

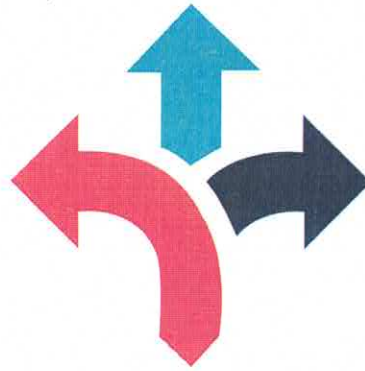
# SESSION 6

## Understanding and Processing Emotions



Please watch the Session 6 video now.  
The video is a summary of the material  
and will help with processing the  
information presented in this session.

# Understanding and Processing Emotions



I became an expert at stuffing my emotions. I did not like feeling bad or anxious, plus my emotions prevented me from being productive, so I did whatever I had to do to ignore or numb them. But as I eventually learned, if you don't deal with your emotions, and instead resist or ignore them, they just get worse. Eventually they exacerbate and blow up or come out sideways, often over some minor, unrelated event.

*In the last session, you worked on reframing your thinking and changing your mindset. We can do the same work with emotions. Rather than avoiding and stuffing them, we can view them as the informative signals they are.*

## What Are Emotions and How Can They Help Us?

In the last session, you worked on reframing your thinking and changing your mindset. We can do the same work with emotions. Rather than avoiding

and stuffing them, we can view them as the informative signals they are.

## All Emotions Have a Purpose

For some reason in the United States, we think we always have to be happy and feeling anything else is not good. But fear, anxiety, sadness, and anger

all have a purpose. Emotions are neither good nor bad. They all have gifts.

*If you don't deal with your emotions,  
and instead resist or ignore them,  
they just get worse.*

- Anxiety has the gift of telling us when we might be in trouble.
- Anger has the gift of helping us be assertive so we're not taken advantage of.
- Fear has the gift of protecting and preserving us.
- Joy has the gift of celebrating gratitude and happiness.
- Shame has the gift of keeping us humble and human.
- Guilt has the gift of reminding us of our values and helping us make amends.

## Emotional Intelligence

When I started my healing journey, I did not understand that emotions are not good or bad, it's the person that makes them good or bad by how they process the emotions. What I learned about emotional intelligence surprised me.

*Emotions are neither good nor bad.  
They all have gifts.*

According to the book *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Dr. Bradberry and Dr. Reed, only 36 percent of people are able to accurately identify their emotions as they happen. Just 36 percent of us! That's why sometimes it takes sitting with our emotions and feeling them to figure them out.

The problems start when we process these emotions in an unhealthy way, which can lead to negative actions.

A lot of times, how we think and feel happens in our subconscious.<sup>33</sup>

It's not uncommon for us to feel anxious over something that may not make sense. It's only when we start analyzing the situation that we realize our emotions are tied to something from our subconscious and we're being irrational. For example, somebody who had a bad experience with a cat scratching them now believes all cats scratch all the time, which is irrational. Or a lady who was fired from a previous job now works overtime and does much more than what her role requires because she's afraid that she'll get fired again if she doesn't. We have to work on changing our irrational thought processes over time.<sup>34</sup> We start by paying attention to what our emotions are trying to tell us.

Here are the four components that make up emotional intelligence:<sup>35</sup>

1. **Self-Awareness**—the ability to correctly understand our own emotions in the moment and not get hijacked by our subconscious. An example of a lack of self-awareness is feeling bad, but being unsure of what or how you are feeling. An example of healthy self-awareness is realizing when you are in a difficult situation and understanding your feelings of anxiety. A self-awareness strategy is to quit treating your feelings as good or bad, lean into your discomfort with your feelings, and get to know yourself under stress.<sup>36</sup>
2. **Self-Management**—your ability to use your emotional awareness to adapt and act in a positive manner. An example is someone that is able to not lose their temper when they are

33. "Therapy in a Nutshell," You Tube, Emma McAdams

34. Ibid.

35. *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Dr. Bradberry and Dr. Reed

