

Episode 48 – COVID Special on Emotion Regulation Strategies

Phil: Hello and welcome to the Emotion at Work podcast, where we take a deep dive into the human condition. It's a bit of a special edition today I suppose because for the first time in a while we haven't got a guest. That's a deliberate choice on my part because I wanted to put together something a little bit different and it was inspired by a post that I shared on LinkedIn recently. I put a post out about how I'm just really tired and I'm exhausted and I'm a little bit fed up of lockdown, of COVID, of all of those things. Within that post I asked people for some suggestions about what do they do? What do they do to help themselves if they're experiencing similar feelings of just general feed up-ness and exhaustion? I got some really, really interesting responses back and when they started to come in, I then got to thinking about well how might we categorise or order or structure these in a way, which then got me thinking oh that might be interesting to share in a post. Then that got me thinking well that might be interesting to share in a podcast actually. So that's how we've got to where we've got to.

Because I think part of the reason that I'm really tired at the moment is because of the amount of emotional labour that's having to be done, well especially having to be done by me I guess. I don't think I'm alone in that, but it's certainly something that is taking its toll for me anyway. Emotional labour is something that we've talked about in a couple of previous episodes of the podcast, talked about in episode two, with SJ Lennie and talked about it with I think it was when Mark Gilroy was on for Episode 27 as well we talked about it. The idea of emotional labour was first put together by Arlie Hochschild and Arlie was talking about this idea that as well as having mental labour, which is the thinking that we need to do and physical labour, which is the physical things we need to do. There's also emotional labour, which is the work we have to do to manage our own and other people's emotions. Sometimes that might be about affecting or changing how we feel, so a lot of Arlie Hochschild's original research was done for example with air stewardesses or people that worked at service industry, where they had to perform being overly happy or overly helpful when they didn't necessarily feel that way. But emotional labour is any kind of work essentially that you have to do to work with, regulate and manage your emotions. That can be really tiring especially when your emotions are either highly charged or your emotions are going on for a long time. For me there is a big part of that with lockdown.

There's a number of different emotions that are all being visited regularly and one of those big ones I should say is loss. There's been loads and loads of loss around COVID, so there's the worst loss of all, which is the loss of life. In the UK recently we hit the very sad milestone of 100,000 deaths or 100,000 COVID related deaths, which is just a huge loss to the friends, family and loved ones of those that are no longer with us. In addition to loss of life there, we've got loss of income, for some, some people have lost their jobs, redundancies. Again in the UK I can't talk worldwide but redundancies in the UK are increasing and have been increasing for the last nine months, because of the economic impact of COVID and what that then means is that's a loss of security, loss of safety. We've also had a loss of freedoms, we're restricted in the UK anyway at the moment, we're restricted in terms of the amount of activities we can do. We can leave the house once a day for exercise, we can leave the house for an essential trip, but essentially that's it. All of the freedoms that we may have had, all of the freedoms that we may have enjoyed have been taken away. There's a duality to that loss, there's the physical loss of not being able to do it, so I can't go and play football or I can't go watch Joseph play football.



But there's also the imagined loss of what else I'm missing out on? I'm missing out on seeing friends, I'm missing out on seeing family. I'm missing out on going on holiday. I'm missing out on so many things. So that compounding sense of loss is just hard, it's hard to deal with and hard to work with and it takes effort to do so and not to get say caught up in that emotion or to hang onto that emotion. That's the emotion on work and the emotional labour I should say that they were talking about. In the same way that physical labour and/or mental labour are exhausting, emotional labour is exhausting as well.

So you combine those things together and in a way if I try and look at it rationally it's no wonder I'm tired. Work is busy which is a great thing and a challenge at the same time. I'm a chair of governors for our local primary school and that's really busy, because there's loads of things going on within the education system, so that again requires work as well and then there's all the home schooling from a family perspective. And then there's the tasks that you need to complete at home and then all the emotions that go with it, so you've got both the physical labour, you've got the mental labour and you've got the emotional labour, and part of me goes well it's no wonder that I'm tired then. Again I'm sure I'm not alone in that and I was very conscious as I was listing some of those things off that I'm very fortunate. I'm very fortunate to be busy, I'm fortunate that work is busy and there's lots of. I'm fortunate that I've got the opportunity to volunteer and support at the local school. I'm fortunate that I've got my family around me and I know not everybody has that. So I guess I wanted to acknowledge that I'm quite lucky and I have those advantages that not necessarily everybody else may have. At the same time how we feel matters and that emotional labour that we're having to go through can be really tricky.

