

Reframing Emotions

Reframing Our Response: A Guide for Going Deeper

Note for Users:

Reframing Our Response: A Guide for Going Deeper is the last week in an 11-week guide that accompanies the podcast *More to It: Reframing Emotions*.¹ Each session is designed to help you and your community know, love, and praise God for His wonderful design for our emotions, even the ones we view as “negative.” The guide features an episode summary, definitions of relevant terms, Scripture reading, discussion questions, activities, prayers, and reflection prompts.

Each section in a session (for example, prayer and discussion) features a timestamp, but the timestamp is simply a suggestion for the amount of time to spend. At times, you and your community may want to linger with the discussion questions. Or maybe you need to spend more time engaging with a concept through a small group activity. You should prioritize what produces the most flourishing in your community, even if it means bending or breaking the time “rules.”

In the podcast, one of our counselors suggests emotions—even the negative ones—are echoes of Eden. If we listen to those echoes and follow them to their source, we might just end up back in the garden, not hiding from God, but experiencing the forevermore joy found in His presence. As you use this guide with your community, we pray that a spirit of unity, curiosity, and humility will be present, creating a space in which you can be vulnerable, drawing near to God and one another.

The Austin Stone Institute, The Austin Stone Counseling Center

¹ Subscribe to the podcast here: <https://pod.link/1626545281>.

Session 11: Reframing Our Response

Episode Main Point

Reframing how we respond to our emotions is slow work. It involves our minds, hearts, and bodies, and it involves our communities.

Episode Summary

In this episode the counselors address topics not yet covered in the other episodes. For example, they discuss the role of medication in counseling practice. The counselors suggest medication is like any other good in our life. Food is good, but it can be misused. Money is neither good nor evil, but it can be misused, too. The same principle applies to medication. “Medication can’t save you,” says Shanda Anderson, “but it can help you get that stabilizing ability needed to do the work emotionally and spiritually and to orient your life to a more helpful perspective.”

The counselors also address potential pitfalls. Brittany Beltran, for instance, warns against an over-emphasis on self-introspection. Andrew Dealy adds, “If we spend the majority of our time just looking at ourselves, we will just naturally become selfish, people who are utterly self-oriented.” Brittany Beltran and Andrew Dealy offer an antidote to corrosive introspection: an engagement with emotions and the stories driving them that perpetually pushes us to change our perspective and move outward, toward God and others.

The counselors also address the role of professional counseling within the context of community. When is it appropriate to seek a counselor’s aid? The counselors offer some guidelines, with one concerning strong emotional responses due to past trauma. At the same time, the counselors say community and counseling ought to be partners, not separate entities. The person seeing a counselor and the group supporting them should grow together, learning from and loving one another.

Finally, the counselors consider how our emotions—and the ways we interact with them—can declare the hope we have in Jesus. “Our emotions,” says Andrew Dealy, “tell us we were designed for a different world, we were designed for a different experience than the one we experience.” In addition, by engaging our emotions from a biblical framework and through healthy habits, we build a foundation that produces empathy, connection, and the ability to help people better understand the human experience.

Definitions

- **Insight:** Insight is new understanding. When applied to emotions, insight refers to a new understanding of the causes or stories that trigger particular felt responses to various circumstances and people.

Scripture

Matthew 16:13–20; Luke 10:25–37; 2 Corinthians 12:1–10; Matthew 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:40–46; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7; Romans 15:1–7; Romans 1:8–15; Romans 7:21–25; 2 Corinthians 6:1–10

Pray (5 min)

Before beginning the study, pray aloud, using either your own words or the words provided.

Heavenly Father, as we end this season of exploring emotions, help us to establish healthy habits. Nurture in us humility, curiosity, and vulnerability. We know our emotions are a part of Your good design, and our emotions are essential to growing in Christ. We want to remain mindful of that in the months and years to come. When we forget the goodness of our emotions, remind us with Your Word and with Your people. We recognize, however briefly or dimly, that emotions can prompt us to seek You. Thank You, Lord, for being patient with us, and for teaching us Your ways. Amen.

Read (5–10 min)

Either read the following Bible verses aloud or invite a volunteer to read.

¹ We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³ For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” ⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. (Romans 15:1–7)

Discuss (15–20 min)

Answer the following questions.



- What is our “obligation” according to this passage?
- “Obligation” can sound like duty. But Shanda Anderson says it’s a privilege and an honor to come alongside someone who is suffering. How might our obligation actually be “a privilege and an honor”?
- What is the aim or purpose of bearing with one another? Why is bearing one another’s burdens good for us as individuals and as a community?
- What surprised or intrigued you about the counselors’ stance on medication and professional counseling? How might that stance help you reframe your understanding of medication or counseling?

Engage (10 min)

In smaller groups of 2 and 3, respond to the following questions.

- In the podcast, the counselors talk about the power of our testimonies, our stories of God’s faithfulness in our lives. What testimonies have helped you to know, love, and follow Jesus?
- How have you seen God’s faithfulness or how have you grown in faithfulness to God over the course of this podcast and guide? Share that testimony with your small group.

Pray (5 min)

Either read the following liturgy, a worshipful prayer, aloud or invite a volunteer to read.

A Liturgy for Bringing our Emotions to God

O LORD my Strength, I cry to You
for You console my soul.

When my emotions roil,
anger and sorrow and shame
all surging within me, breakers
crashing, clashing, dragging me
into their undertow—
O LORD, help!
Please help.
Lift my head above the waves
and guide my wheezing breath
until it is held
and released,
held and released.



Teach me to rest upon You,
like a child with his mother.
O Lord, calm my soul!

O LORD my Strength, I cry to You;
You are my soul's consolation.

When my emotions seem remote,
as distant and unknowable as pinprick stars,
and I drift through the days,
a sailor without compass or map—
comfort me with Your people.
Bring me to the joy
of presence: sitting and beholding
one another face to face.
And there, O Lord—
what a wonder,
what a mystery!
There, You satisfy us
with Your love. You renew
our weary souls in mercies
always new each morning.

O LORD our Strength, we sing praises to You.
Whether our emotions swell or shrink within our hearts,
You console our souls.

All praise be to the Lord who draws near and delivers us!
Amen.

Reflect

Complete the following reflection on your own.

Spend 15–45 minutes contemplating the podcast season. The following prompts can get you started.

- Andrew Dealy compares reframing our response to emotions to throwing a ball with our non-dominant hand. What provoked discomfort during the podcast season?
- Did that discomfort lead to any insights? If so, what were they?



- What habits might you need to adopt to “let insight move into your heart, move into your practice, and move into how you do life” (Andrew Dealy)?



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