



Healthy Bodies

All Emotions

There are no good or bad emotions – they all have a part to play in our lives. Emotions are data/information about how we're experiencing the world. They help guide us through life by motivating us, telling us when we're on track, and when to make a change.

Releasing emotions is to allow us to react to the situation that's happening at the time without the 'emotional baggage'. You'll most likely know the saying 'the straw that broke the camel's back'. Our emotions are stored in our body. Over time they can start weighing us down. They come out in various ways – headaches, injuries, tension, aches or the feeling of being weighed down.

The theory behind this 'Releasing Emotions' work is that when an event happens we store the memory of the event along with the emotion we experienced at the time. Every event that we experience gives us an opportunity to learn. Even in the most horrendous events there are some learnings. For example – I'll treat people kindly, "I'm strong".

In order to let go of an emotion we need a process to take the learnings that came from the event in order to release the emotion. Sometimes the learnings come years later. The process is not about getting rid of the emotion altogether. When we've released emotions from the past it allows us to respond to the situation that's happening. This prevents a 'straw that breaks the camel's back' scenario. This is where our reaction is greater than it needs to be because it's triggering off many other events. You are much more likely to feel in control and respond in a way that works for you.

People report when they are experiencing emotions such as anger, sadness, fear, guilt, hurt it's no longer the same intensity and the feeling doesn't last as long.

"Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don't"

(Steve Maraboli)

Anger.

We all experience anger to some degree throughout our lives. Anger has a continuum from slight irritation or frustration through to fury. Even boredom is a type of anger of not being satisfied with a situation.

The feeling of anger can alert us to taking a stand for ourselves and others. It lets us know something is not right and at times gives us the strength and ability to take action. This can start working against us if the threshold for the feeling anger is low or many situations trigger the anger response.

Anger is a secondary emotion which means that often it masks the primary emotion such as fear, sadness, guilt or hurt. When we are experiencing anger a useful question to ask is – “What is the emotion underneath this?”.

“Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.”

(Buddha)

Sadness.

Sadness is an important emotion because it helps to motivate us to deal with our situation. Our tendency to avoid sadness is almost instinctive. From a very young age, we try to avoid sad feelings. When we fell over we might have been distracted or encouraged not to cry. As well meaning as this might have been we may have created an association that it's not OK to be sad.

It is a natural part of life and is usually connected with certain experiences of pain or loss or even a meaningful moment of connection or joy that makes us value our lives.

We can express our sadness in different ways. Crying is a powerful way of expressing sadness. It has the benefit of us experiencing a release or way of letting go.

Although not necessary tears are often a sign that a shift is happening and we are about to move on in some way. For those that haven't cried in a long time, this can mean we are ready to experience emotions again – this includes fun and joy.

Sadness can be a reminder of what we care about, what's important to us or what gives our life meaning.

“First accept sadness, realise that without losing winning isn't so great”

(Alyssa Milano)

Depression.

Feeling stuck. Depression is a label that is given to people who have a depressed mood most of the time, have lost interest or pleasure in most activities, are fatigued, can't sleep, have no interest in sex, feel hopeless and helpless. It can be difficult to think clearly or make decisions.

Dorothy Rowe describes depression as a prison where you are both the suffering prisoner and the cruel jailor.

Depression can be a way of keeping us safe from doing things. When our mood is low and we're thinking negatively, we can't be disappointed. If we don't have energy to put ourselves out there again we might avoid situations where we get judged.

If we are finding it difficult to look after ourselves or get every day tasks done, people can step in and help. In some respects it can be a way of getting support or a signal that something needs to change.

Unlike the other emotions such as anger or sadness that can guide us and help us in future, depression isn't one that we necessarily need to experience again in the future.

"Once you choose hope, anything is possible."

(Christopher Reeve)

Fear.

The emotion of fear is felt as a sense of dread. It alerts us to the possibility of physical harm. This then motivates us to protect ourselves.

There are times when a past fear might appear, even though the current situation doesn't require the need to be afraid. Although we may logically know we are safe, our brain automatically prepares us for the worst to happen.

For example:

When we were younger being left alone could have put us in real danger – not having food, water, shelter or ways to defend ourselves. Being left alone as adults isn't likely to have the same danger but we might still experience the fear.

We may have experienced an earthquake where we did need to protect ourselves, however that doesn't mean every time the earth moves our life is in danger.

The aim is to experience the right amount of fear to protect yourself and fully enjoy your life which includes challenging yourself.

Sometimes the terms fear and anxiety get used interchangeably. We are referring to fear being the moment that you are experiencing the 'danger'. Anxiety is worrying about the danger or negative outcome happening in future.

It can be a useful question to ask ourselves "Is my life actually in danger right in this moment?" or alternatively "In this moment am I OK?"

If it is in danger – do what you need to do to protect yourself!

If it's not in danger observe your body and reset to calm and positive. The quickest way to calm ourselves is to pay attention to our breath and S-L-O-W it down. Think calm thoughts – "I'm OK" "I'm calming myself".

