

**How are
you feeling!**

Making Emotions make Sense

Teacher's Guide and Evidence-based Concepts Fundamental to an Adolescent's Healthy Emotional Growth.

**A foundation for a comprehensive Social
Emotional Learning (SEL) Program.**

How Are You Feeling? teaches 33 evidence-based concepts that are fundamental for healthy emotional development.

We are delighted that you have chosen to use, 'How Are You Feeling' in your classroom. At any time, if you have questions or concerns, we are available to you.

How are you Feeling? is a comprehensive program with many layers of emotional learning. It increases the student's capacity to engage their natural ability to process their feelings as they arise. The course addresses the impediments they may have encountered that subvert this natural process. It demonstrates for teenagers that in order to keep clear, and be responsive, instead of inappropriately reactive, we have to face and feel what is happening to us rather than distracting ourselves and avoiding reality.

Students become familiar with a useful language that gives them a way to talk about what is happening to them emotionally. They get the message that their feelings are very important and how crucial it is that they find a compassionate ear to listen to them when their feelings are overwhelming or non-existent. Instead of feeling helpless and impotent in the face of another's pain they come to comprehend how powerful and helpful nonjudgmental listening is. The importance of empathy becomes obvious.

As the students learn to name feelings, they come to understand what it means to express them instead of suppressing them. They develop an understanding of how behaviours are connected to how we deal with our feelings and they comprehend, not only their own behaviour, but the sometimes seemingly incomprehensible behaviour of others. Being able to name feelings specifically allows for enhanced connection with others. The program helps young people to examine emotional topics they may not be familiar with and that may be uncomfortable.

It normalizes feelings, and resulting behaviours, that may have confused many of them.

The necessity of grieving emotional pain from losses of all kinds, including the loss of connection, and the loss of control, is made clear. The program helps them to know that they are not alone with uncomfortable and confounding feelings and this helps them shift from feeling discomfort at their core to feeling more okay.

All the learning for this program is contained in the video episodes. There are many examples of emotional situations in each episode that relate to the concepts being taught. And, there are 24 episodes. This guide is to facilitate you more easily keeping it all straight for yourself.

The writing that relates to each clip will broaden the concepts for your personal understanding rather than anything you would necessarily want to bring to your student's attention. If you find that helpful it may inspire you to think of other examples or issues that relate specifically to you, your students, and your culture.

Our research has not revealed any instances of students being triggered into big feelings by anything in the episodes. If you are concerned, that any of your students may be triggered, you will be able to respond with your active listening skills and guide them to whatever usual resource for help exists in your school.

We have provided some ideas for discussion; however, we feel sure that you will know your students, be guided by that knowledge, and conduct the discussion as you wish for your class.

We hope you and your students enjoy 'How Are You Feeling?' together.



Episode Guide

Episode 1

Introduction

A quick overview of a clear model about important emotional concepts students need to understand, and be able to use, in order to navigate their teen years and beyond. Since feelings are buried alive not, dead, young people need to learn how to process their grief, anger, fear, shame and all other difficult feelings to avoid runaway anxiety, depression and despair.

Learning Objective

- To begin to understand a model for self-reflection and self-understanding.
- To learn that what we do with our feelings is crucial to our emotional and physical wellbeing.
- To begin to understand the basics of why we have feelings, the unfortunate, incorrect, things we often learn in our culture and family about feelings, the dire consequences of suppressing feelings for too long, the common ways we suppress our feelings, and, how to process our feelings through to insight and integration instead.

A few words to expand the introductory episode:

Many of us never think about why we have feelings and what they do for us. Most of us grow up with a fear of certain feelings. Our gender has influenced which feelings we think are okay to feel and express and which ones we don't want to show.

For most of us certain music evokes particular feelings. Many of us can identify that we play specific music when we feel certain ways. The awareness that music is actually helping us process our feelings and can be called upon for this purpose is not so commonly understood.

Our character is built guided by what we do with our feelings and with the emotional attachments we develop. Examining why we become emotionally attached to people, purposes, and passions helps us stay in touch with ourselves and understand ourselves better.

Grieving requires staying with sad and despairing feelings for as long as it takes to have their intensity lessen. In many cultures it has become the norm to try to distract anyone grieving instead of supporting them to feel what they need to feel. For a variety of reasons many of us cannot tolerate the grief of others and often make suggestions that unfortunately suppress their feelings and interfere with their grieving.

Introduction

Lots of us may understand the ways we distract ourselves to cope with negative, difficult feelings. However, what we may not realize is that feelings are buried alive not dead. These feelings ultimately explode outwardly damaging our relationships, or inwardly damaging our bodies. It is important to know that if we are not feeling anything this is a serious signal that we are suppressing feelings that need to be felt and expressed.

A traumatic event may cause us to shut down hard and be numb. We need time to allow this numb state, which is usually called depression, until we are ready to start processing what has happened to us. If we keep our feelings suppressed for too long, and we slip into a deep depression, we may not understand why we are depressed because we have lost contact with the original source of our pain. For example, when a young child's parent dies, and they have had no support to feel their grief or anger or fear, they may be plagued with depression 30 years later. This kind of depression is usually a mystery to us and we often feel shame about it.

Addiction to alcohol, drugs, and destructive behaviours happens when we use these things to avoid our feelings. There are damaging consequences when we suppress our feelings for too long.

There are many ways to defend against feeling difficult and confounding feelings. Being able to recognize defensiveness in ourselves and others and realizing it is a signal that there is something we can feel, and work through, and finish with, is very helpful.

Acting-out can happen when we don't finish with feelings from traumatic experiences. For example, we may act-out old, unresolved, anger and damage our relationships, and we may act-out old fear stopping us from living more fully and authentically, and we may act-out our grief by withdrawing deep inside ourselves.

Understanding and developing empathy for yourself and others is essential to our emotional wellbeing because it is necessary in order to be responsive rather than reactive and compassionate rather than blameful.

Self-knowledge happens when we commit to noticing and understanding our feelings.

Episode 2

Natural Needs and their feelings

This episode is about the fundamentals of our emotional system and the role our feelings play in our survival and thriving.

Learning Objectives

- To recognize human natural needs and how their associated feelings motivate us to take the action required to survive and thrive.
- To begin to learn how disconnected feelings result in many uncomfortable feelings including anxiety that we don't understand.
- To understand why we deny we are feeling certain ways.
- To learn to identify and name feelings.

Natural Needs



Babies are born emotionally whole. That is – expressing all of their feelings loudly and clearly to get their needs met and achieve attachment and safety.

Natural Needs Naming



Fear motivates action to survive.
We, flee, fight, or freeze.

Natural Needs Naming & Labelling



The ideal beginning for babies is to securely attach to their mothers. Human babies are born more helpless than most other animal babies so they need a lot of help and safety for survival.

Natural Needs and their feelings

Natural Needs Naming



If we understand the importance of connection to others, and that it is a biological imperative, it is easy to see that at this time in history isolation and loneliness is now viewed as a public health crisis.

In many cultures people are forced by socioeconomic, and other, factors to not have close connection and support from important people who, in earlier times, were solid emotional attachments.

Natural Needs Naming



We are born with innate curiosity and the need to learn.

Natural Needs Naming



Our need to learn can be frustrated in many different ways.

We need the chance to process our frustration with someone who can really listen.

It is, for sure, difficult to learn and study when we are full of unresolved feelings!

Natural Needs Naming



Some people believe this is a complex human need and others believe it is a learned social behaviour. Every religion has some form of the Golden Rule which admonishes us to treat others as we would want to be treated.

Natural Needs and their feelings

Natural Needs Naming & Labelling



If reciprocation is driven by unresolved, unprocessed anger it is called revenge.

Sheldon's need to behave reciprocally is an example of acting-out fear of not behaving appropriately to a ridiculous extreme.

Natural Needs Naming & Labelling



Procreation is quite clearly a survival of the species need.

It is incredibly complex because the motivating feelings frequently don't have anything to do with procreation meaning control, balance, and respect is needed.

Discussing sex and sexuality is not easy for many people for many reasons.

Natural Needs Naming & Labelling



Our natural needs are part of our character and some of these needs are difficult, complicated, and possibly scary.

It is important to find someone safe to talk with about our feelings around these needs that are all part of the human condition.

Discussion Ideas

- Do you think reciprocity is a human need?
- Have you felt obligated to reciprocate?

Episode 3

Introduction to Emotional Attachments & Unfinished Feelings

This episode is about how our feelings help to build our character and how we are influenced by the family and culture we are born into to form emotional attachments to people, purposes, and passions that become important to us. It also is an introduction to the role unfinished feelings play in our emotional lives.

Learning Objectives

- To encourage students to become aware of the various emotional attachments they have developed or are developing.
- To understand that their emotional attachments will shift and change as their life moves along.
- To begin to understand how unfinished feelings affect our lives.

Inside Out & Love Actually

Emotional Attachments



Emotional attachments are created by the things that are important to us and they take time to develop.

In this movie they are depicted as personality islands.

Unfinished Feelings



Old, unfinished feelings are often hidden from us making similar feelings in the present much more intense.

Natural Needs Permission to Feel Triggers Safe Place to Process Feelings



Sam's need for love and need for attention because of his mother's loss is a good example of how big feelings can get pasted on current situations and how we attempt to get a different outcome in the present. With a huge loss such as Sam suffered he also doubted his own worth and this typically Hollywood ending restored his faith in himself as a lovable person. It also demonstrated how love, support, and caring from others helps.

Introduction to Emotional Attachments & Unfinished Feelings

Inside Out & Love Actually Continued

[Processing Feelings](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#)



Grieving means we have to feel the pain, agony, confusion, and loneliness. The process of grieving means feeling all of the feelings deeply and getting the relief we need. This usually means returning to the grief a number of times to feel it all and no longer suffer the intensity. We remember, but scars don't hurt like open wounds.



More time will be spent understanding why we carry unfinished feelings – not only of sorrow, but also of fear, and anger, and many others. We will learn many ways to finish them, why they may be hidden from us, and the effect they can have on our lives.

Summary

[Avoiding Grieving](#) [Unfinished Feelings & Health](#) [Avoidance Behaviours](#)



Unfinished feelings stay with us below the level of our consciousness awaiting their opportunity to pop up and be felt. This is the way our emotional system works to keep us clear and free from anxiety, depression, and being overwhelmed by difficult and confounding feelings.



A Disney look at the misconceptions we learn in our culture about love and relationships.

Introduction to Emotional Attachments & Unfinished Feelings

Discussion Ideas

- Were you surprised about the idea that we emotionally attach to things that are important to us?
- Have you ever thought about how past experiences influence your feelings in the present?
- Did you learn something about grieving that had not occurred to you before?
- What have you been taught about how to deal with overwhelming and confusing feelings that happen big time to all adolescents?
- Did Walt Disney influence you?
- If this example of such a huge loss hits too close to home for you please let me know so I can help you find the support you need and most certainly deserve.

Episode 4

Creating Emotional Attachments

Part 1 of 3

This episode is about helping students examine what they are emotionally attached to and to reflect on how and why they have made some of these choices.

Learning Objectives

- To help the students understand what is emotionally important to them.
- To recognize all of the different feelings that can be associated with our emotional attachments

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



Recognizing what is important to us is a big part of living a conscious life.

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



In recent years it has become increasingly acknowledged that a sense of belonging is of prime importance to human beings throughout their lives in order for them to feel worthwhile and be emotionally healthy.

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



At this time in human history things are changing so rapidly in our world that flexibility becomes a virtue. In order to be flexible it is necessary to be able to grieve the loss of an emotional attachment to a planned career path.

Creating Emotional Attachments

Part 1 of 3

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



Adolescence is a time when young people may become conflicted and confused about what they believe in terms of religion. It is not unusual for this emotional attachment to lose its significance or to become more significant.

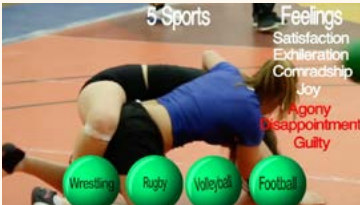
Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



Our kids need our help because they are struggling with so many issues that need to be fixed in our world today.

Research shows that these days being a part of an environmental cause can help young people feel more hopeful about their futures and provide an important sense of belonging, connection and support.

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



Many, both positive and negative, feelings are possible when playing sports of any kind.

Discussion Ideas

- What are you thinking and feeling about building your character after watching this episode?
- Was there anything that surprised you in this episode?
- Have you ever heard of the Golden Rule?
- What do you think of the Golden Rule?

Episode 5

Creating Emotional Attachments Part 2 of 3

This episode continues to help students examine what they are emotionally attached to and to reflect on how and why they have made some of these choices.

Learning Objectives

- To help the students further understand the many different categories of emotional attachments they are being encouraged to take responsibility for and control.
- To recognize all of the different feelings that can be associated with our emotional attachments

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



Information about our health habits is booming these days with many different ideas about what is the best way to eat and to exercise. This makes helping young people understand the importance of listening to themselves and their bodies even more important.

