

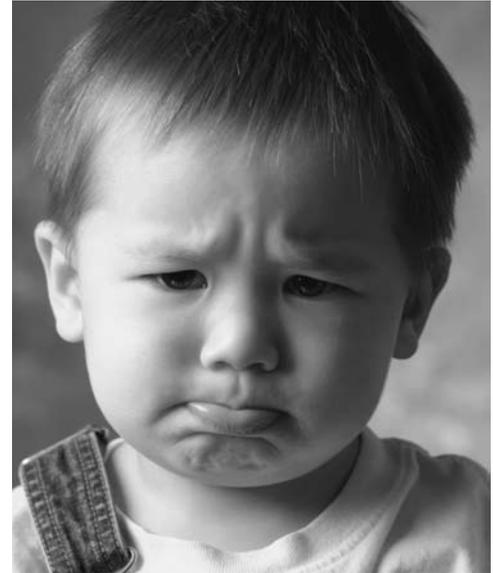
## Lesson 5: Emotional Dimension

As a young child, you freely expressed emotions without regard for the effect they had on others. However, over the years you began to develop **emotional maturity**.

**emotional maturity:**  
the ability of a person to control his or her emotions rather than allowing them to be in control

Emotionally mature people think before acting; they have control over their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. They are able to make appropriate decisions and accept personal responsibility for their actions. They are also able to connect with others in a co-operative and positive way.

Emotional maturity takes longer to develop than physical maturity. In fact, some adults are emotionally immature. You probably know adults who are oversensitive, easily frustrated, and quick to anger; these people are often unreasonably jealous and unable to take criticism. You likely can think of other adults who are self-centred, superficial, and demanding; these people often act thoughtlessly and impulsively. Emotionally immature people usually blame others for making them feel a certain way.



**emotional intelligence:**  
the ability to sense what's really going on in a situation, to assess people's thoughts and feelings accurately, to express empathy, and to respond appropriately

In 1995 Daniel Goleman popularized the concept of **emotional intelligence** (also called EQ) to contrast it with the types of intelligences measured by IQ tests. Goleman argued that IQ contributes about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success; EQ accounts for the other 80 percent. The good news is that emotional intelligence can be learned. In fact, many people today are taking courses to raise their EQ.



In this lesson you will explore the following topics: identifying, understanding, and managing emotions; handling decisions and problems; and coping with peer pressure.

# Identifying and Understanding Emotions

Everyone experiences a wide range of emotions—feelings such as fear, anger, disgust, sadness, and joy. What produces emotions? Why do we have emotions?

## **limbic system:**

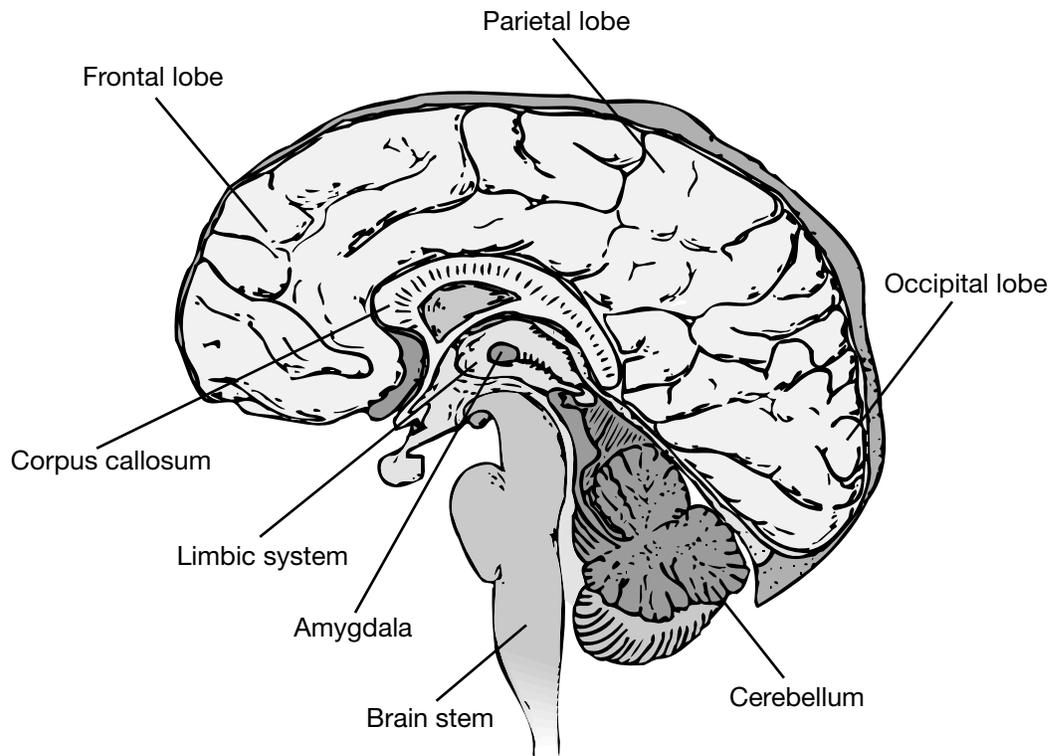
*a group of structures located on top of the brain stem and underneath the corpus callosum*

