



# Awareness of our Emotions

In our journey toward restoration of our souls, it is essential that we come to know the quality and direction of our own emotions, our feelings, and our attitudes about them. We must know what is going on inside of ourselves.

Emotions are very accurate indicators of what we really believe; they reveal the source and root of our faulty belief systems (lies). Emotions come from our beliefs. They match what we believe. So when we focus on healing the wounds in your soul, we might identify the emotion you feel in that wound and what it is you believe that is creating that emotion.

## **Emotions exert powerful influence on our lives**

Our emotions cloud our thinking, govern our actions, and influence our relationships. Studies indicate that deficient *emotional skills* may be the reason why more than half of all marriages end in divorce. The way we express or withhold our feelings of affection can affect the future of our relationships. In fact, without emotion, people cannot relate or connect to others.

Negative emotions block ability to take in pleasure and love. They can also paralyze and debilitate us because they produce an unhealthy spiritual and mental condition. Fear, resentment, anxiety, guilt, tension, jealousy, anger, hate, ill-will, and despair are disintegrating enemies of human personality. They clog up normal sources of emotional, spiritual and intellectual power. When we are bogged down by negative feelings, these emotional ills turn in upon our personalities and sap our energy.

And when these negative emotions accumulate to a certain weight, the personality can't support them and it gives way. Hence, we say: "I'm going to pieces, falling apart, getting upset, flying to pieces." These phrases describe a threatened state of imbalance and disintegration. Unable to rid ourselves of these anxieties, we enter into a state of disease and fall open to many forms of ill health.

They also clog up and cut off the flow of God's energy with in us. The roar of emotions easily overpowers the small, delicate, keen motions of the spirit and gradually the accumulation of negative emotions can cut off the flow of life.

Human beings can be emotionally fragile. Even the tiniest thing can toss us about, like somebody not saying hello or good-bye to us. In English we often say phrases like 'caught in my emotions,' in the 'grip of fear', 'overwhelmed by sadness', or 'captured by love.' These phrases remind us of how powerful our emotions really are.



## Concept of “Emotional Intelligence”

New brain research suggests that emotional intelligence, not IQ, may be the true measure of human intelligence.

### **Emotional intelligence (EQ) refers to qualities like being able to**

1. Understand our own feelings; i.e., self-awareness.
2. Become responsible for our emotions—stop blaming others for them.
3. Empathize for the feelings of others.
4. Consciously choose and regulate your emotions in a way that enhances your living, not letting the emotions control or use you.
5. Able to read a social situation (emotional cues)—90% of emotional communication is nonverbal.

## *The four A's of emotional intelligence*

### **#1 Awareness**

The cornerstone to emotional intelligence is a sense of self-awareness, of being conscious of what we feel. It is the ability to pull back and recognize that “what I’m feeling is anger, or sorrow, or shame.” Awareness allows you to give what you feel a name. Awareness is most important because it allows us to exercise some self-control—to manage our emotions so we can process information, allow our emotions to motivate us, and use them to make our goals.

Once an emotional response comes into awareness—or, physiologically, is processed through the neocortex—the chances of handling it appropriately improves. Being aware of your emotional-physical self means understanding that you have a choice about the way you feel. God has invested deep within us the ability to govern our own emotions. We can even maintain them in silence when we want or need to.

### **#2 Acceptance**

Acceptance of our emotions enables us to feel the emotion and acknowledge it without fear or judgment of it. And we are able to understand the biological process taking place in our body and brain and accept it, to make peace with it.

### **#3 Attitude**

Discovering the relationship of your attitudes to emotions enables you to see which attitude is no longer valid or is lie-based. We hold certain “beliefs” about emotions which are not up for discussion. “That’s just the way I am.” They are beliefs that grew out of experiencing pain or pleasure. People who believe “anger is dangerous” have been hurt or threatened by someone both angry and powerful. Thus, they have a faulty understanding of the survival-based emotions. The problem is in the meaning we give to the emotion, not the word or feeling itself.



Most meaning is believed as if it was "absolute truth". We believe according to our experience; whatever happened when you were tiny and your parents had to deal with these emotions, and set the stage for what happens in you today.

For example, anger has many threatening and dangerous meanings, according to what happened to you when anger came up in your childhood and infancy. Anger has as many meanings as there are people, and most of them are negative. Righteous anger is an emotion for making things right, but we associate anger with bad. *If I am angry then you are to blame. I am angry because you have done something wrong. If I am angry, then I am bad.* Sometimes when we are afraid, we become angry. So we don't recognize our fear, but only our anger.

#### **#4 Action**

When we become aware of our emotions and attitudes then we can make them work for us. We can choose actions based on attitude and emotions that will increase our self-esteem and lead to more pleasure in life – and ultimately give us the ability to keep ourselves healthy.

### *The importance of emotions*

To be “emotionally intelligent” we need to recognize how far more positive and necessary emotions are to life than we normally assume. Here are some ways that emotions help us.

1. Vocalize the inner working of our souls. Emotions are the language of the soul; they are the cry that gives the heart a voice.
2. Link our internal and external worlds: They help us become aware of what is going on within us and around us.
3. Help us feel alive, express ourselves, respond to the world around us.
4. Help us react to warnings or anger in other people.
5. Help us feel regret or shame about something we have done that hurt us, so we wouldn't repeat those mistakes again.
6. We need our emotional responses in order to make decisions, to help us know how we feel about certain things. We unconsciously assign emotional values to some of our choices – these emotions help us make decisions.



