

Biosocial Theory

Why do I have so much trouble controlling my emotions and my actions?

**Emotional vulnerability is BIOLOGICAL:
It's simply how some people are born.**

- They are more *sensitive* to emotional stimuli; they can detect subtle emotional information in the environment that others don't even notice.
 - They experience emotions *much more often* than others.
 - Their emotions seem to hit for no reason, from *out of the blue*.
- They have more *intense* emotions.
 - Their emotions hit like a *ton of bricks*.
 - And their emotions are *long-lasting*.

**Impulsivity also has a BIOLOGICAL basis:
Regulating action is harder for some than for others.**

- They find it *very hard to restrain* impulsive behaviors.
 - Often, without thinking, they do things that *get them in trouble*.
 - Sometimes their *behavior seems to come out of nowhere*.
- They find it very *hard to be effective*.
 - Their moods get in the way of *organizing* to achieve their goals.
 - They *cannot control* behaviors linked to their moods.

(continued on next page)

**An invalidating SOCIAL environment
can make it very hard to regulate emotions.**

- An invalidating environment doesn't seem to understand your emotions.
 - It tells you your emotions are *invalid, weird, wrong, or bad*.
 - It often *ignores* your emotional reactions and does nothing to help you.
 - It may say things like "Don't be such a baby!" "Quit your blubbering." "Quit being such a chicken and just solve the problem." or "Normal people don't get this frustrated."
- People who invalidate are **OFTEN DOING THE BEST THEY CAN**.
 - They *may not know* how to validate or how important it is to validate, or they *may be afraid* that if they validate your emotions, you will get more emotional, not less.
 - They *may be under high stress* or time pressure, or they may have too few resources themselves.
 - There may be just a *poor fit* between you and your social environment:
You may be a tulip in a rose garden.

**An ineffective SOCIAL environment
is a big problem when you want
to learn to regulate emotions and actions.**

- Your environment may *reinforce out-of-control emotions and actions*.
 - If people give in when you get out of control, it will be hard for you to get in control.
 - If others command you to change, but don't coach you on how to do this, it will be hard to keep on trying to change.

**It's the TRANSACTIONS that count
between the person and the social environment.**

- Biology and the social environment influence the person.
- The person reciprocates and influences his or her social environment.
- The social environment reciprocates and influences the person.
- And so on and on and on.