So what I wanted to do then was to try and put something together or attempt or hope that I would put something together in this podcast, that would be of use and benefit to you fair listener along the way. I've already linked back to Episode two and I said 27 but I got that wrong, I'll put the correct link in the show notes. But I do want to link back to Episode 27 of the podcast, where I had James Gross on as a guest. Now James Gross is one of the world's leading researchers into the topic of emotion regulation. So for emotional labour that Arlie Hochschild talks about is the activity that you need to do to work with your own and other people's emotions, emotion regulation are the strategies that you would do to do that. So emotional labour is like an umbrella term that describes the work that you have to do and emotion regulation tries to break it down into the different strategies and approaches that people may use to do that. So what we talk about in terms of the strategies within this podcast, if they're particularly interesting to you, then I would definitely suggest that you go back and have a listen to Episode 27, where I talk with James Gross about these five families of emotion regulation.

I guess a few things just about emotion before I go on, so one is, the frame that I use for all emotions is that they can be used in a constructive way or a destructive way. All emotions can be used in a way where you build relationships and you build collaboration, so we talk about that being constructive. Also all emotions can be used in a destructive way, where they break down relationships and break down collaboration and that's a Paul Eckman inspired framing. I think that's more helpful than some of the other ways that or the valence that could be looked at when it comes to emotion. Therefore when we're experiencing emotion, it is information that tells us there is something happening that's important to us or important to our welfare or it could be important to others or the welfare of others.



So especially those that you're close with or those that you care about. Emotions tell us that there's something important going on and then what happens is, in appraisal theory anyway, so something happens either outside of us or inside of us, so emotions can be triggered by external stimulus, they can also be triggered by memories, they can also be triggered by things we imagine, they can also be triggered by things we relive, and then we make them mean something. So something happens in our internal radar as a way, notices that there's something happening that we think is important to our welfare and it looks then for the emotion that most correlates with it. As a lot of you may know the human brain likes to find a pattern, so it likes to look for things that are similar. So if you're in a situation that you've experienced before and you felt a particular emotion in that situation, then the likelihood is that when you're in something similar and a similar stimulus occurs, then your mind will go ah that's the emotion that you need right now. And then we make it mean something.

So an example that I want to share now, and I'll come back to it a couple of times as we work our way through, is recently I was driving past the local park and I noticed the park was quite busy, now bearing in mind we're in lockdown, that surprised me, I was like what's going on there then? I noticed that there were a number of children in there, a number of children at the park from different families that seemed to be mixing, which again was a surprise to me, because I was like that's not what we're meant to be doing, that's not what the current rules of engagement or the rules of lockdown would state. Then I found myself getting angry about that and I found myself getting quite grumpy and frustrated about the flouting or the potential breaking of the rules or the laws around the current state of lockdown within the UK. One of the things that I realised was that, that wasn't really helping me, so I wasn't using that emotion constructively because I was judging the choices or the decisions or the actions or the behaviours that those people were making. That wasn't building a relationship or building collaboration, actually whilst it wasn't maybe in that moment in reality breaking it down, but it wasn't helping me, it wasn't helping build relationships or collaboration. I then used a couple of different strategies that we'll work our way through shortly to help me work that emotion through.

So one of the things that I've talked about in the past is that if I was to give a three phrase approach to how we can constructively work with our emotions, the first one of those is be heard, the second one of those is create a safe space, so safe space is the second one for us to think about and explore that emotion, and then thirdly to allow us to move on. So being heard in this example was me noticing how I was feeling about what I saw and then creating that safe space within myself or for myself to allow me to explore and think about that emotion or what I was making it mean and how I was using it, and whether it was something that I felt constructive or destructive, and then that allowed me then to move on. So the story I'm telling myself in my head is that I'm chucking out way too many different ideas and constructs, but I'm hoping it will make sense in a way, in that noticing how you feel is really important. Noticing that your emotions are telling you something that is important to you is happening and then we need to think about how we work that through for ourselves and for other people, so that we can move on. Because holding onto emotions can be unhelpful for us and other people.

