

Letting Go of Emotions

Emotions are feelings that come and go. When we take a few minutes to sit with an emotion, we can notice that it occurs in our bodies. Emotions as they are felt in our bodies are meant to give us insight into our needs. Unfortunately, many of us are not trained to sit and feel an emotion. We often spend much time and energy trying to escape or avoid our feelings. When we do that, an emotion may linger for days, weeks, or even months. We may have a “pit in our stomach,” feel “imbalanced,” or judge ourselves unfairly. If we consistently escape or avoid our emotions, we may develop habits that do not serve our wellbeing or act in ways that are counterproductive to our relationships. Holding onto guilt instead of feeling it and allowing it to go, for example, may result in promising others what we cannot deliver, working ourselves into exhaustion, or forgoing self-care.

The good news is that we can choose a different way of being. We can enter into the practice of identifying and feeling an emotion, find ease with it, and learn to let it go.

This is a mindfulness practice to help with letting go of emotions

Consider the following questions:

- “What am I feeling?”
- “What is happening right now?”
- “How is this feeling affecting me?”

Breathe deeply into the awareness of the feeling and say, “I am feeling.” Breathe in through your nose for 4 counts, hold your breath gently for 2 counts, and breathe out of your mouth as if you are blowing through a straw. Repeat this process 3 more times.

Without judgment, see if you can figure out what emotion you are holding on to. Ask yourself, “Is this fear?” “Anger?” “Stress?” “Guilt?” “Sadness?” “Loneliness?” “Regret?” Allow yourself to say, “It’s okay to feel this feeling” and breathe deeply through your belly for 4 counts.

Ask, “What is this feeling trying to tell me?” “What do I need to pay attention to?” “What can I learn?” “What is the opportunity here?” Continue to breathe deeply and slowly and reflect as much as you need, knowing that answers do not need to come immediately.

When you feel ready to move on, consider how you might be able to see this feeling differently. Can you use the feeling to motivate yourself? Can you notice that you are already doing a pretty good job? Maybe you have not considered everything you are already doing and now is a

good time to notice that you are doing your best with the knowledge, awareness, and resources you have.

Finally, allow yourself to release the feeling. As you breathe in say, "I can breathe through this feeling." As you breathe out say, "I can let this feeling go." Repeat this process 3 more times.

Reframe your experience and note what you learned. Gently remind yourself that this is a learning process and that you can practice as much as you want. Maybe as a result of doing this exercise you figured out a project that needs revising or discovered that you need to have a conversation with someone. Perhaps you feel lighter as a result of letting go. Recognize that you are spending valuable time and energy caring for yourself as you feel, name, process, and let go of your emotions. There is so much positive energy in feeling and releasing feelings. You can create a new moment now that you have paid attention to yourself and your needs. The rest of your day is free for your own creation.