## Understanding Emotions

### *Some different opinions about emotions*

1. Emotions are neither right or wrong, they simply are. Most people work hard not to feel what is unpleasant. They pretend, deny, or distort what they are feeling.
2. Emotions are amoral, neutral, judgment free. It is what we do with them that is either constructive or destructive.
3. Emotions are essentially pure and good.
4. Emotions are not amoral – they vocalize the inner working of our souls and are as tainted as any other portion of our personality, polluted by our inherited Adamic nature.

### **Some definitions**

1. Emotion— those human experiences in which inner attitudes are combined with a physiological response on the part of the body; affection, desire, & feeling; any specific feeling, any of various complex reactions such as love, hate, fear, or anger.
2. Feeling – an awareness of an emotional arousal to something or somebody.
3. Affect – an emotion, feeling, or mood as a factor in behavior.

### **Characteristics of emotions**

1. Emotions are evanescent, fragile and powerful.
2. Emotions change as feeling changes.
3. Emotions often display a reactionary motion – a swing from polarity; they vacillate and are undependable. Few matters in the world are as changeable as our feelings and emotions.
4. Emotions are like colors. Some are simple, whereas others are blends or mixed. Some are intense while others are mild.

### *Three dimensions of emotion*

#### **Biological dimension – physiological changes**

When a person has a strong emotion, many bodily changes occur. For example, fear drives the blood into the large muscles, causes an increased heartbeat, a rise in blood pressure, an increase in adrenaline secretions, an elevated blood sugar level, a slowing of digestion, and a dilation of pupils. Paying attention to our bodies may help us become aware of our feelings.

#### **Behavior & appearance – nonverbal reactions**

Feelings are often apparent by observable changes. Some of these changes involve our appearance or behavior – blushing, sweating, a distinctive facial expression, posture, gestures, different vocal tone and rate, etc. Surprise triggers the eyebrows to rise,



allowing the eyes to widen their view. Disgust wrinkles up the face and closes the nostrils to keep out foul smells.

### **Cognitive dimension – mental thoughts & attitudes**

What we think has a great effect on our emotions and our bodies. For instance, say to yourself, *“I’m such a shy person.”* Then say, *“Well I’m a bit shaky here, but that’s to be expected.”* Did you notice any differences in your feelings? in your body? Try another one: say, *“I’m unhappy.”* Now say, *“I’m very happy.”* Can you feel any difference in your emotions or body? Can you see the relationship between your thoughts and your emotions and body?

### ***Effect of emotions on our health***

The realms of the physical, psychological, & spiritual are often so deeply interrelated that there is often no clearly defined dividing line. Researchers argue whether emotions are in the body or the brain, but no one questions that the effects of emotions are in the body. All agree that the body acts up when we become emotionally upset. When we grieve our hearts hurt, when we are afraid, the pits of our stomachs goes cold, and we have difficulty breathing. Fear increases the heartbeat, raises the blood pressure, increases adrenaline secretions, elevates the blood sugar level, slows digestion, and dilates the pupils.

Every emotion involves a complex interplay between body and heart. We do not merely experience anger in our minds, we feel it in our bodies. Emotional disturbances decrease blood circulation and glandular secretions. Grief and disappointment uses up more energy than any other emotion. Long-termed submerged anger and/or fear leads to eating disorders, submerged grief leads to heart attacks, submerged shame and/or guilt lead to pre-menstrual problems. It does not matter if these emotions are justified or if we have been made to feel them unfairly, our bodies are affected in the same way.

### **Splinting reflex**

The body reacts to sudden physical pain by contracting tightly around it. Called the ‘splinting reflex’ because it causes the flesh around the broken bone to stiffen, it prevents the sharp bone from damaging the flesh. In the same way, the body responds to emotional pain. Notice how a crying child has great difficulty breathing. Each in-breath expands the pain of sadness and the pain causes the chest to contract, leaving the child sobbing in gasps.

When held for a long time, these contractions can interfere with the body’s internal organs. It is hypothesized that long-term contractions are responsible for a number of disorders, often labeled ‘psychosomatic’ by interfering with the flow of blood and other biochemicals. Without the proper flow of blood and the other biochemicals, the body’s internal organs could only function poorly or unevenly. Over time, the painful tensions these emotions produce can begin to influence how our physical organs function. It is



estimated that over two-thirds of hospital beds are occupied by patients who are put there because of their inability to organize and discipline their emotions.

### **Some areas in our bodies where emotional energy goes**

*Fear* – throat; stomach

*Excitement* – stomach

*Anger* – stomach, head

*Mortal terror* – bowels, genitals

*Pleasure* – genitals

*Love* – heart

*Sadness, grief* – heart, chest

*Shame, confidence* – bowels, lower abdomen

### ***Twelve categories of emotions***

1. Anger – rage, hostility, mad, hatred
2. Sadness – pain, disappointment, grief,
3. Afraid – fear, terror, distress, anxiety, horror, apprehensive, fright, dread
4. Glad – pleasure, happiness, amusement, joy
5. Disgust – revulsion, loathing, repugnance
6. Surprise – astonishment, amazement, shock
7. Contempt – disdain, dislike, disapproval, disrespect, scorn, derision
8. Excitement – enthusiasm, eagerness, enjoyment, anticipation, delight, thrill
9. Awe – adoration, surprise, wonder, worship
10. Desire – interest, wish, craving, want, yearning
11. Shame – disgrace, embarrassment, dishonor, humiliation
12. Guilt – guiltiness, remorse, fault

### **Some emotions need different treatment**

1. Grief, loss, sad
2. Anger, rage, resentment, kill, vindictiveness, revenge
3. Emotions rooted in lies or faulty belief systems
4. True guilt and shame
5. Reactions of flesh

### **Jesus was an example of an emotionally whole person**

The whole range of His emotions were available to Him. He knew how to do each of the above emotional categories very well. He felt anger, fear, joy, sad, and love. He was emotionally honest and knew how to use all of His emotions in life-giving ways.

