



Emotions

Emotions grow like weeds. If we ignore them, they'll keep on growing until we pay attention. If we don't nurture a peaceful oasis in our heart's garden, emotions will take over. They'll put tenacious roots down into our moods and our personality. Different emotions will gradually intertwine with each other in dark confusion, and part of becoming free is doing the work of consciously untangling them.





We make decisions based on emotions, not rational thinking, even when we think we're being rational. This is a good reason to get to know our emotional states, and especially to notice what triggers them.

Emotions are important signals. If we don't understand and listen to what they are telling us, they can gain far too much importance.

This causes stress, and reduces our ability to focus, do good things for ourselves, and make constructive decisions.

Extremes of emotion hurt us more than they hurt anyone else.

Shouting at someone because we're angry might give some temporary relief, but that's missing the point of why we felt the anger in the first place. Our default mode is to blame our emotions on others - "He makes me so angry", "She made me feel sad". One of the biggest perspective shifts we can have on the journey to freedom is to recognize that this is not true. Although our emotions might be triggered by others, they're happening inside of us. We are the cause, and blaming the other person achieves nothing aside from keeping us stuck in harmful emotional states.

Emotions can either be useful teachers that help us to heal old wounds; or useless, freedom-destroying parasites. Fortunately, the choice is ours. The first step is recognizing the difference.

Fear

- **Useful** fear warns us of danger and suggests we might want to take a different path - literally or metaphorically.
- **Useless** fear paralyzes us with a constant drip of anxiety and self-doubt.

Sadness

- **Useful** sadness is an invitation to actively process, mourn, and release the loss of what we cherish (people, love, objects).
- **Useless** sadness is a wound that never heals. It keeps us passive, at worst depressed and incapable.



Self-Knowledge: Emotions

Getting to know who we really are

Jealousy

- **Useful** jealousy shines a spotlight on the parts of ourselves that we have the capacity to develop, if we choose.
- **Useless** jealousy closes our hearts and suffocates our spontaneity, keeping us focused on others instead of cultivating ourselves.

Anger

- **Useful** anger helps us set boundaries, gives us the energy to pursue clarity and justice for ourselves or others.
- **Useless** anger is a pressure building inside that destroys our peace and surrenders our power.

Happiness

- **Useful** happiness lifts us gently so that we can give more deeply. It contains peace and contentment.
- **Useless** happiness is the euphoria before the crash.

Disgust

- **Useful** disgust tells us what to avoid – and what to pay attention to within ourselves. Often, what arouses disgust in the outer world has an echo in our shadow self.
- **Useless** disgust is judgment that distances us from love for our fellow beings, or from love for ourselves if we cannot tolerate our bodies.

Resentment

- **Useful** resentment warns us that we need to examine the ways we are giving more than receiving; that we need to mend a relationship - or move on.
- **Useless** resentment is the death of love. It's no accident that this word comes from the French *ressentiment* or *ressentir*, to feel again. Resentment really has this quality of being experienced over and over, and building each time until it completely encrusts how we perceive the person we think is causing our resentment.



Self-Awareness: Emotions

Becoming aware of the ways we are not free

Awareness here means reminding ourselves that we do not have to react to our emotions, or let them lead us into actions that we might regret. In other words, we do not have to identify with what we are feeling. When an emotion arises, we can observe it, listen to the action it is suggesting, and make a decision either in line with it, or not. When we are experiencing an extreme emotion, we have the power to release feelings that do not serve us. This is essential. We recognize that the emotion is not helpful to ourselves or others, and allow feelings to flow through us without shaking our foundations.

All of us will go through difficult emotional experiences that can be so overwhelming, we may even feel like we don't want to exist, because it seems like there's no other way out. It helps to remember that this too shall pass. Almost always, the emotional state will pass. As we are going through it, we can remind ourselves that the emotion is a teacher that is bringing up an important message – an old trauma or pattern – that needs to be seen, heard, and released. Over time, as we have this experience again and again, we can actually be hopeful and excited when the darkness comes, because we learn that descending to the darkest place will always show us the way to a higher equilibrium, and greater bliss.



Ask...

What emotion am I experiencing?
What triggered this emotion right now?
Is it connected to anything else?
What does it remind me of?
Is there something from the past I need to release?





🌀 Taking responsibility for our emotions.

Noticing what triggers our emotional responses, and asking ourselves questions about it, is one of the most effective ways to gain the kind of insight that allows us to evolve. Most strong emotions trigger a whole chain of buried experiences of that emotion. To explore this in depth, it can really help to talk it through with a person who is just listening, not judging or advising.

🌀 Naming, allowing, and acknowledging, but not identifying with our emotions.

Not saying “I am angry” but “I am one with the experience of anger”, “Anger is flowing through me”, “Anger is arising within me”.

🌀 Not giving emotions a free pass by believing we are helplessly in their control.

🌀 Responding, not reacting.

When our emotions are triggered while we are communicating with another person, taking a breath and pausing before expressing ourselves. The great thing about doing this is that the more we practice it, the more natural it becomes, until we don’t even notice we are doing it, and all our interactions take place with so much more ease.

🌀 Physically releasing emotions.

Observing where emotions live and express themselves in our bodies, and consciously relaxing, gently massaging, or ‘breathing into’ those parts of us. Shaking our bodies, dancing, doing a few jumping jacks, exercising.