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



Honestly calculating how we spend our free time can be revealing and important. We can come to understand when some activities are becoming excessive. Encouraging students to find a good balance for themselves moves them toward taking more responsibility and control of their lives.

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



This category explains how huge our human need is to be acceptable and to feel good enough. If children have grown up not feeling good enough at their core they can become obsessed with their appearance, especially their flaws.

Creating Emotional Attachments

Part 2 of 3

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



Undoubtedly in 2023 addictions of all kinds are a huge problem. It is difficult to understand why people become addicted or what it takes to remove the addiction.

Discussion Ideas

- Are you surprised at the number of things that you have an emotional attachment to?
- Is there anything you would like to comment on from this episode?
- How are you feeling working on your character sheet?

Episode 6

Creating Emotional Attachments

Part 3 of 3

This episode is about helping students examine their emotional attachments to hobbies, chores, and values.

Learning Objectives

- To make it clear that as you grow you get to choose the size and importance of all your emotional attachments.
- To increase awareness that each individual is constantly making choices, some of which will have a lasting positive or negative effect in their lives.
- To help students understand that they are becoming increasingly responsible for the choices they make and how these choices define who they are.

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



Having hobbies is useful because they stimulate curiosity and expose young people to interests and tasks that may be important to them as they move towards choosing a career path.

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



When young people can recognize the connection between chores and wellbeing they become better prepared to look after themselves. Chores are often an area of conflict between parents and children and when this is the case the kids don't learn much and may end up acting-out to their detriment.

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



Values and morality are a huge topic for young people who learn a lot more from what they see and experience than what they are told.

Creating Emotional Attachments

Part 3 of 3

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



In order to be emotionally healthy we need to be able to respond authentically and appropriately to criticism.

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



When we understand the strength of emotional attachments we can grasp the significance of other people's emotional attachments and why they may behave the way they do if their's are threatened. For example, 'Taking it personally'

Emotional Attachments Responsibility & Control



People usually make snap judgements out of their own discomfort and need to feel okay about themselves.

Discussion Ideas

- How are you feeling after watching all three of these episodes on forming emotional attachments?
- Was looking at all of your own emotional attachments as you used the character sheet of value to you?
- Were there many things that you haven't ever given any thought to before?

Episode 7

Advertising Influences

This episode illustrates how advertisers and social media influencers appeal to our emotional needs in order to affect our buying decisions and life choices.

Learning Objectives

- To assist young people to begin to discern what influences their decisions and choices.
- To encourage students to reflect on what they really want or need and how they want to be in the world.

Emotional Attachments



It is common for teenagers to struggle with some of the emotional attachments that their parents have considered important. Many of these will remain as emotional attachments but with much less importance and some may assume greater significance.

Emotional Attachments



It is natural that friends become much more significant in the teen years as influencers.

If the family is dysfunctional and the bonds are not strong, or there are circumstances where there is just not enough contact between parents and teenagers, friends may have more impact.

Advertisers & Influencers



It takes far too long for governments to get around to legislating against unhealthy and destructive marketing when a product is incredibly damaging.

Not many people realize how they suppress their feelings by smoking.

Advertising Influences

Advertisers & Influencers



Advertising that depends on our human need to be acceptable and special is about as diabolical as it gets!

Advertisers & Influencers



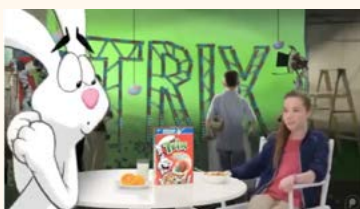
The proliferation of social media Influencers tells us how much young people need help to really examine how they are feeling and what their behaviour is indicating and when they need help.

Advertisers & Influencers



We need more opportunities and incentives for young people to join healthy groups of all kinds to meet their needs for connection, companionship, belonging, direction, and purpose.

Advertisers & Influencers



Exposing kids to the truth about advertising can have a positive effect on their desire for certain products. Nobody likes to be duped!

Discussion Ideas

- Did anything in this episode surprise you?
- Are you feeling influenced by this episode?

Episode 8

Removing Emotional Attachments - Part 1 of 3 (Grieving or Processing a Loss)

This episode is about what we have to do to heal the hurt of removing an emotional attachment. It emphasizes how important it is for our emotional wellbeing to be able to grieve, or process, a loss of anything that was emotionally important to us.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the steps in grieving a loss: naming the feelings, staying with the feelings, and processing through the feelings to the inevitable hurt and sadness.
- To understand that grieving is necessary and emotionally healthy anytime we suffer a loss of anything that has been important to us.
- To know that when we grieve we get relief, insight, and clarity to move forward in our lives.
- To recognize that there is no 'right' amount of time to grieve and each individual will know when their raw wound feels mostly healed.

Madam Secretary

[Grieving](#) [Courage & Vulnerability](#) [Integration](#)



Gatherings such as funerals have traditionally been a ritual to help people connect around their grief and to remember the deceased person which often triggers the feelings of loss.

The rituals around death and dying are varied in different cultures while all serving the same purpose of aiding in processing the death.

Unfortunately there are many people who can't take advantage of the ritual because they feel embarrassed, or even shame, at showing emotion and tears. They may shut down hard, in different ways, in order to not let the sadness come up.

Friday Night Lights

[Grieving](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#) [Courage & Vulnerability](#) [Resilience](#) [Safe Place to Feel](#)



This clip is a good example of the complex number of feelings that can surface around a loss of important plans and potential.

It also, demonstrates how important it is to have a safe caring person to be with to be able to feel and express the depth of the grief.

Removing Emotional Attachments - Part 1 of 3 (Grieving or Processing a Loss)

Californication

[Grieving](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#) [Staying with Feelings](#)



“All you can do, is let it hurt” These 8 words should become a meme!
It is a fundamental truth that not only is letting it hurt all we can do; it is the best thing to do!

Monk

[Defending](#) [Repression & Suppression](#) [Depression](#) [Integration](#)



A funny example attempting to show that other feelings pop up and need to be felt in order to get to the necessary grieving.

Family Ties

[Denial](#)



There are many ways that we deny our true feelings when there is a sudden loss of a cherished relationship at a young age.

[Grieving](#) [Naming & Labelling](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#)



This clip is a good example of when there are many emotional attachments in crisis at the same time.

It also demonstrates how being with loving, supportive people can allow all of the feelings to come tumbling out..

Discussion Ideas

- What have you come to understand about grieving losses that you didn't know before?
- What are the traditional rituals around death in your family and culture?
- Have you suffered a significant loss of a loved one yourself or do you know someone who has?
- How do you feel about the way Hollywood has portrayed dealing with losses?

Episode 9

Removing Emotional Attachments - Part 2 of 3 (Grieving or Processing a Loss)

This episode continues to demonstrate the necessity of taking the time and energy to process a loss of an important emotional attachment.

Learning Objectives

- To understand a common number of emotional attachments where grieving is necessary and emotionally healthy anytime we suffer their loss.
- To see how there are many ways to defend against feeling loss.
- To learn that there are various ways that feelings can be suppressed for long periods and the sometimes very unfortunate consequences.

School of Rock

Defending Avoidance Behaviours



There are many ways of defending against feelings of loss: covering the emotional pain with anger, blaming and belligerence, shutting down and becoming apathetic.

This is a good example of what keeps us stuck!

This is 40

Grieving Defending



Aging gracefully is an ability a lot of people don't have and they go to great lengths to maintain a more youthful appearance.

This is a problem when we need to look a certain way in order to feel good enough.

Frantically having surgery, or trying other ways to maintain a younger look, is a defense against feeling not good enough and being afraid of rejection.

Removing Emotional Attachments - Part 2 of 3 (Grieving or Processing a Loss)

CBC Documentary: Not just a video game

[Distracting](#) [Permission to Feel](#) [Avoidance Behaviours](#)



When the removal of an emotional attachment needs to be grieved and we don't understand this, or know how to do it, we may distract ourselves to the point that the distraction becomes an obsession.

This is a behaviour that is driven by unresolved emotional pain that can be processed if this is understood, and there is necessary support to feel the grief and other feelings.

Acting-out feelings such as anger can lead to tragedy.

Sometimes we have enormous regret that we have to grieve.

Gilmore Girls

[Grieving](#) [Permission to Feel](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#) [Safe Place to Process Feelings](#)



It is important as a friend to be there for a person who is grieving a loss of something they very much wanted. Just listening is the very best way to help others process their feelings.

Discussion Ideas

- Which clip in this episode meant the most to you?
- Did anything surprise you in this episode?

Episode 10

Removing Emotional Attachments - Part 3 of 3 (Grieving or Processing a Loss)

The third episode about removing emotional attachments has more examples about the necessity of grieving the loss of something that was very important to us.

Learning Objectives

- To understand how grieving works and how to help a grieving friend.
- To understand that we can't get over pain until we get into it.

The Big Bang Theory

[Permission to Feel](#) [Support](#)



This clip is a good example of expressing empathy, understanding, and encouragement to a friend who is overwhelmed at the moment.

[Grieving](#) [Support](#)



Good friends are often touched deeply when one of them loses an important emotional attachment.

The West Wing

[Defending Sorrow with Anger](#)



It is common to mask our grief at the loss of an important emotional attachment with anger at anyone or any deity that we can hold responsible.

This clip is an example of questioning a faith and needing to process a lot of different feelings in order to get clear on our beliefs.

Removing Emotional Attachments - Part 3 of 3 (Grieving or Processing a Loss)

Youtube Influencer

[Triggers](#) [Distracting](#) [Processing Feelings](#) [Repression & Suppression](#) [Integration](#)



This is a good example of processing getting rid of an emotional attachment that we don't want to have. It demonstrates how changing our behaviour can be the trigger that alerts us to process our feelings. This leads to important insights when we listen closely to our feelings as we stop the behaviour we no longer want.

We can understand how we used the unwanted behaviour to suppress many other painful feelings. Once we recognize this pattern we can begin to grieve and feel the old feelings. An adult can afford to feel what the child had to suppress.

Night Court

[Grieving](#)



An example of going through all kinds of feelings when an important attachment is ending and it also means the end of a number of other attachments that have been important for years.

This example demonstrates that elderly people have many losses to grieve at this time in their lives.

Basketball Diaries

[Self Medicating](#) [Grieving](#)



This is a very painful example of what can happen.

Discussion Ideas

- Have you ever been in the position of having a friend overwhelmed with grief?
- Has this episode helped you know what to do to help a friend who is grieving?
- Do you have an elderly person in your family that is suffering many losses?
- Can you share a personal experience of the loss of an emotional attachment?

Episode 11

Not permitted to Grieve

Part 1 of 2

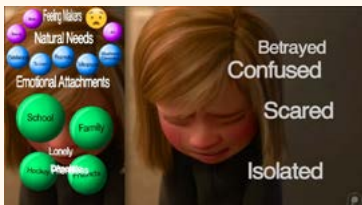
This episode is about how our culture, family, and friends can influence us to banish so-called negative feelings as quickly as possible making it difficult to grieve when we need to.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the many ways we are influenced to bury our sorrow, anger, and fear and how this is very detrimental to our wellbeing.
- To comprehend just how common it is to learn to suppress feelings instead of processing them.

Inside Out

Emotional Attachments Suppressing Feelings



This clip is an excellent demonstration of how as children we are afraid of our parent's anger and how this can stop us from feeling and expressing our true feelings.

Any fracturing of important emotional attachments is very difficult for a child and obviously would result in lots of sadness.

It is natural for a child to need, and want, to cry about lots of things and it takes a big effort to hide these feelings. It is a double whammy when the child is also afraid of what their parents will say and do if they cry. This can make them very nervous and anxious when they feel tears surfacing or any feeling that has been unacceptable in their family.

No Permission to Feel Suppressing Feelings



Asking a child to keep smiling instead of showing their true feelings directly teaches the child that they are good if they hide how they really feel.

This is how shame binds feelings when children are coaxed to do something they don't want to do.

Depression Acting Out



A good example of how depression happens when we don't feel and express our feelings and how trying to escape from the depression can cause us to act-out the feelings.

When a child's natural needs are not being recognized or fulfilled and they can't express how they are feeling they may become depressed and, or, act-out.

Not permitted to Grieve

Part 1 of 2

[Permission to Feel](#) [Safe Place to Process Feelings](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#) [Integration](#)



This was a good movie for parents to see since they could learn something about asking their children to hide their feelings and the consequences of doing that.

Patton

[No Permission to Feel](#)



This is a horrible example of abuse when a person could no longer suppress their pain. It happened to many soldiers in the first and second world wars and this, true story, movie was likely produced to expose this injustice.

There is much more understood now about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the need for treatment for first responders and others suffering extreme trauma.

