

☞ Connecting with Your Feelings ☞

Simplified Version

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☞ **Brief Explanation:** Many people are taught not to feel their emotions, or only to feel certain emotions such as anger (more common for western men) or sadness (more common for western women). Some of the reasons people are not in touch with their emotions are:

- Believing unhelpful comments made by people in our lives
- Observing or growing up in a family in which emotions were *not* expressed or encouraged.
- Being exposed to a trauma once or several times.
- Deciding at an early age not to feel some or all emotions because to feel them seemed not helpful or too painful.

What happens, however, when we decide not to feel certain emotions, is a smothering or flattening effect for almost all other emotions – like a blanket has been placed over all of them.



Biblical Basis: Instead of suppressing our emotions, scripture encourages us to bring them to God and process them together with Him. (See Heb 4:15-16, Eph 4:26-27, James 1:19-20, Is 53:4, Matt 11:28-30, Gal 5:22-23, John 14:27, and various psalms.)

As we come to God with our emotions, He helps us to process these and get His perspective on each situation. He also empowers us to control our actions and respond (from a heart level) in ways that are holy.

To bring our emotions to God, it helps to know what they are. If you're not presently in touch with how you feel, the following steps may help you.



Basic Steps in learning to feel:

1. *Choose* that you want to feel as much as Jesus wants you to – at the root (if there is one) of why you decided it was better not to feel some or all emotions. (If you have previously made a choice or vow *not* to feel, give this to God and ask Him to now nullify it and replace it with your choice to feel.)
2. *Ask* Jesus to be the “screen door” regulating your feelings; and to help you process these together with Him, get His perspective on situations, and respond in a godly way. (Often people assume that the only choices are an open door – feeling everything – or a closed door – feeling nothing.)
3. *Learn*:
 - To recognize what your body is telling you about how you feel
 - Feeling words
 - The meanings of these words
 - How to recognize these feelings in yourself and others.
4. *Practice* in community.
5. *Work through hindrances* (such as believing that it's not okay to feel anger).



Keys: Choose, ask, learn, practice, work through hindrances

Note: Lists of feeling words and related learning activities are included in the standard version of “Connecting with Your Feelings,” available online at www.freemin.org.