

Advice: What you Feel and What you Do

When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.”
- Henry Ford

There are times when your emotions are appropriate guides to behavior—when you’re empathizing with a friend or recognizing your reaction to a situation, for two examples—and there are times when your feelings can lead you astray.

If you feel like sleeping, it could mean that you’re tired (and do need to sleep). But it could mean that you’re trying to do something difficult that you’ve never done or never succeeded in doing before (and you need to stick it out).

If you feel like watching TV, it could mean that you’ve earned a well-deserved break with good entertainment. But it could mean that you’re frustrated with a difficult task. Or maybe you’re avoiding doing what needs to be done (like your homework). Or maybe you’re on auto-pilot and haven’t even considered that there are better choices for your time.

If you feel like eating, you might be hungry and you should eat. It could also mean that you’re feeling unloved, unsuccessful, and unwanted, and are trying to fill the gap. Maybe what you really need is a hug or a sympathetic conversation with a friend or loved one. Or maybe you need a study group.

If you feel angry, it could be that there is genuine injustice to you or someone you love. But could also mean that you’re receiving feedback about an aspect of your behavior that you need to change so that you’ll be happier or more successful.

If you’re not sure whether your feelings are leading you to a good choice or a not-so-good choice, ask yourself this question: “The last time I felt this way and did this, did it make my situation better or worse?”

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