The Big Bang Theory

[Denial](#) [Defending](#)



An idea or belief can act as a defense against feeling. This funny example illustrates how we can be influenced by TV to choose an inappropriate idea for how to deal with our feelings.

It is also a good example of denial and how irritable and defensive we can become when our defenses are challenged.

[Emotional Attachments](#)



“No point dwelling on it.” Is a common admonition to not feel. Sheldon used it to help himself know he didn’t want to stay stuck in this confusion about this emotional attachment and this unfinished situation.

He decided to act on his feelings of wanting the relationship and take action.

[Grieving](#)



When something very upsetting happens there is often a lot of feelings to process before we get to what is right for us to do.

Not permitted to Grieve

Part 1 of 2

Tool Time

[Suppressing Feelings](#) [Denial](#) [Defending](#)



This is an example of TV at its worst! Their humour would have appealed mostly to well-defended males. They missed an opportunity to demonstrate the dire consequences of suppressing sadness but also reinforced the notion that crying is a weakness and should be ridiculed.

It could have been noted that the father's suppression of his grief led to an excessive reaction at the actual funeral and probably worked that way for all the men.

Unconscious emotional pain drives behaviour.

[Disenfranchised Grieving](#)



It is a good example of how destructive information about grieving is taught to young people.

Discussion Ideas

- Which clip or clips in this episode had the most impact on you?
- Do you have other examples of things that are said that deny individuals permission or encouragement to grieve?
- Did you feel angry at any time watching this episode?

Episode 12

Not permitted to Grieve

Part 2 of 2

This is another episode about our need to grieve the loss of anything that was important to us and why we may be blocked in our family or culture from doing this at all, or as much as we need to.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the many ways we are influenced to bury our sorrow and how this is very detrimental to our wellbeing.
- To comprehend just how common it is to learn to suppress feelings instead of processing them.

Will and Grace

[Grieving](#) [Distracting](#) [No Permission to Feel](#)



There are many reasons why we try to cheer someone up who is suffering a loss. Mostly it is because we don't understand the necessity of grieving or we are subconsciously not wanting to feel some unfinished grieving of our own.

[Processing Strategies](#) [Courage & Vulnerability](#)



Using any memorabilia we have that connects us to the lost relationship (emotional attachment) helps to get us deeply into our grief and to stay with it.

[Denial](#) [Acting Out](#) [Avoidance Behaviours](#)



An extreme example of how friends who are being triggered by their friend's pain took drastic measures to try to jolt her out of it.

Not permitted to Grieve

Part 2 of 2

[Triggers](#) [Benefits of Grieving](#)



When friends all understand the benefits of grieving or processing any feelings they can become a real help and support for each other.

[Processing Feelings](#) [Integration](#) [Resilience](#)



When we keep working through our feelings the strength of the feelings diminish each time. We will know when we have done enough grieving. Resilience happens when we have the confidence to know that we can process our feelings until we have integrated unfortunate experiences and losses. We no longer have an open emotional wound that can be triggered at any moment. This doesn't mean we forget what happened, or that we might not feel a twinge of the old feeling, however, we will no longer feel the intensity of the pain or be affected by it.

The Big Bang Theory

[No Permission to Feel](#) [Grieving](#)



Parents divorcing and our pet dying are very common losses that children and teenagers have to face. We can be left feeling bad and wrong for our normal feelings of deep sadness if our culture has encouraged us to avoid our feelings.

Friends

[Disenfranchised Grieving](#) [Grieving](#)



An example of how some parents need to avoid the pain of seeing their children in pain by actually lying to them.

Not permitted to Grieve

Part 2 of 2

Marley and Me

[Courage & Vulnerability](#) [Grieving](#) [Benefits of Grieving](#)



It takes courage to face the reality of any situation of loss. Children need support and understanding to grieve as long as the need to when faced with a permanent loss.

[Courage & Vulnerability](#) [Grieving](#) [Benefits of Grieving](#)



It takes courage and the ability to let ourselves feel vulnerable in order to grieve a very sad loss.

[Courage & Vulnerability](#) [Grieving](#) [Benefits of Grieving](#)



Children need support to face the reality of a loss of an important emotional attachment. Learning to move through grief to acceptance is an important part of becoming resilient and facing life head on.

Watching old home videos of life with a dog or a person who is gone helps move the grieving process along.

[Courage & Vulnerability](#) [Grieving](#) [Benefits of Grieving](#) [Permission to Feel](#)



Learning that it is OK to feel sadness, or any feeling, and how to do it, is very important to our emotional and physical wellbeing.

Seeing that adults can openly feel sadness and cry is the best model for children to have permission and encouragement to feel.

Discussion Ideas

- Are you aware of any admonitions against feeling grief in your culture?
- Do you find the humour in these clips helpful in understanding the concepts?
- Do you have any examples of things you have heard that deny individuals permission or encouragement to grieve?
- Was this episode surprising in any way for you?

Episode 13B

Healthy Suppression of Feelings

There are many good and healthy reasons to suppress our feelings for short periods of time. We have to subdue our natural reaction in many circumstances when we need to accomplish a task, or avoid inappropriate behaviour. We do this by learning how to suppress or regulate feelings.

Learning Objectives

- Students learn to become aware when they are suppressing feelings.
- Students learn that feelings should be expressed and processed as soon as possible after a triggering situation.

ER

[Healthy Suppression](#) [Emotion Regulation Strategies](#) [Responsibility & Control](#)



There are many occupations where we have to suppress our feelings in the moment to perform a stressful task. This requires the ability to self-regulate, be in control of our feelings, and understand our responsibilities.

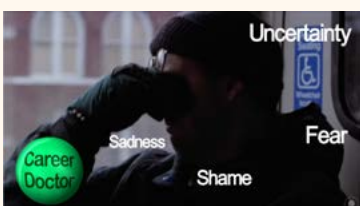
[Blaming](#) [Responsibility & Control](#) [Support](#)



Both blame from others and self-blame are dead-ends and breed resentment and guilt if not processed.

When we want to support someone in their grief we need to understand if they are not ready to accept our help and still stand by.

[Grieving](#) [Safe Place to Process Feelings](#) [Integration](#) [Resilience](#)



If Dr. Green finds a safe place to feel his suppressed feelings he will become emotionally clear about his role and limitations as a doctor. He will be better able to learn from his mistakes and he will not stay stuck in self-blame. He will be free to continue to learn and develop his skills .

Healthy Suppression of Feelings Continued

42 (Jackie Robinson)

Healthy Suppression Emotion Regulation Strategies



Anger is frequently the big feeling we need to suppress in order to not put ourselves in jeopardy no matter how huge and miserable the trigger.

Support



Jackie seems to have had the support of his wife. Support from others is so important when facing abuse of all kinds.

Healthy Suppression



Jackie could not express his rage for the verbal abuse directed at him so he found a safe place and a bat to express his anger.

Grey's Anatomy

Healthy Suppression Emotion Regulation Strategies Responsibility & Control



“There are lives to save” Shock and grief are very big feelings that most of us don’t have to suppress in order to save lives as these physicians are required to do.

Grieving Safe Place to Process Feelings Integration Resilience



Funerals are a ritual that has evolved as a place to acknowledge loss and express grief. There are many different types of funerals with some more amenable than others to encouraging grieving.

Healthy Suppression of Feelings Continued

Grieving



Sometimes it's easier to laugh than to cry. Feelings can be layered. The doctors in this example got to huge grief by first expressing the absurdities of the situation and laughing.

Apollo 13

Healthy Suppression Emotion Regulation Strategies Responsibility & Control



This is an extreme example of the necessity to take control, focus, and solve the problem keeping huge fear under control. This is more easily done when you know you can let those feelings out and process them when the crisis is over.

Triggers Blaming Defending Suppressing Feelings



The life of these astronauts is in imminent danger which is obviously very emotionally stressful. One crew member is acting-out his anger at the situation by blaming another for causing the problem. His anger is likely covering his fear.

Safe Place to Process Feelings



Sometimes we cry with relief when a crisis is over. We always need to find a way to feel all of the fear and grief that we have suppressed.

When feelings from life-threatening trauma are not processed our emotional system will continue to try to get us to do so with flashbacks and nightmares. We may be diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Discussion Ideas

- Can you think of times when you had to suppress your feelings or 'go along to get along'?
- Have you understood before the importance of not burying feelings?
- Does it make sense to you that when you hold feelings in they may be acted-out inappropriately?
- Are there some ways you already know that you use to work held feelings through in safety?

Episode 14

Unfinished Feelings & Emotional Baggage

Part 1 of 2

Feelings held in the body because they have been suppressed ultimately explode outwardly damaging relationships with dysfunctional behaviour or implode inwardly and damage our bodies. When we armor our bodies so we will not feel the unfinished feelings we experience tension in our muscles, headaches, and stomach aches.

Learning Objectives

- To understand that feelings are buried alive not dead and what this means.
- To begin to recognize some behaviours caused by unprocessed feeling.
- To support students as they learn some difficult truths about early trauma and its potential effects.

Intro - VEEP

[No Permission to Feel](#) [Suppressing Feelings](#) [Closed to Feeling](#)



Many people believe that it is possible to put feelings away and they believe this is the right thing to do. However, there are many adverse consequences to suppressing feelings.

No one would Tell

[Traumatizing Experience](#) [Repression & Suppression](#) [Unfinished Feelings](#) [Acting Out](#)



It helps to understand that people can be triggered into acting-out their suppressed anger in controlling, aggressive, and violent ways. This bully is unaware that he is overreacting to his girlfriend's actions and blaming her for his big feelings.

Unfinished Feelings & Emotional Baggage

Part 1 of 2

The Breakfast Club

Acting Out Shame Responsibility & Control



It is possible to gain insight into why you have behaved in a way you regret. This is a good example of how openly talking with others and expressing feelings without censoring them leads to insight, relief and clarity.

The Big Bang Theory

Repression & Suppression Acting Out Traumatizing Experience



There are very many ways that unresolved feelings from traumatic incidences can affect us if we don't talk about how we felt or write about it. This is a good example of how not talking about a traumatic incident can affect relationships many years later.

Responsibility & Control Processing Feelings Integration



We can break through to the feelings we need to acknowledge about what we have experienced. and finish when we are with someone we trust. Sheldon opens up about his fears of hurting his girlfriend like his father did his mother.

Trauma

Traumatizing Experience



It is important to become aware that even though we may be overwhelmed with big feelings at the time of a traumatic event, it is possible to work them through bit by bit. Acknowledging and expressing them is the beginning of processing all of them.

Unfinished Feelings & Emotional Baggage

Part 1 of 2

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

[Traumatizing Experience](#) [Processing Feelings](#) [Responsibility & Control](#)



It is possible to work through any degree of adverse experiences so that they don't affect your life. It is helpful to understand the ways you can do this and that you can ask for help.

Sam took many years to process the sexual abuse she suffered but appears now to have integrated the experience and gained a lot of wisdom.

[Triggers](#) [Traumatizing Experience](#) [Repression & Suppression](#) [Shame](#)



Charlie is triggered into a memory of his aunt touching him when Sam his girlfriend touches his thigh.

Flashbacks to old, unresolved, traumatic incidents is our emotional system trying to get our attention by triggering us with a snatch of a suppressed memory. We feel as much as we can each time we are triggered and eventually we integrate the experience and it no longer interferes with our present life. We can also deliberately return to the healing process by talking about the incident or writing about it. Once we experience the relief that can come we are encouraged to use the process more in our lives.

[Courage & Vulnerability](#) [Support](#) [Safe Place to Process Feelings](#)



When we are very young, and afraid to tell anyone, our emotional system represses adverse events. We often feel the abuse is our fault, or somehow, we deserve to be treated badly. When we don't have help when we are little we carry these awful feelings subconsciously until we are older and able to open to the memories and seek help.

Discussion Ideas

- Headaches and many other physical pains are often blamed on stress and carrying big, unexpressed feelings is very stressful. Can you think of physical ailments that might alert you to some unfinished feelings?
- Can you think of a cultural saying that indicates we carry our feelings in our bodies? For example, "That is a pain in the neck!" "I have a gut feeling"
- Has this episode helped you understand something new about why people behave the way they do?
- Can you share some of the ways you have worked through something difficult?

Episode 15

Unfinished Feelings & Emotional Baggage Part 1 of 2

This episode is about the accumulation of unresolved, unfinished, feelings and the many problems they can create.

Learning Objectives

- To further learn about how we accumulate emotional baggage.
- To demonstrate common ways in which we are triggered to old, unfinished business.
- To explain the ways non-judgmental support for ourselves and others is important when processing feelings that have been buried for a long time.

The Darjeeling Limited

[Repression & Suppression](#) [Defending](#) [Processing Feelings](#)



If a family hasn't talked openly about feelings or issues; being together in close quarters can provide lots of triggers and acting-out behaviours.

[Triggers](#) [Repression & Suppression](#) [Acting Out](#)



Outbursts and declarations such as "I was his favourite" are sure to trigger siblings into big, long-held, feelings.