*The limbic system controls emotions.*

**amygdala:** *a structure in the limbic system about the same size and shape as an almond*

*The amygdala is concerned with emotions.*

Researchers have discovered that the brain's **limbic system**—more specifically the **amygdala**—controls emotions and motivations. The diagram that follows shows you the location of these structures in the brain.



Some people think of positive emotions as good and negative emotions as bad. Emotions by themselves, however, are neither good nor bad; they simply supply information. Your emotions motivate and guide you. Following are examples:

- The feeling of fear is a signal that you are in danger. When you are frightened, your body's natural *fight-or-flight* impulse is triggered. The limbic system in your brain signals your **adrenal glands** to release hormones that prepare your muscles and other body systems for action.
- Your emotions are important clues in decision making. You will feel happy and comfortable with decisions if they are consistent with your values. You will feel unhappy and uncomfortable with decisions if they are not in agreement with your values.

**adrenal glands:** *two glands—one on top of each kidney—that produce hormones*

# Managing Emotions



All of us experience a wide range of emotions in our lives—both pleasant and unpleasant. You need to pay attention to your emotions—they are telling you something. If you are experiencing negative emotions too often, you need to figure out why. Is it because of an ongoing negative situation in your life that needs to be changed or is it because you are over-reacting?

Part of wellness is striving for balance in your life. This includes emotional balance. Emotional balance isn't about getting rid of negative emotions. Instead you want to learn how to experience them, cope with them, and keep them somewhat moderated. Or, in some cases, you want to learn how to seek help and change any negative or painful situation that may be causing negative emotions.

Following are three steps that can help you maintain emotional balance in your life:

**Step 1:** Identify the emotion you are experiencing. If you find it difficult to name the emotion, you may need to pay closer attention to your body. Your body has many ways to let you know that you are experiencing a feeling. Your facial expression, body language, and tone of voice often indicate your emotion. Also be aware of your body's physical reactions to emotion. For example, fear or anxiety may show up as a “knot” in your stomach or a “lump” in your throat.

**Step 2:** Understand the personal meaning of the emotion—the cause. A person, an event, or a memory could be triggering the emotion. Once you have identified the cause, ask yourself the following kinds of questions to determine why you are feeling this way:

- What is this emotion telling me?
- Why has this emotion come up right now?
- Does the intensity of my feelings match the situation?
- What judgments or conclusions have I made? Are they accurate?

People have different strategies for understanding their emotions. Some find it helpful to talk about their emotions with a friend. Others prefer to write about their feelings in a journal.

**Step 3:** Decide how to express your emotions appropriately. Remember that emotions are expressed in thoughts and actions, and you have options about how to express the emotions you experience. Following are some useful questions to consider when deciding how to respond to your feelings:

- What are my options for expressing my feelings?
- What are the risks and consequences of each option for me?
- What are the risks and consequences of each option for others?
- What result am I hoping for?
- What do I want to do?

Dealing with negative emotions in this way gives you more control. It teaches you to turn negative emotions into opportunities for growth.



View Segment 6: Emotional Balance on your Student Support CD. This segment will give you more tips on how to maintain emotional balance in your life.

1. What did you learn about emotional balance from the video segment?

**Compare your answer with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**

Two of the emotions people have the most difficulty managing are sadness and anger. You will discover strategies for handling sadness and anger in Section 2.

