

Friends, I have the disease of alcoholism; my home group is Agapé, and my name is John. My dry date is December 23, 1072. What qualifies me to felicitate this workshop is that I have done much



research and been credited as a mental health coach, a practitioner of Positive Psychology, an author, and most importantly, an apprentice as a recovered individual in this journey called life.

Let's do some housekeeping first. This is a workshop and not an AA meeting. I make that distinction to you because I am using skill sets that are not directly related to the Big Book, and I know some people are susceptible in this area. I respect your view, but this workshop won't be for you. If you have that biased, I ask you to leave now.

Our topic is Emotional Sobriety, the next frontier, as Bill W named it. So what is emotional sobriety? Let's come up with a standard definition to start our work.

“Emotional sobriety can be defined as the ability to cope with feelings healthily. Someone who is emotionally sober still feels happiness, sadness, anger, and other strong emotions but knows how to handle them so that they don't control their behaviour or become overwhelmed.”

What isn't emotional sobriety?

Emotion Dysregulation

Most emotion regulation skills are learned as part of normal adult development. However, several factors can result in persistent [emotion dysregulation](#), interrupting the course of emotional action:

Trauma. There is a high correlation between emotion dysregulation and past trauma. Trauma can sometimes interrupt healthy emotional development, including increased sensitivity to emotional triggers and interrupting cognitive functioning when triggered.

Invalidation from the environment. People who grow up in persistently invalidating environments learn to distrust or ignore their emotional cues, resulting in not being able to intervene with intense emotions.

Biological sensitivity. Some people are born more sensitive to emotional triggers. Brain imaging studies have confirmed there can be significant differences in the structure and functioning of parts of the brain responsible for emotion.

The ten most dysfunctional characteristics of low emotional Sobriety are:

1. Having a hard time handling difficult emotions with greater ease.
2. Being excessively hard on yourself.
3. Motivating yourself with criticism rather than encouragement.
4. Focusing on your flaws and shortcomings more than your strengths and accomplishments.
5. Feeling ashamed or embarrassed of your emotions rather than viewing them as a natural part of the human experience.
6. Believing that your emotions make you weak or defective.
7. Seeing your emotions as good or bad rather than simply neutral experiences.
8. Extremely reacting to your emotions, either by suppressing them or letting them take over completely.
9. Experiencing emotions such as shame, guilt, and self-hatred more intensely than others.
10. Judging yourself harshly for having negative feelings instead of accepting them as a natural part of life."

Nine traits of Emotional Sobriety in Recovery

#1: They're happy, joyous, and free

I know this is quite the cliché in the rooms, but being 'happy, joyous, and free' are certain qualities of an emotionally sober person. This way of being can be achieved if you're willing to do the work...and then actually do it. Recovering is very different from abstaining. When recovering from drug addiction, you are working on a solution – whatever that looks like for you – rather than simply not using (abstaining).

#2: They have a positive outlook on life

Now, this isn't to say that they never have their "bad days," but, an emotionally sober person differs from someone who is merely dry in that, their overall attitude is a positive one. You know what I mean. There are plenty of people out there **who are generally negative and hyper-critical** basically about everything. Then some seem to roll with the punches and, rather than dwell on their setbacks, move on rather quickly. They don't let negative feelings ruin their day.

#3: They laugh a lot

Although closely tied to numbers 1 and 2, being able to laugh – and often – is yet another quality of someone with emotional sobriety. There's something behind the saying, "Laughter is the best medicine," and these people seem to have tapped into that.

#4: They know how to be serious at times and silly at other times

Being in recovery means taking your addiction seriously. However, I firmly believe in adding levity to difficult and even sombre situations. And by that, I suggest having a good sense of humour and maintaining high spirits. The people I know whom I'd describe as having emotional sobriety don't always take things (especially themselves) so seriously.

#5: They have good things to say

Whether it's their share in a meeting or advice they give you about an issue at work or in your relationship, an emotionally sober person tends to have a good head on their shoulders and a mature way of looking at things.

#6: They meditate and pray

To [obtain and maintain emotional sobriety](#), people who strike me as emotionally balanced are in the habit of meditating and praying. These are great ways to build spirituality, inner peace and calm, and self-awareness, all critical aspects and tools to a strong recovery and feeling balanced.

#7: They have good relationships with others

Emotionally sober people can also be spotted by the quality of their relationships with others. That's to say, these folks can form deep and intimate connections with others while [maintaining healthy boundaries](#).

#8: They live the principles

Those who work in a 12 Step program are familiar with “living the spiritual principles.” Whether they work in this recovery program or a different one, people with emotional sobriety live principled lives by incorporating qualities such as honesty, compassion, courage, integrity, and service to others.

#9: They keep their behaviour in-check

Another quality of an emotionally sober person is that they rarely react without first thinking things through. As human beings, we experience emotions and moods; we’re not robots. But those of us who are, let’s say, not-so-well-adjusted are more likely to have a knee-jerk reaction that could lead to [making a poor decision](#). Emotionally sober people can experience their emotions and then re-calibrate themselves so that they make the best decision at that moment.

