

## Overview

Emotion shifts are the things we do to help us not get stuck in an upsetting thought or feeling. Emotion shifts are used to help us take a break from upsetting thoughts and feelings, but not to try and forget about them. The more confident we become in using emotion shifts, the less we will worry about having the upsetting thoughts and feelings and the more we can then feel safe in looking at and figuring out the things that cause us to become upset.

In medicine, emotion shifts are especially helpful for residents who are moving quickly from one activity to another or one patient to another. Using an emotion shift can help you avoid bringing a negative emotion (anger, frustration, impatience, anxiety) that emerged in a prior activity into your next activity. Imagine the clinic patient who sees you after you just found out you have 2 admits waiting. Doing an emotion shift will help you approach that clinic patient with attention and compassion rather than the emotions that might have popped up about the extra work.

Emotion shifts were introduced to us by Dr. Lee Lipsenthal. Information about his presentations, including emotion shifts is at <http://www.findingbalanceproductions.com>.

An adaptation of the emotion shift involves these steps:

- Become aware of the negative emotion or thought. Use your awareness of when you are angry, frustrated, impatient, anxious to prompt you to start an emotion shift.
- Pick an alternative emotion you would prefer to have in place of the negative one. For example you could substitute calm for impatient, relaxed for tense, accepting for angry.
- Pick an image you naturally associate for the preferred emotion. For example, the image for calm could be standing in a park on a warm summer day feeling the sun's rays.
- Then do the following:
  1. Take a deep breath, hold it briefly and then slowly exhale, letting your shoulders drop as you exhale.
  2. Take another deep breath, hold it briefly and then slowly exhale, close your eyes and picture the positive image.
  3. Take another deep breath, hold it briefly and then slowly exhale, close your eyes, picture the positive image and then the preferred emotion you want to have.
  4. Repeat #3
  5. Return to your activity while thinking about the preferred emotion as you start in.

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