

Feeling Your Way to Better Relationships

By Jennifer Peters, MA and Jim Kinney

"The challenge most people have with processing their feelings is that they are trying to process them through their "thinking mind." You can't THINK your FEELINGS. You either feel them, or you repress them with THOUGHTS."

~ *Hu Dalconza, www.holisticlearningcenter.com*

Why Expressing Feelings is Important

When we have difficulty expressing our feelings, we are, in fact, repressing them. This blocks the natural flow of life force energy, the energy flow that sustains the connection with our higher consciousness, other people, and Spirit. When we block this natural flow, fears can creep into our conscious awareness. We may feel alone, disconnected, empty or lost.

Not only does repressing feelings disrupt a healthy energy flow, we also *use* energy to keep the feelings repressed. This is primarily a subconscious process, experienced consciously through blocking emotions such as depression or anxiety. By releasing the blocks and accepting our true feelings, we can heal our experiences.

We Were Taught Naught

Nearly everyone was taught that certain emotions were unacceptable. As cultural norms, boys are ridiculed for feelings of sadness, and girls are reprimanded for expressing anger. As we grow older, we may have learned from experiences in life that

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it's not safe to express our feelings. We think, "I will never let anyone hurt me like that again!" Further, society often rewards those who act "tough" by repressing emotions.

Over time, we may have accumulated such a huge stockpile of feelings that we are afraid of uncorking it. So we just "don't go there" and continue to live our life numbly – cut off from our own senses, and unable to connect authentically to others.

The solution is to accept all our feelings and emotions – the positive AND the negative – as part of who we are. Feelings are neither right nor wrong, *they just are*.

What Feelings Tell You

Feelings are messages that indicate if we are in alignment with our authentic Self. Feelings such as joy and love are natural expressions of harmony. Uncomfortable feelings let us know that we need to take action in order to restore inner balance.

For example, anger is energy used for protecting our boundaries, so we feel safe in the world. If we block angry feelings, we will usually blame others or ourselves - affirming our lack of power. By feeling anger, and reflecting on what aspect of our values has been disrespected or violated, we can take appropriate action to assert ourselves.

Healthy expression of feelings is similar to the digestive cycle, the way we ingest, digest, process, and eliminate food. With feelings, we need to honor, face, embrace, and release them. When we are in touch with our true Self, we accept our feelings as natural and beneficial; we 'own' them; we reflect on how to bring our system back into harmony; and we let the feelings go.

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Know Your Truth

According to Jill Bolte Taylor, PhD, author of *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*, "When emotions are triggered, it takes less than 90 seconds for the brain chemicals to surge through our body and be completely washed out of our bloodstream. If we stay in that emotional state longer, it's because we choose to stay attached to the past."

Pain comes from resistance to feeling, from fears associated with past, not from allowing the feelings. Resistance to feelings usually results in projecting past experiences onto others, and creating patterns of relationships we don't desire.

By acknowledging and owning the feelings we generate, we can learn to accept ourselves and live authentically. By accepting our true Self, and acting from this place of wholeness, we can interact with others in a deeper and more meaningful way. The truth is, the quality of our relationships with others is a direct reflection of the quality of our relationship with our own Self. Can you feel it?

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About the authors: Jennifer and Jim Kinney, co-founders of the Santa Fe Harmony Center, have provided experiential approaches to healing and transformation for over 20 years, using mind-body integration approaches and spiritual practices from indigenous cultures, western psychology and neuro-linguistic programming, along with sound healing, music and drum circles. More information available at www.santafeharmonycenter.com