

How to Process Emotions

Processing emotions simply means choosing to feel your emotions rather than avoid them.

Even if you are someone who identifies as being very even-keeled, your emotions need to be felt. Otherwise, they get stored in the body and we end up using food or drink to deal with emotions we don't want to experience.

Some signs you probably have emotions that need processing are:

- You want to overeat or drink, overshop, overwork, or any other “over” behavior.
- You are easily irritable, angry, tearful, or have difficulty sleeping.
- You recently went through a stressful event, or through any major life event.
- You feel emotionally exhausted, low, or drained.

Listed below (in no particular order) are some of the techniques you can use to process emotions. Be willing to experiment!

It's great to find several techniques that you like. Practice regularly to help you develop this important skill.

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Technique 1: Let the Feelings Wash Over You

Allow your feelings to wash over you like waves at the beach: let them build, crest, and recede. If you can, name the emotion ("I'm feeling angry"). As you wait patiently for the emotion to subside, breathe deeply, visualize the wave, or watch the seconds hand on a clock or watch. This is a great approach for strong emotions.

Technique 2: Identify Your Current Feelings

Close your eyes and breathe deeply a few times. Move your attention from your head into your body and start mentally scanning. Ask yourself the following questions as you explore the emotion:

- Where is it located in my body?
- Does it have a shape? If so, what shape is it?
- Is it hard or soft?
- What color is it?
- Is it fast or slow?
- Is it changing or does it stay the same?
- What is the name of the emotion I'm feeling?

You can do this for as little as two minutes at intervals throughout your day, or in longer sessions. See what shifts!

Technique 3: Journaling

Journaling can be a great way to get suppressed emotions such as anger, sadness, and fear to come to the surface so they can move through and out of you. Simply dump out the thoughts and feelings you're having onto paper, without editing yourself. You can write for as long as feels right to you – 10-20 minutes is often the sweet spot. Handwriting works best.

HOW TO LOSE WEIGHT FOR THE LAST TIME

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Technique 4: EFT Tapping

EFT Tapping, often known simply as ‘tapping,’ involves gently tapping on specific acupressure points in a predictable pattern, while focusing on thoughts. It’s simple and you can learn to do it on your own. For more information and free guided tapping sessions, search the internet or your App Store for “EFT Tapping Solution.”

Technique 5: Embodied Movement

Embodied movement is the term I use to describe moving your body in ways that help you to release the emotions you’re feeling. Turn on some music that evokes the emotions that you’d like to process and move your body, however feels right to you. You might even want to close your eyes so you can deeply connect to what you’re feeling. Nobody needs to see you and it doesn’t need to look like dancing!

Technique 6: Tremoring

Tremoring is as simple as shaking your body. You can do small or big movements, fast or slow movements. Tremoring can be great for working through stress and anxiety. Search the internet for “TRE exercises.”

Technique 7: Meditation

Meditating is a great way to process emotion and to actively destress. There are countless different ways to meditate – I suggest you try various options and learn about different approaches until you find one that works for you. Lots of teachers and services offer guided meditations and there are some good apps out there. Search the App store for “meditation” or check out Headspace, Calm, or Insight Timer.

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Technique 8: Breathwork

Breathwork is more than simple deep breathing. It involves consciously altering the rate and depth of your breathing in rhythmic ways. If you're interested in breathwork, definitely seek out a trained breathwork coach. Check out Scott Schwenk (scottschwenk.com) or Samantha Skelly (pausebreathwork.com).

Technique 9: Connection

A good long hug can be a great way to allow emotion to come up. Aim for 15 to 20 seconds (or more!). If nobody is around you can hug a pillow, blanket, stuffed animal, or even wrap your arms around yourself for a hug.

Technique 10: Have a Good Cry

A good cry can be very therapeutic. If you find it difficult to cry, try watching a sad movie or listening to sad music to help bring up the tears.

Technique 11: Laugh

Being able to laugh out loud is wonderful for releasing emotion. It's even better if you can laugh along with someone else. Try watching a comedy special on television or a favorite funny movie.

When it comes to processing emotions, there's no right or wrong way to begin, just start somewhere.

Pick something from this list to try this week.