36. Ibid.

provoked as opposed to someone that reacts before they think and yells at somebody. Even if the anger is well-deserved, yelling at someone demonstrates a lack of good manners. A self-management strategy is to take some deep breaths, count to ten, and take control of how you talk to yourself. Control what you think and visualize success.<sup>37</sup>

3. **Social Awareness**—your ability to correctly understand other people’s emotions and process what is happening if you don’t feel the same way. An example of healthy social awareness is being at dinner with several people and recognizing the ones that are not talking and engaging them in conversation. An example of a lack of social awareness is not realizing that a coworker is overwhelmed and asking them to help you with some of your work. A social awareness strategy is to watch people’s body language and practice the art of listening. Try

putting yourself in another person’s shoes and looking at things from their perspective.<sup>38</sup>

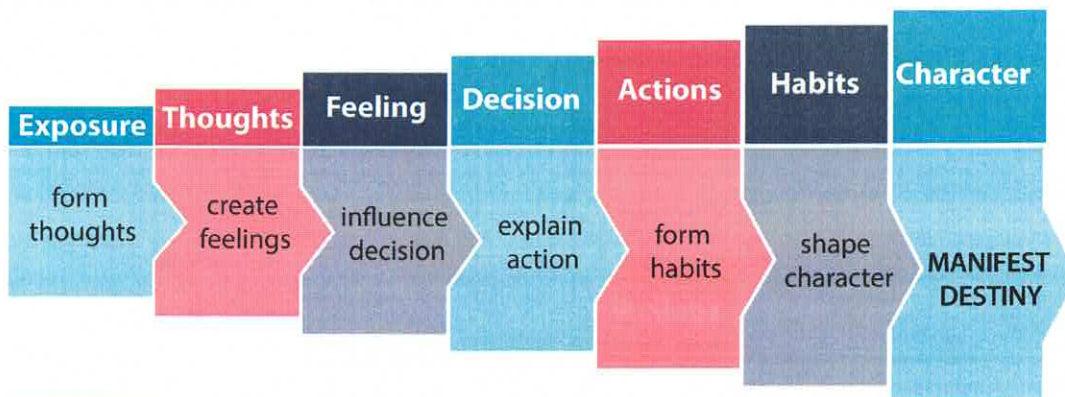
4. **Relationship Management**—your ability to manage people’s emotions in a situation or environment. You may know someone who is sensitive to certain topics. If you avoid those subjects or talk about topics you know will be non-threatening, you are practicing healthy relationship management. If you know you’re dealing with a person that is rather shy and meek, being aggressive with them is not managing the relationship correctly. If you know that someone reacts severely to criticism, you should soften your comments to properly manage the relationship.

Relationship management strategies require you to be open to feedback and criticism and to be curious and have an open mind. Confront uncomfortable conversations, explain your decisions, and acknowledge how other people feel.<sup>39</sup>

## How Emotions Shape Destiny

What you see and experience affects what you think about. Those thoughts sway your emotions. Emotions influence your decisions. Your decisions lead to your actions, which develop into habits. Habits shape your character, which ultimately determines your destiny. That’s why it’s crucial to

learn how to manage our emotions. When we do, we are better able to identify and break negative, irrational thought patterns and beliefs that impact how we feel, behave, and shape who we are and where we’re headed in life.



37. *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Dr. Bradberry and Dr. Reed

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

## How Emotions Show Up in Your Life

Imagine that you order some food from Grub Hub and when they deliver it, you never take the food inside. It just sits outside your door. Eventually, rodents, pests, and bugs will show up to feast.