Sports Book Author

[Repression & Suppression](#) [Defending](#)

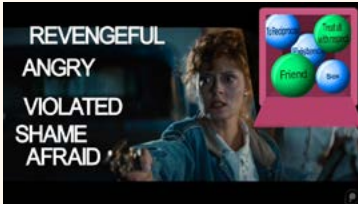


Any kind of loss needs to be processed because it wouldn't be a loss of it wasn't important to you. The bigger the walls a person has put up to defend against talking about the loss, the more formidable the defense and, the harder it is to break through.

Unfinished Feelings & Emotional Baggage

Part 1 of 2

Triggers Acting Out



Louise's rage is triggered resulting in tragedy rather than healing. It is a stark example of what can happen when we don't work our feelings through to insight and understanding.

The Big Bang Theory

Acting Out Triggers



Sheldon's behaviour is clearly inappropriate as he acts-out his long-held anger at Santa on his friends.

Both the 'Dungeon and Dragon' game and Sheldon's dream are triggers that could be used as a doorway into exploring his very old, unprocessed feelings.

Unfinished Feelings Repression & Suppression



Childhood feelings such as rage, that we couldn't express for various reasons, often show up in dreams along with our inappropriate behaviour such as acting-out revenge. Nightmares include unprocessed feelings as our subconscious keeps opening the door that we tried to close on these feelings.

Discussion Ideas

- Did you know anything about emotional baggage before these two episodes?
- What do you think of this explanation for inappropriate behaviour?
- Were you aware that you possess the ability to process your feelings and that you will then feel better?
- Are there movies or TV dramas you can think of where the character's back story has been used to explain their behaviour?

Episode 16

Depression caused by Unfinished Feelings

Part 1 of 2

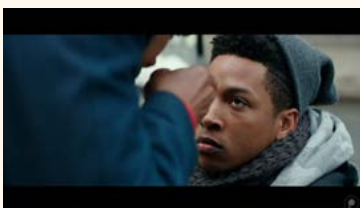
This episode is about how depression happens when there is suppression of feelings causing us to be more closed to our sorrow, fear, and anger than open – to be unmotivated and shut down emotionally.

Learning Objectives

- To learn, It's OKAY to not be OKAY!
- To understand that depression is a consequence of suppressing feelings for more than just a short time.
- To recognize that the healing is in the feeling and that feelings can be processed by sinking into them and staying with them.
- To recognize that struggling to keep feelings away causes much misery.
- To be able to Identify when help is needed.

Collateral Beauty

[Depression](#) [Acting Out](#) [Triggers](#)



There are often many different feelings involved in processing a very painful loss. For example, expressing anger is Howard's opening to his stored pain.

[Depression](#) [Processing Feelings](#) [Integration](#)



It is really important to find a safe person to help open the door just a little wider.

Depression caused by Unfinished Feelings

Part 1 of 2

Sex and the City

Depression



It is common after a first big reaction to very bad news to shut down completely and feel nothing as Carrie describes. It is also common to escape into sleep for awhile. Her friends give her time and support to face the reality until she is able to start to talk about it all.

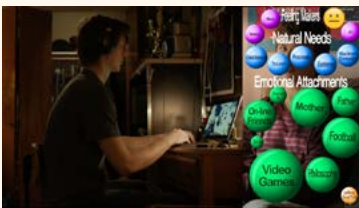
Men Women and Children

Depression



A good example of many depressing events intensifying fundamental feelings of personal unworthiness. "I think if I disappeared tomorrow, the universe wouldn't really notice".

Distracting Avoidance Behaviours



Video games are not only a convenient distraction from ongoing painful circumstances and feelings; they are also a way to feel something which is a relief from the horrible deadness and emptiness of the depression.

Discussion Ideas

- Have you ever wondered how anyone really recuperates from trauma?
- Do you know people who suffer with hopelessness, helplessness, and despair?
- Have you witnessed others suffering from depression?
- How do these examples of people struggling with depression make you feel?
- Do you know how you distract yourself from your feelings?

Episode 17

Depression caused by Unfinished Feelings

Part 2 of 2

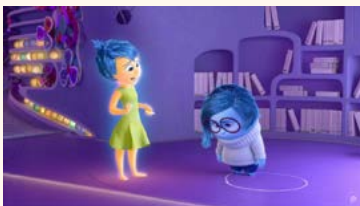
This episode continues to illustrate how depression results from suppressing any feelings to suppressing the pain of deeply repressed traumas. It also shows how we get relief from depression when we are able to express our feelings and what we need in order to do that.

Learning Objectives

- To further understand that it's okay to feel any and all feelings.
- To demonstrate that feelings can be processed by sinking into them even though it is painful and scary.
- To understand how we can be inhibited by erroneous beliefs and shame generated by fear.
- To be able to identify when we feel vulnerable and need a safe place to feel.

Inside Out

No Permission to Feel Depression Acting Out



Sadness is forced to stay in a circle and out of Riley's life so she can be happy for her mother and Father.

This movie demonstrates the common beliefs that some feelings should not be allowed. In a deep depression we feel numb with no feelings at all about the purposes, passions and people that brought us joy. (Emotional Attachments are represented by Personality Islands)

Depression



This movie does a good job of showing that we need to feel all of our feelings in order to be emotionally healthy and how depressed we can be when we suppress them.

In the movie it takes 'sadness' touching all of the sad losses that Riley has experienced and, has had to hide, to demonstrate that when Riley is able to feel, she can express herself, and only then do her parents get that she has been hurt.

Safe Place to Process Feelings



Generally, when we can express ourselves clearly we are much more likely to get what we need. Riley is able to say "You need me to be happy" which is exactly what she was feeling, and what her parents needed to hear - how terribly sad she was about the move to a new city. If children are afraid their parents will be angry it is unlikely they will express their need.

Depression caused by Unfinished Feelings

Part 2 of 2

[Benefits of staying with Feelings](#) [Expressing](#) [Integration](#) [Resilience](#)



When we experience relief, and how our feelings move when we express them, we are encouraged to go for them — put them out there the best we can.

The Good Wife

[Benefits of staying with Feelings](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#) [Expressing](#)



This clip demonstrates the value of just listening and trusting that the other person is expressing what they need to express!

It's Kind of a Funny Story

[Depression](#) [Courage & Vulnerability](#)



This is an example of having the courage to seek help and to not be put off by indifference.

When someone treats you with indifference and minimizes your problem it can be very hard to hang in there to push for what you need.

[Benefits of staying with Feelings](#) [Expressing](#) [Safe Place to Process Feelings](#)



Craig's therapist allows Craig to stay with his feelings from childhood and his current obsessive need to be President of the United States.

These feelings are already close to the surface and Craig is able to drop his defenses, and talk about his life, which gives him insight into his father's need for him to be super successful by his definition.

Discussion Ideas

- What was most meaningful for you in this episode?
- Did this episode change your mind about anything?
- What would you most like to share with others about depression and unfinished feelings.

Episode 18

Self-Distracting

This episode is about distracting as a common defense mechanism for coping with distressful situations and overwhelming feelings. Short term distraction can work well as a needed break. However, continuing to distract, instead of facing and feeling the reality of what is happening, results in accumulated unfinished feelings and unresolved problems.

Learning Objective

- To learn how distractions are used to avoid feelings.
- To become aware of the use of short-term distractions.
- To understand the consequences of long-term distracting.

Gilmore Girls

[Distracting](#) [Avoiding Grieving](#) [Avoidance Behaviours](#)



Keeping busy is one of the most prevalent beliefs about how to deal with unpleasant feelings! If you ask someone how they are doing after a significant loss they may say, "I'm okay, I'm keeping busy".

[Disenfranchised Grieving](#) [Shame](#) [Permission to Feel](#) [Processing Feelings](#)



The idea that feeling deeply, wallowing, or falling apart is shameful exists in many cultures and is acceptable in others. Rory reveals her shame when she says, "I don't want to be that kind of girl that falls apart just because she doesn't have a boyfriend". With her mother's help Rory finds she really can't avoid her pain.

Men, Women and Children

[Distracting](#)



This is a good example of the huge need people have to shut down and distract themselves from all kinds of difficult feelings when they suffer an enormous loss. It is especially brutal if those close to them are indifferent to their pain or have no idea how to really connect with a loved one who is suffering.

Self-Distracting

Forrest Gump

Emotional Attachments Overwhelmed Disenfranchised Grieving



Anticipating the death of a loved one is a chance to start the grieving process. It can be really helpful and beautiful if we can grieve with this person and others who are also affected by the advancing loss.

Forrest didn't appear to get to do this.

Distracting



Many people have no idea why they are behaving the way they are and that they are distracting themselves from facing their pain.

In this Hollywood version of handling grief, Forrest's distraction appears to give him the time and solitude to gradually examine and feel some of his unresolved emotional pain.

Integration



Mama always said, "You have to put the past behind you before you can move on. And I think that was what my runnin way all about."

Often, "Put the past behind you" is an admonition meant to encourage people to just somehow stop dwelling on past issues. It is not widely understood how the past interferes with the present and how to process feelings in order to truly move on unencumbered.

That 70's Show

Distracting



Using food to self-soothe is a common distraction to keep from feeling the emptiness often experienced following a loss.

Discussion Ideas

- Name ways that you use to distract yourself from your feelings.
- When you have witnessed extreme or obsessive behaviour has it occurred to you that feelings were being avoided?

Episode 19

Self-Medicating to Avoid Painful Feelings

An episode about how and why we self-medicate. It uses four different situations illustrating the use of alcohol or drugs to suppress feelings and the destructive consequences.

Learning Objectives

- To become aware that self-medication is an attempt to numb and avoid painful feelings.
- To become aware of behaviour that indicates there are feelings that need to be felt and processed.
- To understand about how using drugs and alcohol can become a vicious cycle and a slippery slope into addiction.

That '70s Show

[Self Medicating](#) [Self-Blame](#) [Avoiding Grieving](#)



"What's going to help me is drinking." Eric believes that drinking will help him get over his grandmother's death. Eric is frantic to escape his feelings that he caused his grandmother's death and drinking himself to oblivion is the only thing he knows to do.

[Processing Feelings](#) [Safe Place to Feel](#)



Eric's family doesn't typically talk about their feelings but Eric has a girlfriend who makes him feel safe to discuss what he is really feeling without being judged.

Requiem for a Dream

[Self Medicating](#)



Feeling insecure and not good enough is a common and very painful way to be. If it is deeply rooted the person may require professional help to heal. It also may be triggered by a current event and can be explored and felt through with any safe person. Writing about the feelings and thinking about other times these feelings have come up is a good strategy for connecting with what these horrible feelings are all about.

Self-Medicating to Avoid Painful Feelings

[Suppressing Feelings](#) [Avoidance Behaviours](#) [Self Medicating](#)



An addicted person's purpose becomes focused on obtaining the next drink or drug and other emotional attachments fade away. They have lost touch with the source of their pain and any possibility of connecting with it and healing as long as they are using and without help.

Thirteen

[Triggers](#) [No Permission to Feel](#) [Suppressing Feelings](#) [Emotional Attachments](#)



This is a good example of a young person with a multitude of triggers. Her needs were not being met by her parents and stressful and inappropriate behaviour was being modelled. This further overwhelmed Tracy.

[Natural Needs](#) [Connection](#) [Support](#)



The need to fit in and belong is huge in the teen years. Choices can be difficult and turn out well or not. Figuring out who you are and who you want to be involves establishing your own values and choosing how to dress and who you want as friends.

[Self Medicating](#)



The combination of being in emotional pain in a very dysfunctional family, and the need to be accepted and cared about, can lead to trying and quickly using drugs.

[Processing Feelings](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#)



With some empathetic help it is possible to break through the numbness and feel and start to heal.

Self-Medicating to Avoid Painful Feelings

The Basketball Diaries

Grief



Grief can be overwhelming when a young friend dies. Many other feelings such as confusion, incredulity, fear, and distrust may be triggered along with deep sorrow.

Self Medicating



"It was like a long heat wave through my body. Any ache or pain or sadness or guilty feeling was completely flushed out".

It is understandable that addicts keep returning to the source of their relief even though they learn the feelings return in full force.

Processing Feelings Expressing-Writing



Jim's 6 months in jail gave him the drug-free time and solitude to write about it all. The writing helped him express and process his feelings and recuperate.

Any amount of writing can be very helpful and is a way to open a door into the many feelings that are waiting to be felt.

Responsibility & Control



This was a true story and Jim went on writing and speaking about his experience to help others. It allowed him to take control of his feelings even when talking with an old friend who offers him "a bag of the finest dope for old times' sake."

Emotional Attachments



Consequences can be severe and heart-breaking for the addict and those who care for him or her.

Discussion Ideas

- What are the main things you are taking away from this episode?
- Can you name in one word how this episode made you feel?

