Unwanted emotions can appear when you least expect them. You might feel a pang of jealousy when a classmate gets a role in the school play that you had wanted. Or, you might be angry that you didn’t get the grade you felt you deserved. You might even feel envious of a sibling or other family member because of the way they look or a talent they have. What can you do with these unwanted feelings?

Emotional awareness means that you can accurately recognize your own emotions and those of others. With emotional awareness, you can communicate effectively and set boundaries when necessary. However, if you’re emotionally unaware, you may have a harder time dealing with your emotions. You may be more likely to deal with your unwanted emotions in unhealthy ways.

There are some common unhealthy ways that people deal with their emotions. For example, when dealing with jealousy, you might not accept that you’re feeling that way and instead accuse other people of being jealous. This is called projection. Another unhealthy way of dealing with unwanted emotions is denial. In denial, the individual pretends their emotions don’t exist. Shutting down is similar to denial. When shutting down, people stop participating normally in life because of their feelings.

“Acting out” is when instead of communicating emotions with the relevant people, individuals take out their feelings on others. For example, if you’re angry because of a fight you had with your mom, you might be mean to your friend even though they had nothing to do with your anger. Finally, rationalization is another unhealthy way to deal with unwanted emotions. When people rationalize their emotions, they use logical explanations to explain their feelings, even if they’re not appropriate or relevant to the situation. For example, you might blame your teacher for how poorly you performed on a test rather than admitting that you weren’t prepared.

Instead of dealing with unwanted emotions in the above ways, you can use healthier coping mechanisms. For example, you can talk about your feelings. Or, you can walk away to take a break if you’re not ready to deal with them yet. Expressing yourself through art and music are other healthy ways you can deal with these emotions. Some people also find exercise very therapeutic.
Question 1: Describe a scenario in which someone expresses their emotions in an unhealthy way.


Question 2: What are some ways that you can practice emotional awareness?


Question 3: What’s your favorite healthy way to deal with unwanted emotions? How can you use it more?