By positive we mean looking for the good in the situation, reminding yourself this might be an opportunity to learn.

FEAR.

Forget Everything and Run;

OR

Face Everything and Rise.

Hurt – No Expectations Approach.

Hurt is always about our value system, we all have different value systems.

We get hurt when we expect other people to behave like we behave. Why would they?

- They have different life experiences
- They might have been brought up in a household with different values
- They have experienced different emotions
- They have a different filtering system in terms of the way they perceive events

It is one thing to get it and it is another thing to live it. It's therefore helpful to give yourself time and space to imagine a 'no expectations' approach.

Expectations of ourselves are often other's expectations of us or how we think the 'world' operates. We usually pick these up many years ago without realising it. You can recognise them in the language we use "I have to..." "I must..." "I don't have a choice" "I need to..." "It's the right thing to do" "It would be rude not to..." "I can't say no"

With this approach you either choose:

- **Not** to do something
or
- Do it **whole-heartedly**

If you choose to do something you do it while expecting nothing in return. Often people will do a task and be resentful. Whatever the task you can choose; If you don't want to do it, don't do it. If you choose to do it, **DO IT WHOLEHEARTEDLY.**

When you have that it is so liberating, when you understand claims (the wrongs perceived happening) you will hear them everywhere, it is often the word *should, must, have to* – *he should have done this... she should have done that...*

The question is who says!

Practice and have fun doing only what you really want to do this week.

Sometimes when people say "I've got no expectations" you tell by the tone of their voice their thinking behind that statement is "I'll be let down". With this approach the thought is "We all have different values therefore I choose to have no expectations".

A common response when introducing the 'no expectations' approach is "How can that work? Doesn't that mean there's no accountability for me or for others?"

Having no expectations is different from there being no consequence. Everything that we do or don't do will have consequences. The difference being when we have no expectations the hurt or negative emotion isn't part of it.

Another question that gets asked is "Isn't setting an outcome an expectation?" There is a difference between having your mind focussed on what you would like versus expecting it to happen. We can imagine what we're aiming for without the emotion attached when we're expecting.

Choosing a no expectations approach is ultimately about YOU! A lot of time and energy is freed up. Ironically this is more likely to get you where you want to be (even though you have no expectations).

Tasks:

1. Pick a situation where you have been upset, annoyed, angry. Imagine what that situation would have been like if you had no expectations. What you see, hear (be saying to yourself), feel, how would you be responding?
2. When it involves another person ask yourself what is the person valuing most in this situation? What am I valuing most in the situation?
3. While still imagining you have no expectations of yourself or others, how will you respond
 - a) don't do the task
 - b) do the task whole heartedly.What will you notice (see, hear, feel)?

Guilt.

Guilt is an emotion that occurs when a person believes or realises (accurately or not) that they have compromised their standard of behaviour or expectations of others. It's the feeling of making a mistake or a situation that you regret.

Experiencing this can lead to taking responsibility for our actions. It gives us an opportunity to learn from the experience – what we will or won't do in future.

On reflection people discover a lot of what they previously felt guilty about was related to other's expectations and not their own beliefs or values. They make a conscious decision to no longer experience feelings of guilt related to these situations.

Once releasing guilt from the past, people report they very rarely experience it in future. Instead they describe having a feeling which signals to do things differently, they take the learnings and move on. The process can happen so quickly they no longer describe the feeling as guilt.

“Mistakes are part of life everyone makes them, everyone regrets them. But some learn from them and some end up making them again. It's up to you if you'll use your mistakes to your advantage.”

(Meredith Sapp)

Shame.

Guilt and shame also get used interchangeably. Where guilt is an awareness or regret at a situation shame is the negative view of ourselves in relation to that regret.

Guilt: I *made* a mistake.

Shame: I *am* a mistake.

Shame is a painful feeling about how we appear to others (and to ourselves) and doesn't necessarily depend on our having done anything.

It can be that voice in our head that tells us "You're not good enough" "Others are doing better than you" "You're lazy" "You're a failure" "You're not good looking enough, intelligent enough, successful enough".

Having a negative perception of ourselves at some point may have motivated us to make changes e.g. we might donate money to charity, improve our health, be kinder to others, work hard, support the environment.

When we are thinking negatively about ourselves this can have a very draining effect. This isn't the most effective state to be in particularly when we are wanting to make changes.

When it comes to motivation we are either moving away from pain or towards pleasure.

Shame as a motivator is an example of moving away from pain. In future we may choose to use more 'towards pleasure' strategies; for example imagining what we will see, hear, feel, when we have achieved what we'd like. Alternatively use the emotion of shame to alert wanting things to be different and moving to other mindset strategies that energise us.

Shame is often fuelled by keeping it to ourselves. By talking and sharing with others is an opportunity to re-evaluate what beliefs we have taken on as facts. By receiving empathy, understanding or being presented with different views that can help shift the beliefs that drive the emotion of shame e.g. "I'm not loveable", "I'm not successful" "I'm letting people down". This can enhance the releasing emotions work.

"Empathy is the antidote to shame"

(Brene Brown)