Twelve essential insights on Emotional Sobriety from the book by Dr. Berger

1. Waking up from our sleepwalking.
2. Living life consciously.
3. Discerning our emotional dependency.
4. Knowing that it's not personal.
5. Realizing that no one is coming.
6. Accepting what is.
7. Living life on life's terms.
8. Discovering Novel Solutions.
9. Breaking the Bonds of Perfectionism.
10. Healing Through Forgiveness.
11. Living a Purposeful Life.
12. Holding on to Ourselves in Relationships.

Scientific American

Recovery programs teach these fundamental principles of emotional regulation because addicts do not know them intuitively. But the techniques do come naturally to many healthy people. At least, that is the conclusion of some recent studies by psychological scientist Gal Sheppes of Stanford University and his colleagues, who have examined the strategies people choose for dealing with negative emotions of different kinds and intensities. The researchers had the idea that people process different types of emotional information in the two ways described in recovery literature—either by blocking it entirely or thinking about it carefully to reevaluate it. For example, if an experience or thought were intense and threatening, people would nip it in the bud early. They would disengage and not pay attention, blocking negativity from awareness, much as newly recovering alcoholics are advised to do. This technique would keep potent negative thoughts from ever gaining force.

Summary of Bill's article:

- AA oldsters often lack emotional sobriety, which is the next major development AA needs to focus on.
- The urges for approval, security, and romance appropriate for a 17-year-old become an impossible way of life when you reach 47 or 57.
- Many AA members have taken wallops in different areas because they have failed to grow up emotionally and spiritually.
- The task is to figure out how to translate the proper mental conviction into the correct emotional result.
- Last autumn, the author realized that his dependence on people and circumstances was what caused his depression and he began to work on breaking these dependencies.
- He concluded that outgoing love is what heals and allows one to be open to God's love.

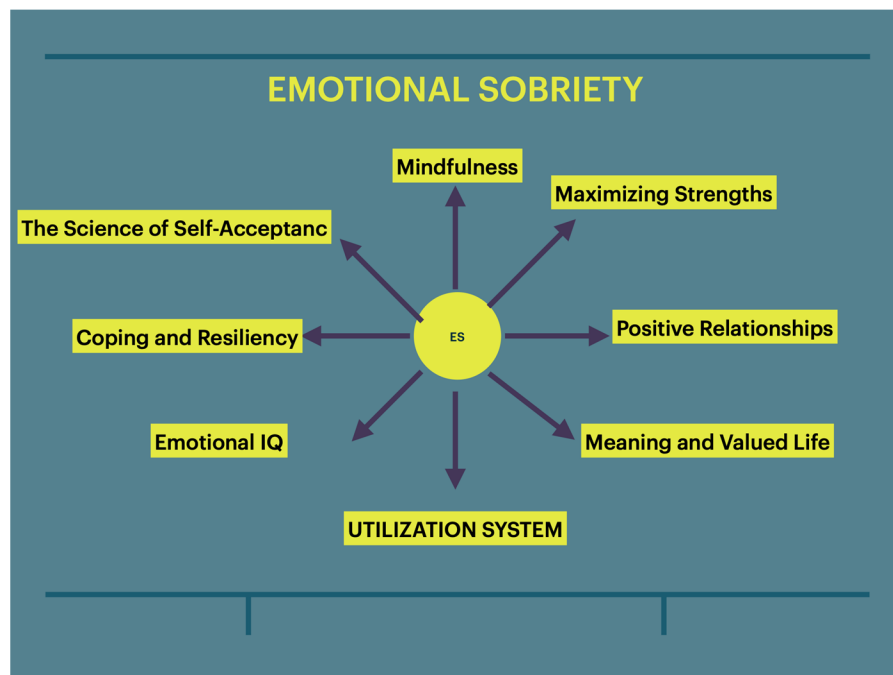
My definition and how to improve Emotional Sobriety

Emotional Sobriety is the ability to be aware and understand emotions, both your own and others. It also includes regulating emotions, responding effectively to emotions in yourself and others, and creating positive relationships.

Ten ways to advance Emotional Sobriety are:

- 1. Recognize your emotions.** The first step in managing your emotions is recognizing them. When you identify what you're feeling, you can start understanding why you're feeling that way and working on addressing it.
- 2. Acknowledge your feelings.** Once you've identified your emotions, don't try to push them away. Acknowledge that you're feeling that way and accept the emotion as part of yourself.
- 3. Label your feelings.** Once you've acknowledged your feelings, please give them a label. Labelling your feelings will help you understand them better and make it easier to manage them.

4. Understand the causes of your feelings. Once you've labelled your feelings, take some time to understand the causes of those feelings. What's triggering this emotion? Why are you feeling this way?



5. Manage your stress levels. Stress can often lead to emotional outbursts or difficult emotions like anger or anxiety. Managing your stress levels can help keep your emotions under control.