#### ***Jesus was not emotionally blocked.***

- Accept love
- Give love
- Receive anger
- Express anger



## Relationship of Emotions to Our Beliefs

When we focus on healing the wounds in your soul, we might identify the emotion you feel in that wound and what it is you believe that is creating that emotion.

### *Eight Categories of Negative Belief Systems (lies)*

Following are eight categories of negative belief systems and examples of corresponding emotions and reactions.

**1. Abandonment:** The feeling of being deserted, not wanted, forsaken. The withdrawal of intimacy. It inevitably leads to loss: the loneliness of living in isolation from those who mean the most to us. It is separation, but it feels like death: it signals the end of relationship.

1. I am all alone	I will always be alone	I have no one
2. No one even cares	They do not need me	I am rejected
3. I don't matter	I have been overlooked	No one likes me
4. I have no friends	I can't trust anyone	Men can't be trusted
5. No one will believe me	They don't believe me	God has forsaken me
6. I am betrayed	They are not coming back	
7. There is no one to protect me	I am afraid they won't come back	
8. If you love, people will leave you	I'm not worthy of getting my needs met	
9. I am empty	If I trust, I will die.	
10. I don't need anyone	If I love, I will be hurt	
11. If I love, God will take them from me		

**2. Shame:** The feeling that comes from believing one has done something, caused something, participated in something they believed to be wrong. The lies are condemning, rooted in self-condemnation. Shame is the traumatic experience of nakedness. This exposure occurs when we feel the glance of a gaze tearing open the various cultural, relational, or religious coverings we put on. What is revealed, we feel, is our inner ugliness.

1. I'm bad	I'm dirty	I'm shameful	I didn't try to run away
2. I'm sick	I'm nasty	I'm so stupid	
3. I was a participant			
4. I'm no good	I'm guilty	It was my fault	
5. I did it to him/her first			
6. I'm an idiot	I caused it	I'm disgusting	I deserved it
7. I'm a mistake	I'm a jerk	I allowed it	
8. I'm ignorant	I kept going back	I was a participant	
9. I did something wrong		I should have known better	



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|---|----------------------------------|
| 10. I am cheap like a slut  | I'm afraid someone will find out |
| 11. I was paid for service rendered   | I should have told someone       |
| 12. I felt pleasure so I must have wanted it  | I should have stopped them       |
| 13. I'm shameful for letting this happen  |                                  |
| 14. I was a willing participant because I felt pleasure                                       |                                  |
| 15. I knew what was going to happen yet I stayed anyway                                       |                                  |
| 16. It happened because of my looks, my gender, my body, etc.                                 |                                  |
| 17. I should have done something to have stopped it from happening                            |                                  |
| 18. I'm shameful/dirty & therefore only important if I can perform above the shame of the lie |                                  |

**3. Fear:** Says we are in danger or that bad is about to happen or is happening. Fear is a response to our uncertainty about our resources in the face of danger, when we are assaulted by a force that overwhelms us and compels us to face that we are helpless and out of control. Fear cringes before something or someone who might hurt us physically or psychologically.

*Some kinds of fear*

Fear of death, fear of loss, fear of impending doom, free-floating anxiety, fear of being alone, fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of pain, fear of being out of control, fear of drowning. Fear of loves. Fear of illness. Fear of old age. Fear of someone. There are over 4000 fears.

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|---|--|
| 1. I am not safe  | I am in danger                               |
| 2. I am going to die  | If I trust I will die                        |
| 3. He/she is going to hurt me                                 | They are going to get me                     |
| 4. Something bad is going to happen                           | Doom is just around the corner               |
| 5. I do not know what to do                                   | If I tell they will come back & hurt me      |
| 6. He/she are coming back                                     | If I let them into my life they will hurt me |
| 7. Something bad will happen if I tell                        | Fear of death: terror of separation          |
| 8. It is just a matter of time before it happens again        |  |
| 9. Something bad will happen if I stop it or confront it.     |  |
| 10. If I let him/her/ them into my life they will hurt me too |  |

**4. Powerlessness:** They feel trapped and *see* a way out, but lack the power to escape. They know what needs to be done but feel they are powerless to do it. Felt overwhelmed when they were constrained to act. Violated in forceful ways.

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|--|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. I am trapped  | I cannot stop this       | I am pulled from every direction |
| 2. I cannot get away   | I am overwhelmed         | There is no way out              |
| 3. I am too weak to resist   | I cannot get loose       | The pain is too great to bear    |
| 4. I don't know what to do. I am too weak or helpless. I am too small to do anything |                          |                                  |
| 5. Everything is out of control  | Not even God can help me |                                  |





6. They are too strong to resist I'm trapped & there is no way to escape
7. I'm going to die & I can't do anything about it
8. I watched my parents fight, but I felt powerless to stop it
9. I should have run away, but I had no power to do so.

