

Emotion as a Wave

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Emotions, by their nature, build, peak, and subside like waves. When we have been taught how to allow our emotions to flow in their natural rhythm, they will move through us and pass within a short time (often within a few minutes).

When we haven't been taught how to ride the waves, we often get sucked into the feelings like a whirlpool, or we will defend against them by running away, ignoring, avoiding, distracting, burying, stuffing, etc. All of these options leave the emotion trapped inside our bodies. But when we have the tools that allow us to BE with and fully FEEL emotions, then the wave can resolve itself naturally.

There are two main categories of skills for riding the wave of emotion. They can be used individually or together:

1. Grounding in your body

Grounding connects you to your body, supports the wave of emotion to peak and subside naturally, and helps you avoid reacting in a way you might later regret.

Examples: diaphragm breathing; tune into your senses and the environment around you; take a walk; count to 10 (or 100); meditate; exercise; etc.

2. Processing emotions

Processing emotions increases self-understanding, self-acceptance, and emotional healing. Grounding alone is often not enough for very difficult or intense emotions.

- a. *Notice* – notice that you are being affected.
- b. *Name* – tune into yourself and name the feelings that are alive right now.
- c. *Surrender* – accept that these feelings are what is true for you right now.
- d. *Feel* – allow yourself to experience the feelings moving through your body.
- e. *Express* – write, journal, draw, talk with a good listener, stomp, hit pillows.

Important Reminders:

- The riskiest time to react to intense emotions like anger, fear, and shame is when you are near the peak. We cannot make good decisions in an emotional peak.
- Judging ourselves for our emotions makes us feel worse, and it also prevents the wave from subsiding. Emotions are not right or wrong. They just are.