

Control your emotions... before they control you

"You make me so mad!"

"When you drive so fast, you scare me."

"You liar! You make me so frustrated that I... I... I..."

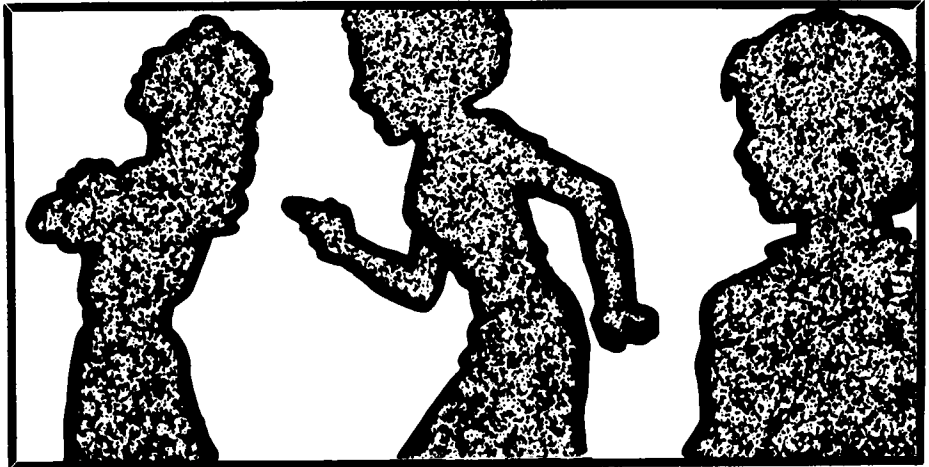
Emotions are an important part of our lives. Without them, we couldn't love or hate, be happy or sad, become involved in important causes or in life itself.

Without emotions, we would be robots.

Yet, although we need emotions to live a full life, we need to control these emotions—not let them control us. We have all seen the young child having a temper tantrum. He screams, kicks his feet, flails his arms and shouts, "I hate you! I hate you!"

Sometimes, teenagers and adults also allow their emotions to get the better of them. Depending upon their previous experiences, they will strike out, swear, become physical, or withdraw, sulk, and try to deny the existence of their tormentor.

It is important to realize that *we allow* this to happen. Nobody can make us feel angry or sad, unhappy or glad. *We choose* to feel so.



Nobody can make us respond to our chosen feelings in any special way. *We learn* which behavior is successful. *We use* these tactics over and over until they become integral parts of our character—until it seems that it is impossible to act otherwise.

What does your behavior say?

Examine your own behavior. Do you use anger to intimidate? Do you appear shy and look frightened so that others will feel sorry and not ask too much of you? Do you look confused or frustrated so that others will do the work for you?

How successful are these tactics? If you saw someone else acting like this, how would you react?

Start observing the behavior of others. How do they act? Why do they act in the ways they do? To get attention? To get their own way? To release pressure?

Stand back from the situation. If you did not have to react immediately, what would you choose to do? If you had a moment to think, how might you change your behavior?

Once we become conscious of behavior—our own and others—we begin to regain control. We begin to see how we can act in situations so that we will neither jeopardize our relationships nor compromise our standards.

Don't deny your emotions. Accept them! Enjoy them! But remember, *you are in charge!*

"Ride your emotions as the boats ride the waves; don't get upset among them."

—Mary Austin