

Mastering your emotions: 5-step practical guide on how to process your emotions



Do you remember the Pixar movie Inside Out? Do you recall it had five characters - Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear and Disgust? As a culture, we have an acceptance of mostly expressing emotions such as happiness, joy, always being 'good' or 'alright' when asked how we are. What happened to the other four characters of Inside Out? What role do they play in our lives? From the time that we are children aren't we told things such as, "Don't cry," "There's nothing to be sad about" or "get a grip on it"? Avoid unpleasant emotions at all costs.

However, in the new circumstances facing our world, our communities, our workplaces and

our families aren't we all experiencing a range of emotions other than joy and happiness? How do we process these emotions? How do we communicate how we feel? How do we get the help and support we need?

To be candid, I am no expert on processing emotions. Like a lot of you (hopefully) I grew up valuing thinking over feeling. However, a journey I've been on over the past year has helped me enormously.

So, this blog is my early practitioner's collection of practical tips and strategies on processing emotions. I have felt more liberated, created more capacity, understood myself better and continue to feel more content. Having lived on the frontlines of CoVid-19 for 2.5 months these strategies have helped me tremendously when some days feel like a complete roller coaster

It is well documented that unlatching the cage and letting those emotional birds fly free has some real health benefits. [Some studies](#) have linked the repressing of unpleasant emotions to increased stress. Health risks increase when people have no way of expressing or acting on their feelings.

According to Tori Rodriguez, a psychotherapist and writer, "Anger and sadness are an important part of life, and new research shows that experiencing and accepting such emotions are vital to our mental health.

So here are the 5 practical strategies I would like share with you:

1. Check in with your body

Emotions are a form of expression just as dance, music or drama. An emotion is a messenger which signals something you need to pay attention to. It originates in the brain but manifests as a physical sensation somewhere in the body (e.g. cold feet, butterflies in the stomach). Observe that feeling - like tension—I feel my jaw is tense, there's tension around my eyes. My shoulders feel heavy. Check in with your body and how it feels differently. Pay attention to those physiological signals.

2. Name It

Give it a name – is it fear or anxiety or frustration. If emotion is a messenger trying to signal something lets decode it accurately. I have enjoyed immense freedom in decoding, for example, it's not anger I feel but insecurity. The ability to acknowledge and recognize the emotion is paramount in being able to clearly express it, ask for help or plain acknowledge it to yourself.

3. What is it telling me?

Now that you know the emotion, ask yourself, “Where is it coming from?” and “Is that anxiety related to the communication I’m about to make? A decision I’m about to take? Or an email I’m about to send? Where is that irritation coming from? Is it a mood because I am missing being at the workplace after weeks of working from home? Am I missing the water cooler banter?”

4. Feel don’t fight

Emotions are energy in motion. Don’t get stuck in the emotion and let it dictate your behaviour.

Imagine your day as a river, flowing. In one place the river is calm. Then it hits rapids, then waterfall. There are whirlpools and swamps, then places the river suddenly speeds up. When you are in the rapids you may not wish to be there but you simply are. The only thing to do is just be in the rapids.

What does this translate into? If you feel sad go for five minutes to feel sad. Feel your sadness or fear or anger. Fighting it doesn’t help because your brain is producing the feeling, accepting it does.

Processing emotions like this allows us to own it, to experience it and move on.

5. Use healthy coping strategies

These are unprecedented times, and for many of us, the first such. Positive coping strategies you can use include writing in a journal, taking up art, talking to a friend, or seeking help with a professional coach or therapist—there are many healthy ways to process your emotions. Reach out.

I wish for you all that you allow yourselves to experience “emodiversity,” or a rich array of both positive and negative emotions (although there is no such thing as negative emotions).

My want for you is to feel it, name it, flow with it and accept it. Decode what your emotion is telling you to learn something about yourself or the situation to experience potentially better behavioural choices and positively greater happiness

reading list

[How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain](#) - Lisa Feldman Barrett

[That Discomfort You’re Feeling Is Grief](#) - Harvard Business Review, 2020

Watch

[How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain](#) - TedTalk, Professor Lisa Feldman Barrett

PhD



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Divya has designed and led 1:1 coaching, leadership development programs and programs to radically sharpen communication effectiveness. In 2019, Divya worked with 22 organizations across 10 countries. She is a Certified Professional Co-Active Coach (CPCC) with Coaches Training Institute (CTI) as well as certified in Advanced DiSC and the Hogan Assessment series.

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Templar provide a range of [training and executive coaching](#) services targeted at groups and individuals looking to improve performance in a broad spectrum of areas from public speaking, sales and relationship management to leadership and individual career development.