6. Express your feelings constructively. Don't keep your feelings bottled up – find healthy ways to express them constructively. Scream into a pillow, write in a journal, talk to a friend – get them out healthy instead of letting them fester inside you.

7. Avoid emotional contagion. Emotional contagion is when you catch someone else's emotion like a cold – it can be tough to manage your feelings when others constantly influence you. Avoid people who are always negative or emotional roller coasters, if possible, and stick closer to those who have more stabilizing influences on you, emotionally speaking.

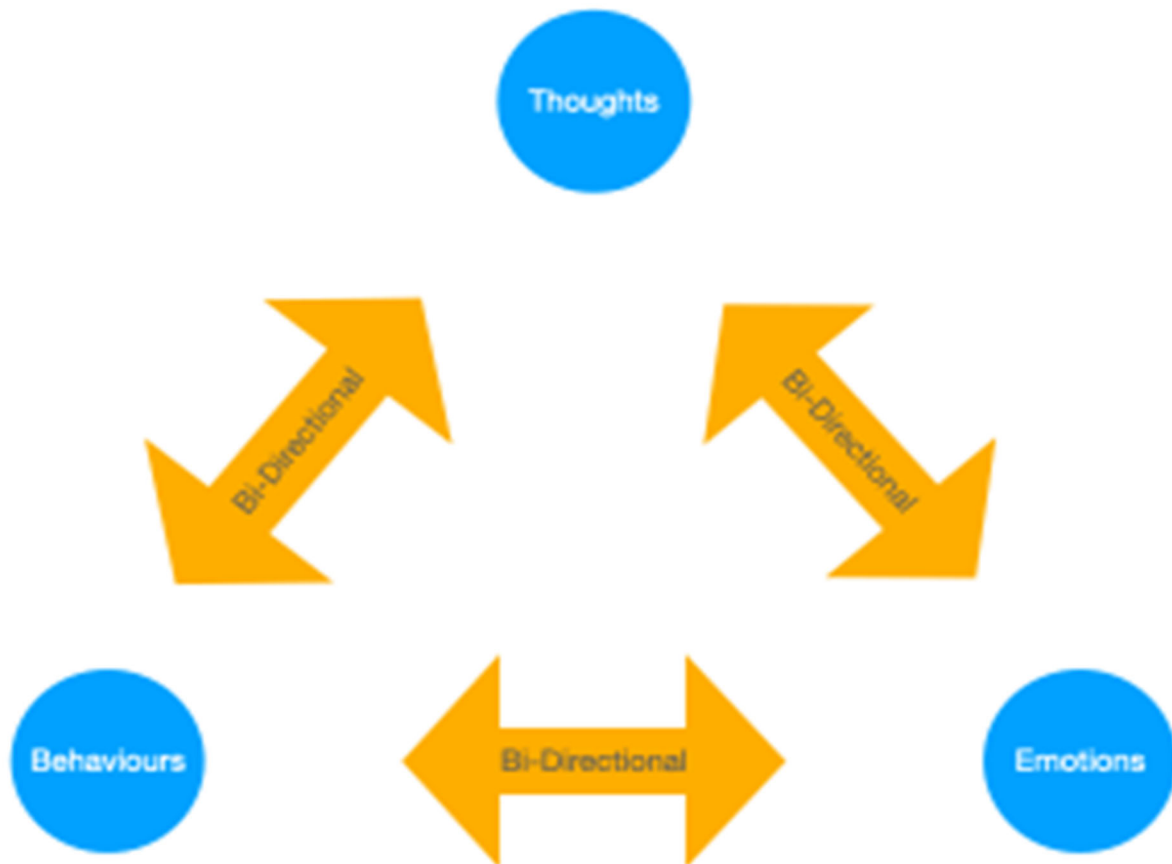
8 . Practice mindfulness. Mindfulness is the practice of being aware of the present moment without judgment. When you practice mindfulness, you learn how to acknowledge and accept your thoughts and feelings without getting wrapped up in them. This can help manage difficult emotions.

9 . Take care of yourself emotionally. This one may seem like common sense, but it's essential – take care of yourself emotionally by practicing self-care habits like exercise, relaxation techniques, and healthy eating.

10. Seek professional help if needed. If managing your emotions seems too tricky on your own or if they're negatively impacting your life, seek professional help from a therapist or counsellor

A misconception of Emotional Sobriety

1. You are comparing your present experience to the past.
2. The illusion that whatever your experience at this moment is the best you can experience and, therefore, nothing else is needed.
3. You can pull out the emotions only in an attempt to regulate them without concerns about what is causing them.



Our life journey is like a sailboat on a trip to the desired destination. Each sailboat has a captain. The work during this workshop is to prepare the captain for a successful trip. My job here is to introduce you to each area we will improve.



Our journey aims to operate with emotional and thoughtful regulation in responding to life and having effective behaviours that move us forward.

