



Finding Your Feelings

Feelings are neither right nor wrong, but it's important not to act upon your feelings in ways that are harmful to yourself or others. Before you act upon your feelings by stuffing them inward or by expressing a particular behavior, you should try to understand where your feelings are coming from. Try these techniques to help you get in touch with your feelings:



Set a digital watch so it beeps every half hour. When it beeps, ask yourself: What am I feeling right now (happiness, anger, peace, frustration, etc.)? What is the real source or cause of this feeling? If the feeling is negative, what action do I need to take?



Sit quietly for 20 minutes in a comfortable position. Relax by doing some deep breathing. Then let your consciousness move slowly around your body and mind, noticing a tense muscle, a vague sense of dread or anticipation, a recurring image or idea. Say "hello" to whatever sensation comes up, and then let it pass.



Write for 10 minutes without stopping. Write whatever comes into your head, without judging or stopping to compose what you're going to say. Don't worry about whether what you write is true or fair to others. No one's going to see it but you.



With a trusted friend, take turns sharing whatever comes into your head for 10 minutes. Give each other permission to be outrageous and "off the record" in what is said. Agree that nothing you exchange is to be repeated.



If you have trouble acknowledging an emotion, such as anger or fear, make a list. For instance, "I am angry because..." Start with small, silly things if you can't think of anything serious. Keep adding to the list until you get to what feels important.