

## TIP SHEET 9.2

### Client Worksheet: Understanding emotions

Our emotions play an important role in our lives. However, they are often misunderstood. Learning to manage our emotions means that we understand the role and function of emotions in our lives. This handout provides an overview of some of the key functions of emotions.

- We all experience a number of primary emotions. These are anger, sorrow, joy, surprise, fear, disgust, guilt, shame, and interest. As we develop, we also experience some emotions that are combinations of these primary emotions.
- Emotions are fleeting, usually lasting a few minutes at the most.
- Some emotions may continually reoccur, and when they persist, they are called moods.
- Emotions can be prompted by internal and external events. It is our interpretations of these events, however, that influence the emotion we feel.
- Emotions involve brain- and body-chemistry changes; when we sense these changes, we sense that we are having an emotional experience.
- Emotions are chemical energy designed to prompt action – they are energy in motion.
- Emotions are important for their role in communication, and can be expressed in body language, actions, and words. However, we easily misread emotions, which can lead to people misunderstanding us, and to us misunderstanding others.
- Emotions, even unpleasant ones, are useful - because they give us information about what is happening. It is important to check, however, that we interpreted whatever prompted our emotion correctly, as we can cause ourselves all sorts of distress by misinterpreting situations.
- Emotions are not facts: sometimes they give us misleading signals. Just because we feel afraid, it doesn't necessarily mean the situation is threatening; just because we feel love for another person, it doesn't mean that person is necessarily good for us; and just because we feel guilty, it does not necessarily mean we have done something wrong.
- Being able to recognise, describe, and name emotions gives us better control over them.