

# Life Management Associates, LLC

600 Dewey Blvd., Suite B  
Butte, MT 59701

Office: 406-782-4778  
Fax: 406-782-1318



## EMOTION COST-BENEFIT EXERCISE

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We've discussed the difference between healthy and unhealthy emotions. How can we make a practical decision about our feelings when we get upset? We live in a real world where we get stuck in traffic and confronted by all kinds of frustrating and irritating situations. How can we decide whether to accept or change our feelings? We need useful guidelines.

Let's take a specific example. Imagine that you discover that Julie, your fourteen-year-old daughter, has been cutting classes and lying to you about her grades and homework. You feel shocked, disappointed, and angry with her. What should you do with these feelings? Should you express your angry feelings and give Julie a piece of your mind, or should you hold your breath and count to ten?

The Emotion Cost-Benefit Analysis can help you with this decision. First, list the advantages of getting angry in this situation. Ask yourself, "How will it help me if I get angry? How will it help Julie?" List the advantages of getting angry in the left-hand column of the form.

Now list the disadvantages of getting angry in the right-hand column. Finally, weigh the advantages against the disadvantages. Are the advantages or disadvantages of getting angry greater? Write two numbers that add up to 100 in the circles at the bottom to indicate the results of your evaluation. For example, if the disadvantages feel slightly greater, you might put a 40 in the left-hand circle and a 60 in the right-hand circle. If, in contrast, the advantages feel quite a bit greater, you might put a 65 in the left-hand circle and a 35 in the right-hand circle.

The essence of the Emotion Cost-Benefit Analysis is that you ask yourself, "How will it help me to feel like this? What are the benefits? And how will it hurt me? What are the negative consequences?" If you decide that your negative feelings are healthy and appropriate, you can accept your feelings and express them constructively. In contrast, if you decide that your feelings are not beneficial, you can change the way you feel with the techniques you are learning.

## EMOTION COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

**Describe Your Negative Feelings:**

Advantages of Feeling Angry	Disadvantages of Feeling Angry
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