMIND yourself of why love is not justified (rehearse the “cons” of loving) when loving thoughts do arise.

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Love

4. AVOID CONTACT with everything that reminds you of a person you love: pictures, letters/ messages/e-mails, belongings, mementos, places you were together, places you planned to or wanted to go together, places where you know the person has been or will be. No following, waiting for, or looking for the person.
5. STOP EXPRESSING LOVE for the person, even to friends. Be unfriendly toward the person (e.g., “unfriend” the person on Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
6. ADJUST YOUR POSTURE AND EXPRESSIONS if you are around the person you love.
No leaning toward him or her.
No getting close enough to touch.
No sighing/gazing at the person.

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SADNESS

Sadness FITS THE FACTS of a situation whenever:

- A.** You have lost something or someone permanently.
- B.** Things are not the way you want or expected and hoped them to be.
- C.** Other example: _____

Follow these suggestions when sadness is NOT JUSTIFIED by the facts or is NOT EFFECTIVE:

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Sadness

Do the OPPOSITE of your sad action (or inaction) urges. For example:

1. Get ACTIVE; approach.
2. AVOID AVOIDING.
3. BUILD MASTERY: Do things that make you feel competent and self-confident.
(See *Emotion Regulation Handout 19: Build Mastery and Cope Ahead.*)
4. Increase PLEASANT EVENTS.

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Sadness

5. Pay attention to the PRESENT MOMENT!
Be mindful of your environment—each detail as it unfolds.
Experience new or positive activities you are engaging in.
6. CHANGE YOUR POSTURE (adopt a “bright” body posture, with head up, eyes open, and shoulders back).
Keep an upbeat voice tone.
7. CHANGE YOUR BODY CHEMISTRY.
For example, increase physical movement (run, jog, walk, or do other active exercise).

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SHAME

Shame FITS THE FACTS of a situation whenever:

- A. You will be rejected by a person or group you care about if your personal characteristics or behavior are made public.
- B. Other example: _____

Follow these suggestions when *both* shame and guilt are NOT JUSTIFIED by the facts or are NOT EFFECTIVE:

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Shame

Do the OPPOSITE of your action urges. For example:

- 1. MAKE PUBLIC your personal characteristics or your behavior (with people who won't reject you).
- 2. REPEAT the behavior that sets off shame over and over (without hiding the behavior from those who won't reject you).

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Shame

- 3. NO APOLOGIZING or trying to make up for a perceived transgression.
- 4. TAKE IN all the information from the situation.
- 5. CHANGE YOUR BODY POSTURE. Look innocent and proud. Lift your head; "puff up" your chest; maintain eye contact. Keep your voice tone steady and clear.

Follow these suggestions when shame is NOT JUSTIFIED by the facts or is NOT EFFECTIVE, but *GUILT IS JUSTIFIED* (your behavior does violate your own moral values):

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Shame

Do the OPPOSITE of your action urges. For example:

- 1. MAKE PUBLIC your behavior (with people who won't reject you).
- 2. APOLOGIZE for your behavior.
- 3. REPAIR the transgressions, or work to prevent or repair similar harm for others.
- 4. COMMIT to avoiding that mistake in the future.
- 5. ACCEPT the consequences gracefully.

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Shame

- 6. FORGIVE yourself. Acknowledge the causes of your behavior.
- 7. LET IT GO.

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GUILT

Guilt FITS THE FACTS of a situation whenever:

- A. Your behavior violates your own values or moral code.
- B. Other example: _____

Follow these suggestions when *both* guilt and shame are NOT JUSTIFIED by the facts or are NOT EFFECTIVE:

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Guilt

Do the OPPOSITE of your action urges. For example:

1. MAKE PUBLIC your personal characteristics or your behavior (with people who won't reject you).
2. REPEAT the behavior that sets off guilt over and over (without hiding the behavior from those who won't reject you).

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Guilt

3. NO APOLOGIZING or trying to make up for a perceived transgression.
4. TAKE IN all the information from the situation.
5. CHANGE YOUR BODY POSTURE. Look innocent and proud. Lift your head; "puff up" your chest; maintain eye contact. Keep your voice tone steady and clear.

Follow these suggestions when guilt is NOT JUSTIFIED by the facts or is NOT EFFECTIVE *but SHAME IS JUSTIFIED* (you will be rejected by people you care about if found out):

OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Guilt

1. HIDE your behavior (if you want to stay in the group).
2. USE INTERPERSONAL SKILLS (if you want to stay in the group).
3. WORK TO CHANGE the person's or group's values.
4. JOIN A NEW GROUP that fits your values (and will not reject you).
5. REPEAT the behavior that sets off guilt over and over with your new group.

ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Guilt

6. VALIDATE YOURSELF.