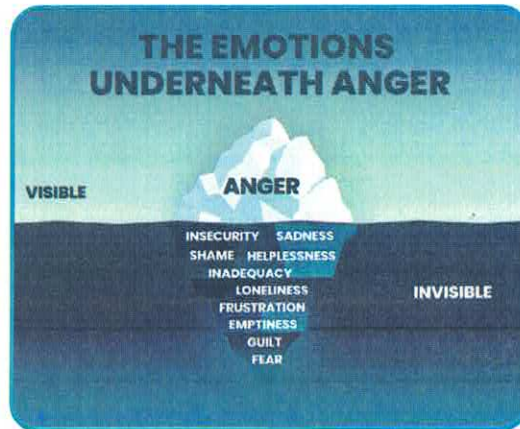


That's pretty much what happens when you don't deal with your emotions. It becomes a big mess.<sup>40</sup>

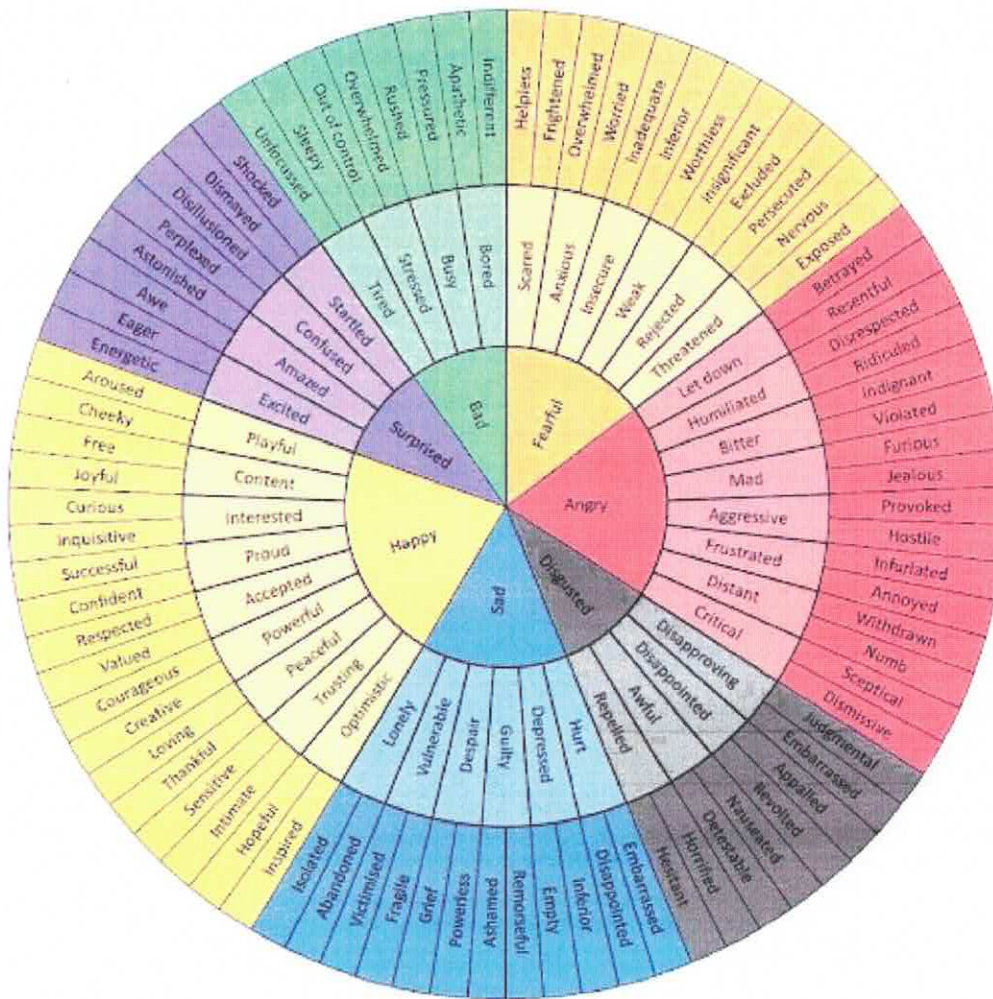
I used to not even know what I was feeling back when I was living with unprocessed trauma. I just knew I felt bad. I didn't want to admit I was angry or sad because those were "bad" emotions. But as I learned how to acknowledge and process my emotions, I discovered a way out of the mess. I stopped reacting to them in impulsive, unhealthy ways, using anger to protect myself or numbing the pain through addictive behaviors. I am now able to manage my emotions effectively, which is what this workbook chapter aims to guide you through.

