

Intuitive Reinvention™

HOW TO FEEL YOUR FEELINGS

*For the companion podcast, listen to Episode # 218,
"Feelings Won't Kill You" tracycrossley.com/podcast/218*

Some people are afraid if they allow their feelings to surface, they will spiral into a bottomless abyss, never to return. Emotions can be extremely painful, but they won't kill you. We give meaning to them based on our old patterns and beliefs, not on reality. But even if we intellectually know feelings are just a flood of brain chemicals, we go to great lengths to avoid them.

Why is it important to feel your emotions? First of all, shoving them down turns you into a pressure cooker—they have to come out somehow, someday. If you numb, distract or avoid, those feelings may erupt in unexpected anger or blame. They seep out when you least expect it, sometimes misdirected toward people you care about. Second, accepting and allowing your feelings leads to a more fulfilling life because you're able to make change happen on a deeper level.

So how do you feel your feelings? Below is a guide to help. Keep in mind language and emotion are in different parts of the brain, so this process is a bit esoteric. Keep at it—the more you do it, the easier it becomes and you'll start to get a "feel" for it. The whole process only takes a few minutes.

There are two ways to approach this, and the processes are similar:

In Reaction

When you're in a heightened emotional state, usually from being triggered, sitting with your feelings will make the discomfort dissipate quicker. Ignore them or push them down and they will linger under the surface forever. Even if you have only a few minutes to connect to yourself, it's worth it. And if it is your first time, be prepared to either not feel anything at all or experience an explosion of emotions. In the latter case, you will want to be alone for a bit of time. If you're around other people, try to go somewhere you can be alone. If you can't, take a second and connect so you are at least not blocking yourself from feeling.

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1. Notice what your head is responding and reacting to- maybe it's a text from your partner that he/she has to cancel your plans for the evening.
2. Take a deep breath and close your eyes.
3. Focus on your gut or the source of the physical discomfort. Emotions usually manifest somewhere in the body—the stomach, chest, throat, jaw, shoulders, etc. Wherever it is, focus on it and stay there.
4. Emotions will build and you'll start to get very uncomfortable. STAY WITH IT. Your instinct will be to get up and dust or make a phone call or do your taxes (I'm serious!). This is fear and it's trying to distract you. Don't let it. Remember, the feelings will not harm or kill you.
5. For some people, this may be enough. Allow the feelings and any tears to come without judgment. Just sit and allow. That's it. Ride it out until you feel lighter. To make sure you're "done," remind yourself of what happened to trigger you (i.e. the text) and see if there's anything left. If not, you've ridden the wave and you can go about your day without that heaviness. If it's still there, stay with it until it's gone.
6. If you want to go deeper while allowing the feelings, stay with it until your innate voice tells you what's going on. Are you getting flashes of images or scenes from your past? These flashes are a window into the source of your emotional pain. Perhaps you see yourself in a grocery store as a kid, by yourself, thinking you've been left behind. Fear of abandonment is what the text triggered. Connecting with the source of your pain can provide insight; you'll start to recognize it more easily in the future and say to yourself, "This is triggering my fear of abandonment. I'm going to allow myself to feel these shitty feelings, knowing it's about my past and not the present situation."

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Body Scan

This can be done at any time. I like doing it when I first wake up to take my emotional pulse. It's a good way to start the day and can actually shift your mood.

1. Start at the top of your head and scan your body from head to toe, noticing everything you feel physically. Are your shoulders tight? Is your stomach in a knot? Does your back ache? Is there tension or heaviness anywhere? Maybe you have a generalized feeling of anxiety. Don't do anything yet, just notice.
2. Zero in on any discomfort and focus there for a minute. Can you feel anything bubble up? If not, that's probably resistance stemming from fear. Stick with it and see if you can connect with anything. If not, try again another morning or when you're triggered.
3. If you do start to sense emotions brewing, allow them to surface. Don't distract yourself. Stay with it until they dissipate... or proceed to Step 4.
4. Go deeper. Observe any flashes of pictures or scenes from your past. Do they reveal any particular fears or beliefs (fear of rejection, belief you're not good enough, etc.)? How is this currently manifesting in your life? See if you can match the fear or belief to what's going on; maybe it's an event you're planning, a job interview or a family dinner. Recognize it's less about the current event and more about the old feeling.

When you release your feelings, they no longer control you. Look at emotional triggers as an opportunity to practice (I know it sounds awful, but it really is a gift). Each time you do this exercise it will feel like a pressure valve releasing, resulting in a lighter, happier you.



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