

Understanding & Giving Space to Emotions

A gentle reflection tool to notice, name, and navigate uncomfortable feelings with self-compassion.

PART 1: UNPACKING PATTERNS & BELIEFS

Comfortable Emotions

Which feelings feel easiest or most accepted for you to express?

Challenging Emotions

Which feelings do you feel pressure to push away or "toughen up" about?

What happens when you bottle up or suppress your emotions?

Notice physical reactions (tension, fatigue), mental states (numbness), or behaviors (sudden outbursts).

PART 2: PRACTICE — NOTICE & NAME

1. Body Scan: What physical sensations are present right now?

Tightness in chest, pit in stomach, shallow breathing, heavy shoulders, clenched jaw, etc.

2. Naming the Feeling

If you only know you feel "bad" or "off," use an emotion wheel or app (e.g., How We Feel) to find a specific word.

Gentle Reminder

You don't need to name the emotion with perfect accuracy. Simply slowing down to notice and acknowledge what you are experiencing is the most meaningful first step.

PART 3: THE 90-SECOND WAVE EXERCISE

The 90-Second Rule

Physiologically, an emotion wave rises, peaks, and subsides in about 90 seconds. Find a quiet space, set a 90-second timer, sit comfortably, and let the emotion pass through you without judgment or trying to fix it.

- Find a quiet, comfortable position and set a timer for 90 seconds.
- Focus on your breath and observe the physical feeling like a ocean wave passing through.
- Observe without judgment—uncomfortable feelings are not dangerous.

Where in your body did you feel the emotion most strongly during the 90 seconds?

What thoughts or urges came up as you sat with the feeling?

Did the intensity or quality of the emotion change over the 90 seconds?

PART 4: INSIGHT & COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE

1. What message or need might this emotion be highlighting?

Emotions point to what matters to us (e.g., a need for rest, clear boundaries, connection, or safety).

2. How can you respond to yourself right now with compassion instead of shame?

What would you say to a close friend feeling this way?

"Giving our emotions space doesn't mean letting them control us. It means allowing ourselves to acknowledge what we're feeling with understanding and compassion."