In a moment I'm going to move into the first two families, when I talk about these five families of emotion regulation. One thing I'm going to encourage you to do when I get to the end of this section and then in the following sections, is I'm going to leave a gap, I'm going to leave a pause, to give you an opportunity to reflect. I'm going to leave a gap so you can grab hold of your earphones or grab hold of your device, whatever you're listening on and you can pause it and have the opportunity to do some



reflection and take some notes and if you want to. What I'll do is I'll pause now before we move on and then I'll pause after each family of emotion regulation. I guess what I wanted to set out here in my opening then is there's a lot of emotion work going on. There's a lot of emotional labour that's happening right now for ourselves and/or for other people and that can be tiring. I hope that in this podcast today that you get some strategies, some ideas, some techniques that you can use to help you with any grumpiness, exhaustion or tiredness that you might be experiencing along the way. So I'll pause now and then give you the opportunity to think about anything I've talked about in this opening before we move on.

Hello and welcome back and our first two families then, they would fit I guess under the heading of proactive, so these are proactive emotion regulation strategies. And what I mean by proactive is this is planning ahead of situations where you know or you think emotions are going to be involved and then you making some choices about either how you can change something or in this first one, the sorts of situations that you can select that you know are going to help you from an emotion regulation perspective. So when the LinkedIn post that I mentioned earlier on, when we shared that, when I've analysed the responses and the comments that came back, there were three top suggestions, and they were fresh air, walking and exercise. So Wendy Forrester, Tony Allen, Ros Goodwin, Ben Crabbe, Chantelle Kimber, David Hayden, Joanne Warner, Darren Galsworthy, Owen Davis, Angela Podalsky, Ollie Holt, Meriam Lee, Liz Needham and Sherrie Yellop, all of them suggested one of these three things in terms of the fresh air, walking or exercise.

So the idea being then is what you're doing is you're choosing something that you know supports you from an emotional regulation perspective, something that you know helps you, that you know is a situation where you're going to be able constructively work with any emotions that you have. So that might be in whatever way that might be. So this is a proactive approach. Now we also had some other things that would sit within this situation selection category that weren't necessarily about fresh air, walking or exercise. So Sarah Knight she talked about reading and not watching TV. Now she didn't go into the specifics and the details of this, but for me this is a similar thing around the news and avoiding the news and to a certain degree avoiding Twitter. So what I was finding was that watching the news regularly or consistently and/or being on Twitter regularly and consistently didn't really help me. What I found was that they would either raise frustrations, raise anxieties, raise sadness and general grumpiness and fatigue. So by choosing not to do those things and to do something else, so as Sarah suggested to read instead of watching TV, is an example of this situational selection approach. Jill Whittaker, so even though I guess this technically this fits in exercise, but it was a such a unique wonderful idea, she talked about having a dip in the sea. Which I said must be really cold right now and she said it's okay. I'll trust Jill that she knows if it's okay. Angela Podalsky also as well as talking about fresh air, exercise and walking, she talks about scheduling in calls with people that not necessarily help you but scheduling calls with friends, family, scheduling calls that you know are going to enrich you and are going to help you. Then Sharon Box she talked about funny videos and she put a link to a This Morning video, which I'll put in the show notes as well, which was to do with inappropriately shaped vegetables and I'll leave that visual treat for you to imagine.

So the situation selection family then is about choosing to do certain things or choosing to avoid other things. So it's about seeking situations where you feel enriched or where you feel eased or renewed and it could be then avoiding situations where you tend to experience feelings that you don't want to



experience or feelings that are maybe less helpful or destructive for you. So for me a good example of that would be not driving past the park, there's a few different ways I can get to my house and one of those is to not drive past the park. If I don't drive past the park I can't see people in there and that can't make me grumpy. I say can't make me grumpy but people being in the park doesn't make me grumpy, it's what I make it mean. I make people at the park mean something and I make it mean for example people are breaking the law or breaking the rules, I'm not. That's not fair and therefore I feel grumpy. I guess having that awareness then is part of it where I talk about this being heard, it's hearing the emotion and hearing why it's there and why it's come forth, because that can help work it out. So people being in the park doesn't make me grumpy, I make people being in the park mean I get grumpy. Which I'm hoping is a useful distinction to make. Whilst I may not agree with it, one of the things I can do is I can think about well what might be going on for those people that are at the park? I don't know their lives, I don't know their situations, it could be that in their situation that's what they feel they need to do, that's what they feel they need to do to sustain their emotion regulation and to work on how they're managing their emotional labour. So whilst I may not agree with it and I maybe have not understood it, I don't have to judge it in that way. As a member of my team Emily says you do you. So that can be one way of thinking about or looking at it, assuming that people are doing the best thing that they can for them in that particular moment at the time.

