



ACTIVITY: Do You Bottle or Brood?

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to:

- Examine the ways we deal with negative emotions
- Discuss how negative emotions can help us

ESTIMATED TIME

10-15 minutes

No materials required

Background

Susan David, author of *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life*, identifies two ways that people ineffectively deal with negative emotions.

Bottlers push away negative feelings. They may be trying to avoid the discomfort of the feelings, or they may think that it is a sign of weakness to acknowledge these negative states. They may also feel that expressing their feelings will alienate others.

Brooders get stuck in negative feelings and don't let go. They relive failures, hurts, and inadequacies.

Both bottling and brooding stem from good intentions. Bottlers want to remain positive. Brooders want to "solve" a problem. But both methods can have detrimental effects on our well-being. Bottlers that don't deal with feelings find that those feelings, and resentments, tend to resurface. Brooders can lose perspective and the importance of minor events becomes greatly exaggerated. With both of these methods we miss out on the ability to actually deal with the issue that is causing our suffering.



Activity

- 1) Using the highlighted information on page 1, explain bottling and brooding.
- 2) Provide an example from your own life when you used either of these methods of dealing with negative emotions. What was the consequence?
- 3) Lead a discussion with the group using the questions below.

Discussion Questions/ Key Points

- What is the purpose of negative emotions?
- What are the benefits to bottling and brooding?
- What are possible negative consequences from bottling? From brooding?
- What are some better ways to deal with negative emotions?
- Are you a bottler or a brooder?
What steps can you take to have healthier emotional choices?

Let's Try This!

If the group is interested in learning more about this topic, email the article below.

Follow-up

Have a follow-up discussion a few weeks later. Has anyone begun to notice times they are not dealing with their negative emotions? Does anyone want to share an experience or something new they've tried when dealing with a negative state?

Bottling Up Emotions Doesn't Work, but Neither Does Brooding. Here's a Different Approach.

Gretchin Rubin.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/bottling-up-emotions-doesnt-work-neither-does-brooding-gretchen-rubin>

Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life (2016).

Susan David