## How to Identify Your Emotions

Emotions are complicated. Oftentimes, they are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to identifying what we are really feeling. On the surface, I was on the defensive and quick to get angry. These are secondary emotions that were masking what I was really feeling: deep-seated shame and insecurity. I was fearful of other people because of how I grew up, so I used anger and a strong, defensive personality as coping mechanisms to keep people at a distance. As I began to explore the root causes of my reactions and address the underlying feelings driving them, I could see these coping mechanisms that had protected me when I was young were no longer serving me.



40. "Therapy in a Nutshell," You Tube, Emma McAdams



The tool that helped and continues to help me identify my emotions is the Emotion Wheel. It is broken into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary emotions.

- Primary emotions are basic and instinctual, such as sad.
- Secondary emotions develop in response to primary emotions and are often more complex and influenced by personal experience, thoughts, and beliefs. The secondary emotion for sad can be lonely.
- Tertiary emotions are the consequence of secondary emotions. For example, sad, lonely, and isolated.

Let's start with the primary emotion of sadness. This sadness could be secondary to loneliness and the loneliness could be related to being isolated. Sometimes we don't know what the primary emotion is, but we do know the secondary or tertiary emotion. A person may feel worthless and mislabel that as the primary emotion. But using the Emotion Wheel, they can trace that worthless feeling to the next level that relates to feeling weak, and the primary emotion related to those, which is fear.

You can use the Emotion Wheel in a couple of different ways to identify what you are feeling.

### **Primary to Tertiary**

Example: I felt angry at John because he criticized my hair in front of a group of people. I realize I was angry because I felt humiliated and ridiculed by his rude remarks.

### **Tertiary to Primary**

Example: I felt excluded and inadequate when my coworkers did not ask me to be on the volleyball team with them when it was time to sign up. I realize now I was fearful of being rejected.

## **Emotions in the Body**

Another way to identify your emotions is by paying attention to your body. You can feel fear in your chest and notice it in your rapid breathing; you can feel sadness in your heart, and shame or guilt in your gut.

When a client fired me and gave their account to a competitor, I felt “bad,” but I couldn’t identify what the true emotion was at first. As I paid more attention, I noticed feeling a pain in the pit of my

stomach as if someone had hit me, and my heart was racing—signals that I was experiencing shame and fear. I then was able to process my shame for losing the account and fear over my competitor taking business from me. Knowing my emotions were a signal of something deeper, I could identify some dysfunctional thought processes that were causing part of these emotions and learn from the event.

<b>Location of Sensation</b>	<b>Basic Emotion</b>	<b>Secondary and Tertiary Emotions</b>
Neck, shoulders, jaw, and upper chest (tightness or pressure)	Anger	Frustrated, humiliated, resentful, provoked
Stomach or gut (knot)	Shame	Guilt, embarrassed, exposed, regretful
Heart (stabbing pain)	Sadness	Lonely, vulnerable, disappointed, despair
Chest and lungs (rapid breathing, shortness of breath)	Fear	Anxious, insecure, rejected, overwhelmed, worried, insignificant
Entire body (lightness or heaviness)	Joy	Optimistic, confident, hopeful, inspired, valued
Chest (warmth and swelling)	Love	Sensitive, aroused, compassionate, affectionate

Adapted from The Meadows Outpatient Program

## **How to Process Emotions**

Licensed marriage and family therapist Emma McAdam does a great job of teaching you how to unpack your emotions and focus on what you are feeling. I spent a weekend watching her videos and it was life-altering. I had to rewatch a few of them

because I wanted to fully integrate the unfamiliar notion of allowing myself to sit with an emotion without trying to stuff it or numb it. Now when I feel something, I use this process and get to know what I

am feeling and why. This approach is adapted from her YouTube series *Therapy in a Nutshell*.<sup>41</sup>