All right so I'm going to encourage you to pause again here and to think about all right well if there's one family of emotion regulation strategies and it is a proactive which is situation selection, what I'm going to encourage you to think about is what are those situations that enrich, ease or renew you? So what are those situations that you know enrich, ease or renew you? And then think of well how can I do more of those things? And then likewise what are those situations where you may feel as though you're anxious or frustrated or angry or grumpy or annoyed or sad, and are those situations that you can avoid and you can choose not to do and you can choose not to expose yourself to the sorts of stimulus that might bring forth those kinds of feelings? So pause now and when we come back we will talk about the second proactive family, which is situation, modification.

Okay, welcome back, I hope you had a good think, I hope you had a nice opportunity to think about some of the questions that I posed, and where we're going to go next then is thinking about this second proactive family, which is situation modification. So if situation selection is choosing those places or choosing those activities or choosing those situations that may enrich, ease or renew you. Situation modification is saying okay there might be situations that I can't not do, I can't select to do them or not do them. So it's then thinking well how can I modify them so that it works most constructively for me? So how can I modify situations so that it works most constructively for me? When I put the post on LinkedIn Kelly Swindler came back with a wonderful suggestion of walking and talking. So there might be calls that I need to have, calls that I need to do with clients or colleagues or members of my team and I can't not do them, but I know that going outside and getting fresh air and walking is one of those activities that enriches, eases or renews me. So can I combine those two things together? Do I have to tether myself to my desk and to my camera in Zoom or can I go out for a walk and talk instead? Darren Galsworthy he also talked about routine, so he talked about having a morning and an evening routine, actually I'm not sure if he said morning and evening to be fair, I think he had a pre work and post work routine. But having that routine, that morning routine that works for you, that you know sets you up well for the day. So you have to get up everyday there's no getting away from it, but how can you modify that routine so that it works in a constructive way for you? Michelle



Batiste had a different way of looking at that's similar which is having something to look forward to. I can modify my day by giving myself rewards, what can I give myself as a reward to look forward to at a certain key point in the day? So again noticing that, yes, there are things we have to do and certain things we might need to do, but what in Michelle's example what can my reward or my something to look forward to be?

Then Sherrie Yellop also talked about having a bit similar to Darren's routine in terms of having a clear change between work and home. Having a clear way of changing between being in work and being at home. It's interesting how things change over time, lockdown one I was dead good at this. So I would consistently before I went into the office I would go out for a walk, not far it was just around the block, it would take me, I don't know, six minutes maybe and then I'll come back and that would be my right now I've moved from home to work, and then I would do the same at the end of the day. This time round I found it a lot harder to do, I think partly because I'm busier but also because, actually I don't know why, why else? I think because I've lost the discipline, I've lost the habit of doing it. I got myself into a habit of it last time and I've not got that at the moment. So that was Sherrie's idea, sorry random digression there. But Sherry's idea was then having that clear change between work and at home. So it can also though this situation modification can also be about adapting or changing the way that you work or the way that you interact with different people. One of the things that I have been doing more of is when I join virtual meetings or virtual calls is having the what I'm calling a connection question. So a way of connecting with everybody else or connecting with the other people that I'm with, before we move into what we're actually there to do. Again they're typically quite short, quite brief and I enjoy them from a it helps me connect with that person as a person before we then move into the detail of what we're doing. So some of my favourite questions that I've been asking recently are what has got your smiling recently? When was the last time you laughed? What are you looking forward to post COVID? When was the last time you cancelled a meeting? Shall we see if we can finish early and if we did finish early what would you do? If we cancelled this meeting or you finished early what would you do instead? As a way of trying to connect with people.

Another idea that fits into this that came out through a conversation I was having with two members of my team, is what they will do is they will call each other and they will call each other and be on a call together, but not necessarily talking about the thing. So they'll be working interpedently at their own desks in different parts of the world but they're on a call together, so that they feel like they're connected. They feel like they're with somebody else, without necessarily talking or working on a piece of work together. But they know that there's someone else there and it gives them a feeling of connection, which I thought was a really nice idea as well, and reminded me of the type of things that Indcowork do. So if you were on Twitter and you searched #Indcowork then you'll find the virtual Indcowork activities that are happening. Historically when Michelle Paraslater and Fiona McBride set up Indcowork, it was a physical thing where people would come together and cowork in a space but work independently on different things and you can do that in a virtual way as well. Other things you can do then is modify your goals or expectations, so Gemma Dale at HIGem on Twitter, she regularly makes the point that the way that we're working right now isn't just remote or virtual working, this is remote or virtual working during a pandemic as she would enunciate in her Tweets. So the situation we're in now isn't just a standard right that's it everybody needs to work from home or everybody's working virtually, this is whilst all the other things that are going off as well. So you might have a set of goals or expectations or standards maybe that you've set for yourself, and when you bring in that



context of oh actually we're in a global pandemic, maybe we need to manage those goals or expectations or standards that we might have.

