



Throughout history, in society and within families, we are often taught to keep our feelings boxed up inside with no collective modeling of how to metabolize the various traumas experienced in our lifetime or the lifetime of our ancestors.

We are not often asked how we truly feel about life events and then given the appropriate space to make connections within our body to express it outwardly to another person. The general message has been that feelings are messy and best kept to oneself.

When an event or situation is given the energy that it is not safe to be talked about, it leaves our body in a perpetual state of feeling like something is wrong (stress/anxiety). Healing cannot happen from this space. Shame and confusion perpetuate the general sense that emotions should be hidden. When we don't have safe spaces to process feelings, our reaction to environmental triggers comes from a place of reactivity versus agency and choice, which increases the likelihood of passing down our cultural trauma.

Over time when feelings and events are not fully processed within the body it can lead to physical, mental and emotional wounds that affect the health of our bodies, institutions, churches and communities. We cannot heal through bypassing our bodies and the held emotions and feelings that reside there. We now know through scientific research in the studies of emotional intelligence, epigenetics and somatic body therapies that trauma is held within the body and can be passed down from generation to generation. We also know that understanding our body's emotional language is key to healing and making behavioral change so that held traumas do not get passed down and expressed in future generations.

Primary Emotions are immediate responses that are instinctual and universal across cultures. They function to keep us alive and prepare us to deal with important events. Emotional researcher, Dr. Paul Ekman currently identifies 7 universal primary emotions: Fear, Sadness, Disgust, Anger, Enjoyment, Surprise and Contempt. Dr. Ekman, Eve Ekman PhD, alongside the Dalai Lama developed an interactive map to explore our emotions, **Atlas of Emotions**. The map is a helpful tool for building emotional awareness and increasing emotional vocabulary.

Secondary Emotions are learned responses that are social constructs developed in our childhood from the people, environments and societies we live in (emotions attached to stories). Secondary emotions are defensive and inhibitory emotions that develop to protect our primary emotions and are ways we were taught to react to our emotions (e.g., feeling guilty when angry so turning the anger inward). Examples of secondary emotions include anxiety, guilt, shame, resentment, frustration and remorse.

Exploring our emotions: When a reaction arises, it is an invitation to explore deeper to see if something sensitive is being hidden underneath the immediate reaction. Emotions can last anywhere from seconds to minutes but generally resolve within an hour. If they last longer than an hour the emotion is categorized as a mood. *If you are experiencing painful emotions or overwhelm where feelings, negative thoughts or behaviors are lingering it is recommended you reach out to a trained therapist who can support you.

What am I feeling? Where am I feeling this emotion in my body? What triggered this feeling?

References/ Resources

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Emotions & Feelings List

Accepting / Open

Calm
Centered
Content
Fulfilled
Patient
Peaceful
Present
Relaxed
Serene
Trusting

Aliveness / Joy

Amazed
Awe
Bliss
Delighted
Eager
Ecstatic
Enchanted
Energized
Engaged
Enthusiastic
Excited
Free
Happy
Inspired
Invigorated
Lively
Passionate
Playful
Radiant
Refreshed
Rejuvenated
Renewed
Satisfied
Thrilled
Vibrant

Angry / Annoyed

Agitated
Aggravated
Bitter
Contempt
Cynical
Disdain
Disgruntled
Disturbed
Edgy
Exasperated
Frustrated
Furious
Grouchy
Hostile
Impatient
Irritated
Irate
Moody
On edge
Outraged
Pissed
Resentful
Upset
Vindictive

Courageous / Powerful

Adventurous
Brave
Capable
Confident
Daring
Determined
Free
Grounded
Proud
Strong

Worthy Valiant Connected / Loving

Accepting
Affectionate
Caring
Compassion
Empathy
Fulfilled
Present
Safe
Warm
Worthy

Curious

Engaged
Exploring
Fascinated
Interested
Intrigued
Involved
Stimulated

Despair / Sad

Anguish
Depressed
Despondent
Disappointed
Discouraged
Forlorn
Gloomy
Grief
Heartbroken
Hopeless
Lonely
Longing
Melancholy
Sorrow
Teary
Unhappy

Upset Weary Yearning Disconnected / Numb

Aloof
Bored
Confused
Distant
Empty
Indifferent
Isolated
Lethargic
Listless
Removed
Resistant
Shut Down
Uneasy
Withdrawn

Embarrassed / Shame

Ashamed
Humiliated
Inhibited
Mortified
Self-conscious
Useless
Weak
Worthless

Fear

Afraid
Anxious
Apprehensive
Frightened
Hesitant
Nervous
Panic
Paralyzed

Scared Terrified Worried

Fragile

Helpless
Sensitive
Grateful
Appreciative
Blessed
Delighted
Fortunate
Grace
Humbled
Lucky
Moved
Thankful
Touched

Guilt

Regret
Remorseful
Sorry

Hopeful

Encouraged
Expectant
Optimistic
Trusting

Powerless

Impotent
Incapable
Resigned
Trapped
Victim

Tender

Calm
Caring
Loving
Reflective

Self-loving Serene Vulnerable Warm

Stressed / Tense

Anxious
Burned out
Cranky
Depleted
Edgy
Exhausted
Frazzled
Overwhelm
Rattled
Rejecting
Restless
Shaken
Tight
Weary
Worn out

Unsettled / Doubt

Apprehensive
Concerned
Dissatisfied
Disturbed
Grouchy
Hesitant
Inhibited
Perplexed
Questioning
Rejecting
Reluctant
Shocked
Skeptical
Suspicious
Ungrounded
Unsure
Worry

Body Sensations

Achy
Airy
Blocked
Breathless
Bruised
Burning
Buzzy
Clammy
Clenched
Cold
Constricted
Contained

Contracted
Dizzy
Drained
Dull
Electric
Empty
Expanded
Flowing
Fluid
Fluttery
Frozen
Full

Gentle
Hard
Heavy
Hollow
Hot
Icy
Itchy
Jumpy
Knotted
Light
Loose

Nauseous
Numb
Pain
Pounding
Prickly
Pulsing
Queasy
Radiating
Relaxed
Releasing
Rigid
Sensitive
Settled

Shaky
Shivery
Slow
Smooth
Soft
Sore
Spacey
Spacious
Sparkly
Stiff
Still
Suffocated

Sweaty
Tender
Tense
Throbbing
Tight
Tingling
Trembly
Twitchy
Vibrating
Warm
Wobbly
Wooden