**5. Tainted:** Similar to shame, but it has different roots. Feel shame because something wrong was done to them. The truth is that no person can be defiled by another. We can only defile ourselves.

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|---|-------------------------|
| 1. My life is ruined  | I will never be happy   |
| 2. I will never feel clean again  | My body parts are dirty |
| 3. I will always be unclean, filthy, etc.                                     |                         |
| 4. I am a slut, a whore, dirty because I was raped                            |                         |
| 5. No one will ever really be able to love me                                 |                         |
| 6. Everyone can see my shame, filth, dirtiness                                |                         |
| 7. God could never want me after what has happened to me                      |                         |
| 8. I will always be hurt, damaged, broken, because of what has happened to me |                         |
| 9. I am shameful, evil, perverted because of what happened to me              |                         |
| 10. I am dirty  |                         |

**6. In-Validation:** When necessary foundation of love was not given, the child comes to sense of in-validation & draws a false conclusion about his/herself.

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|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. I am not loved   | I am not wanted                     | I am not cared for         |
| 2. I'm not needed   | I am not important                  | I do not matter            |
| 3. I'm not valuable                                       | I have little value                 | I don't matter             |
| 4. I'm worthless  | I'm in the way                      | I am a burden              |
| 5. They do not need me                                    | I'm unimportant                     |                            |
| 6. What I say does not matter                             |                                     |                            |
| 7. I'm not acceptable                                     | I was a mistake                     | I have no right to succeed |
| 8. I didn't deserve it                                    | Girls/boys are less important       |                            |
| 9. Success is a bad and selfish thing                     | God could never love or accept me   |                            |
| 10. I should have never been born                         | I could never be as . . . as she/he |                            |
| 11. I was never liked by them because I was.              |                                     |                            |
| 12. Something else is more important than I am            |                                     |                            |
| 13. Something must be wrong with me                       |                                     |                            |
| 14. Even if you do your best it will not be good enough   |                                     |                            |
| 15. I could never jump high enough to please him/her      |                                     |                            |
| 16. No matter what you do, great pain is sure to follow   |                                     |                            |
| 17. I'll find love if I rescue/seek to make someone happy |                                     |                            |



**7. Hopelessness:** Tells the person to give up. They believe there is no way out of the situation. There is no sense in trying to get better. The lie says all the doors are shut and there is no place to go. They can see no other options. A sense of in-validation leads the person to hopelessness.

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. There is no way out                                 | There are no options for me         |
| 2. I have no reason to live                            | I just want to die                  |
| 3. The only way to escape is to die                    | There is no good thing for me       |
| 4. Nothing good will ever come to me                   | It will just happen again and again |
| 5. It is never going to get any better                 | All I see is darkness               |
| 6. Suicidal thoughts and idealization                  |                                     |
| 7. Even if you do your best it will not be good enough |                                     |
| 8. No matter what you do great pain is sure to follow  |                                     |

**8. Confusion:** Wounded before they could understand what was happening to them. It is not really a lie, but a feeling of confusion. The person cannot make any sense out of a situation or why it is happening. The goal is to stir up the feelings of confusion, more than find a lie statement. The lie is “I cannot understand this.” God will likely speak a truth explaining why the event occurred.

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|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. I am crazy                   | I must be stupid | Everything is confusing              |
| 2. This does not make any sense |                  | Why would they do this to me?        |
| 3. I cannot understand this     |                  | I don't know what is happening to me |

Sometimes demons will manifest in a person's memory and create a sense of confusion. Take authority over this spirit of confusion and command you in Jesus' name to stand back and stop confusing this person. I forbid you to interfere. If you choose not to comply you willfully defy the name of Jesus.



## ***Four Basic Emotional Problems***

### **The Inability to Accept Love**

For some people, pain has outweighed pleasure in their infancy and childhood. Somewhere along the way, they resolved, consciously or unconsciously, that human relationships are more painful than pleasurable and that *I do not need anybody*. For the rest of their lives, they continue to cut themselves off from love, from the anticipation of pleasure, and therefore from significant human ties. Only when they acknowledge this and share their feelings, especially the pain, can they come to accept love. We call these people rejecters. They must learn how to ask for love.

### **The Inability to Express Anger**

Because it is unimaginable for to live alone, these people pay any price for love. They learned not to become angry or assert themselves so others will keep on giving them love. They need anger exercises to help them assert the force of their personalities. Only anger at the humiliations they have endured can make them understand the price they paid for security. They get from their anger strength to come to the feeling of self-respect, self-worth, and sense of adequacy.

### **The Inability to Accept Anger**

The acceptance of the emotional expression of anger is very frightening to many people. They associate verbal anger with physical aggression and react as if they were being physically assaulted. Under the emotional assault of someone's anger, they forget the old adage that "names will never harm me".

We need to learn that we can express anger without going crazy and can accept it without being destroyed. When we stop defending ourselves from the concerned anger of others, we frequently find that it is not we who are being attacked, but only our distorted emotions, behavior and attitudes. When we learn to accept anger, we find that we can accept it without being wrong; we can be wrong without being guilty; and we can make mistakes which need not be repeated.