- To process emotions sometimes you just have to figure out what the emotion is that you're feeling. **Use the Emotion Wheel to name it.**
- **Don't consider an emotion to be good or bad.**
- **Observe that emotion** using an emotion tracker to identify where you're feeling it in your body, what you're feeling, what you're thinking about what you are feeling, and what you're saying to yourself.
- **Be willing to sit with the emotion** for a few minutes and explore your thinking. Are you using filtering, where you're just looking at the negative parts? Are you catastrophizing, making the worst possible thing happen? Do you have any faulty thinking that needs to be cleared up?
  - Sitting with emotions can get overwhelming. There are several ways to help stay in the process: deep breathing exercises, softening your gaze and letting what you see start to blur, tapping different parts of your body, shaking out your arms and legs, moving around and walking, or doing a self-relaxation step by step, body part by body part, in order to calm yourself down.
- **Clarify** what you can and can't control and what you really value.
- **Act and accept your emotions.**

Here's another personal example of how I learned to process my emotions. A friend wanted me to sign up for a 5K run with her. It was a huge

race in the middle of downtown Austin. I knew there would be a ton of people and the parking and traffic would be horrendous. And honestly, I prefer being with small groups of people, not large crowds. I like my friend and enjoy spending time with her, but I didn't want to deal with all those other things. So, instead of agreeing to something I didn't really want to do (not being true to myself), I suggested we meet up after the race and have lunch. I explained it just wasn't an activity that I really value, and I didn't want to experience all the stress associated with it. I set a personal boundary and was still able to spend time with my friend.

- **Name the emotion:** fear—*anxiety, overwhelmed, worried, rejection, inadequate*
- **Location in body:** *chest and lungs*
- **How I sat with the emotion:** I did some deep breathing and evaluated my thoughts. I understood the fear I was feeling was over an event in the future and that I could control the future.
- I **clarified** the situation by asking myself what I valued and what I wanted. I realized I wanted to spend time with my friend, but not at that type of event. I also realized that my friend can't read my mind and I needed to tell her what I would rather do together.
- I **accepted** that crowds, traffic, and parking do create anxiety for me. I accepted that I can deal with those emotions if necessary, but I choose not to for an activity that isn't required and that I do not value.

## Emotion Tracker

If observing your emotions is something new for you, try using an emotion tracker like this one. You can update this simple spreadsheet weekly,

daily, or even hourly based on what you need to notice your emotions.<sup>42</sup>

41. "Therapy in a Nutshell," YouTube, Emma McAdams

42. Ibid.



Time of Day (morning, afternoon, evening, night)	What do you feel? (Name the emotion.)	Where do you feel the emotion in your body?	What do you think about the emotion (good, bad, dumb, painful...)	What do you say to yourself when you are having this emotion?
	Anxiety	Heart and lungs	I feel bad that I am anxious and want it to stop.	This is stupid to feel this way when there is no reason for me to be anxious. This must be something from my past memories that's causing me to feel anxious.

### Perspective

When I start to get upset sometimes, I've developed the habit of asking myself whether about it will still matter to me a week, month, or year from now. This practice helps me put things in perspective. If someone flips me off in traffic, I will probably

forget about it in an hour. If I make a meal and my husband did not like it, it probably won't matter to him a week from now. In both cases, what feels like a major issue at the time is insignificant in the big picture.

### Zones of Regulation

It's important to understand our emotions so we can respond accordingly instead of saying or doing something we might regret. If we are angry, it is

better to pause before taking action because in this state of mind, we are usually not thinking clearly. When I am tired, I don't make good decisions and

			
<p><b>Blue Zone</b> Low State of Alertness</p>	<p><b>Green Zone</b> Ideal State of Alertness</p>	<p><b>Yellow Zone</b> Heightened State of Alertness</p>	<p><b>Red Zone</b> Extremely Heightened State of Alertness</p>
<p>Board Tired Sad Disappointed Sick Depressed Shy</p>	<p>Happy Positive Thankful Proud Calm Content Ready to Learn</p>	<p>Excited Silly Annoyed Worried Embarrassed Confused Nervous</p>	<p>Upset Angry Aggressive Mad Elated Terrified Out of Control</p>

sometimes I am more sensitive. Zones of regulation help us identify where we are emotionally and how we should act.