Episode 20

Defending against feeling unfinished feelings

This episode is about some of the many defense mechanisms we use to avoid our feelings. Defenses are crucial when we are young, vulnerable, and fragile. If we continue to defend a lot when we are adults we will not be clear to face reality and solve problems.

Learning Objective

- To be able to recognize our own and others defensive behaviours such as overreacting, underreacting, acting-out or withdrawing inside and becoming depressed.
- To be able to recognize when we are being defensive and when others are too.
- To understand how constantly defending can keep us stuck.
- To understand the value of self-reflection – curiosity about ourselves and our defensive reactions.

Madam Secretary

[Defending](#) [Denial](#) [Connection](#) [Safe Place to Feel](#)



Denying the huge flood of feelings that occurs after a life-threatening experience can lead to many symptoms including panic attacks. The person often describes feeling crazy with so many conflicting feelings happening all at once. It is important to understand that this flood of feelings is perfectly normal and the feelings will lose their intensity as they are talked about and felt through.

[Connection](#) [Safe Place to Feel](#)



It is always helpful to have someone share their story of trauma and recovery. Joining a group of people who are also healing through feeling can be enormously helpful. A safe place to connect and tell our story and share our feelings.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

[Defending](#) [Denial](#) [Minimizing](#) [Self-Blame](#)



It is very common to excuse abusive behaviour in another person as was illustrated in this clip. Also, common to suppress any fear by minimizing the risk and using self-blame, “I egged him on”, to defend against feeling the truth.

Defending against feeling unfinished feelings

[Connection](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#)



Persistent caring and support from friends or family helps an individual get out of an abusive relationship.

Please Like Me

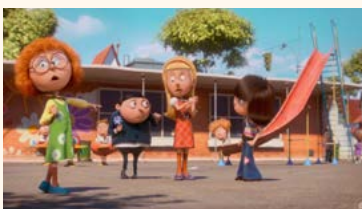
[Connection](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#)



This is a good example of the power of someone just listening while the other person talks, feels, and gains insight.

Despicable Me 2

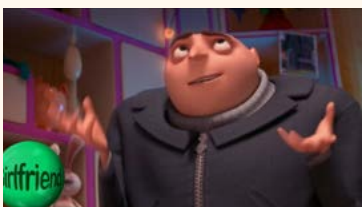
[Natural Needs](#) [Traumatizing Experience](#)



Being humiliated in any way is nasty. It can stick with us and affect our life for a very long time as it did with Gru.

A humiliating incident can cause withdrawal and a lack of connection to others. This denial of our basic need for connection can lead to isolation and depression and missing out on a lot of life's pleasures.

[Triggers](#) [Defending](#) [Denial](#) [Emotional Baggage](#)



We can defend by rationalizing like Gru when he says he has no interest in going on a date instead of being able to admit he is afraid to go on a date.

Gru is a good example of emotional baggage constricting his life.

Defending against feeling unfinished feelings

The West Wing

[Acting Out](#) [Denial](#) [Stuck](#)



This clip is a complex example of someone acting out very inappropriately and being stuck in lots of denial. His friends know something is wrong but Josh unconsciously denies that his behaviour is “out of character”. We can have so many long-suppressed feelings that we can’t even acknowledge our grossly inappropriate behaviour and this is a form of denial.

[Triggers](#)



This is a good example of how something can trigger us that doesn’t have any apparent connection to our feelings at all.

Even if we never figure out what the trigger was when we stop denying our experience and behaviour we can connect with the feelings, process them, heal, and move on.

Triggers into big feelings always open a door that we can choose to go through to discover more about ourselves and to heal.

[Overwhelmed](#)



When a person can acknowledge that they have been acting-out their feelings instead of feeling them they can find help and begin to process and heal.

[Processing Feelings](#) [Responsibility & Control](#) [Courage & Vulnerability](#)



It is always a relief that when after doing the hard work of healing big traumas we notice when the things that used to trigger us no longer do.

Discussion Ideas

- What are some of the defensive behaviours you have witnessed when someone is triggered?
- What examples of defensive behaviour of your own can you share?
- Was there anything about this episode that surprised you?
- Do you see how powerful it can be to just be there and listen while a friend talks about their feelings, feels, and gains insight?

Episode 21

Open and Closed Characters

This Episode illustrates how we inevitably shutdown emotionally as we repress and suppress our feelings, and therefore split off from our experiences, and disconnect from ourselves over time. It demonstrates how we become more closed than open and the dire consequences this can have for our lives.

Learning Objectives

- To understand how our emotional system protects us by shutting down our feelings when they are too overwhelming and too much for us to bear.
- To understand that shutting down over and over again can cause us to become generally more closed than open; disconnected from our feelings, ourselves and our reality.
- To be able to recognize that using power, aggression, domination, and controlling behaviour as well as not being able to stand up for ourselves all indicate the early shutting down of feelings.

The Royal Tenenbaums

Emotional Attachments Shutdown Traumatizing Experience



This is a devastating example of how a fundamental, extremely important attachment can be full of pain and lead to a child shutting down hard.

No Permission to Feel Repression & Suppression Closed to Feeling



When we are not listened to or encouraged to talk about our feelings when we are young we can grow up being afraid to express them. This pattern of repression and suppression leads to becoming much more closed than open about sharing feelings. This restricts our ability to have meaningful emotional attachments.

Open and Closed Characters

Manchester by the Sea

[Defending](#) [Closed to Feeling](#) [Grieving](#)



In this clip we see one person who is able to talk, at this time, about her feelings, and behaviour she regrets. She is openly grieving and wanting the opportunity to talk more to help herself and to help her ex-husband.

Lee can't bear to feel his pain and although it comes up, as it must, he keeps defending against feeling it fully.

You can probably see where each of these people would be placed on a continuum from closed to open.

Phantom Thread

[Acting Out](#) [Responsibility & Control](#) [Emotional Attachments](#) [Natural Needs](#)



An example of someone who is closed to their feelings and therefore acts-out his need for power and control often and consistently. He has no idea what a bully he is or how to take responsibility for his feelings and behaviour.

It is also an example of a fragile, vulnerable person who is very afraid to act-on their natural need for a satisfactory connection to a major emotional attachment.

Discussion Ideas

- Most people understand they are supposed to take responsibility for their actions. Is it news to you that we also need to take responsibility for our feelings?
- Where would you place each of the grieving couple on the continuum from closed to open?
- How did you feel watching Mr. Woodcock bully his partner?

Episode 22

Safe Place to Feel

Part 1 of 2

This episode is about the need for a safe place to feel all of our feelings and what is required in order to feel safe.

Learning Objectives

- To learn that if we don't feel comfortable expressing our feelings we probably learned that they were unacceptable, and we became afraid to show them, and learned to shut them down as best we could.
- To understand that it takes courage to face and feel the many different emotions that accompany life's painful experiences.
- To understand that feelings can be expressed and worked through rather than suppressed causing us to lose touch with our real self and suffer many problems in all different aspects of our lives.

Murdoch Mysteries

[Triggers](#) [Permission to Feel](#) [Defending](#)



A good example of an unusual trigger and a rationalization for it that serves as a defense for not questioning further.

[Staying with Feelings](#) [The Value of Being Heard](#) [Support](#)



It is important to be able to name the feeling and to acknowledge the fear.

When someone is empathetically listening, as we talk about our fear, we are more likely to feel safe enough to stay with it long enough to connect with the original trauma.

With a severe trauma, such as in this example, the feeling may have to be revisited a number of times before the connection happens and the insight comes. Also, there would be a lot of feeling to be done around such an event in order to heal it enough to integrate it.

Safe Place to Feel

Part 1 of 2

M*A*S*H

[Avoided Feelings affecting Health](#) [Triggers](#) [Defending](#) [Repression & Suppression](#)



In this example, where there are some unexplained physical symptoms with no medical explanation, the psychiatrist helpfully suggests there has been a specific trigger to something bigger that has been held since childhood.

Humour is a common defense to avoid feeling.

[Safe Place to Feel](#) [Emotional Attachments](#) [Shame](#) [Support](#)



The therapist picks up on the evidence of this client's emotional attachment to his cousin.

It is the therapists job to notice the clues in what a client is saying, or what his body language is saying, that indicates there is some feeling being passed over.

Children can't afford to see the truth. Being loved and cared for by others is too important to children to risk acknowledging the truth by expressing their true feeling, such as rage. There is too much to lose and so the illusion is kept in place

[Expressing](#) [Processing Feelings](#)



When the breakthrough comes it can be big and feel like a huge relief. Anywhere but in the movies, such a traumatic experience would require revisiting the scene many more times to complete all of the feelings.

Most individuals look forward to getting back into the feelings once they have experienced the insight and relief that follows. Some deliberately put themselves in situations where they have previously been triggered.

[Safe Place to Process Feelings](#) [Relief](#)



An example of a smell as a trigger.

Once trauma feelings are connected to an old memory and thoroughly felt we often notice that we are no longer triggered when we encounter the triggering event again.

If we are triggered again it will likely not be as strong but we will know we have more feeling to do.

Safe Place to Feel

Part 1 of 2

High Anxiety

Permission to Feel



Definitely not client-centered therapy! Client's need to be helped to go with their feelings and experience them deeply not to fight them!

Summary - Love and Monsters

Processing Strategies Courage & Vulnerability



Pretending the triggering person is in front of you, and speaking out loud to them, is a very effective process to get into feelings and to stay with them. This works for: grief and hurt; anger and rage; anxiety and fear; and any other feelings that need to be processed. When we keep focusing on this person and saying all we really want to say we are working our way through and further processing the feelings.

We need a safe place to do this where we can let it all out without fear that we will be overheard by someone who doesn't know what we are doing.

This is very different than **thinking** of what we want to say as we ponder a scenario.

Discussion Ideas

- What do you think about talking to someone who isn't there?
- What did you like about this episode?
- Was there anything you disliked about this episode?

Episode 23

Safe Place to Feel Part 2 of 2

The therapy illustrated in this episode is to encourage students to find a safe place to process their feelings, where they will not be judged, and where they can express all of their feelings without censure.

Learning Objectives

- To understand that it takes courage to express feelings. We will feel very vulnerable if we have not had encouragement to express our feelings, and to accept that they are all necessary and that they have value and purpose.
- To understand that we need to feel to heal and a safe place means with someone who is non-judgemental and can hear us, validate our feelings, and help us stay with them.
- To learn how processing feelings, whatever they may be, leads to finishing suppressed feelings, and integration, meaning no longer keeping the feelings and the experience split off from our consciousness.

Intro - The Perks of Being a Wallflower

[Triggers](#) [Overreacting](#) [Repression & Suppression](#)



This clip shows how a big trigger into rage can result in a big overreaction and an act-out of the feeling. It can happen even with someone who would know the behaviour was inappropriate and who would never want to act this way. This demonstrates the power triggers can have when certain feelings have been suppressed for a long time.

Intro - No One Would Tell

[Underreacting](#) [Self-Blame](#)



Underreactions are much harder to recognize than overreactions. Some cultures value not reacting at all and just being submissive. Continuous underreacting to overt aggression, or to other's needs being more important than ours, can lead to a deadening passivity.

Safe Place to Feel

Part 2 of 2

In Treatment

Defending



Session 1

When we decide to see a therapist we can ask any questions we want about the kind of therapy they do. When we meet the therapist it is important to trust our feelings about whether or not we can feel safe with this person.

Developing Trust The Value of Being Heard



Session 3

Therapists explain how the therapy works, what can be expected, and that the client is in control. Client-centered therapy is based on the therapist being a facilitator who helps people discover what their experience means for them rather than the therapist being the expert authority telling them what it means to them.

Safe Place to Process Feelings The Value of Being Heard



Session 4

Defenses drop away when a client feels safe enough to talk about their experience and their feelings. They can become curious about it all and despite the pain that is being uncovered they have the courage to keep going.

Processing Feelings Minimizing Staying with Feelings Courage & Vulnerability



Session 8

Staying with the painful feelings when the connections start to happen is the way we make progress. It is the therapist's job to help their client to stay with a memory, and the feeling, instead of moving on to talk about something else.

These are good examples of how a therapist can gently help a client get through their long-established defensive beliefs and get to the truth that couldn't be faced at the time of the trauma.

Children believing that they are responsible for what is happening to them is a formidable defense, that the child needs, because this gives them some hope that they can change the situation. They keep trying to be 'good enough' so the abuse, neglect, deprivation, or chaos will stop.

Safe Place to Feel

Part 2 of 2

[Courage & Vulnerability](#) [No longer Denying](#) [Integration](#)



Feeling deeply what couldn't be felt as a little child results in insight, clarity and lasting healing. Clients shift from feeling inadequate and not good enough to admiring the child they were and feeling more and more okay at their core. Behaviour changes because they trust themselves more. They become more and more able to respond appropriately, and stand up for themselves, and be clear about what they need in the present.

Discussion Ideas

- How are you feeling about this episode?
- What do you think was the most significant thing you learned from this episode?

