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9-2023

Keeping Your Emotions in Check

Brad Hinman

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Keeping Your Emotions in Check

A LOT OF MY WORK IS HELPING PEOPLE DEAL WITH THEIR EMOTIONS. BIG FEELINGS ARE HARD. THIS MAY SOUND LIKE I WORK MAINLY WITH CHILDREN, BUT I DON'T. I WORK PRIMARILY WITH ADULT MEN!



▲ BRAD HINMAN

Ephesians 4:26 and 29 tells us that “In your anger do not sin ... Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” These two verses, and many others, admonish us to control our emotions especially when our inclination is to lash out in anger when we feel strong emotions. People who verbally attack others, or worse yet, try to control others, or punish people who they think are not good enough, would be described as lacking emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence comes from having emotional awareness of how our actions affect others and us. If, for example, you see a brother doing something in his own home or on his own property that you don't like, the Bible admonishes us to go to that brother and discuss that with them directly. We are not to sneak around and try to get that person in trouble, when really our brother's actions are none of our business. People with emotional intelligence are able to regulate their emotions and not act impulsively to cause damage to themselves and others.

This is called emotion regulation. This is a term that means having the ability to effectively manage and process an emotional experience while avoiding the urge to lash out verbally or physically, but rather we use emotion regulation strategies to cope with situations where we see, read or hear something that we interpret as making us angry. What would be most helpful is first to ask ourselves, why is something that someone else is doing any of my concern? This reminds me of Rotary International's

Four Way Test of the things we think, say or do. If I talk to others about this, is what I will say about this person the truth? Would it be fair for me to talk to others about this without my brother present? Is my telling others about this person's actions going to be helpful to all concerned? And finally, would the way I am expressing my big emotions benefit everyone in this situation or just myself?

Our emotions are complicated, I get it. But dealing with them in the wrong way often makes things worse for us and others. It can be difficult for us to counteract our base, sinful nature which encourages us to attack someone verbally for not expressing their autonomy the way we think they should. We will be much more well-adjusted if we allow ourselves to work on our own emotional regulation, rather than trying to regulate others to fit our image of them. ■

It is important to note that this article is not intended to take the place of medical advice or to diminish the effects of mental or personality disorders.

Brad Hinman, LPC, LMFT, AASECT Certified Sex Therapist, is director of Hinman Counseling Services and assistant professor of counselor education in the Andrews University School of Graduate Psychology & Counseling.