So again I want to give you the opportunity to pause and think about what you want to do now or what you want to do next with what we've just talked about. So we've been through situation modification, which is how can we adapt or change the situations that we're in to make those work for us in a more constructive way? So pause and have a think about what you would want to do now or what you would want to do next, and then we'll move on to thinking about the three reactive families, so these are more reactive families and emotion regulation.

Hello and welcome back, hope you had a good think and we're going to move on now to the reactive families of emotion regulation. So the first one of those then is attentional deployment and attentional deployment is often about distractions and it's about focusing our attention in a particular way, or on a particular thing to take our attention away from the emotion we might be experiencing. I talk about a reactive heading that would sit under these because the first two, the situation selection and situation modification, they were thinking ahead of a situation to think about how you might want to either modify it or whether you want to choose the situations that you're in and how you want to approach them? Whereas the three families that we're about to go into are when the emotion is happening. So this is when the emotion is happening with us, it's happening and we're noticing that it's happening and it's thinking well what we can do about it in a reactive way then? So attentional deployment is often about distraction and this is something that can happen both in and out of awareness. So when it happens in awareness is we notice that the emotion is happening and then we choose to focus on something else. If I think about it in a face to face world or in a face to face environment, a good example of this would be where you're in a team meeting and somebody is struggling to regulate their emotions. It could be that they're angry, it could be that they're sad, it could be that they're tearful, it could be that they're anxious. And people just ignore it or they talk about something else, so we started to talk about topic A, that seemed to make the emotions either more intense or more enduring for whoever it might be. So we talk about something else instead. We divert the attention away from whatever it is that was bringing forth the emotion and we looked to do something different with it.

So how that can happen both in and outside of awareness is how we distract ourselves from those thoughts or feelings that might be making it tricky for us or that might be something destructive. When I think about the LinkedIn post that I put out, so Tony Allen he talked about sending or sharing humour or nonsense was his words. So sharing humour or nonsense on WhatsApp. So as a way of sharing, I don't know what they are, I guess that could be GIFs, it could be memes, it could be other videos in a way, potentially a bit like Sharon's situational selection in going to her funny videos. But the reason I'm putting Tony's in the intentional deployment is because it's about saying oh somebody might find it funny. So it's not a proactive I'm going to go and find this video that renews or eases or enriches me, it's about responding or reacting to something that might be happening and that might be going on. Miriam as well she talked about sometimes I just want to go and lose myself in great TV. The losing yourself in great TV bit is that's the distraction, it's the your thoughts and your feelings are focused on the TV for example rather than being focused on whatever it was that might have been going on for you. Sometimes it will happen outside of awareness, there are times where I might be finding something tricky, a tricky conversation, I might be procrastinating about something, I might be feeling



about a particular task or activity that I need to do and then the next thing I know I've got my phone in my hand or I've started to go and read a research paper or I've gone down a rabbit hole and gone hang on a minute how did I get here? So what I've noticed is when I do find myself in situations I'm like hang on a minute I went out with the intention of doing 'x' and now I'm doing 'y' why is that? Is because if it's a tricky thing, something that I'm maybe finding challenging or difficult, then as a way of coping with it out of my awareness I distract myself with something else.

