



Dealing with a Difficult Emotion

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Sometimes, rather than simply experiencing a feeling, it is useful to get some objective distance from the feeling. This is particularly true for overwhelming, unhealthy feelings. You can do this in the following exercise by paying attention to process rather than to content. Then, you can try and access another balancing emotion.

1. Imagine a situation or personal interaction that produces this difficult emotion. This might be a conversation with a parent or partner that leaves you feeling difficult emotions of rage, worthlessness, or undesirability.
2. As the emotion emerges, shift your attention to the process of sensing. Describe the sensations. Describe their quality, intensity, and location and any changes in these. Breathe.
3. Pay attention to accompanying thoughts. Describe the mental process in which you are engaging, whether it be thinking, remembering, or criticizing. Breathe.
4. Focus on your emotional need in your painful emotion. Validate your need. "Yes I need comfort, support, validation, or protection."
5. Focus on another softer, good feeling that will soothe the need, such as love, joy, or compassion or on a more empowered feeling like assertive anger that helps you to feel deserving of that previously unmet need. Imagine a situation or personal interaction in which you feel this. Feel it now. Allow the feeling to fill you.
6. Talk to the old, difficult feeling from your space in your new, healthier feeling. What can you say to the bad feeling that will help transform it to a better feeling? Say this.