### **The Inability to Give Love**

There are several reasons why some people are unable to give love: Some fear that to give love they will become responsible for the well-being of the person loved. Some fear that if they give love they would be taking advantage of a person who accepts their love. Others feel every human contact is more of a depletion than a restoration and therefore avoid human contact. Others feel too inadequate to feel that their love has value. The inability to give love can be attacked and overcome by freeing oneself from these irrational fears. Understanding comes only after fully expressing and letting out one's feelings.



## Why We Are Afraid to Listen to Our Emotions?

If we are able to understand ourselves honestly—and more importantly, know God—we must listen to our emotions. However, we often turn a deaf ear – through emotional *denial, distortion, or disengagement*. We filter out anything disturbing in order to gain *control* of our inner world. We are frightened and ashamed of what gets into our consciousness.

Part of our understanding and feeling difficult emotions is understanding why we avoid them. The reason we do not want to feel is that feeling exposes the tragedy of our world and the darkness of our hearts. Feelings expose the illusion that life is safe, good, and predictable.

Perhaps a better explanation for why it's so difficult to feel our feelings is that all emotion, positive or negative, opens the door to the nature of reality. All of us prefer to avoid pain—but even more we want to escape reality. The Scriptures reveal that the absence of feelings is often a refusal to face the sorrow of life and the hunger for God. (Is. 47:8; Rev. 18:7)

In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. We turn our back on reality, and reality is where we meet God. If we want to know God, we must ponder and struggle with our feelings to gain an understanding of the passions that rule us. We forget that a change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God. Only face to face with our deepest ruling emotions is there hope of redeeming the fabric of our inner world.

Another explanation of why we avoid our feelings is that it's painful to feel. To feel hurt, hurts. To feel shame, shames. To feel any loss only intensifies sorrow.

If we are to become aware of our emotions, we must open our heart to feel. To be aware of what we feel can open us to questions we would rather ignore. For many of us that is why it is easier not to feel. But a failure to feel leaves us barren and distant from God and others.

The route to facing what we feel is not by devaluing the darkness of what we feel, but by valuing the deep structure of why we don't want to feel. Once we face why feeling is so hard, then we can move beyond what we feel to the *deeper energy within us that keeps us from grappling honestly with our emotions*. Then we will not only feel more deeply, but – more importantly – we will feel our feelings in a way that exposes our struggle with God.

### Some ways we handle emotions, pain and suffering

- Trivialize and minimize pain—delude ourselves
- Deny it
- Project it out onto others
- Stuff it/swallow the emotion
- Repress it
- Idolize pain or idealize it
- Sentimentalize it
- Blame ourselves or others
- Magnify it



## *Why we have difficulty feeling our emotions*

There are a great many reasons why people find it difficult to feel and express their emotions in life-giving ways.

**Denial Rule:** Told it's "not that bad." Over & over, in subtle ways told: Be quiet, you don't hurt that bad. What children see & hear is denied. Believes in half-truths. Child's reality is challenged & denied. Denial very deep & insidious. Denial rule is basis for trait of not knowing what is normal. Task of therapist--get patient to agree on what really happened to them, not deny it anymore. Truth shakes the foundation

**Silence Rule:** "don't talk, don't trust, don't feel, don't cry". Emotional silence is always there. No one can express their anger or pain. Taught not to talk about what they see or feel. No place for emotional honesty; not permitted, because they do not know what to do with it. Never allowed experience of doing anger, feeling/expressing anger. Repression of emotion, fear of losing control. Do not know how to express their pain, cannot cry, fear of not being able to stop. They learn not to ask questions "Don't speak, don't cry, don't have an opinion, don't disagree, don't be unhappy" In fact, "don't be" is the essence of the rule. The family secret is not talked about; this secret spins out all the other secrets – about being abused.

### **Other Toxic Rules We Grew Up With**

Unhealthy rules or toxic rules create an atmosphere in which the child fears total rejection if rules are broken, hinder relationships. We do not want to face the reality of human needs; we want to live in a word where everything can be fixed with a great sermon or a quick prayer. This denies people the chance to feel what they feel. You cannot feel what you feel without being shamed or being made to feel inadequate.

1. Do not express feelings.
2. Never express your feelings unless they are positive.
3. Never reveal a thought, feeling or doubt that would make someone feel uncomfortable
4. Do not communicate directly.
5. Wear pasted-on smiles as if all is well and support image of perfectionism.
6. You can't be angry with God.
7. If you are sad, there must be something wrong with you – do not have enough faith, you are not being prayerful enough, sin is in your life.
8. Do not have realistic expectations.
9. Do not be selfish.
10. Do as I say, not as I do.
11. It is not okay to play.
12. Do not rock the boat.
13. Do not talk about problems.



## **Damaging consequences**

Negative emotions block ability to absorb pleasure and love. Most of our wounds do not show, however they ooze pus even though the events that wounded us are long since buried in our unconscious; and we react out of proportion to current issue.

Because we learned that only certain feelings were acceptable and allowed to feel, we learned to distort our feelings. When feelings are repressed and distorted, resentment, anger and depression build up and then tend to find expression in devious ways that frighten and confuse us, i.e., jealousy and possessiveness may result.

We also learned to distort feelings to maintain the impression that we want to have of ourselves. If we want to see ourselves as kind, loving persons and yet inwardly resent the behavior of another, we are caught in a self-centered bind of our own making. In order to maintain that self-image, we will distort our feelings of anger (unconsciously) into self-righteousness.

