

Allow Emotions to Serve You

Do negative feelings often trip you up, bring you down, or inhibit you from experiencing the life you want? Do you continuously attempt to get rid of them and find it really challenging? Perhaps there's another way: instead of judging emotions as negative or bad, instead experience them as gifts.

Negative Feelings Don't Actually Exist

Really there are no negative feelings – we've just learned to judge them that way. When we judge certain feelings as wrong, uncomfortable, or dislikable, we're actually separating various parts of ourselves and as a result experience inner disharmony, disconnection and disempowerment. Through understanding the empowered version of our feelings, we recognize how each "negative" feeling we experience is actually meant to guide us – to what's important underneath it.

Happiness, Empowerment, Fulfillment

Although we commonly say "I want to be happy," what most of us really desire is to feel alive and experience life to its fullest. When we say these words, we judge anything that *doesn't* resemble happiness. And this is when we get into an inner battle with our emotions, leading us to emotionally flat line, turn to distractions and not really be in touch with our true selves. If, on the other hand, we say "I want to be alive and live fully," this means we are willing to experience the heights and depths of life. We are willing to experience the depths (from an empowered approach) because we know we can only experience the highs, if we are allowing our full emotional range.

Emotions Serve a Purpose

Many of us learn as children to believe there's not much point in dealing with our feelings. Yet, not only does accessing them support us in experiencing emotional highs, it also serves us to create breakthroughs. The reality is we know what we should be doing to make our lives more fulfilling, yet we don't always take the actions we know would better serve us. The reason we don't do what we'd like to do for ourselves is not because we aren't motivated or disciplined enough. The reason is due to an emotional block. Rather than continue to emotionally react, you can use your "negative feelings" as a signal to support you how to respond in an empowered manner.

Receiving Our Feelings

A typical way we try to deal with negative feelings is to try to get away from, rise above, release, observe, cut them out, free ourselves from them—all of which distance us from ourselves. We avoid what we don't like, which in turn keeps us disconnected from ourselves, our pain, our self-judgments. By learning to receive our "negative" feelings, we open ourselves to living with pain without suffering, and perhaps even healing our pain. This is a practice that enables us to receive more of the goodness we desire in life.

Recognizing the Love Behind Fear

Our fear is there to protect us – it kicks into gear our primary survival strategies: fight, flee or freeze. As children, we each needed protection when our "authentic selves" were not accepted or understood. We developed strategies to allow for at least some of our needs to be met (often love and appreciation). As we grow into adults, many of us realize at some point that these old strategies don't serve us well anymore. Yet they are deeply rooted into our cells, and we find it difficult to change our age-old patterns. An important part of our personal growth is to recognize when we are reacting to "fear triggers," find compassion for how this behavior protected us as a child AND listen to the other adult parts of us which are wanting *choice* instead of automatic pilot survival strategies.

Getting Specific With Feelings

We can sometimes be overly general with our emotional state, for example when we say we're "stressed," "off," or "in a bad mood." We do this when we think people don't really care or want to be bothered with our feelings. Or we use this as a way to keep our negative feelings at arm's length, so we don't get overtaken by negative emotion. Yet, if we desire to use our feelings to our benefit, we can better be specific about what exactly we are feeling.

"Negative" Emotions Exercise

1. Give yourself uninterrupted time and space to specifically identify what you are feeling (for assistance, refer to a [Feelings list](#), page 2). If you notice more than one feeling simultaneously, go with the strongest one. This step is helpful because giving feelings presence, space and acceptance can contribute to inner clarity, understanding, compassion.
2. If you notice becoming concerned about the negative messages of your identified feeling, observe your thoughts. Is there an inner critic, who says things like, "don't be pathetic" or "put it aside, it's not important"? This is fear wanting to protect you – allow the voice to be present, perhaps writing down the thoughts/messages. By doing this, your inner critic feels heard, which means the mental chatter stops or dramatically reduces. So **give your inner critic space** to rant.
3. Once your inner critic's message is heard, you'll likely notice a space of silence has been created. Now there is room for another wisdom to come through in regard to the "negative feeling" you are experiencing. **Give your inner wisdom space** - at least 5 minutes worth. Ask yourself: "What is really important to me underneath it all?" (for assistance, refer to a [Needs list](#), page 1).
4. Sit with your set of needs (likely you discovered more than one), exploring it from a place of compassion and creativity, and ask yourself: "What one new step can I take to meet all of my needs?" Then **commit to taking action**, even a baby step. You don't have to act on it in that moment – try to as soon as possible, and mark it on your calendar (for assistance, refer to [Art of Making a Request – Checklist](#)).
5. Now notice, after having committed to taking empowered action, if your "negative feeling" has transformed. Perhaps it has dissolved altogether? Either way, the feeling has done its job to signal to you how you were off your path and more importantly how to get back on your path to living life fully. A "negative feeling" will only come back if you go off your path again (which we all do). Perhaps you can now **experience a sense of gratitude toward your feeling** for the gift it gave you?

For more in depth information, refer to the following books:

- *F.E.E.L. - Feel Every Emotion as Love: Turn Your Negative Feelings into your Greatest Allies*, Michelle Bersell
- *Emoties, Wat Moet ik Ermee?*, Marja Postema



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