

Understanding Our Emotions

It is important for us to understand the purpose of our emotions before we can learn to regulate them and work with them effectively. Emotions are adaptive but can become problematic because of past traumas or because people are often taught to ignore or dismiss them. Here are some truths about emotions that many of us did not learn, or tend to forget:

Our emotions:

- Exist on their own
- Cannot be legislated (as in "you should love your brother")
- Are instinctual and often protective
- Are neither positive nor negative. They simply are. What may be negative (or positive) is how we're handling them or relating to them, what we're allowing them to become, what context we're holding them in, or what attitude in which we are enlisting them.
- Motivate us to necessary action (for example, "i feel afraid therefore I will call the police")
- Tell us what's important in a situation and thus can act as a guide to what we need or want
- Need to be attended to...

OR

- They will come out – even if we ignore, deny, or stuff them - in physical symptoms, addictions, eating disorders, anxiety, explosive anger, depression, self-harm

Remember:

- It's okay to feel; it's even okay when emotions feel extreme. Often our emotions become louder when we're not listening to them and/or utilizing the information they have to offer.
- Over time being aware of our emotions and learning to manage and use them gives us a sense of consistency and wholeness. For many of us emotions are a largely untapped source of strength, freedom and connection.