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

Emotions are part of how God has created us – we are wired to feel, for good reason. Whether you like it or not, you experience emotions. Sadly, we have mis-understood and mis-managed our emotions. One goal of emotions is to make sense as to why we feel as we do, therefore, learn to seek the messages or reasons behind the emotion.

Emotions are feelings in motion. Emotions are neurological energy. Emotions are like weather. Imagine, for a moment, the whole reality and vastness of weather. Weather ebbs and flows, continuously, in various degrees of temperature, mixed with wind velocity, and you begin to get the picture. Emotions are neither right or wrong. Emotions don't lie. Emotions are real.

No one ever really needed help making sense of emotions that feel good. The problem begins with emotions that are uncomfortable and painful. The most common tendency is to resist, fight, control, and repress an emotion that you don't like, and when you do, you actually make your self feel worse.

An emotion always follows either something that got activated in our biology, or from how the mind perceived an event, conflict with another person, memory, etc. Granted there are circumstances that legitimately cause deep sorrow, like the death of a loved one, end of a relationship, or natural disaster. But for our purposes here, emotions reflect how our minds are interpreting events or relationships, along more significantly the beliefs and meanings we conclude. It is common to believe that the problem is that actual painful emotion, but this is backwards, because of improper education.

There is really no such thing as a bad emotion: *there are desirable and undesirable emotions*, but no bad emotions. Because an emotion is painful or uncomfortable does not make it bad. Sadly, our culture has been conditioned to believing that undesirable emotions are bad.

Perhaps the most profound perspective about emotions is that they generally do not last that long, even though they can seem to last forever. If you look back upon your life, you will discover, with the exception of traumatic events, that no emotional state lasted very long. You can trust that you will eventually be able to re-group. Back to the weather analogy, you realize the weather never stays the same, for too terribly long. We don't complain too much about the weather because over the years we've learned there are seasons and they change. After a while you can eventually discover the pain doesn't bother you as much as it used to because you've learned to understand why you feel as you do. It's ok to be bothered and upset by feeling what you feel, this is being human. In fact, part of the learning is becoming honest about your feelings, first, to yourself, second, to others.

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.

**Shame:** Shame is possibly the hardest emotion to work through, yet experiencing shame is part of being human. Shame helps to see when we've mis-takenly over-identified or personalized something you did and then you believe a negative way about yourself. It can also be about 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 – a brief disclaimer: guilt is Not an emotion, it is an opinion or judgement that you have done something wrong or violated a value system. It can result in 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 re-evaluate 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 our self or 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 your perspective or something about yourself and/or your life.

**Hopeless & Discouraged:** A message to consider letting go of something. Ask yourself in what do you place your hope, confidence, joy, and security. If you are not careful you could convince yourself that your problems will go on forever and that things will never improve.

**Jealous:** A message that your emotional well-being is threatened or that comparisons are getting the best of you.

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

**Anger, Irritation, Annoyance, or Resentment:** You believe 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 your 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.*