Because we are not skillful in dealing with feelings, feelings tend to come out in an intense, bombastic way and be overwhelming to those around them and often to ourselves.

Became so preoccupied in fulfilling others' expectations that we lost touch with ourselves.

We are so trained to see others' point of view that we always put those viewpoints above our own. Believe that when we understand how another feels, we have no right to have feelings of our own. In order to be accepted, we deny our own experience. Grow so out of touch with their feelings that we cannot determine what it is we even want.

Have such a low self-esteem we cannot believe that others would want to be around us unless they were forced to be there, so we try to possess other people. Use relationship, worrying, eating, or any number of things to avoid dealing with our feelings.

However, God is able to heal and restore us. See Jerry's story.



## Jerry's experience with feeling his emotions

For many years Jerry often said that he did not care if other people were hurting. He was unable to connect emotionally to them. Here is his story of healing:

"Some years ago, I was in a situation where I felt very disconnected from the people I was with, people who are very close to me. That evening I prayed and asked the Lord what my problem was. A thought came to me: 'I lack the emotional resources.' Immediately I knew this was true: I am unable to connect with other people; I feel isolated emotionally from them; I want to relate but don't know how.

"I asked the Lord to show me what the root of these feelings was. I sensed a shadowy picture of my mother crying—over the death of my new born brother. For some months I prayed about this memory and asked the Lord to heal me.

Finally, I asked our friends to pray and minister to me. During this time of ministry, the Lord took me back to this same memory: My mother has her back to me, agonizing over the death of her 5-day old son. She is crying and extremely sad, and I feel overwhelmed. I cried out, "*I don't know what to do; somebody needs to help her, but I don't know what to do.*"

"In the middle of the pain, we invited Jesus to come and heal me. I saw Him; there He was, playing with my toys! He smiles and beckons me to come to Him. He is sitting cross-legged on the floor. Jesus invites me, and I go to sit on His lap. He comforts me as a Father would comfort his child. It feels wonderful, reassuring. The thought comes to me: 'I do not *have* to do anything. It isn't my job to do anything.'

"In another healing session, I saw that I had made a decision at that point in my life: I would never care about the pain of others. If I couldn't help them that I would not care.

"In the next few weeks the Lord continued working with this memory. In my last healing experience with this memory, I was in a room filled with black despair and Jesus came to me and grabbed my hand and we *ran* out into the sunshine. The heaviness was gone, and I felt free!

"I was freed from four lies: 1) I am powerless. 2) I don't know what to do to help others who are emotionally upset. (Powerlessness); 3) I don't care about the pain of others; 4) life is full of despair and hopelessness.

"Since these healings, I have been aware of feeling much more connected to others, I feel comfortable in situations where I had previously felt withdrawn, and in general I sense a new feeling of self-confidence and assurance. In groups I now feel emotionally connected in a new way, I am more open to people, and I possess the emotional resources appropriate to each situation."



## Emotions and The Psalms

When we read the Psalms, we find that they validate our right to feel. The Psalms captures the struggle of the heart as the poet attempts to grasp the goodness of God in the light of the heartaches of life. The Psalms do not theologize it or explain pain away. David was emotionally honest with God.

The Psalms teach us the language of the soul as they reflect the movement of the human heart in rich and startling language. They teach us how to wrestle with doubt until it gives way to the first rays of hope. They light our way.

Psalms of complaint and accusation, confusion, doubt and heartache

### Specific Examples

Psalm 77: 1-3 envy, jealousy

Psalm 6:6-7: hurt

Psalm 44:11-12; 88:8-11: Rage

Psalm 130:1: out of the depths we cry

Psalm 73:1-3

- Contain a hope of transformation and healing through God.
- Teach us how to be emotionally honest with God. Help us get real, get past holy talk and romantic images.
- Provide an outlet for anger.
- Do not allow us to deny our true feelings, either depth of pain or joy; offer the possibility of its transformation. Allow us to reflect on them in front of God.

It is within the inner confusion of life that a door is open for God's presence. He comforts those who mourn, not those who live above desperation. He reveals Himself more often in darkness than in the happy moments of life.

### Emotions tell us what we are doing with God and with others

The Bible reveals that our inner world is complex. By God's design we are complicated creatures. The psalmist calls us to ponder our inner world, not neglect it: *Why, oh my soul, are you in despair*, he repeatedly asks. Psalm 42:11.

Emotions are a voice that tells us how we are doing with God who seldom seems to be or do what we expect of Him. They provide a window to the question: "What am I doing with God? Am I moving toward God or away from Him? Am I turning toward Him, or away from Him toward false gods of my own making?"

Emotions are a voice that can tell us how we are dealing with other people. They tell us how we are dealing with a fallen world and hurtful people. They help us sense the pulse





of a group or relationship and state of unspoken feelings. They enable us to connect and relate to other people, to feel their pain, to empathize.

Emotions expose what we are doing with the sorrow of life and in turn reveal what our heart is doing with God. Emotions open the door to hard questions: Does life make sense? Is there any purpose to my pain? Why must every relationship end? Is God good?

The presence of disruptive emotions that feel irrational or out of control is not necessarily a sign of disease, sin, or trauma; instead it may be the signal that the heart is struggling with God. Therefore, the ups and downs of our emotional life can be viewed as a cry to be heard.

