

## Why It's Important to Catch Negative Emotions Early

Have you ever gotten angry or anxious and then reacted in a way that made you ask “what was I thinking?”

You weren't. That's the problem. Once intense emotions are in full effect, your rational mind is rendered useless. The momentum is too strong for you to think your way out of it. It's not because there is something wrong with you, it's because this is how your brain works.

The part of our brain called the Limbic System is primarily responsible for your emotions. For example, the amygdalae is responsible for feelings of anxiety and fear. When this part of the brain is activated because of an intense, stressful experience, your brain will simultaneously turn off another part of the brain—the prefrontal cortex—which helps us reason and think critically. This is why it's so important to catch negative emotions EARLY, before they become outside of your control.

So, it's important to recognize your triggers. What changes do you notice within yourself when you are having a particular negative emotion? (You may want to ask yourself these questions for each negative emotion you tend to experience, such as anger, anxiety, fear, sadness, etc.).

How do you change physically?

Do you change the way you stand or the way you breathe?

How does your thought process change?

Do you get disconnected from your awareness of your “now” (or are you hyper alert)?

Are you having pretend conversation or arguments in your head, such as reliving or imagining past events or future conversations?

Recognizing small changes will help you get better at noticing and shifting them before they turn off the critical part of your brain.

So, what can you do when your prefrontal cortex shuts down?

Put your hand over your heart and focus on your breathing for 2 minutes. This syncs the heart with the brain and stimulates the prefrontal cortex.