



Processing Emotions

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Have you ever caught yourself re-telling a story about an experience that occurred some time ago and yet you still feel that same heightened anger, fear or dread as if no time had passed at all? Do you feel the same weighty heaviness on your shoulders, heat flooding your face, loud pounding in your ears, that same breathless tightness in your chest or gripping tension in your muscles? Do you hold your breath as you think about it?

We are more than our minds and thoughts; we are also feeling, emotional beings. Our emotions and bodily experiences are a compass to our inner world, holding valuable information for us, if we pay attention to them.

As living beings, we can always count on facing challenges, obstacles & conflict in life. Ignoring or suppressing our internal and emotional responses to them contributes to the distress we feel.

What do your emotional and bodily reactions tell you about yourself and the world?

What do your responses say about your beliefs, values and needs?

What does this experience mean for you?

Use this guide to help you process your internal world, learn more about yourself & manage distress with *compassion, kindness and care*. And in doing so, you create opportunities to improve your relationship with others.

Guide to

Processing your Emotions

working with you through life's



Notice your most apparent emotion.

It's helpful to notice the emotion like this: "This is Resentment/Anger/Sadness/Frustration" etc

Now see if you can sink a little deeper into your emotional experience.

Were there other emotions that came immediately before?

Using a list of emotions may help to identify & name them.

Turn your attention to your bodily experiencing. What do you notice? For example, you might notice a dull ache in your shoulders, a tightness in your jaw or chest, the clenching of your fists, you might be jiggling your feet, or feel queasy in your stomach, a heaviness in your core.

Deepen your bodily experience. Does the feeling shift or move? Does it have a colour or temperature? A shape?

See if you can place a caring hand on the part of your body where you feel the strongest sensation. Continue to sit with the sensation and the emotions. This may feel awkward, uncomfortable, weird. Remember that any new behaviour feels uncomfortable at first. The more you practice, the easier and more familiar these mindful, focussing behaviours will be.

Does this feeling seem familiar? Does it bring up other memories, images, stories? Notice any new emotions or bodily experiences that arise. You may catch yourself thinking, 'yes I remember the time...I felt the same way then'

See if you can connect with your body's implicit knowledge. With your hand on the part of your body where you feel the sensation most strongly, ask yourself the following questions with gentle curiosity:

'What is this about?' 'What do you want me to know?' and 'What do you need?'

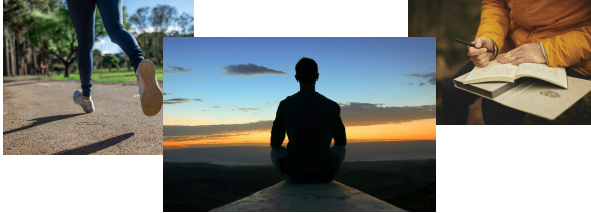
Give yourself time and space to do this and see what arises.

You are the expert on you. Trust yourself.

Making meaning of your experience. What does your experience tell you about what's important to you, about what matters to you? Your answers likely point towards your values, beliefs about yourself or the world, losses, needs, dreams, or boundaries that have been crossed.



Managing your Emotions



While our emotions and felt experiences make sense and fit the situation, we want to reflect on whether our reactions to the situation move us **towards our values and what is important to us** or lead us away. We can ask ourselves, *how can I take responsibility for my reactions and what can I do to self soothe?*

Taking responsibility for your part in conflict

Ask yourself, is there some small part I can take responsibility for? In the lead up to the conflict, was I tired, sensitive or defensive? Could I have been more open & shared about what was going on with me? Was I perhaps nursing an old grudge? Did I shut down, tune out or in some other way, turn away?

The fact is that few of us enjoy conflict and distress. Have you ever heard someone say *my favourite pastime is feeling bad* or *I feel most relaxed when I'm in conflict with my loved ones.*

Acknowledging your part, even the tiniest part, will create opportunity for connection and healing.

Being in contact with our internal experiences, being mindful of what is going on for ourselves at any given time, will allow us to care for ourselves.

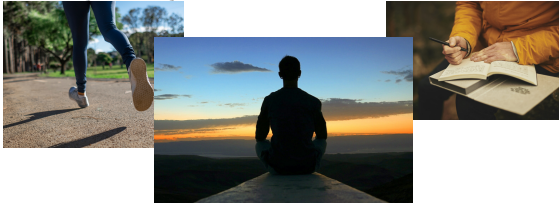
When we engage in self-care, we can then be open, available and honest with others. In turn, this allows others to show up for us.

Self care is therefore not a luxury - it is a necessity.

Guide to

Managing your Emotions

working with you through life



There are 3 approaches we can take to manage our emotions. The option we choose will be influenced by the resources available to us at the time: people, space, time, privacy. As you read through this list, ask yourself, which of these do I already do or what might I begin? Incorporate regular time to practice self-care so it becomes an instinctive go-to once you notice the signs of distress arising.

There are 3 approaches we can take to manage our emotions:

You as your own resource. We can harness the power of our own mind and body to regain equilibrium. Self-regulating strategies include mindfulness practices, rhythmic diaphragmatic breathing, using a weighted blanket or taking a soothing bath to provide comfort to our body. Journaling our emotions and thoughts or partaking in meditation practices are alternative ways to acknowledge our experiences and soothe our emotions and body.

Sharing with a trusted person who is able to hear you and hold the emotional space for you, who will keep your confidences. Someone who will listen without proffering unsolicited advice, be on your side, someone you can cry and rant to, lean on and who will hear and hold all your emotions without judgement or criticism. This may be a trusted friend, peer or neighbour, a family or community member or you may wish to confide in a qualified counsellor/therapist who is trained to support you and help you navigate life.

Distractions. Intentional distraction with healthy activity that takes little effort & relaxes you such as exercise, going for a walk, watching a movie, playing an instrument or a game.

Aim to incorporate a mix of each type of resource into your life. If you find you are relying heavily on any one type of resource, please consider seeking further support. **You don't have to go through it alone.**

May you know peace