### Three Actions Which Provoke Our Feelings

Our emotions are often based on our responses to how others deal with us. Our feelings are provoked when people relate to us in one of the following three ways:

1. they move against us – attack
2. they move away from us – abandonment
3. they move toward us – love

In the context of a sinful, fallen world, our emotional responses to these relational movements can generally be characterized as fight or flight. The following diagram show how these responses give rise to our difficult emotions:

<b>Relational Movement</b>	<b>Fight Response</b>	<b>Flight Response</b>
Attack (against)	Anger	Fear
Abandonment (away)	Jealousy	Despair
Love (toward)	Contempt	Shame

What is our emotional reaction when someone attacks us? We either return the attack in anger or retreat in fear. How do we respond to the loss of abandonment? We either cling desperately in a jealous rage or withdraw from the pain of involvement in despair. How do we feel when someone loves us but we view that love as too disruptive and dangerous? We fight off our need for it with skepticism and contempt or flee from the need it exposes in us by withdrawing in shame. Each relational movement provokes a consequent emotional response in us. These responses open the door to our deeper questions about God.

### The Ultimate Question: God, Are You Good?

All of our emotions find their final object of focus in God. At the core of all our different emotions is the question: “*God are you good?*”



1. Is God just – will He let the wicked win and prevail against me? Anger
2. Can I trust God to protect me from harm? Fear
3. Is God good – will He satisfy my hunger? Or will He bless others and leave me empty? Jealousy
4. Is God good, or will He leave me in isolation? Will He offer His presence to others and leave me alone? Despair
5. Does God love me or will He turn away in disgust? Contempt
6. Does God love me, or will He hate me if He sees me as I really am? Shame

## The Relational Movements

### 1. Attack: The Violation of Our Dignity

An attack provokes us to fight (anger) or flight (fear). When someone attacks us, they threaten us with destruction – of our property, position, person, or power. At the very least, they want to keep us from enjoying what we have. Relational assaults can be unrelenting, crafty, deceitful and subtle – and are almost always a surprise. Sometimes the attacks we experience are so subtle that we ignore their cumulative effect. But our emotional response is likely to be a movement between anger and fear.

#### *Anger: fighting fire with fire.*

When we respond to an assault with our own attack, we are fighting fire with fire. Anger propels us into the battle. It is a response to a perceived or actual injustice that attempts to destroy the wrong done to us. Whether righteous or unrighteous, anger triggers activity: our breathing quickens, muscles tighten, eyes narrow and focus on the enemy. Anger spurs immediate and decisive choice. Many of us make choices with an internal chip on our shoulders. Anger is an adrenaline that increases our courage to move in a world that seems to oppose our desire.

Unrighteous anger dulls the pain of desperation and aggressively demands justice; since God fails to protect us, we are justified in taking matters into our own hands. Anger vocalizes the core question, “*Is God just – will He let the wicked win and prevail against me?*”

Anger attempts to rectify God’s passivity by empowering us to act instead of waiting vulnerably for God to do something. It is not only a protection against harm and an energizer for battle; it is a taunt against God for apparently refusing to act on our behalf.

#### *Fear: Anger in Reverse*

When confronted with harm that can overpower us, fear energizes us to flee. It quickens our retreat. It makes any movement forward into battle seem absurd.

Fear triggers a dilation of the pupils, as if our eyes are opening wide enough to take in all the data necessary to avoid destruction. Our stomach tightens, heaviness descends, and sweat glands release moisture to cool down the physical machine so that it doesn’t burn up. The body is prepared for flight and hiding. As fear increases, the body is prepared to shut down and curl up. At its extreme terror is immobilizing.



In order to preserve ourselves, we will do whatever seems reasonable to escape. The anxiety demands that for own survival, we back away from the threatening person or problem.

Both fear and anger are self-justifying; fear simply moves us in the opposite direction of anger. Ungodly fear dulls the pain of desperation and passively demands protection; since God fails to protect me, I am justified to act on my own behalf. Fear vocalizes the core question, *Can I trust God to protect me from harm?*

## **2. Abandonment: The Withdrawal of Intimacy**

Abandonment inevitably leads to loss: the loneliness of living in isolation from those who mean the most to us. It is separation, but it feels like death: it signals the end of relationship. Every human relationship is haunted by potential abandonment. Our friends could betray us, our children spurn us, our spouse divorce us. Abandonment invades every relationship and mocks intimacy. Loss is a cruel taunt. It deepens desire as it takes away hope. Loss and abandonment provoke jealousy (fight) and despair (flight).

### ***Jealousy: Possessive Rage***

Jealousy comes from wanting to keep what we angrily fear we might lose; envy comes from wanting to gain what we do not have. Both jealousy and envy involve a furious demand that our soul not suffer loss.

Jealousy builds a fence around the one who might leave; it is a possessive rage that attempts to protect the beloved from a rival suitor and the self from loss. Envy also works to escape loss. It is painful to see another enjoy what we lack, so we become thieves who ransack or steal the pleasure of others.