Episode 24

Summary

This summary episode brings all the important concepts together. It is our expectation that you will have your own unique way of finishing off the course with your particular students.

The following is simply a list of what we consider the most important knowledge for the students to have grasped so they have a basic understanding of how our emotional system is meant to work in their favour.

- How we deal with all our feelings is the major factor in our emotional health.
- Feelings are not good or bad, right or wrong, they just are!
- Being able to express how we are feeling allows us to be who we really are (authentic).
- Our emotional system can repress our feelings when we are overwhelmed by a traumatic event.
- We cannot get over our pain until we get into it.
- When we can get into the pain we get relief and it feels honest and liberating.
- There are many things we can do to help us get into our pain.
- Suppressing our feelings for a short time is necessary when it is inappropriate to express them, or we need to complete a task.
- The danger lies in keeping them suppressed by burying them and holding them in our bodies.
- Feelings are not buried dead — they are buried alive!
- Suppressed feelings can make us feel many things including anxious, irritable and depressed.
- We gather emotional baggage when we keep suppressing instead of expressing.
- It is important that we understand that we have unfinished feelings that need to be felt.
- If we keep getting triggered and are unable to take advantage of the opportunity to finish some feelings, our emotional system will shut down most of our feelings and we will only feel numb, empty and deeply depressed.
- There are safe strategies to help break through shut-down.
- The hurting is the healing.
- Support from a non-judgemental person who can just listen and be there is the best kind of help.
- When feelings are fully experienced there is a sense of completion and wholeness.

Summary

- Blaming others for how we feel is the opposite of taking responsibility.
- Blame and resentment is what kills relationships.
- Once we have accepted what is not within our control, like parents divorcing or someone dying, we can grieve what we need, and work through any anger or fear so we can then move on.
- Open wounds hurt but scars do not.
- We defend against feeling in many ways.
- Self-destructive behaviours, such as smoking, vaping, excessive drinking, using drugs and cutting, are some indications that there is held pain.
- Destructive behaviours are warning signals that we are emotionally stuck!
- Distracting is a common way to avoid feeling and very easy to accomplish these days.
- Any behaviour that becomes obsessive and excessive is an indication that there is much needing to be felt.
- Acting-out, overreacting, and underreacting are all behaviours that indicate held feelings.
- Just listening is powerful help to give when friends are in distress.
- When we feel vulnerable It takes courage to both acknowledge and express feelings.
- We need a safe place to feel with a trusted person or a safe and secure place to process on our own.
- The more we process our feelings the more resilient we become and the more we have faith that we can be okay when we face adversity.

**We hope you enjoy ‘How Are You Feeling?’
and your interaction with your students
around the concepts they learn.**



Summary of Concept Learning Objectives

No.	Concept	Description
1	<u>Emotional Attachments</u>	Human beings form emotional attachments to what is important to them.
2	<u>Advertisers and Influencers</u>	Advertisers and Social media influencers appeal to our emotional needs in order to affect our buying decisions and life choices.
3	<u>Natural Needs</u>	Our feelings guide us from the very beginning of our lives to get what we need to survive and thrive in our culture.
4	<u>Grieving</u>	It is important for our emotional well-being to be able to grieve, or process, a loss of anything that was emotionally important to us.
5	<u>Avoiding Grieving</u>	Grieving is a natural process and avoiding it for very long is not wise.
6	<u>Disenfranchised Grieving</u>	Friends, family and our culture may, for various reasons, discourage, or not support, our grieving process. This can result in many unhealthy outcomes.
7	<u>Benefits of Grieving</u>	Grieving benefits us by releasing the tensions that cause physical pain in our bodies where we hold our unexpressed feelings. Emotional tears not only bring emotional release but also rid our bodies of stress hormones.
8	<u>Processing Feelings</u>	The ability to process feelings is a prerequisite of emotional and physical wellbeing. Processing means staying with feelings until they have been felt thoroughly. This is often called, 'working feelings through' or 'finishing with feelings'.

9	<u>Processing Strategies</u>	We need some strategies to help us process our feelings because staying with feelings in order to finish with them is frequently contrary to our conditioning.
10	<u>Permission to Feel</u>	In our culture we are frequently told what we 'should' and 'should not' feel rather than the correct information that there are no 'shoulds' to feelings.
11	<u>Staying with Feelings</u>	When we learn to stay with feelings until they lose their intensity it allows us to complete what we feel about the triggering event. We can then move forward instead of being stuck in troublesome feelings.
12	<u>Naming, Expressing & Accepting</u>	The naming and labelling of feelings is the necessary first skill for processing feelings.
13	<u>Triggers - Overreacting & Underreacting</u>	Circumstances that trigger us into overreactions and underreactions are an opening to processing and understanding unfinished feelings.
14	<u>Traumatizing Experience</u>	A traumatizing experience is when we are overwhelmed by feelings.
15	<u>Healthy Suppression</u>	There are many good and healthy reasons to suppress our feelings for short periods of time.
16	<u>Repression and Suppression</u>	Repression of feelings happens sub-consciously when feelings are too much for us to bear. Suppression is the deliberate burying of feelings in order to avoid them. There are a number of ways to suppress feelings, in a healthy way, when they are inappropriate or overwhelming in the moment.
17	<u>Self Medicating</u>	People often numb uncomfortable feelings using drugs and alcohol without knowing that is what they are doing. This is a slippery slope into addiction.

18	<u>Distracting</u>	Distracting is a common way to cope with, and to regulate, difficult feelings for a short time.
19	<u>Defending</u>	It is important to become aware of how we defend against feeling and processing our emotions.
20	<u>Blaming</u>	Blaming is a way to deflect feelings and avoid responsibility.
21	<u>Shame</u>	Shame binds feelings and prevents us from revealing who we really are. Shame indicates we feel we are somehow fundamentally flawed. It is different than guilt which is when we have either done something against our own values or we fear we have.
22	<u>Responsibility and Control</u>	Taking responsibility for our feelings is the major key for emotional wellbeing in our lives. Acknowledging what is within our control, and what is not, is paramount to wellbeing.
23	<u>Unfinished Feelings and Health</u>	Unfinished feelings reside in our bodies and manifest as body aches and pains as well as emotional suffering.
24	<u>Depression</u>	The causes of depression can be viewed on a continuum from suppressing any feelings, to unfinished grieving because of avoiding feelings, to deeply repressed traumas.
25	<u>Closed to Feeling</u>	Inevitable emotional shutdown occurs as we repress and suppress our feelings and therefore split off from our experiences and disconnect from ourselves over time.
26	<u>Avoidance Behaviours</u>	All kinds of acting-out behaviour is driven by unconscious emotional pain.

27	<u>Safe Place to Process Feelings</u>	A safe place to process feelings requires somewhere that we will not be judged and where we can express all of our feelings without censure.
28	<u>Normalizing</u>	It is important for emotional health to normalize many aspects of the emotional system that are commonly misunderstood.
29	<u>Courage and Vulnerability</u>	We feel vulnerable when we feel threatened or are emotionally exposed. Every time we have the courage to express our feelings honestly this authenticity strengthens our sense of self.
30	<u>The Value of Being Heard</u>	It is a human need to be heard. When we feel heard we feel validated, not alone, and connected to the listener and to ourselves.
31	<u>Emotion Regulation Strategies</u>	Emotion regulation strategies are used to help people cope with big feelings that may not be appropriate in the moment.
32	<u>Integration</u>	Integration happens when enough feeling and connecting has been done so that we no longer need to keep our feelings or experience of painful events split off from our consciousness.
33	<u>Resilience</u>	Emotional resiliency has to do with how readily we recover from adversity and this has to do with how adept we are at thoroughly processing our feelings.



**Concept Description
Learning Objectives
& Supporting Research**

Concept 1

Emotional Attachments

Human beings form emotional attachments to what is important to them.

Notable Researchers: James W, Bowlby J, Ainsworth M

It takes time to create an emotional attachment and it takes time and emotional energy to remove an emotional attachment. Feelings related to emotional attachments motivate us to take action.

Learning Objective

It is beneficial that young people understand that they form emotional attachments to many things which are described in the How Are You Feeling? program as people, purposes and passions. This helps them realize that it is important to make wise choices. They learn that it is necessary to grieve when an emotional attachment is removed in order to integrate the experience.

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Concept 4

Grieving

It is important for our emotional well-being to be able to grieve, or process, a loss of anything that was emotionally important to us.

Notable Researchers: Worden JW, Baker J, Horowitz MJ

The first step in the grieving process is to be able to name the feelings involved in the loss, and then stay with them, in order to process through them to the inevitable hurt and sadness. In order to finish with sorrow, it needs to be felt completely. Once we have grieved a loss thoroughly, whether big or small, we can carry on with clarity. There is no 'right' way, or correct amount of time, for grieving. Each person will know when this particular raw wound feels healed and the scar, that remains and reminds, does not hurt.

Learning Objective

It is important for young people to grasp that grieving is necessary and emotionally healthy any time they suffer from a loss of anything that has been important to them.

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Concept 5

Avoiding Sorrow, Fear & Anger

Avoiding these feelings for very long is not wise.

Notable Researchers: Shear K, Baker J, Jacob S.

It is important that everyone take the time they need to grieve a loss as soon as possible. There is no healthy way to avoid feeling the loss for long. It is common to be advised to keep busy to distract ourselves from grieving, or to take offered anti-depressant medication. Putting off the painful feelings can lead to depression even a long time after the disturbing loss.

Learning Objective

How Are You Feeling? students learn how important it is to grieve as soon as possible after a loss of *any kind*. They are encouraged to seek help, when they need it, from a trusted person who can listen empathetically.

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Concept 2

Advertisers and Influencers

Advertisers and Social media influencers appeal to our emotional needs in order to affect our buying decisions and life choices.

Notable Researchers: Schmitt B, Zarantonello L

There are many common examples of advertisers and influencers using human beings' insecurities in self-serving advertising.

Learning Objective

It is important that young people begin to discern what influences their decisions and choices and that they reflect on what they really want or need and how they want to be in the world. This is necessary as young teenagers separate from their parents and are becoming their own person.

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Concept 6

Disenfranchised Grieving

Friends, family and our culture may, for various reasons, discourage, or not support, our grieving process. This can result in many unhealthy outcomes.

Notable Researchers: Doka KJ, Martinčeková L

Our culture has influenced us to banish so-called negative feelings as quickly as possible and this makes it difficult to feel comfortable displaying grief. This is especially true if other people do not think our loss is such a big deal, or they believe that thinking positively is the answer.

Learning Objective

Students comprehend the many ways we are influenced to bury our sorrow and how detrimental this can be. In the How Are You Feeling? program grieving is normalized.

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Concept 7

Benefits of Grieving

Grieving benefits us by releasing the tensions that cause physical pain in our bodies where we hold our unexpressed feelings. Emotional tears not only bring emotional release but also rid our bodies of stress hormones.

Notable Researchers: Consedine NS, Zisook S, Fernández, Ó

Many people have had the experience of relief after having a good cry. However, most unfortunately, crying has been denigrated in our society as a weakness and has not been seen as the gift it is. The major benefits of grieving are the release of tension in our body, avoiding depression, and achieving integration so we can move on.

Learning Objective

How Are You Feeling? emphasizes how necessary grieving is to emotional health. It also goes a long way to reduce the stigma of crying for students and helps them recognize it as a benefit.

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Concept 3

Natural Needs

Our feelings guide us from the very beginning of our lives to get what we need to survive and thrive in our culture.

Notable Researchers: Kidd C, Bowlby J, Ainsworth M

We are born with natural needs and the feelings to fulfill these needs. The program discusses 5 of these natural needs. The most well-known being our survival need and our attachment need.

Learning Objective

Students learn five natural needs, or innate, instinctual, needs, and their accompanying feelings. They begin to appreciate that their feelings are necessary and important to their emotional well-being. The 5 innate needs that are discussed in the program are Attachment/Connection, Survival, Curiosity, Reciprocation and Procreation.

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Concept 8

Processing Feelings

The ability to process feelings is a prerequisite of emotional and physical well-being. Processing means staying with feelings until they have been felt thoroughly. This is often called, ‘working the feelings through’ or finishing with the feelings.

Notable Researchers: Pennebaker JW, Izard CE, Lazarus R.S.

Learning how to cooperate with our emotional system by naming our feelings, staying with feelings instead of avoiding them, finding supportive people who can listen without judgement or interference, and using some strategies to facilitate feeling, makes us better equipped to be emotionally healthy. Most people have not learned how to process feelings even though our emotional system is designed to do that. Once we are able to process our feelings, we no longer need a coping strategy to deal with recurring feelings.

Learning Objective

It is important for young people to know that it is possible to work through emotionally difficult situations and feelings and finish with them. When they learn how to process their feelings, they have a path out of their difficulties which leads to emotional growth and resiliency.