The diagram below can help you determine when to act, rest, take caution, or stop.<sup>43</sup>

- When you are in the blue zone you should take care of your needs and rest because you are not aware of your emotions.
- When you are in the green zone you are good to go and ready for anything.
- When you are in the yellow zone be cautious because you can easily go to the red or blue zone.
- When you are in the red zone you need to stop and not take any action or say much because your emotions are extremely heightened.

### Locus of Control Method

For a long time, I believed and acted as though I had the power to control other people's actions and emotions. Frankly, it was exhausting. When I finally realized I am not responsible for either one of them, that I am only responsible for myself, it was quite liberating.

Using the locus of control method allows you to determine what is in your control and what is out

of your control. You then focus on what you can control and let go of the rest. For example, if people I'm not really fond of say something rude to me at a party, I can control my response. I don't have to accept what they're saying; I can decide to move on, without getting my feelings hurt, and talk to some other people.<sup>44</sup>

Emotion	What Is in My Control	What Is in My Influence	What Is out of My Control
Anger	How I act and what I say	Being calm but firm will help control the situation.	How other people act and talk

### Session 6 Discussion Questions

1. Discuss what primary, secondary, and tertiary feeling you experienced recently.
2. Did you consider that feeling bad? Why or why not?
3. Was that emotion rational or irrational?
4. What emotions do you almost never feel? Which do you feel frequently?
5. Discuss an emotion you may have labeled "bad." How do you think it actually helped you?

43. Zones of Regulation <https://zonesofregulation.com/>

44. "Therapy in a Nutshell," YouTube, Emma McAdams

## Session 6 Homework

### Day One Emotion Tracker

Complete the emotion tracker for one week, four times a day: in the morning, afternoon, evening, and night.

Time of Day (morning, afternoon, evening, night)	What do you feel? (Name the emotion.)	Where do you feel the emotion in your body?	What do you think about the emotion (good, bad, dumb, painful...)	What do you say to yourself when you are having this emotion?
	Depression and sadness	Heart	I hate this emotion and would do anything to not feel it.	I am depressed because I am going through a hard time, but it will eventually pass

## Session 6 Homework

### Locus of Control

Think of a couple of situations you currently have emotions about. Write down the emotion, what is within your control, and what is out of your control. For example, I don't get along with my coworkers. I can control talking in a respectful, dignified manner to them, but I can't control what they say or think.

Emotion	What Is in My Control	What Is in My Influence	What Is out of My Control
<i>Anger</i>	<i>How I act and what I say</i>	<i>Being calm but firm will help control the situation.</i>	<i>How other people act and talk</i>

### Avoidance List

List everything you do to avoid your emotions and the long-term effects on your behavior. It might be that you don't go places, you drink alcohol, or you distract yourself by binge watching Netflix.<sup>45</sup>

What thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories would you like to get rid of?	How do you escape, avoid, or distract yourself?	How does this work long-term?	What are the negative side effects?
<i>Sadness</i>	<i>Binge watching TV</i>	<i>Only for a few hours</i>	<i>Wasting time and not working on the issue</i>

45. "Therapy in a Nutshell," You Tube, Emma McAdams

## Session 6 Homework

### Day Two Healthy Habit<sup>46</sup>

Walk for ten minutes after dinner.

#### Benefits

- Being outside in fresh air
- Lower blood sugar and stabilize insulin levels
- Socialize with neighbors and build a community for yourself

### Day Three

Read Session 7: The Roles We Play.

### Day Four

Optional scripture reading and reflection:

*Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters:  
You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.*

—James 1:19

Created by Yoko Ochoa, Life Coach of Yesterday's Gone Women's Shelter

How does this scripture tell us to manage our emotions? How could this have helped in a recent argument? How do you see this helping you in your current relationships?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

46. This Healthy Habit was created by Yoko Ochoa, Life Coach, Yesterday's Gone Women's Shelter