

A Blueprint for Increasing Emotional Competence and Relational Success (principles and goals are excerpted and reformulated from articles written by Susan Johnson)

Principles

Emotion shapes and organizes our experience and our connection to others. It readies us for specific actions: it is the great motivator.

Emotions and emotional signals are the central organizing forces in intimate relationships. Changes in emotional responses, such as increased love and tenderness, are hard to generate if we don't work with emotion directly.

Emotions aren't just inner sensations and impulses; they are profoundly evolved social scripts. Self and system (i.e., you and your partner are a relationship system) are molded in an ongoing, moment-to-moment feedback loop of emotional interactions, or lack of interactions.

Emotion is a complex, exquisitely efficient information processing system, designed to organize behavior rapidly in the interest of survival. It is an internal signaling system, telling us what matters in the flood of stimuli that bombard us, and tuning us in to, and informing us about our inner needs.

Mostly, we act as if emotions simply happen to us: we don't see how we shape our own experience and induce negative responses from others. Viewing experience as an active construction is both regulating and empowering.

Practice Goals – Learning how to Swim

- Learn how to tune into your deeper emotions and listen to them
- Learn how to track your emotional experience and order it into a coherent whole
- Learn how to keep your emotional balance so you can trust your experience and follow your inner sense of what you need
- Learn how to send clear and congruent signals to others about these needs; and learn how to respond reciprocally to the needs of others

We can let ourselves be carried by the river of feeling – because we know how to swim. From [The Wise Heart](#) by Jack Kornfield