

# Reflections

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## Educating the Emotions and Feelings

**1. Accepting the emotions and feelings.** The first step is to accept them joyfully. If God gives us a heart capable of feeling, we should accept it. Our ideal is not an insensitive man, cold, without passions.

Without feelings, we become machines, beings without soul, caricatures of a human being. Sensitivity allows us to feel with another person, allows us to enjoy a work of art and the beauty of nature. Perhaps it would be necessary to go through the emotions and feelings, one by one, which our heart is capable of in order to value them, to see their sense and function, and to be grateful for them. Father Kentenich, the Founder of the Schoenstatt Movement, tells us: *“no authentic man exists without emotions; no great man exists without great passions.”*

**2. To clarify and treat objectively (intelligence).** Emotions and feelings emerge spontaneously. They are instinctive reactions. Therefore, they need, in order to become human, to become enlightened by intelligence. They should be “assumed” in our spirit. They should be clarified in order to see their virtues and their limitations. For example, instinctive maternal love which is only directed toward one’s own children, has to be enlightened by reason in order to also open itself to other beings who are in need of affection and service.

The negative feelings also need clarification and reasoning. If dislike for someone emerges in my heart, that emotion must become enlightened and objective. I should try to discover the values and positive aspects of the other person and thus control the primary instinctive reaction. The same applies to a hurt caused by a brother. I have to discover the wound, seek where the motive is and thus it can be healed.

Thus it is necessary that we know ourselves in our reactions, that we reflect on that which we feel. Nothing should be left to the judgment of the pure spontaneity of blind emotions. And when we speak of illuminating, we always think of the intellect enlightened by faith.

**3. To direct (the will).** Feelings and emotions should not be repressed. On the contrary, they create in our interior a state of alarm, a neurosis and they are the constant source of psychological problems. Our emotional life has to be collected, directed and placed at the service of a superior ideal.

It is our will which fulfills that task: it assumes the emotions and channels them. But it is not about despotic control of the will, but more of a diplomatic control: an inviting control, assuming, channeling and appealing towards the positive.

To channel the emotions means to give them a response: reason shows the way they should follow, and the will assumes the emotion and leads it through that way. In some cases it also means that their impulses are satisfied on a superior level. For example, when a longing for sensitive sheltering cannot or should not be satisfied on the sensitive level; for more reason it should find satisfaction on the spiritual-supernatural level which also responds to the intimate desire of the instinct. To channel also means that the feelings should first be pruned, purified.

**4. To purify and ennoble.** We already know that in our being, and especially in our instinctive and affective life, a disorder caused by original sin exists. A disorder which is confirmed and aggravated by our own personal sins. For example, if my appetite is not moderated, a disposition toward gluttony grows in me; if I do not moderate my drinking, I will become an alcoholic. Each one of us feels the weight of this disorder, we feel nature heads downward and when we have acted badly, the fall leaves a scar on the soul which predisposes it to follow the wrong way. In spite of the efforts of the intelligence and the will, an unhealthy inclination has been created.

In order to put these emotions in order, we must purify and ennoble them: remove from them the traces of sensuality, subjectivity and egoism; free them from dislikes, envies and enslaving attachments. We have to learn to know how to renounce, cut off and prune all deviations. Self-education demands sacrifices. But it is not about making sacrifices just for the sake of making sacrifices. Renunciation is directed toward the goal of the mature man, toward the full development of love in our life. An ordered instinctive life favors, encourages and assures authentic freedom, in love and for love.

### Question for reflection

Do I know my personal emotions which I should purify and ennoble?

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