Rather than bear the loss and trust in God's goodness, we strike out against those who seem to threaten or enjoy what we desperately claim as our own. Ungodly jealousy dulls the pain of loss and aggressively demands satisfaction; since God fails to provide for me, I am justified to act on my own behalf. Jealousy vocalizes the core question, *Is God good – will He satisfy my hunger? Or will He bless others and leave me empty?*

### ***Despair: Flight from loneliness***

Despair is the refusal to struggle. It deadens our heart of the hope that we will be rescued, redeemed, and happy. Despair refuses to hope. *Hope deferred makes the heart sick (nausea), but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life* (Prov. 13:12) If hope deferred makes the soul sick, then it is no wonder most of us spend our lives in denial, focusing our passions on more trivial desires. Such despair saves us from the possibility of really wanting something that might be denied us.

We hate to be lonely. We might enjoy being alone, but we despise being cut off and isolated from others. We desire intimacy, yet despair deadens our sense of caring whether anyone wants relationship with us. It allows us to wallow in our failures rather than face our need.



Ungodly despair dulls the loneliness and passively demands some kind of relief; since God fails to offer His presence for comfort, I am justified to act on my own behalf. Despair vocalizes the core question, *Is God good, or will He leave me in isolation? Will He offer His presence to others and leave me alone?*

Living with an inner dullness works for a while. However, life – or more accurately, God – refuses to allow us to exist as robots. Suffering strips us of that strategy by forcing us either to struggle with God or to kill our desires – in essence, to commit soul murder. God provokes us to move out of our complacency and mediocrity by moving toward us, arousing our deepest passions.

### **3. Love: The Pursuit Of Our Hearts**

Despair dulls us to any movement made toward us that might arouse the desire for intimacy. The repeated cycle of desire aroused, hope disappointed, and soul deadened through despair leads to a hatred of desire.

Desire is an enemy that can be neutralized through contempt. Contempt is our means of fighting against the arousal of hope when someone moves toward us, offering kindness and tenderness. If hope penetrates the facade of contempt, we often feel like fools who have been set up and used. Shame comes when our desire for intimacy exposes us as naked and needy. Therefore, the offer of intimacy often provokes contempt (fight) or shame (flight).

Intimacy is a taste of reconciliation. It is a testimony to the fact that separation and loss have been overcome. Moments of connection reflect our hunger for redemption, for perfect relationship with God. Although we crave redemption, we are also reluctant to let our desires exceed our control. We work hard to dull the potential for assault or loss that comes when we open our hearts to intimacy.

However, God will not leave us in our superficiality or sullen despair. Nor will He allow our puny shields of anger to stall Him. He will not leave us alone. He pursues. He intrudes. He will use any and every means to do so. He constantly moves toward us, arousing both desire and ambivalence. We want and we don't want that grace that can break our hearts. We know that involvement with God will require the removal of our deepest defenses. He never merely takes us as we are. He receives us and changes us. We fight God's movement toward us and relieve our ambivalence with contempt and shame. Here, the deepest difficulties of the human heart come to the surface.

#### ***Contempt: The Shield Of Mockery***

Contempt smells kindness, grace, and compassion and turns up its nose in disgust. We desperately want love, but passion seems dangerous. Consequently, we shun loving movement toward us by treating it with contempt. We are really asking, *If you move toward me, I will be aroused with the anticipation of involvement. But what if you don't really want me? What if your movement toward me is really meant for another; or – worse – meant for my harm?*

Paul asks a difficult question regarding our response to God's gracious movement toward us. See Romans 2:4. When someone gives us a fight, we stiffen when we doubt



their sincerity, fear that our desire for more will increase beyond our control, or recoil in the sense that our sinfulness makes us unlovable. Contempt is a defense against the naked shame that comes when love penetrates a sinful heart.

Ungodly contempt dulls the ups and downs of ambivalence and aggressively demands distance; since God's love does not seem clear, I am justified to act on my own behalf. Contempt vocalizes the core question, *Does God love me, or will He turn away in disgust?*

### ***Shame: A Flight from Intimacy***

Shame is a flight from intimacy. It is one of our deepest fears: We will be isolated and mocked forever. It is a taste of hell – the experience of being caught without defense or cover and condemned to unrelenting humiliation. Shame is feeling exposed as ugly beyond words. Nothing else cuts to the core so personally as shame does.

Shame drains us of energy and withers our desire to exist. Like other emotions of flight (fear and despair), shame is a withdrawal from engagement. Its typical posture is eyes downcast, shoulders slumped, heart disengaged. Shame is an escape from reality through dissociation.

Ungodly shame dulls the terror of exposure and passively demands safety; sincere God's love seems dangerous; I am justified in shutting down. Shame vocalizes the core question, *Does God love me, or will He hate me if He sees me as I really am?*

Most of us seek to escape from shame by spending our energy insulating ourselves from anything or anyone that might provoke exposure. Some choose spouses, careers, sports on the basis of the fear of humiliating oneself.

Shame seems to justify avoidance. Even more, it seems to demand the insulation of arrogance. This is shamelessness – immunity to shame through progressive hardening of the heart. Arrogance is more than a cocky attitude or boasting about personal competence; it is a clenched fist shaken at the heavens in defiance; *I will not bow; I will not be broken by the weight of reality. I will not succumb to the desire for reconciliation. I will not face, nor fee, the groaning of my soul for redemption.*

Arrogance can show itself in contemptuous belligerence or in the quiet refusal or supposed inability, to feel. Arrogance involves turning away from the groaning of our soul – and, therefore, turning away from struggling with God.

(Above Excerpts from *Cry Of The Soul* by Dan Allender & Tremper Longman )