
Experiencing Emotion

Relational trauma, which includes a diverse spectrum of experience ranging from abuse to early hurt, loss or invalidation, leads to dis-integration of emotional experience



The area of the brain that normally registers, processes, integrates and makes sense of emotional experience is actively inhibited, which actively shifts attention away from the body's activation in an attempt to reduce arousal.

This shift is because of messages, direct and indirect, that suggest these emotions are not ok. Over time, these messages become internalized, and can be perceived as “unsafe”, leading to fear, or “unacceptable”, leading to guilt and shame.

Over time, this shifting away from oneself results in an alienation within - between what one does experience (emotion) and what one should or should not experience (reason).

This internal division, results in an inability to integrate painful or strong emotion. This results in physical and psychological discomfort and contributes to anxiety.

The work involves shifting back toward emotional experience. Approaching oneself and one's emotions with compassion and curiosity. This allows the inner capacity, to identify, tolerate, process and integrate core emotions, to develop. This capacity building correlates to psychological development and emotional maturity, and results in inner psychological structures being activated and aligned.

As the psychological structure is strengthened, giving way to the emergence of a healthy adult, and attention can shift from past to present moment awareness and acceptance. The emotional and rational minds come together - leading to deep knowing and wisdom.

Over the next few days,

- Notice the experience of emotions in your body,
- Approach the emotion with curiosity and compassion,
- Recognize that any emotion, no matter how strong, is like a wave – it will pass through you,
- There is nothing you need to do with it. You do not need to block it, you do not need to react to it.

Your homework is to experience the emotion and provide the space for it to pass through you. With practice, this exercise will help you increase your capacity for processing and integrating your emotions.