So for example I found that when I focus on helping someone else, that that's easier for me to do. So if I've got something that I know I'm anxious about or frustrated with or concerned about doing, I can easily distract myself with a phone call to somebody who I can chat to who might need my help on something and then I can distract myself by helping them instead of dealing with the thing that I've actually got to deal with. It's interesting for me then to see how this plays out in some of the virtual meetings or the virtual interactions that I'm in. So when do our attentions get distracted or avoiding some thing or things that we're actually meant to be doing or meant to be talking about? So when that difficult conversation needs to happen or we get to that, as Julia Driver would call it, that gnarly point or that gnarly agenda item or that topic that everyone finds tricky to discuss, do we actually do it or we do allow ourselves to put our attention elsewhere? Do we talk about something else instead? So one of the things to look out for in a virtual meeting is when does that happen? When are we diverting our attention away from what needs to be discussed or that emotionally charged thing that needs to be explored or agreed or decided on and when are we distracting ourselves off with something else instead? So intentional deployment then is often about distraction, it could be both inside and outside of awareness and what I'm going to encourage you to think about now is what do you want to do now or next about this approach? Maybe thinking about when does it happen for you? How does it happen for you? And when do you seem to use attentional deployment as a way of helping you regulate or work with how you feel?

So we're going to move into family number four now then, and that is cognitive change or reappraisal. Adrian Close was the person in the LinkedIn post who talked about their strategy when he said that it's about focusing on the reasons to be cheerful. For example there's a vaccine, this hopefully will be our final lockdown and he talked about people are saving money and therefore there may be an economic explosion at the end of it or afterwards, after the lockdown has finished and/or the vaccines have been rolled out. So the cognitive change or reappraisal then is about revisiting or rethinking about the appraisal that we may have given to the situation. I gave an example of one earlier on where I talked about how driving past the park then and what I was thinking, what I was feeling in response to that. So one of the ways that I could reappraise that is to think about how the people in the park are doing the things that they need to do that's right or best for them. The other example I gave was how I can reappraise it by thinking well I'm doing what I think is right and I'm doing thing that are in line with my values or my beliefs or what I think is the right thing to do. And so by doing that it allows me to change or potentially amend how I feel because of the way that I'm looking at whatever it was that's maybe started or brought forth the emotion in the first place. So at the heart of reappraisal, there are some questions that I would encourage you to think about. So when you're in that emotion and you're aware that you're in it, is to think well what am I making this mean? So there's the situation, there's this thing happening, there's this thing I'm seeing or hearing or sensing or there's the thing I'm remembering and what am I making it mean? Another question that could help would be well what else could explain 'x'? What else could explain this situation? What else could explain people being in



the park? What else could explain whatever that might be? If I was to assume the best in me or to assume to best in other people then what might be happening. If I was to assume the best in myself or the best in others then what is happening? So cognitive change reappraisal is trying to do is to get you to think differently about what's happening to try and then again change and effect how you feel.

If I was to think about some of the ways that you might want to reappraise at the moment, so from an external perspective I might think well this is an opportunity for me to spend so much time with my family and so much time at home. Because I've never been at home so much in my adult life, every single role I've had has involved some degree of travel and being away and I've never spent so many nights consecutively in my own bed ever, I don't think. So the opportunity then of lockdown is I can reframe it to say well what a wonderful chance it is for me to spend this much time at home, this much time with my family. Or if I was to think about it from an internal perspective I can think well I'm not angry about what's happening, I'm passionate about doing the right thing and I'm passionate about protecting myself or protecting others. So you can do the cognitive reappraisal thinking about things from an external perspective or from an internal point of view as well. So what I want to do now then is to give you another opportunity to pause and think about well what do you want to do now or next in this cognitive change or reappraisal? Are there other ways that you could look at a situation? Are there other ways that you could view it or see it that may make it more constructive for you? Thinking about what are you making it mean? What else could explain what's happening and what's going on? If I was to assume the best in me or others then what might be happening as well as the idea that I come up? I think the meaning that we make when we see or experience or remember something is one perspective on it and so thinking about alternative meanings for some can be really helpful.

I know I said I was going to pause and I'm now carrying on talking and I'll pause in a moment, because when we read that email or we listen to that voicemail or we hear that thing in someone's voice or we see something happening and we feel an emotion in response to that, we've attributed a meaning of some sort to it. One of the ways that we can do this cognitive change and reappraisal is to think well what else could it mean? What else could be going on? One of my favourite mantras that I say to myself a lot is there's always more going on than I think. There's always more going on than I think is happening. So what else could that be? That can be a way of helping us change or reappraise how we're feeling. I will now actually properly pause I promise, so you can think about what you want to do now or what you want to do next and how you might be able to use cognitive change and reappraisal?

