

The Secret of Emotional Healing

An introduction

What you feel, you can heal

You may have heard the expression, “What you feel, you can heal”, coined by relationship therapist John Gray. This is a good starting place for the journey of increasing your emotional freedom to find more peace, joy and inner stillness. The reverse of “feeling your feelings” is to use strategies of denial, avoidance, numbing yourself and judgmentalness to protect you from pain and difficult feelings.

These strategies may be ok if they are working for you. But often strategies that once worked become problematic. The scenarios are endless.... We avoid saying “No” to our child so she won’t be unhappy and we won’t have to feel our pain at her hurt, until her irresponsible behavior magnifies to the point where we are forced to set a limit. Or we are living with resentment that we are sick of holding on to. Or we have a dream we long to follow, but are blocked by fear. Or have physical pain that we suspect is connected to an emotional issue. Or have depression or anxiety we must address. Or a repeated pattern of anger or hurt feelings, or people pleasing, or judgmentalness that we are tired of living with.... Life can force us to deal with our feelings, or we narrow the confines of where we tread, to keep ourselves safe.

What we may not know is that when we choose to “work through” sensitivities, our experience of Life deepens and becomes more vibrant. Working through emotional challenges actually cleanses our energy, brings greater clarity to our thinking and purifies the heart. Alternatively, when feelings that are rattling around inside of us are not expressed and released, they are stored in our body numbing or stressing us, triggering us and sapping our vitality.

The term “working through”, refers to the process of emotional healing, sometimes called completing “unfinished business”, or releasing blocked energy. The secret contained within the phrase “You can heal what you can feel” is that *emotional healing is about the process of finding Acceptance. Our uncomfortable emotions arise in response to something we don’t accept.* A child scrapes his knee playing. He hurts, he feels scared. He cries, is reassured and feels better. He has accepted the pain. This is not obvious. We observe the tip of the iceberg when we see a particular emotion and don’t view the feelings as something fluid, that may require our assistance to help them heal and come to peace.

When we learn to identify what it is that we are not willing or able to accept – or what we are resisting – we become conscious partners in helping ourselves heal long-standing issues, traumas, wounds and unmet needs. This is actually like a grieving process, though some issues may be “worked through” surprisingly easily.

The Chinese finger puzzle

Often we put ourselves down for having an issue, or pattern of emotional reactivity that we don't like, when – in fact – the starting place for healing is always to come to acceptance of the thing we may want to change.

This process of acceptance is like the straw tube Chinese finger puzzle. If you put a finger into each end and try to pull your fingers apart, the ends of the tube hold you tighter in their grip. When you stop trying to pull away, the straw loosens and you can pull your fingers out. Similarly if you resist how things are – be it physical or emotional pain, or other life circumstances – this difficulty holds you tighter in its grip. When you make the decision to “let go” of trying to escape how something is, you loosen its grip.

This goes directly against the grain of our reflexes. When we dislike something that is happening, we resist and say “No, I don't like you, I reject your presence.” *We believe this is the end of the story, when in fact it is the opening through which we can shift to love, acceptance and understanding, if we know how.* This starting place of rejection can be equated to denial and anger. If we allow and facilitate these feelings, our rejection/resistance can shift to acceptance. So we are now at peace around something that was previously a problem for us. That does not mean we don't want to solve the issue, but if we feel stuck, it is necessary to start with finding acceptance of the thing we don't like.

How our emotions work

Our emotions express themselves and move in a natural direction towards acceptance, in the same way that a stream naturally flows into the river, which flows into the ocean. With an understanding of the pattern of this natural flow, you can work with this current to foster your healing and growth.

As we express our feelings, we react to something disliked in the general pattern of **anger, hurt, fear** first, then **guilt/I'm sorry/regret**, to **longing/wanting/needing** which resolve in **peace**. I call the 5 clusters of feelings which lead to peace and acceptance, the “primary colors of emotion” – comparable to the primary colors which are aspects of the color white.

This pattern tends to look like this:



When we experience loss, trauma or not getting our needs met, our feelings shift from peace to reactions of “How dare you!” or “I’m mad that you are here” (anger), “It hurts that...” (hurt), “I’m scared that...” (fear), “I feel guilty that ... maybe I did something to contribute to this” (guilt/sorry), “What I want is...” (longing/wanting/need).

As we allow the expression of these feelings, it is as if muddy water is getting cleansed and the feelings shift to love/acceptance/understanding/peace. These feelings of love, acceptance, understanding look like this: “I understand that you were doing the best that you could...,” “I can accept that this happened...,” “No I can’t, I’m mad” (reverting back to anger) to “I can forgive that this occurred...,” “I love you/that...”

The molecular structure of our emotions

You might say that this is the secret molecular structure of our emotions. Understanding this natural progression is illuminating. Learning to use this understanding to work through issues and patterns requires some skill and sometimes guidance. It should be said clearly *that it is the feeling in your heart, not the chart, that needs to guide your own healing process.*

Understanding the general direction that your feelings follow as they heal, helps you look out for unexpressed feelings, as you are moving towards acceptance of something. It also gives you faith that you are progressing towards Acceptance, if you are beginning to encounter the later emotions such as guilt or wanting.

The magic of this approach rests on ...

1. Understanding that beneath all of our challenging emotions, is a lack of acceptance of something.
2. Clarifying what is it that I wish to accept? This can take time and dialogue to sort out.
3. Staying “real”, expressing what am I feeling or experiencing in each changing moment vs. “psyching yourself out” and telling yourself you feel a certain way, which, in fact, is not what your body is really feeling.
4. Allowing yourself to naturally move through the cycle of feelings to acceptance. This means that you experience your reaction of hurt, fear, dislike and rejection, etc., watching out for each of the “primary colors of emotions” as the feelings shift.

When we Embrace What Is, we open up new possibilities for healing or shifting a difficult situation, or seeing it differently so that new possibilities emerge. This process “purifies our hearts” and opens our heart wider for more life, vitality and expansiveness.