## Handling Decisions and Problems

Everyday you make countless decisions. Many are minor decisions—for example, deciding what you will do for entertainment this weekend, what kind of sandwich you will eat for lunch today, or what you will wear to school tomorrow. Generally, these decisions will have little or no impact on your life, so you don't need to spend a lot of time dealing with them. However, some decisions you make are major decisions—for example, deciding what courses you will take in school, if you should quit school, or what you will say if someone offers you drugs. These decisions will have a large impact on your life and the lives of others, so you need to take them seriously. You need to spend more time, thought, and energy in making these decisions.





Following are some tips for making decisions and solving problems:

- **Take time to make important decisions.** Avoid making a decision in the heat of the moment. If you are upset, wait until you calm down and can think the problem through. Better still, try to anticipate when major decisions might have to be made and plan ahead so you will be prepared.
- **Identify and understand the problem.** You can't make a sound decision until you know exactly what you have to decide. Consider your goals, what you hope to accomplish, and what standards you will set for yourself.
- **Identify the options.** Brainstorm a list of alternatives. You can do this alone or with others. Remember that the best options aren't always apparent at first.
- **Study the options.** Get all the facts you can about each possible alternative. Identify the positive and negative points of each option.
- **Weigh the options.** Consider the suitability of each alternative. Ask yourself questions like these: What impact will each option have on me and people around me? What are the risks? What are the consequences? Does it agree with my beliefs about what is good, right, desirable, and worthwhile?
- **Make a decision.** Sometimes the right choice becomes clear to you when you weigh the options. If the decision is a difficult one, however, you may have to eliminate options and then choose the best one.
- **Act on your decision.** Sometimes following through on your decision is the hardest part of decision making.
- **Evaluate the decision.** Think about the outcome of your decision. Did you accomplish the results that you set out to achieve? Did you like the result? Would you make this type of decision again? Would a different decision have been better? Reviewing major decisions helps you learn from your experience.

A Plus-Minus-Interesting (P-M-I) chart like the one that follows can help you organize your thoughts about making a decision.

### P-M-I Decision-making Chart

Question: *I have been offered the answers to the science midterm test. Should I take them?*

**Choice 1**  
*Take the answers.*

**Choice 2**  
*Say "Thanks, but no thanks."*

Plus	Minus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I could ace the midterm.</i></li> <li>- <i>I would raise my average.</i></li> <li>- <i>I wouldn't have to study as hard.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I might get caught.</i></li> <li>- <i>I'll feel guilty.</i></li> <li>- <i>I won't really know the material for the final exam.</i></li> <li>- <i>It's wrong.</i></li> </ul>

Plus	Minus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I'll feel good about myself.</i></li> <li>- <i>I'll be better prepared for the final exam.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I might not do as well on the test.</i></li> <li>- <i>The friend who offered me the answers might be upset with me.</i></li> </ul>

**Interesting**  
(Give reasons why)

- *A number of my friends have taken the answers to avoid studying.*
- *If I cheat once, it might be easier to cheat again.*

**Interesting**  
(Give reasons why)

*Ms. Johnson is my favourite teacher and I know her exam will be fair.*

**My Decision**

*I'll say "Thanks, but no thanks" and prove I can do just as well on the test by using my study strategies to help me prepare for it.*



- Some people are more successful than others at making major decisions. With a partner or small group discuss some of the barriers to making responsible decisions.



**Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**

View Segment 7: A Decision-Making Model on your Student Support CD for more tips on effective decision making.

# Coping with Peer Pressure

When someone gives you a compliment, what is your reaction? Does the compliment lift your spirits and make you feel good about yourself?

Everyone wants their actions, opinions, and feelings to be accepted and valued by others. This desire for belonging and acceptance makes you more susceptible to the influences of your peers—people who are your own age. This influence is commonly called **peer pressure**.

*peer pressure: the influences that people of the same age have on each other*

Peer pressure may be positive. If someone encourages you to do something constructive or discourages you from doing something wrong, that pressure is positive. Consider these two examples of positive peer pressure:

- Friends persuaded Zoya to join the school band. She was reluctant at first, but discovered she really liked playing the trumpet, and the experience was very satisfying and rewarding.
- Mark had been drinking at a party and was about to drive home when his friends talked him into taking a cab instead. The next day Mark realized that his friends had saved him from making a big mistake.

Peer pressure may be negative. If someone encourages you to do something destructive or discourages you from doing something that would be beneficial to you, that pressure is negative. Consider these two examples of negative peer pressure:

- Friends talked Jody into skipping class. Jody knew that cutting classes was wrong and she felt guilty about it. She was also disappointed that she missed hearing a guest speaker.
- Changez told his friend that he wanted to become a peer mediator at school. His friend thought the idea was stupid and asked Changez who he was trying to impress—his teachers or his parents? Changez was totally embarrassed and he dropped the idea.