Okay, so our fifth and final family is about response modulation. So this is the latest or the latest in the process of an emotion. If the trigger is the beginning and then the emotion ending is the end, then response modulation is the furthest down that process of all of these different emotion regulation strategies. It's where we are often in the emotion and the way that we modulate the response, so the way that we modulate the sensations or the feelings that we have, you can look at them in two different ways. You can look at it from a physiological perspective or you can look at it from a physical perspective. From a physiological perspective then we could do things like breathing, so breathing is advocated in things like yoga, meditation or the classic parental one of count to ten. So those things in terms of breathing, pausing, focusing on your breath in particular, because by regulating your breath it regulates your heart, it regulates your heart rate, it can help regulate your blood pressure and it can help regulate those physiological sensations. Because the human body is amazing, when it notices



something important to our welfare is happening. It will then make the physiological changes that we need to help us deal that emotion. Now one of the challenges we have is that we may not always be able to deal with that in a particular way or maybe even an evolutionary way. So by regulating our breath it helps regulate all of the other physiological aspects as well. So it helps regulate other aspects of the autonomic nervous system. So by doing things like breathing, relaxing our shoulders, relaxing tense muscles, counting to ten, those physiological changes can be helpful. Similarly you can have some physical changes, so you could move, you could exercise. Now I talked about moving and exercising in the first family with situation selection. So this isn't moving or exercising in a planned way, which it would be if it was in situation selection, this is moving or exercising in a response modulation way. This is right I'm in it, I'm feeling this feeling and I want to help myself work with it, I'm going to go for a walk. Because that going for a walk or doing exercise can help you modulate and work with that emotion.

There are other things that you can do, other things that I've done, if I was to look at my shopping habits I'm buying more beer now than I was at the start of lockdown. So things like alcohol, food, drugs, cigarettes, those things are other things that we can modulate our emotions. We can have those physiological things that we can do, we can have the physical things that we can do and then some will span both. For example yoga or mindfulness is something that can span both, yoga especially or Pilates might be another one that you put into that category as well. It's a physical thing that also helps in the physiological side of things because of the way you're regulating your breathing. One of the challenges with response modulation is the most common approach of response modulation is suppression, is where we suppress the emotion, we feel it but then we squish it and then push it back down again. Because we know that when we express emotion that can have impact on how other people see us. And if you want to know more about that then go back to Episode 45 of the podcast where I interviewed Arik Cheshin about some of the implications of expressing emotion in the workplace. So what might happen is we suppress the emotion and we suppress the emotion and then it builds to a point where we can't hold onto it anymore and then it floods out. So those flooding out episodes are as a result of persistent response modulation. It's where the build up of emotion has got to the point where we can't regulate it anymore. So when we think about response modulation then we need to be cautious with suppression, because it can be one of the ways or a common way for people to feel like they need to modulate the response of how they feel.

So for this final time then I will again I will pause and ask you to think about well what do you want to do now or next in terms of what we've talked about from a response modulation perspective? And then we come back together I'll bring us together, I said the word together twice, anyway I'll come back together for a conclusion shortly.

All right, so those were the five emotion regulation families. Two of those are proactive situation selection, situation modification. Three of those are reactive, attentional deployment, cognitive change or reappraisal and response modulation. What I would encourage you to do then is to plan those proactive strategies, put those things in your diary or in your calendar or on your to-do list, those things that you know enrich, ease or renew you, put those in because they can help. And then bring greater awareness and choice to those reactive strategies. Now as I've worked my way through you might have heard things that you know are like your go-to favourites, go-to things that you do. I know when I've had a particularly bad day, the temptation to go and open the fridge and crack open a beer



is high. So if I know that those are my go-to ones then how might I experiment with doing other ones? So using other strategies. I would also love to know what you do and how it works? You can let me know on Twitter, I'm @philwilcox. You can let me know on LinkedIn surprisingly I'm Phil Wilcox, or you can tag the Emotion at Work company page and I'd love to know how you're doing. If you found this episode useful then I would be very, very grateful if you left a review. So I am in constant awe when I look through my podcast listening figures that everyday I'm in somebody's ears and that blows my mind, that everyday somebody is listening to at least an episode of this podcast and that is hugely humbling and makes me a little bit proud as well. So if you would like to help other people find this content, then leaving a review on iTunes or Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts from, leaving us a review would be really, really helpful.

That's it. Look after yourself, stay safe, that seems to be like the phrase for 2020 into 2021 and I hope one day I might actually get to see you and maybe even though I might know you, maybe even hug you when we can get back to doing the whole hugging thing again. I hope what we've covered today is helpful in some way, in some form, and I'll see you soon.