

# EMOTIONAL RESOURCE

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## 4.2 QUESTIONING EMOTIONS

The main job of emotions is to give us emotion messages, to help us understand what is happening to us. However, these messages are just suggestions, not facts, and they are based upon what we have experienced in life. For example, if we have experienced abuse or mis-treatment, then we may become very sensitive to fear and its message of danger, or anger and its message of injustice. We may automatically accept these messages as facts, which can lead to intense emotions and extreme reactions. Alternatively, we may have learned to tune out these messages, leaving ourselves open to danger and mistreatment. The way we learn to react automatically and unconsciously to emotion messages is what we call our *emotional reasoning*. Both of these extremes (ignoring or blindly following our emotion messages) can cause us problems. Learning to consciously treat these messages as valuable suggestions is what we call *questioning emotions*.

It can be hard to question your emotions fully in the moment you are triggered. Instead, it can be helpful to do this before or after an emotional reaction takes place. The **Questioning Emotions Worksheet** guides you in a step-by-step fashion through the process of questioning emotions for a typical emotional reaction. This will leave you with a brief reminder which you can write down and keep for when you need it. You can use your reminder like a flashcard that is brief and helpful enough to use in the moment when you are triggered.

The questions on the following page will be useful in helping you to complete the worksheet and learn how to question your emotions. They fall into two categories: (1) questioning the accuracy of the emotion message and; (2) the helpfulness of the response to it. These questions are just suggestions though as you may think of others that will work well too.

## Instructions – Questioning Emotions

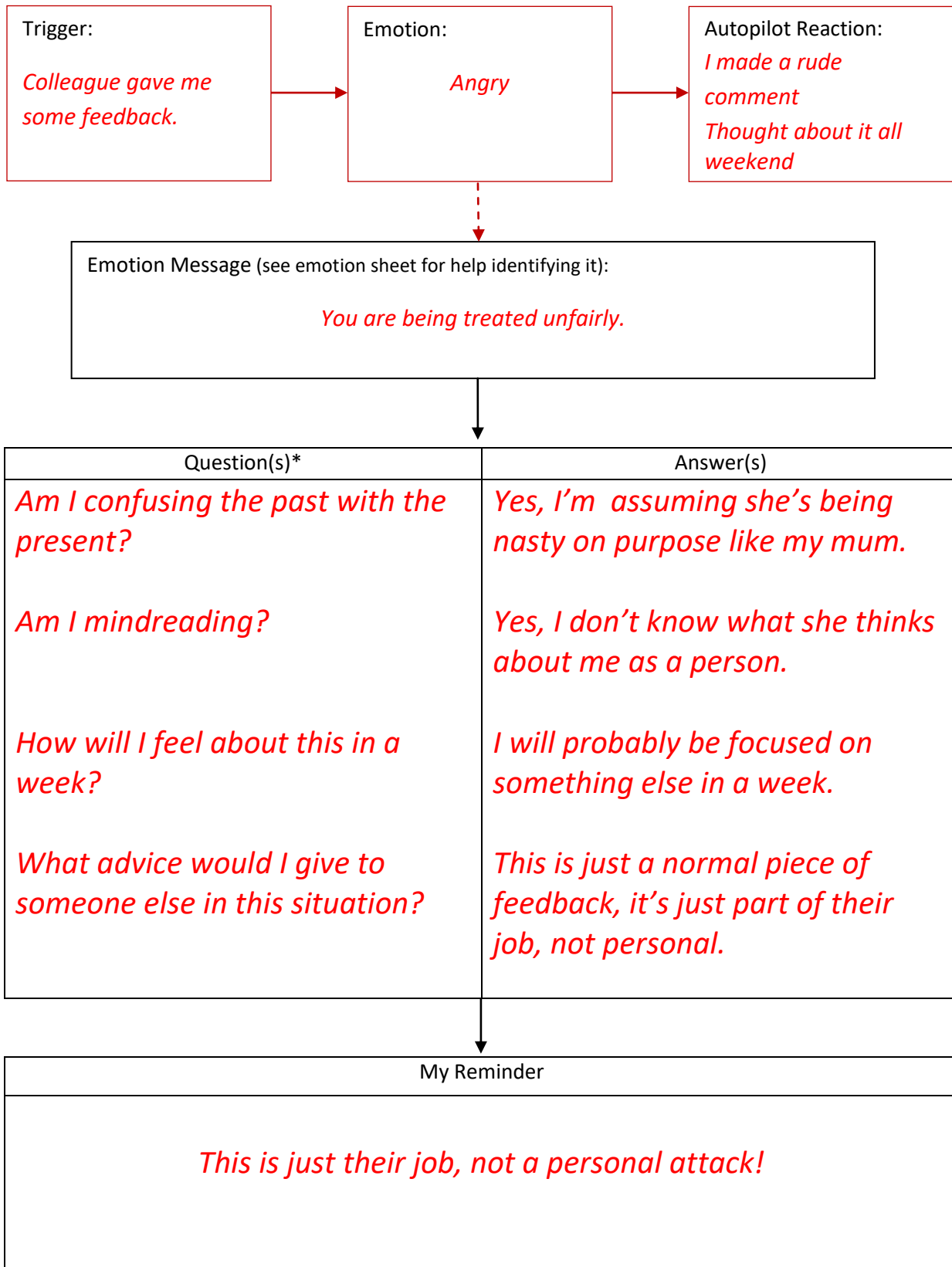
### Question the accuracy of the emotion message:

- What is the exact trigger for this emotion?
- Does this trigger seem to match with the emotion message?
- What do I think is going to happen?
- Am I jumping to conclusions or mindreading?
- What facts is this message based on?
- Is this emotion message usually accurate or inaccurate?
- Am I treating someone/something in the present like someone/something from the past?
- What harm has actually been done?
- Have I been through this before – have I seen it come and go?
- How will I feel about this tomorrow, in 1 week, 1 month, 1 year?
- Is there another emotion that would fit better in this situation?

### Question the helpfulness of the autopilot reaction to this emotion message:

- Does this emotion message help or hinder me in situations like this? Is it worth getting drawn in by this emotion message?
- Where does following or ignoring this message tend to get me?
- What will be the consequences of my usual autopilot reaction?
- What is the purpose of my autopilot reaction – what positives do I get from it (even small ones)?
- Is there another way to get what the autopilot reaction gives me?
- Is there a more helpful response to this message?
- Am I forgetting that emotions are always temporary?
- Am I feeling like I have to act or make a decision now – am I feeling put on the spot?
- What might happen if I respond another way?
- What advice would I give to someone else feeling this way, in this situation?
- What can I do to reduce the intensity of the emotion?

## Questioning Emotions Worksheet



\*see handout 4.2 for helpful questions

# Questioning Emotions Worksheet

Trigger:

Emotion:

Autopilot Reaction:

Emotion Message (see emotion sheet for help identifying it):

Question(s)*	Answer(s)

My Reminder

\*see handout 4.2 for helpful questions