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Concept 9

Strategies to Aid with Processing Feelings

We need some strategies to help us process our feelings because staying with feelings in order to finish with them is frequently contrary to our conditioning.

Notable Researchers: Pennebaker JW, Vuoskoski T

The very best strategy is to be able talk to an empathetic person with whom we feel safe to say anything we are feeling. Since there is no way around feelings, only a way through them, we have developed many ways to get into feelings, to stay with them and to process them. For example, writing of any kind without care or censure. Another powerful way to get clearer when we are angry is to write letters we do not send, allowing us to arrive at something we want to say in person that is appropriate to the current situation and will not damage the relationship. Other strategies to aid with processing include: painting, drawing, playing an instrument with feeling, listening to music or watching a sad movie that resonates with our grief.

Learning Objective

Students hear about these strategies in the episodes and may share some of the ways they usually cope in the discussion periods. Now they have something to do to resolve their big feelings which have formerly confounded them.

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Concept 10

Permission to Feel

In our culture we are frequently told what we ‘should’ and ‘should not’ feel rather than the correct information that there are no ‘shoulds’ to feelings.

Notable Researchers: Parkes CM, Horowitz MJ, Wakefield JC

Feelings are not right or wrong, good or bad! This flies in the face of strong conditioning to the contrary. Unfortunately, girls and boys are conditioned to not feel entitled to certain emotions such as anger for girls and vulnerability for boys. Thankfully, this is gradually changing in some societies.

Learning Objective

Our propensity to want to promote positive thinking and looking on the bright side has robbed young people of their right to feel what they feel. We want the students to ‘get’ that *it is okay to not be okay* and to know what to do about it.

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Concept 11

Benefits of Staying with Feelings

When we learn to stay with feelings until they lose their intensity it allows us to complete what we feel about the triggering event. We can then move forward instead of being stuck in troublesome feelings.

Notable Researchers: Ford BQ, Lam P, John OP

When we actually get into troubling feelings, we get release and relief. If we stop there, we have experienced catharsis. This, like venting, feels good but is not enough to finish with the feelings. Staying with them brings insight, understanding and integration of the event. The feelings are felt and processed.

Learning Objective

How Are You Feeling? stresses the importance of students learning about processing of feelings. Our concern is that if students are *only* taught to regulate their feelings, that is, suppress them in the moment, they are left full of unresolved feelings. It is imperative that the students learn to stay with, and process their feelings as well as learning the regulation strategies.

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Concept 12

Naming, Expressing & Accepting Feelings

The naming of feelings is the necessary first skill for processing feelings.

Notable Researchers: Lieberman MD, Eisenberger NI, Brackett MA

When we name what we are feeling as specifically as possible we begin to understand what is going on for us. Many people use ambiguous terms such as 'upset' or 'stressed' instead of identifying the feelings specifically. This simple change in how we express how we are feeling is a powerful opening into self- understanding, self-expression and clarity.

Learning Objective

The How Are You Feeling? program normalizes talking about feelings and therefore enhances deeper connections. The students benefit from the use of a whole range of specific feeling words.

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Concept 13

Triggers - Overreacting & Underreacting

Circumstances that trigger us into overreactions and underreactions are an opening to processing and understanding unfinished feelings.

Notable Researchers: Levenson RW, Berkowitz L

Being able to recognize big feelings, or the absence of feeling, as triggers is an important skill. We cannot avoid overreactions and underreactions and it is crucial that we recognize them as powerful messages from our emotional system! Being able to own that 'we have been triggered' and to use that trigger to begin to process through the accompanying feelings, or lack of feelings, avoids the perils of suppressing for too long.

Learning Objective

Students learn to recognize what being triggered means. They learn to take responsibility to own the size of their feelings, work them through to resolution, and not blame others for them.

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Concept 14

Overwhelmed by a Traumatizing Experience

A traumatizing experience *is* when we are overwhelmed by feelings.

Notable Researchers: van der Kolk BA, Perry BD, Oprah

It is what happens inside of us that determines how traumatic an experience is for us! Trauma is our inability to process overwhelming feelings from a single event, such as a car accident, or from experiences that go on much longer, such as childhood deprivation, neglect or abuse. Our ability to process feelings when we are overwhelmed is affected by many factors, such as, the emotional awareness of the individual, the meaning of the event, and sociocultural/family factors. What is crucially important is that we understand that we must work through all of our feelings in order to heal and no longer be traumatized.

Learning Objective

We help students know that they will be overwhelmed with many intense feelings when anything they experience as difficult happens to them. We teach them the many ways to process their feelings to integrate the experience and we encourage them to get support if they need to.

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Concept 15

Healthy Suppression of Feelings

There are many good and healthy reasons to suppress our feelings for short periods of time.

Notable Researchers: Bonanno GA, Westphal M, Kashdan TB

We have to subdue our natural reaction in many circumstances, for example, when we need to accomplish a task or avoid inappropriate behaviour. We do this by learning how to suppress or regulate feelings.

Learning Objective

Students learn to become aware when they are suppressing feelings and to understand that feelings should be expressed and processed as soon as possible after a triggering situation.

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Concept 16

Repression, Suppression and Avoidance of Feelings

Repression of feelings happens sub-consciously when feelings are too much for us to bear. Suppression is the deliberate burying of feelings in order to avoid them. There are a number of ways to suppress feelings, in a healthy way, when they are inappropriate or overwhelming in the moment.

Notable Researchers: Singer JL, Weinberger DA, Bonanno GA

Learning to notice when we are suppressing and avoiding feelings in various ways is a necessary skill most people have to learn. We suffer the most when we avoid our feelings by distracting ourselves, self medicating, defending, denying, and shutting down even more. The consequences of long term suppression of feelings are relationship difficulties, depression, addictions, anxiety, anger issues, and many other emotional and physical problems.

Learning Objective

How Are You Feeling? students become familiar with the many ways feelings can be suppressed and avoided. They understand that the source of emotional problems can be from earlier traumatic events in their lives.

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Concept 17

Self Medicating to Numb Unfinished Feelings

People often numb uncomfortable feelings using drugs and alcohol without knowing that is what they are doing. This is a slippery slope into addiction.

Notable Researchers: Maté DG, Khantzian EJ

According to Dr Gabor Maté, "Addiction is neither a choice, nor a disease, but originates in a human being's desperate attempt to solve a problem; the problem of emotional pain."

Learning Objective

Young people need to know the difference between healthy and unhealthy ways to deal with distressing feelings; as well they need to understand what a vicious cycle self-medicating can become when it has to be repeated and increased to keep the feelings at bay.

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The Power of Addiction and The Addiction of Power: Gabor Maté at TEDxRio+20

Garland, E. L., Pettus-Davis, C., & Howard, M. O. (2013). Self-medication among traumatized youth: structural equation modeling of pathways between trauma history, substance misuse, and psychological distress. Journal of behavioral medicine, 36(2), 175-185. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-012-9413-5>

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Concept 18

Distracting

Distracting is a common way to cope with, and to regulate, difficult feelings for a short time.

Notable Researchers: Wolgast M, Lundh LG, Sheppes G

It is important that we become aware of when we are distracting ourselves in order to cope with distressful situations and overwhelming feelings. Short term distraction can work well to give ourselves a needed break. However, continuing to distract instead of facing and feeling the reality of what is happening results in accumulated unfinished feelings and unresolved problems.

Learning Objective

This concept becomes very clear to the students in the How Are You Feeling? program and they can discuss many ways that they distract themselves. They might also reveal why they have done it or do it.

References

Distraction – Good? Bad? What?

Wolgast, M., Lundh, LG. Is Distraction an Adaptive or Maladaptive Strategy for Emotion Regulation? A Person-Oriented Approach. J Psychopathol Behav Assess 39, 117–127 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10862-016-9570-x>

Kashdan, T. B., & Rottenberg, J. (2010). Psychological flexibility as a fundamental aspect of health. Clinical psychology review, 30(7), 865–878. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.03.001>

Westphal M, Seivert NH, Bonanno GA. Expressive flexibility. Emotion. 2010 Feb;10(1):92-100. doi: 10.1037/a0018420. PMID: 20141306.

Gratz, K. L. (2010). An acceptance-based emotion regulation group therapy for deliberate self-harm. Unpublished treatment manual. Jackson: University of Mississippi Medical Center.

As Gratz (2010) describes it, distraction involves redirecting attention towards something else for a short period of time, and is therefore quite compatible with a willingness to come into contact with the avoided emotion in the near future.

Schnider, K. R., Elhai, J. D., & Gray, M. J. (2007). Coping style use predicts posttraumatic stress and complicated grief symptom severity among college students reporting a traumatic loss. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3), 344–350. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.344>

A 2007 study did focus on bereaved people, specifically 123 college students who had unexpectedly lost a family member, romantic partner or very close friend. This study compared outcomes of problem-focused, active and avoidant coping and found that avoidant coping seemed to increase the occurrence of complicated grief and post-traumatic stress among survivors.

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Concept 19

Defending Against Feeling

It is important to become aware of how we defend against feeling and processing our emotions.

Notable Researchers: Horowitz M, Cramer P, Janov A

We have many defensive mechanisms to avoid our feelings such as denying, rationalizing, projecting, blaming ourselves and others, fantasizing, dissociating, and harming ourselves. Defenses are crucial when we are young, vulnerable, and fragile. We develop layers of defenses when our needs are not met when we are very young. As adults we are able to feel and heal what we could not feel as children.

Learning Objective

Our students learn that being defensive does not mean they are 'bad'; however, it will keep them stuck. It is something to be noticed and felt.

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Concept 20

Blaming

Blaming is a way to deflect feelings and avoid responsibility.

Notable Researchers: Pickard H, Shaver KG

Blaming ourselves and others is a formidable and common defense. Facing the truth and holding someone else, or ourselves, accountable is not the same as blaming. Taking responsibility for our big feelings and acknowledging the size of them is the opposite of blaming. Blaming others is associated with anger and fault-finding. Self-blame is a form of irrational guilt where we beat ourselves up. We are in danger of being stuck in blame and victimhood when we do not take the responsibility to work through old, incomplete feelings.

Learning Objective

Students readily grasp that blaming others damages relationships and that blaming ourselves is a dead end. They come to understand that taking responsibility for the size of their feelings is the responsible and accountable thing to do.

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Concept 21

Shame

Shame binds feelings and prevents us from revealing who we really are. Shame indicates we feel we are somehow fundamentally flawed. It is different than guilt which is when we have either done something against our own values or we fear we have.

Notable Researchers: Tangney JP, Leary MR, Brown B

Our feelings become shame-bound if it was unacceptable for us to express them when we were children. We come to believe we are 'bad' to have these feelings and we are ashamed. Shame binds our feelings by not only having what are considered unacceptable feelings but by having to control ourselves so we won't reveal them! We may self-medicate in order to escape from the shame. This only adds to our shame; we feel humiliated and defeated because of our powerlessness over the inevitable addiction.

Learning Objective

Shame is a killer of the human spirit so it is imperative that adolescents come to understand that even this awful feeling can be processed. They learn that their sense of themselves can and will change for the better.

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Concept 22

Responsibility and Control

Taking responsibility for our feelings is the major key for emotional well-being in our lives. Acknowledging what is within our control, and what is not, is paramount to well-being.

Notable Researchers: Berger J, Moore JW, Haggard P

We need the wisdom to differentiate what we are responsible for and what we have control over and what we are not responsible for and do not have control over. We also need to make the important distinction that we are responsible for our own feelings and not for the feelings of others, even though, we are responsible to treat others decently and to honour our commitments to them. If we think we are responsible for other people's feelings we will feel *guilty* when they are unhappy or distressed. If we believe other people are responsible for our feelings we will be *angry* and *blame* them when we are unhappy or distressed.

Learning Objective

The How Are You Feeling? program helps students understand that nothing that happens to us as little children is our fault. We are not responsible for our thoughts, feelings and actions as little children. The students learn they are now ready to take responsibility for *their* thoughts, feelings, and actions. They need to know that having any feeling is okay and, that acting it out is not! The nature of responsibility is a very significant concept for adolescents to comprehend. They need to know that their feelings, whatever they may be, are crucially important for a deep understanding of themselves and who they are. They also need to know that they must take responsibility for what they do with their feelings.

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Concept 23

Unfinished Feelings Affect Physical and Emotional Health

Unfinished feelings reside in our bodies and manifest as body aches and pains as well as emotional suffering.

Notable Researchers: Consedine N, Patel J, Chapman BP

We can notice where we are holding tension in our bodies and when we have headaches and other aches. This body awareness can alert us to when we are suffering from bottling up unfinished feelings. Depression, anxiety, addiciton, eating disorders, obsessions and compulsions as well as unhealthy relationships and dysfunctional behaviour result from suppressing unfinished feelings for long periods of time.

Learning Objective

The How Are You Feeling? program clearly presents that many unfortunate consequences can occur when we do not process our emotions, complete our feelings, and integrate painful experiences.