People who use peer pressure to persuade friends to do something wrong or unwise usually know that they are abusing or exploiting the friendship. However, being able to influence others can make them feel powerful and in control. It is tough to resist peer pressure, but paying attention to your own feelings and beliefs about what is right and wrong can help you choose the appropriate thing to do.



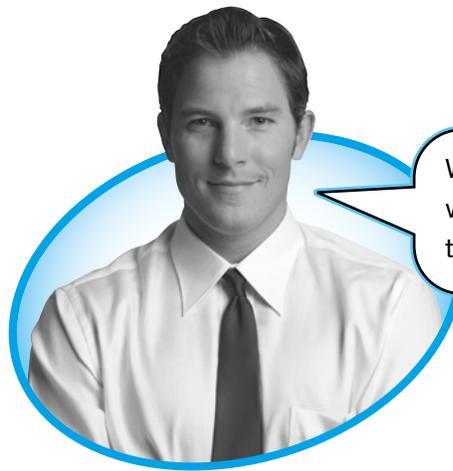
Following are some tips on how to say no to negative peer pressure.

- Remember that you have a right to say no to anything you don't want. You don't need to give reasons.
- Be assertive. Say no convincingly. Use your voice, facial expressions, and gestures, so people know you mean it.
- Leave if the pressure is too great.



3. Role-play a peer pressure situation with a partner or small group.

**Compare your answer with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**



What can you do when you don't want to go along with the crowd? Following are suggestions from teens for ways to resist negative peer pressure.

- Stay away from situations that you know could be trouble. Like if you're asked to a party where you know there's going to be drugs, make other plans.
- Ask questions. When a person pressures you to do something you're not comfortable doing, ask all kinds of questions. Asking questions puts the other person on the defensive and puts you in control.
- Be assertive. Repeat yourself if you have to. Practise saying no in front of a mirror—make eye contact, say no like you mean it.
- Think about the consequences of giving in. For example, what could happen if I drink and drive?
- I find it's easier to resist peer pressure if I am with a friend who shares my values. We can back each other up.

- Don't fall for the old "everybody else is doing it" line. Think about it. There's no way everybody else is doing it, whatever the "it" is.
- Maybe it's time to find new friends. If the group you hang around with is always pressuring you do something you're not comfortable with, they're not really true friends. If they were, they'd respect your values.
- Don't pressure your buddies. You wouldn't want to be pressured into doing something you're not comfortable with so why would you pressure your friends?

Go to page 12 of Assignment Booklet 1A and respond to questions 9 and 10 of Section 1.

## Looking Back; Looking Ahead

In this lesson you examined the emotional dimension of your life. You explored the following topics: understanding emotions, handling decisions and problems, coping with peer pressure, and managing your emotions. This is the last lesson in Section 1. You're almost halfway through Module 1!

## Glossary

**adrenal glands:** two glands—one on top of each kidney—that produce hormones

**amygdala:** a structure in the limbic system about the same size and shape as an almond

The amygdala is concerned with emotions.

**emotional intelligence:** the ability to sense what's really going on in a situation, to assess people's thoughts and feelings accurately, to express empathy, and to respond appropriately

**emotional maturity:** the ability of a person to control his or her emotions rather than allowing them to be in control

**peer pressure:** the influences that people of the same age have on each other

**limbic system:** a group of structures located on top of the brain stem and underneath the corpus callosum

The limbic system controls emotions.

## Suggested Responses

1. The video segment emphasizes having balance in your life. If your feelings overwhelm you, take a break and do something else to take your mind off the situation—go for a bike ride or listen to music. The segment suggests that the emotional and physical dimensions of your life are connected, so take time to eat and sleep. Schedule your time so you don't feel so stressed. Don't worry about the big issues that you can't control—things like terrorism and war. Talk out your troubles with others.
2. Answers will vary. Following are some possible barriers to making responsible decisions:
  - making impulsive decisions without thinking them through
  - procrastinating or avoiding decisions because of the fear of making a mistake
  - vacillating or half-heartedly committing to a course of action
  - making unwise decisions because of irrational ideas or false assumptions
  - making unwise decisions because of the influence of others
3. Did you use a firm tone of voice and a serious expression when you said “no”? Were you assertive and convincing?

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