

OUR INSIGHTS

Emotional Health – the Above & Below the Line Concept

Imagine you are driving a car. Suddenly, from out of nowhere someone runs out of the road. You are forced to brake quickly to avoid an accident. How would you react? Like most people, you would probably put a heavy hand on the horn and yell at the person. This typical situation is a classic example of “automatic response”. It is the kind of behaviours that we don’t consciously think about. When you reflect on these behaviours, you may recognise that these behaviours are unhelpful and not the best choice at the moment you made. But can we change the situations? The truth is “yes”. But it requires substantial efforts.

In the “Above and Below the Line” model, there is a line between the automatic responses to challenging situations and the more constructive behaviour.



Line of Choice



A person’s ability to choose between the “Above the Line” behaviours and “Below the Line” behaviours depends on the emotional health levels. When a person is emotional healthy, they have a higher degree of behavioural freedom and less self-centred. In a difficult situation, they will take personal responsibility. Thus, they are able to observe their inner motivations and emotions. They can recognise that they have choices of the behaviours and the impacts on others. They are also able to see other perspectives, rather just focusing on themselves. In contrast, when a person has low level of emotional health, they become more self-centred. These self-concerns also contribute to their automatic responses (Below the line behaviours). When people are facing challenges, they feel threatened. The internal fears and anxieties will trigger the automated responses with blaming, defending, denying and justifying.

How to increase your emotional health? First you need to become more aware of your automated responses and their consequences. Then you will understand what drives these behaviours and become more conscious in choosing the appropriate responses. The following practices will help you become more “presence” and enhance your self awareness.

• Deep Breathing

Start by breathing in and out slowly. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, letting your breath flow effortlessly in and out of your body. Purposefully watch your breath, focusing your senses on its pathway as it enters your body. At the start, keep breathing for one minute. As times goes by, you can extend the duration.

• Mindful Observation

Choose a natural object from within your immediate environment and focus on watching it for a minute or two. This could be a flower or an insect, or even the clouds or the moon. Simply relax into a harmony for as long as your concentration allows. Look at it as if you are seeing it for the first time. Visually explore every aspect of its formation.

• Silent Exercise

During lunch, spend at least 30 minutes in silent. Without talking to other people. Just focus on your food and your sense.