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**DON'T KILL THE MESSENGER!!! EMOTIONS AS MESSAGES**

What is your first reaction to an uncomfortable or difficult emotion? Is it to seek ways - sometimes any way - to stop it, get away from it, kill it!

What is an emotion? One definition - *a feeling inside that is trying to get out!!*, i.e. *expressed!!* These feelings that can run our lives; they are the glue that keeps us together or the force that can destroy us. An emotion is a thought or idea accompanied by a bodily sensation: it is experienced as a form of energy. We are frequently unaware of the original thought or the awareness is short-lived and fleeting. With intense and dramatic emotions such as joy or terror, the body sensations are obvious; however, when the emotion is more mundane and ordinary, as with boredom or annoyance, the physical sensations can be so subtle as not to be noticed.

**There are no bad emotions:** *there are desirable and undesirable emotions*, but no bad emotions. Because an emotion is painful or uncomfortable does not make it bad. When a loved one betrays you, it is human and appropriate to feel hurt and disappointed. You would be less than human if you did not.

You may not want to feel emotional pain, but when you find yourself in a hurtful situation it is appropriate to feel that hurt. **The essential question** about emotions is not whether they are good or bad, but whether the emotion is appropriate for the situation. *That is, does the emotion match the circumstances.*

Being human you may often have these "inappropriate" emotions. What does this mean? You are being paged urgently! *Any recurring emotion that does not match the situation is a signal - a message about some aspect of your life.*

Emotions are a gift that make and keep us human - you have a right to feel any and every emotion you experience. When they match the circumstances they express your humanity, heal and complete the experience so that you can go on with your life cleanly without the excess baggage of unrecognized or unexpressed emotions. *When they do not match the circumstances they become opportunities to learn something important about yourself and your life.* That is when you must listen - these **emotions are your teachers, don't run away from them. Ask yourself, "What is this emotion trying to tell me about my life?"**

The message is different for each person; however, there are certain **universal messages** contained in some of the more common, frequently experienced emotions. The following list is a guide to help you explore and learn from your emotions.

**Guilt or Shame:** A message that you have violated your own standards. Be sure you are truly using your standards, and that they are appropriate for the situation. You can modify and adjust standards and learn for the future. Perhaps you've hurt someone. Guilt results from self-condemnation, whereas shame involves the fear that you'll lose face when others find out about what you did.

**Disappointed or Frustrated:** A message to change expectations. Disappointment results from not having our expectations met. You insist things should be different. It might be your own performance, or from an uncontrollable event. Whenever we place expectations on others we can count on setting ourselves up for disappointment!

**Depressed or Sad:** Thoughts of loss: a relationship rejection, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, or the failure to achieve an important personal goal. A message that you need to change something about yourself and/or your life.

**Hopeless & Discouraged:** A message to let go of something. Ask yourself in what do you place your hope and confidence. You feel convinced that your problems will go on forever and that things will never improve.

**Jealous:** A message that your emotional well-being is threatened.

**Envy:** A message that there is something you want. Is "it" worthwhile enough to go after?

**Stuck:** A message to go outside of yourself and gather more information and resources.

**Procrastination:** A message that either you don't know how to do something, or you don't want to.

**Anger, Irritation, Annoyance, or Resentment:** You feel that someone is treating you unfairly or trying to take advantage of you. A message about the need to stop the abuse - from self toward self or from others toward self. Look for the flip side of anger, which is sadness, hurt, pain, and or fear. Ask your self if your anger is simply a result of not getting your way.

**Emotions are your friends, your allies** - not to be used as excuses to avoid thinking or taking action; *but to respect and learn from*. When you allow yourself to feel something you are in process and that process moves you forward so that pretty soon you're feeling something else and moving on.

**Sometimes people are afraid that if they 'give in' to their emotions they'll drown in them. Just the opposite is true; 'giving in' to them will move you through the tunnel to the light of learning and change at the end. Emotions don't get us into trouble - it's the emotions we have about our emotions that trap us and keep us on a treadmill of negativity and stagnation.**

*Emotions are our teachers and opportunity to learn and change. Listen for the message and don't kill the messenger.*