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Concept 24

Depression Caused by Suppressed Feelings

The causes of depression can be viewed on a continuum from suppressing any feelings, to unfinished grieving because of avoiding feelings, to deeply repressed traumas.

Notable Researchers: Kahn JH, Bowlby J, Butler EA

Depression is used as a description of a downcast feeling state that varies from mild to very severe. It is not commonly understood that it can be lifted by feeling that which has been depressed.

Learning Objective

Students need to understand it's 'OKAY to not be OKAY'. They learn they can avoid carrying feelings that pull them down into a sense of hopelessness, depression and despair by sinking into those feelings and processing them. If the depression is so deep that the young person is feeling a global heaviness, no energy, no ambition, no future or can't get out of bed, and this persists, then seeking professional help is crucial.

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Concept 25

Inevitable Shutdown or Closed to Feeling

Inevitable emotional shutdown occurs as we repress and suppress our feelings and therefore split off from our experiences and disconnect from ourselves over time.

Notable Researchers: Sierra M, DeWall CN, Baumeister RF

Our emotional system protects us by shutting down our feelings when they are too overwhelming and too much for us to bear. However, it also triggers us, trying to get our attention, so we can finish unfinished feelings that we have been unaware of suppressing. This is our emotional system protecting us from shutting down for too long causing us to become numb, unfeeling, dysfunctional, disconnected from reality, unaware, and possibly suicidal. We are all on a continuum from non-integrated to integrated. For example, shutdown to fully feeling, or closed to open, outside ourselves to inside ourselves (see complete list). It is possible to re-connect to the long-suppressed feelings and integrate the experiences. We will then be less defensive and more responsive, less withdrawn and more expressive, more open than closed.

Learning Objective

This knowledge gives students understanding and hope that they need not be stuck in despair and encourages them to talk about their feelings and process them instead of shutting down. They 'get' why some people are more open or more closed.

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Concept 26

Behaviours Resulting from Suppression & Repression of Feelings

All kinds of acting-out behaviour is driven by unconscious emotional pain.

Notable Researchers: Kowalski RM, Patel J

Feelings held in the body because they have been suppressed ultimately explode outwardly damaging relationships with dysfunctional behaviour or implode inwardly and damage our bodies. When we armour our bodies so we will not feel the unfinished feelings we experience tension in our muscles, headaches, or stomach aches. Addicts of all kinds who suppress their feelings with addictive substances or processes are attempting to numb their painful feelings. Sooner or later we can become more shut down than open and alive; unable to feel joy, satisfaction and contentment.

Learning Objective

To make students aware of how behaviours are related to unfinished feelings and buried emotional pain.

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- Maté, D. G. (2018). In the realm of hungry ghosts. Vermilion.

Concept 27

Safe Place to Process Feelings

A safe place to process feelings requires somewhere that we will not be judged and where we can express *all* of our feelings without censure.

Notable Researchers: Kahn JH, Lieberman MD, Pennebaker JW

Our suppressed feelings are frequently shame-bound and it takes courage to allow ourselves to be vulnerable enough to feel them. If we require help we need to find a non-judgmental person who can hear us and validate our feelings. We need to *'feel to heal'* and finding support that is safe is frequently necessary.

Learning Objective

The students 'get' how difficult it is to feel safe if they have had adverse experiences expressing their feelings. The How Are You Feeling? program acknowledges to the students that it takes courage to face and feel what is necessary and encourages them to do so.

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Concept 28

Understanding Feelings

It is important for emotional health to normalize many aspects of the emotional system that are commonly misunderstood.

Notable Researchers: Paulus DJ, Coles ME, Coleman SL

Normalizing prevalent misconceptions about our emotional system helps people not feel alone with both their feelings and their experiences. For example, we are often encouraged to move forward and not *wallow* in our feelings. This term has a negative connotation which implies that staying with feelings is indulgent. In fact, we develop resiliency when we are able to process our feelings before trying to move on.

Learning Objective

The How are you Feeling? program normalizes for students: that all feelings are OKAY; that they can expand their feelings vocabulary; that asking for help is important; that conflicting feelings are common; and that processing feelings allows them to move on. The knowledge they acquire helps them talk about difficult or stigmatized issues that they may previously have been reluctant to examine.

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Concept 29

Courage and Vulnerability

We feel vulnerable when we feel threatened or are emotionally exposed. Every time we have the courage to express our feelings honestly this authenticity strengthens our sense of self.

Notable Researchers: Brené Brown, Kristin N

What makes us vulnerable to the judgement of others is whether we have been judged, dismissed, ridiculed or not supported in our young lives. This is why it takes courage to express ourselves and to reveal who we are. Also, in our culture, we are bombarded with messages to '*get on with your life*' which implies suppressing feelings. This is often portrayed as a sign of strength. However, when we avoid our feelings it drains our energy and leaves us confused with unresolved issues. Relationships flourish when people are willing to be vulnerable with each other.

Learning Objective

Many students may never have experienced the safety to expose certain of their feelings. They learn that it takes courage to be vulnerable and authentic and that this creates a positive sense of self.

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Concept 30

The Value of Being Heard

It is a human need to be heard. When we feel heard we feel validated, not alone, and connected to the listener and to ourselves.

Notable Researchers: Gordon T, Shenk CE, Morelli SA, Krause ED

When we use active listening we demonstrate that we are trying to hear the other person accurately and, if we have not, it gives them the opportunity to clarify what they are feeling. This is an empathic process repeated until understanding happens. Listening with the intent to understand the other person validates their feelings and relieves the helping person of the belief that they need to fix the other person's problems. Dismissing someone's feelings robs them of their feelings and therefore, connection to their pain. This does not help them. Trying to change how they feel by looking for a silver lining is common, but not beneficial, and stops the helping process.

Learning Objective

The How Are You Feeling? program believes that the most valuable tool we have in living authentically is the ability to listen, and trust our feelings. Students learn how validating it is to be listened to and heard and how this helps them connect to themselves and to move along in their process. They 'get' that the best way to help their friends is to be there and listen. Teachers who moderate the HAYF episodes are expected to constantly demonstrate Active Listening to the students.

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Concept 31

Emotion Regulation Strategies

Emotion regulation strategies are used to help people cope with big feelings that may not be appropriate in the moment.

Notable Researchers: Gordon T, Gross JJ, Kappas A, Guendelman S

Regulation techniques such as mindfulness, positive thinking, gratefulness, reframing, acceptance, CBT, DBT, and 12 step programs are strategies that help people cope with difficult feelings in different ways. Research has shown that flexibility in dealing with feelings is healthy. It is important to understand how to move from regulation to processing. Reframing or reappraisal of thoughts and other strategies are often used to regulate and cope with dysfunctional behaviours for some students. Regulation is a short term solution since the feelings will likely persist or return in a different situation. If students are asked to reframe their thoughts without processing their feelings they will have to deny the strength of their feelings. Reframing is imposing a different perspective on a student instead of letting them get to this on their own by helping them process their feelings about what is happening.

Learning Objective

With the How are you Feeling? program the vast majority of adolescents will be able to use their natural abilities to regulate their feelings, suppress their feelings for short periods and return to the feelings in order to process them to completion later.

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Concept 32

Integration

Integration happens when enough feeling and connecting has been done so that we no longer need to keep our feelings or experience of painful events split off from our consciousness.

Notable Researchers: Zisook S, Shear K, Berger J

Integration literally means to make complete or whole. When we struggle to not feel something painful, we suffer. When we allow the feelings in, we get relief from our suffering even though our pain may be very intense. As we stay with our feelings, in order to process them, we connect with the source of our pain, we gain insight and understanding. When we stay with the feeling until it dissipates we get integration. We feel more complete and whole. When we feel deeply and completely and integrate our experiences, we become free of hidden drives and obsessive thoughts. We automatically 'let go' of the bothersome thoughts or behaviours we have been plagued with. Knowledge plus feeling gives us a more integrated perception of the world.

Learning Objective

The How Are You Feeling? program's goal is to give young adolescent students knowledge and understanding of some important truths about their emotional system so they can integrate their experiences and avoid the many pitfalls of the emotionally tumultuous teen years.

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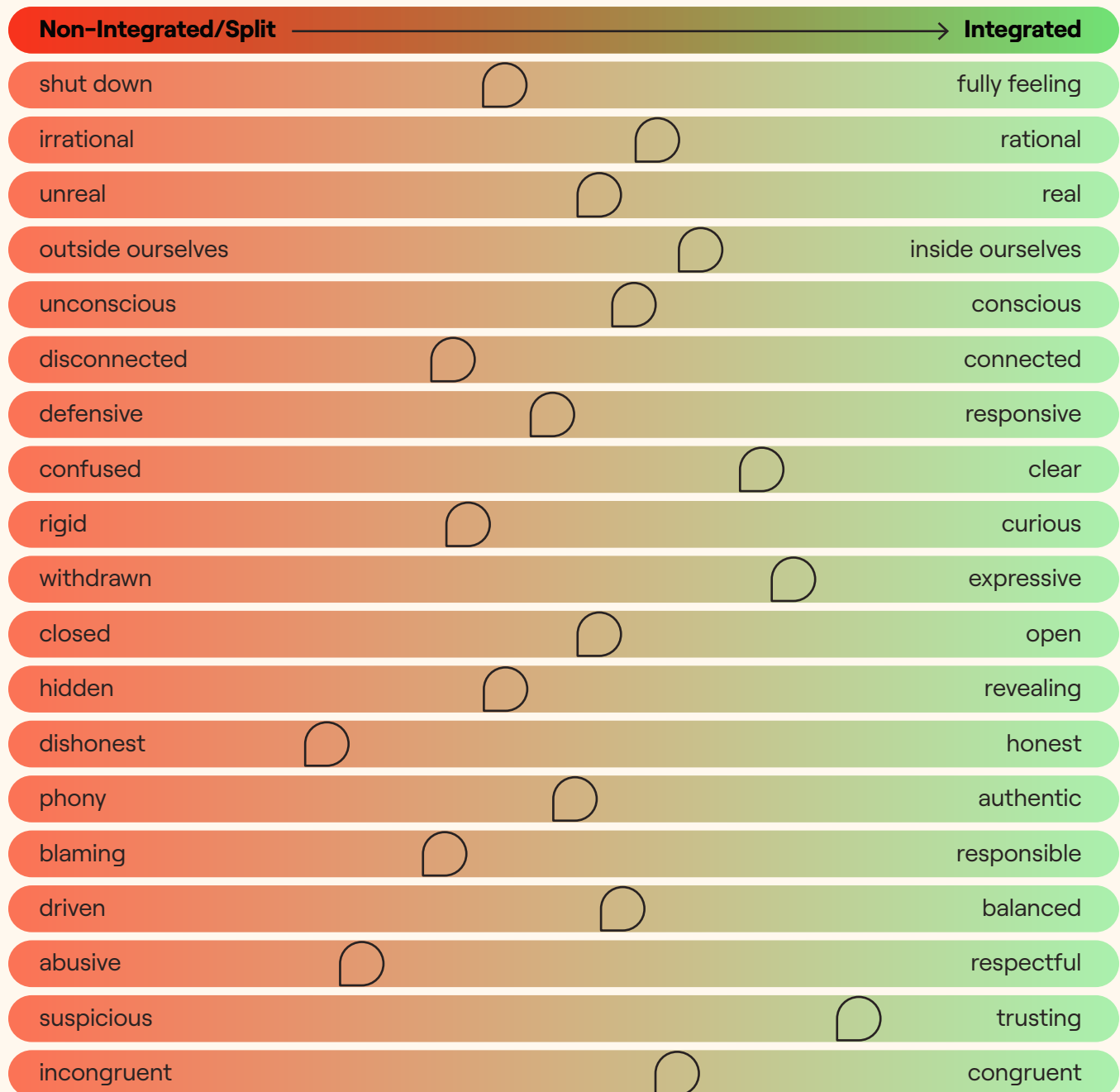
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Non-Integrated to Integrated

We are all somewhere on each of these continuums and we are capable of moving toward further integration and emotional health.



Concept 33

Resilience

Emotional resiliency has to do with how readily we recover from adversity and this has to do with how adept we are at thoroughly processing our feelings.

Notable Researchers: Bonanno GA, Kelley TM, Pennebaker JW

In our culture sometimes people are seen as being resilient if they can hold it together, and push through adversity, without breaking down. This is a false and detrimental understanding of resiliency because it is not sustainable and will result in eventual breakdown physically and emotionally. When we are holding unfinished feelings that need to be felt, and split off traumatic experiences that need to be integrated, we cannot be truly resilient.

Learning Objective

Clarity is a big part of resiliency and cannot be obtained when young people are full of conflicting, unresolved feelings and dilemmas. The HAYF program points out the value of short term suppression or distraction to cope with difficult feelings, in the moment, and that true resiliency requires the processing of feelings.

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www.howareyoufeeling.org

Contact:

bob.calvert@howareyoufeeling.org