**What are my emotions telling me?**

A mentally healthy life includes the full range of human emotions—even the uncomfortable ones like sadness, fear, anger. anxiety, shame and so on. These emotions are all part of being human. Sometimes we do not want to feel these emotions, so we push our difficult feelings down but they don't go away. Bottling up our emotions can make them grow or come out in other ways, for example, not processing something negative that happens at work or school could end up making you more likely to yell at your children, family or friends later. Bottling emotions can reduce your resiliency and increase your reactivity.

Oftentimes difficult emotions are telling us something important about our experiences, and it is important to pay attention to them, name them and process through them. Try watching he movie “Inside Out” (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2096673/>), it shows the importance of recognizing and working through an uncomfortable emotion.

People who can clearly identify how they are feeling in times of intense distress gain access to information that can be used as input to manage problems, make judgments, make progress toward meaningful goals, and more successfully interact with others.

Try these strategies to explore what your emotions are telling you:

1. Permit yourself to experience the emotion—it’s a normal response. Openly recognize what you’re feeling, practice “gentle acceptance” that it’s happening.
2. First write down your physical sensations, such as tension, shaking, energy level, heart rate and temperature. “Notice what is happening in different parts of the body, particularly [your] head, heart and stomach area.”
3. Next write down the thoughts you’re having. For instance, maybe you’re thinking, “I want this feeling to go away,” or “I shouldn’t be feeling this way,” or “I can’t believe she said that to me!” or “This really hurts.” Then write down the behaviors you’re engaging in, such as shutting down or getting quiet, or checking out by reaching for your phone.
4. Lastly, reflect on what happened beforehand to trigger your emotion, and what the emotion is trying to tell you: “If these emotions had something important to say, what would they tell me?”

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| ***Resources:*** | * [*https://www.jstor.org/stable/40064633?seq=1*](https://www.jstor.org/stable/40064633?seq=1) * [*https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/03/110323105202.htm*](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/03/110323105202.htm) * [*https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four\_lessons\_from\_inside\_out\_to\_discuss\_with\_kids*](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_lessons_from_inside_out_to_discuss_with_kids) * [*https://psychcentral.com/blog/understanding-what-your-emotions-are-trying-to-tell-you#2*](https://psychcentral.com/blog/understanding-what-your-emotions-are-trying-to-tell-you#2) * [*https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/curious/201502/what-your-emotions-are-really-telling-you-if-youll-listen*](https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/curious/201502/what-your-emotions-are-really-telling-you-if-youll-listen) |