



# Dream Emotionally, Think Rationally

By:  
Joe Tye

Paul and Joan leaned against the Chevy and held hands as they watched Jeff and Sandra run off toward their classes. Ruthie Howard, one of the moms who volunteered at Shay's Point, had agreed to open things up at Paul's school that morning.

"I don't understand you." Paul turned his eyes from the playground equipment at his kids' school that he knew he'd never be able to afford for the disadvantaged kids at Shay's Point and looked over at Joan. "One minute you tell me to think big, and the next you tell me to be reasonable. One minute you tell me that my only limits are self-imposed, and the next you tell me to go easy on myself because I'm only human. Why, if I didn't love you so much, I might even accuse you of being inconsistent."

Joan smiled and yanked the short end of Paul's necktie, pulling it tight. "Well, my dear, you'd be wrong.

I'm perfectly consistent."

"How do you explain that?"

"Easy. You need to be emotional on the upside and rational on the downside."

"Okay, psych major, can you put that into terms a dumb lawyer can understand?"

"It won't be easy, but I'll try. Let's see. Wherefore and whereas the beginning of any difficult enterprise requires an extraordinary amount of optimism and positive attitude, any party planning to undertake such difficult enterprise must imbue it with emotional energy at a level for which no rational explanation is possible. In the course of fulfilling the difficult enterprise, however, there will be unanticipated difficulties—elsewise such enterprise should not have been labeled difficult by the party of the first place. Such difficulties—also known as obstacles, hindrances, obstructions, barriers, or setbacks—may plunge the party of the first place into a state of melancholy—also known as depression—against which emotional energy and positive attitudes alone

will not prevail. In such cases the party of the first place must exercise and practice disciplined thinking, which is based upon an objective search for facts and sober analysis of such facts, thus and thereby preventing the party of the first place from wallowing in unwarranted self-recrimination, overestimating the magnitude of obstacles, and overlooking possible alternative solutions to said difficulties. And so forth and so on.”

“Very impressive, counselor! Intimidating, without informing. You would have made a great lawyer. But can you say it in English?”

Joan looked at him with a patience earned through years of working with children. “When explanation doesn’t work, try example. That’s what my mother always told me.”

**EFFECTIVE ENTHUSIASM IS THE MARRIAGE OF EMOTIONAL ENERGY AND DISCIPLINED INTELLECT. LIKE HAVING COURAGE, WHETHER OR NOT WE HAVE ENTHUSIASM IS A PERSONAL CHOICE.**

“Rafe said that very same thing,” Paul blurted out without thinking, earning a look that notified him Joan intended to know everything about Rafe before day’s end. She took both of his hands in hers and said, “When we were just starting up the school, nobody believed it was possible except you and me. And I only believed in the school because I believed in you. If you had been what you lawyers call a reasonable man back then, you would have listened to all those other reasonable people and gotten a real job. But you were unreasonable because you had a dream, a calling. You didn’t have anything going for you except your passion, your emotional commitment to this cause. Shay’s Point School was built on your emotional energy, Paul. That energy turned a dream into reality.

“But reality is more complicated than dreams, and emotions aren’t enough to keep things going. In fact they can be downright harmful. Things start to go wrong, and instead of trying rationally to understand the problem, you blame yourself—or someone else.

Instead of asking for help, you try to do it all yourself, like you always have.

“This morning you said we might lose everything today. That was your emotions doing the talking. A little bit of rational thinking will show you that’s not true, and guide you toward actions you can take to keep it from happening.”

Paul put his hands around Joan’s waist and pulled her close. “You are an amazing person, you know that?”

And I’m very lucky to have you as a partner in this life.”

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“Yes, you are.”

“Sandra told me this morning that I just need to give myself permission to be happy. If I give myself permission to dream new dreams, can I have yours also?”

Joan smiled and touched his chin. “Let’s do it together.”