

Encouraging Emotional Growth

Life's most precious memories are tied to feelings — those of love, achievement, excitement, and hope. Other feelings — those of grief, disappointment, fear, and anger — may also be remembered a long time after they were experienced. Human beings are capable of experiencing a wide range of feelings, and some pleasant ones would not be possible if it were not for the occasional presence of unpleasant ones. What is important to remember is that we have a right to **all** of our feelings. This, of course, means that the "right to feel" extends to our children and to the children of others.

Feelings, since they are part of our "inner selves," are often difficult to identify. In some instances they are elusive. In other situations they can become very intense. Feelings occur with such frequency in our daily lives that they become directly connected to almost everything we think and do.

What we know
+ What we think we know
+ What we feel about that knowledge
= What we decide to do

How we feel about others influences both what we **think of them** and what we **do for them**.

Examples of this type of inter-relatedness between feeling and doing might be found in these situations:

- A man or woman may be abusive to someone for whom they have no feelings one way or the other who in this case is "faceless" or an "unknown" (objectivization/desensitization).
- Some parents abuse the child toward whom they feel anger or hatred (cruelty).
- A brother may lend money to his sister who needs a costly operation (enablement).

Feelings are not only negative or positive. Three general stages of feelings are possible.

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| Positive | Negative | Neutral |
| Love | Hate | Indifference |
| Sympathy | Outrage | Disinterest |

Many parents, teachers, and community people are upset by what they believe to be a growing desensitization of feelings among children and adults. They cite examples of people who stand by uninvolved in the face of the need and pain of others. They express concern about a "me generation" of people who assert the principle of self-gratification, disregarding the needs of others. They suggest that violence on television erodes feelings or incites violent behavior in the young.