



## Focus: Emotional Health

# 7 Essential Aspects for Emotional Health in a Rational Society

In the current times of rapid change and transforming world events, the question of how you can stay emotionally healthy in a rational society is becoming more and more urgent. For many people, numerous emotional issues are coming to the surface and interpersonal conflicts seem to be increasing more and more. In order to navigate through these wild times reasonably safely, it is crucial to take care of your emotional health. In order to stay emotionally healthy, 7 aspects are necessary, which we will focus on below.

1. Awareness of your current attitude towards feelings
2. Awareness of your numbness bar
3. Switch to a new perspective on feelings
4. Learning to feel consciously
5. Clearly distinguish feelings from emotions
6. Dissolve old emotions
7. Use feelings consciously and responsibly as a navigation system

Let's take a look at what's behind each of these aspects.

### **1. Awareness of your current attitude towards feelings**

For emotional health, the first step is to clarify what attitude you have with regard to feelings. Most people – shaped by education and society – unconsciously have an attitude that says that feelings are not okay. We don't even have clarity about how many feelings there are. Instead, we throw various terms into the pot "feelings" e.g. "I feel drained, confused, tired, happy, anxious, annoyed, exhausted, great, recovered, relaxed, strange,....". But most of them have nothing to do with feelings.

To bring light into the darkness: In total, there are four major feelings territories that can be distinguished: anger, sadness, fear and joy. There are other terms for feelings, but they often belong to one of the large territories (e.g. nervousness belongs in the territory of fear, while resentment belongs in the territory of anger) or represent a mixture of feelings (e.g. "frustrated" is a mixture of anger and sadness and "desperate" a mixture of fear and sadness).

But even with the clarity that there are only these 4 feelings, the attitude remains that feelings are not okay. They may be okay at home in a quiet room, but definitely not in public. Those who show feelings are considered weak, unprofessional and not resilient. Specifically, anger is called irrational, destructive, uncivilized, dangerous and unprofessional. Sadness, according to common opinion, is weak, emotional, pulls others down, is also unprofessional and unpleasant; while fear is portrayed as cowardly, unstable, paralyzing, incompetent and nerve-wracking. Joy, on the other hand, is still okay to a certain degree, but if you show too much joy, you are unrealistic, childish, silly, naïve and do not take life and work seriously. This is the conventional wisdom about feelings.



Does this sound familiar to you?

## 2. Awareness of your numbness bar

After admitting to yourself that you actually have the unconscious attitude that feelings are not okay, the next step is to become aware of the consequences. Because feelings are not okay in modern society, you may be very well trained to push feelings away. Most people have installed an extremely high numbness bar as a result. What does that mean? Well, it means that on a scale of 0% to 100%, a feeling, e.g. anger, has to become very big until you perceive it as such. Often this numbness bar is 80%, i.e. anything below is not consciously perceived as anger. It may start with one thing coming to another, you feel a little weird or tense. Then a few things happen in your everyday life, the tension increases and at some point, at 80%, comes the the straw that broke the camel's back. Then you explode, it either gets loud, an argument breaks loose or you leave the room angry. Then you tell yourself that this must not happen again, but that you have to have a better grip on yourself next time. So you do everything you can to keep the numbness bar high again through distraction (e.g. television, social media, a lot of sports, food, alcohol, smoking, a lot of work, etc.). This way you continue to fit into society where feelings are not okay.

How do you keep your numbness threshold high?

## 3. Switch to a new perspective on feelings

If you admit to yourself that you have the old view of feelings, and actually keep your numbness bar high through distraction, then it's time to change your perspective on feelings, because that's the only way you can become or stay emotionally healthy. While the old assumption was based on feelings not being okay, the new assumption includes the following:

**Feelings are neutral energy and information that serve you.**

Feelings are not a design error of the universe. Instead, they are a crystal-clear navigation system that guides you unerringly through your life. For example, you need your anger to set clear boundaries, make decisions, say yes/no clearly, recognize injustice, take action, and take a stand for yourself. Sadness is a great force to communicate, be vulnerable, let go of things, develop compassion and to give space to others. Fear serves you to recognize dangers, assess risks, be attentive and present, stand in not-knowing and to try out new things; while you can use joy to be excited, inspire others, experiment, pursue your visions, and move forward.

## 4. Learning to feel consciously

With the new perspective that feelings are neutral energy and information that serve you, another important step on the way to emotional health is to learn to feel consciously again. This means that you learn to perceive the feelings again and express them clearly and unmixed. (*Note: If you want to start at home, a great phrase is this: "I feel angry, anxious, sad, happy because..."*). In addition, it is crucial to take possession of the feelings again. With the old point of view, it could happen to you that you have the impression that the feelings overwhelm you and possess you and, for example, that fear has a grip on you. However, if you experience in a safe training room to feel the feelings up to 100% maximum, then you will experience that you own the feeling and not the other way around. This is the point at which you can begin to consciously navigate the feelings.



## 5. Clearly distinguish feelings from emotions

Another important point is to get clarity about the fact that there is a difference between feelings and emotions. Maybe you are astonished now, because we tend to use these two terms as synonyms. However, there is one major difference:

- Feelings (anger, joy, sadness, fear) arise in the here and now. If you use them consciously and responsibly, they disappear immediately afterwards.
- Emotions, on the other hand, are either incomplete feelings from the past (e.g. from childhood or from later, serious situations, in which it was too dangerous to express the feelings), or they are inherited feelings, i.e. taken over by parents, teachers, brands, religions, etc.

Emotions feel the same as feelings, but last longer, usually longer than 3 minutes. Maybe it has already happened to you that you had a conversation with someone, that person pressed a red button on you and you got really angry. A day later, you might still have been angry. In this case, there is a very high probability that the person had triggered an old emotion in you. This means that the person was the trigger, but what you felt had nothing to do with them, but was much older. However, if we do not know the distinction, we immediately project our surging emotion onto the other person or situation, so that it usually comes to an argument. It is therefore crucial to learn on the one hand to distinguish emotions from feelings and on the other hand to make the so-called gap. This means that you consciously perceive the moment when the emotion arises and in the next step interrupt the automatic mechanism of the emotional reaction.

## 6. Dissolve old emotions

The interesting question is, of course, what do you do when someone triggers an old emotion in you. Suppose you have made the gap as described in the previous paragraph, the next step is to dissolve the old emotion. In a concrete situation, it can therefore be helpful to first write down what the trigger was, which old emotion (anger, joy, sadness fear) was associated with it and which possible beliefs came up with the old emotion. You can then transform these old emotions and beliefs in the form of conscious feelings work in a safe training space, so that you anchor powerful, new decisions in your body that serve you now in life.

## 7. Use feelings consciously and responsibly as a navigation system

Once you have gone through the above steps, the new perspective allows you to use the feelings consciously and responsibly, e.g. using anger to set boundaries or fear to be awake and present. Just having intellectually understood the new perspective on feelings and skipping the remaining steps doesn't work. For example, how are you going to use anger responsibly if you can't tell whether it's a feeling in the here and now or an old emotion? How are you going to use it if you keep your numbness bar so high due to your old survival strategy that you only feel the anger when it reaches 80%?

Unfortunately, there is no shortcut on the way to emotional health. But even with a little practice, you can take huge steps, so that you quickly get closer to the goal of using the feelings as a clear inner navigation system.



All the best,  
Nicola Neumann-Mangoldt

Book recommendation:

*If you want to dig deeper into the topic of feelings, I can recommend the books of two trainer colleagues:*

1. „Feelings“ by Patrizia Patz
2. „The Power of Consious Feelings“ by Clinton Callahan