

# Declaration of Emotional Independence

Emotional independence is a kind of resilience that helps with people and situations that we encounter on life's journey. It involves practicing accepting ourselves "as is" and changing unhelpful perceptions and behaviors, resulting in a healthier sense-of-self and reduced reliance on others for happiness, sense of purpose, or identity. Emotional independence helps us see ourselves as separate from others and independent from circumstances that might have once dictated our moods, behaviors, and ideas. Declaring our emotional independence gradually builds us from the inside out, not the outside in.

Ready to practice declaring your own emotional independence? Below are some simple steps you can take:

**FREEDOM FROM EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY** – In childhood, we learned ways to deal with situations and people based on our experiences in our families of origin. As adults, we often respond automatically in patterned and sometimes unhelpful ways to life's stressors. As we receive feedback about our natural responses to stressful situations, we can decide to make changes, leading us to live more purposeful and intentional lives.

**FREEDOM FROM DISTRACTION** – When was the last time you spent time with yourself without a phone, TV, or another means of distraction or numbing? Try taking 10 minutes a day to self-reflect and get know yourself better. During this time, watch your mind wander without judgment. What do you think about? What emotions do your thoughts trigger? Over time, you'll start learning about your life and you. Then you can begin to gain an understanding of your values and long-term goals.

**FREEDOM FROM FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY** - Throughout our lives we are exposed to a lot of "shoulds" and "ought tos", e.g. "I should be happy all the time" or "I ought to be exceptional at everything I do." If we can identify the source of these voices, distinguishing them from our own voice, we can free ourselves from others' expectations, and reduce feelings of anxiety, resentment, and emptiness.

**FREEDOM FROM EMOTIONAL ENMESHMENT** - Emotionally independent doesn't mean that the people in your life have absolutely no effect on you. However, it supports you in striking a good balance between emotional closeness and distance, allowing you to regulate yourself even around people who know your triggers. Your close relationships shouldn't feel like a burden or a crutch you need to feel good about yourself and your life.

**FREEDOM MEANS RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT** - Take responsibility for your own emotions. When we blame others for our feelings, we squander our freedom, and increase our dependence on others by leaning on them to fix things. That leaves us feeling emotionally dependent and uncomfortably vulnerable. Taking responsibility for your emotions puts you in the driver's seat, instead of being driven by your emotions. When you recognize that you are in control of the options for improving your situation, you'll feel less unsettled and more in control.

**You** - Our brains decide what makes us happy and it has nothing to do with the outside world. It's about how we perceive the outside world. By changing your thinking over time, you can gain more control over your emotions, allowing you to live a more emotionally independent life. People, circumstances, and your bank account can't control you! You can feel every emotion you want to feel by engaging in more purposeful thoughts and actions. Happiness is your decision.

Take a good look at yourself and your actions, opening yourself up to making changes that you might never have considered. Living an emotionally independent life means opening yourself up to new experiences and letting go of the idea that it's better to live comfortably than to work on changing out of fear of the unknown. There's another type of emotional comfort worth trying out, and that's the self-confidence of knowing you can handle anything you face. Emotional independence is the only lasting security, the only real sense of internal comfort.

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