

# Learning about **Disappointment** From Chinese Language

Musings of an Ontological Coach

SWIPE



# Disappointment - 失意

In Chinese, disappointment can be translated into two characters “失意” (Shi Yi).

失 means loss. 意 is the common character to describe meaning. These two characters translate disappointment as a loss of meaning.

We are often disappointed when an outcome turns out differently from we had expected. We experience disappointment when we are not able to make sense of why things turn out differently from what we had expected.

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# Disappointment - 失望

Another common way to describe disappointment in Chinese is to use the characters “失望”. 望 means hope.

失望 means the loss of hope. A person begins to lose hope after failing to make sense of what had happened. 失望 is possibly the more intense version of disappointment compared to 失意. When one is not able to make sense of the unmet expectations, the inability to sense-make develops into a loss of hope (resignation).

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# Understanding Disappointment

Disappointment is the emotion experienced when there is unmet expectations. Dealing with disappointment takes a lot of emotional bandwidth. The purpose of this emotion is to align our expectations with reality.

In disappointment, our instinct is to look at the problem and ask “why” questions. In a mood of disappointment, we often end up making stories in our head. The “I’m not good enough” or “I’m a failure” stories are common themes in disappointment. We also tend to hold on to stories of how our closed ones failed us.

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# Understanding Disappointment

We are disappointed when we fail to achieve the set of outcomes that we had aimed for. The stronger our confidence in believing that the set of outcomes can be achieved, the bigger our disappointment when that goal is not met.

When we are in disappointment, we sigh often and we feel sluggish in our body until we can make sense of what had happened.

Disappointment can become a mood when there is a lack of answer to why things did not turn out the way we expected (no internal closure).



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# Overcoming Disappointment

1. Practice Sense-making - It is common to find people lowering their expectations of the results in order to deal with potential disappointments. However, doing this can hinder performance as it stops one from going the full 100%.

The alternative could be to practice and learn the skills of sense-making. Sense-making skills increase one's agility to deal with circumstances that are out of our control. Ability to make sense of what's happening can strengthen our resilience.



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# Overcoming Disappointment

In sense-making, we first need to process our emotions. With negative stories in our heads, we need to look for evidence that we did our best. That can be hard when we are dealing with disappointment and unfavorable results.

We often need to enrol others for help. We need others to listen and validate our thoughts and emotions. We need alternative perspectives to consider and help us look beyond our stories. Sense-making is the process of learning from the emotion of disappointment.



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# Overcoming Disappointment

## 2. Practice making clear requests

Disappointment is connected strongly with expectations. Many times, our expectations of others are simply unspoken or vague requests. We assume the other party know what we want and we get disappointed when they do not.

Often, disappointments can be managed by making specific and clear requests. This means we let others know exactly what we want and what satisfactory outcomes look like (rather than assume they know).



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# Intepreting Emotions from Other Languages

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