



MAKING PEACE WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS: RIDING THE WAVES

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Look up



AGENDA

EMOTIONS
AND
FEELINGS

WHAT EMOTIONS
REFLECT

TOOLS TO COPE

Birth

Aging

Illness

Death

Sorrow

Pain

Grief

Not getting what we want

Getting what we don't want

Losing what we cherish

**Human
conditions
shared by all**

**Natural
parts of the
life cycle**



EMOTIONS

RAW SIGNAL/SURGE

INFORMATION, NOT
INSTRUCTIONS

HUMAN, NOT A PROBLEM
TO SOLVE

WAVES WE RIDE

HARDER TO REGULATE

Types of Basic Emotions



1. Happiness



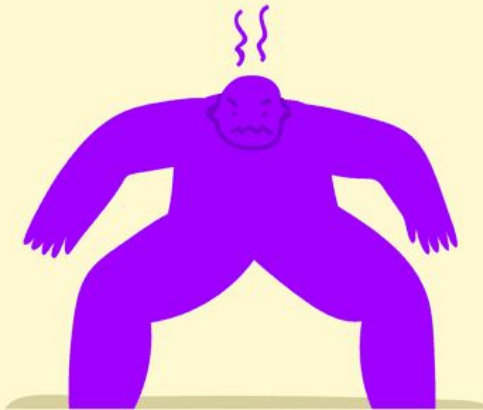
2. Sadness



3. Fear



4. Disgust



5. Anger



6. Surprise

FEELINGS

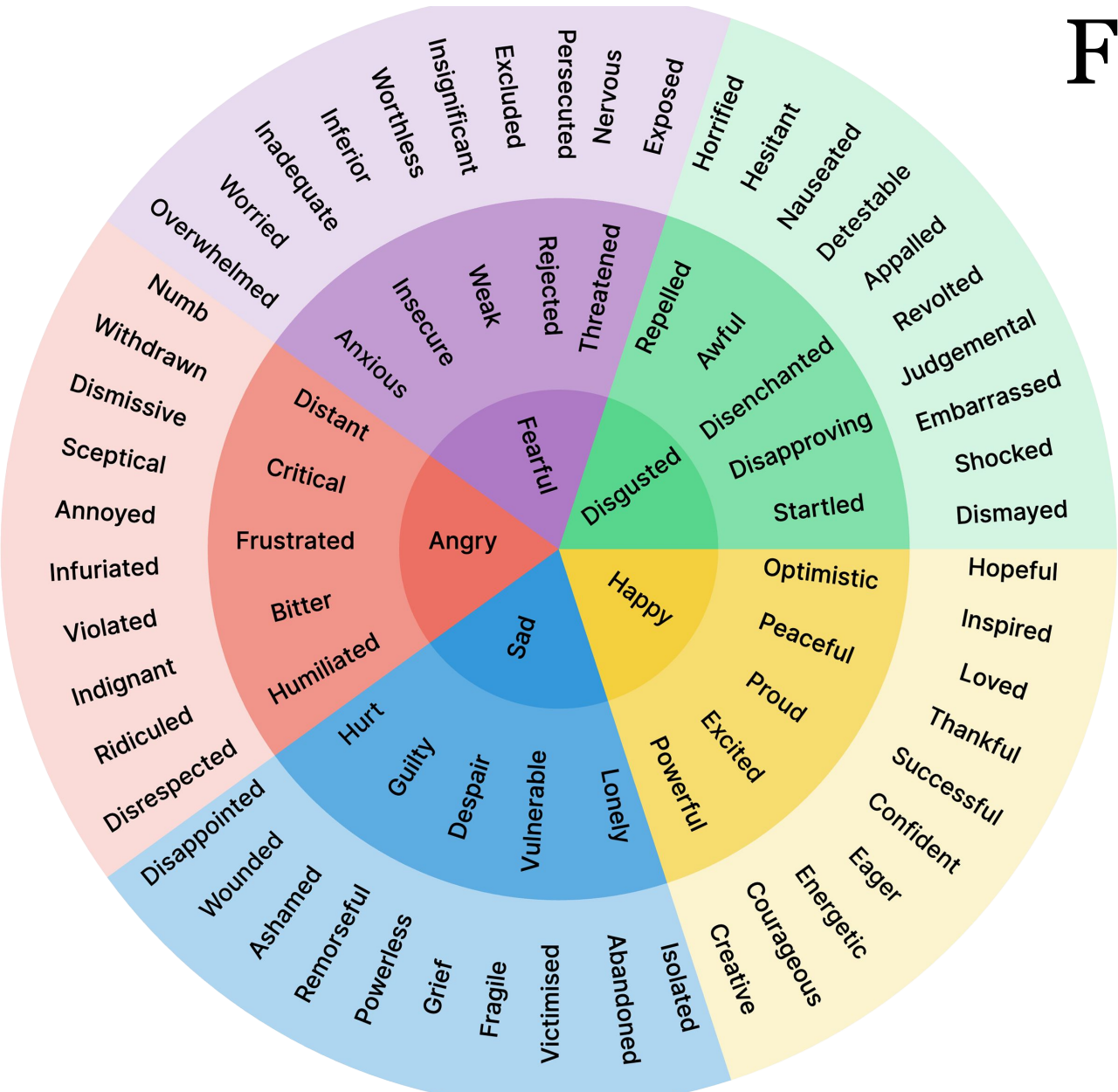
AWARENESS OF RAW SIGNAL

NOTICING ALLOWS US TO
CHOOSE /CONTROL RESPONSE

EMOTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY:
I FEEL

DANGERS OF NOT FEELING

STORIES WE TELL



Riding Waves Avalanches



Caught in



How Long Do Emotions and Feelings Last?

The physiological surge of an emotion lasts about 90 seconds. What extends it is our thinking — not the original trigger.

Anger/ Frustration/Fear

90 Sec–5 min

- Intense surge, chemical flood, depletes us.
- Prone to looping when triggered by unsolvable problems.
- If we replay trigger, we add story about it.

Grief /Sadness

20–30 min

- Lasts longer, tied to loss
- Even acute waves pass
- Grief returns in waves
- Deserves space

Overwhelm

Hours–Days

- Signals too much accumulated stress.
- Running on Empty
- System flooded
- Feel trapped, no relief
- Needs real change, not “coping better”.

Anger Iceberg

Icebergs are large pieces of ice found floating in the open ocean. What you can see from the surface can be misleading. Most of the iceberg is hidden below the water.

This is how anger works. Often when we are angry, there are other emotions hidden under the surface.



GRIEF

can feel like

many
feelings

anxiety

loneliness

fatigue

sadness

numbness

yearning

anger

boredom

pain

↑
insert your feeling right here

Guilt is a complex emotional and moral experience

Occurs when we believe we have done something wrong, violated our values, or harmed someone else

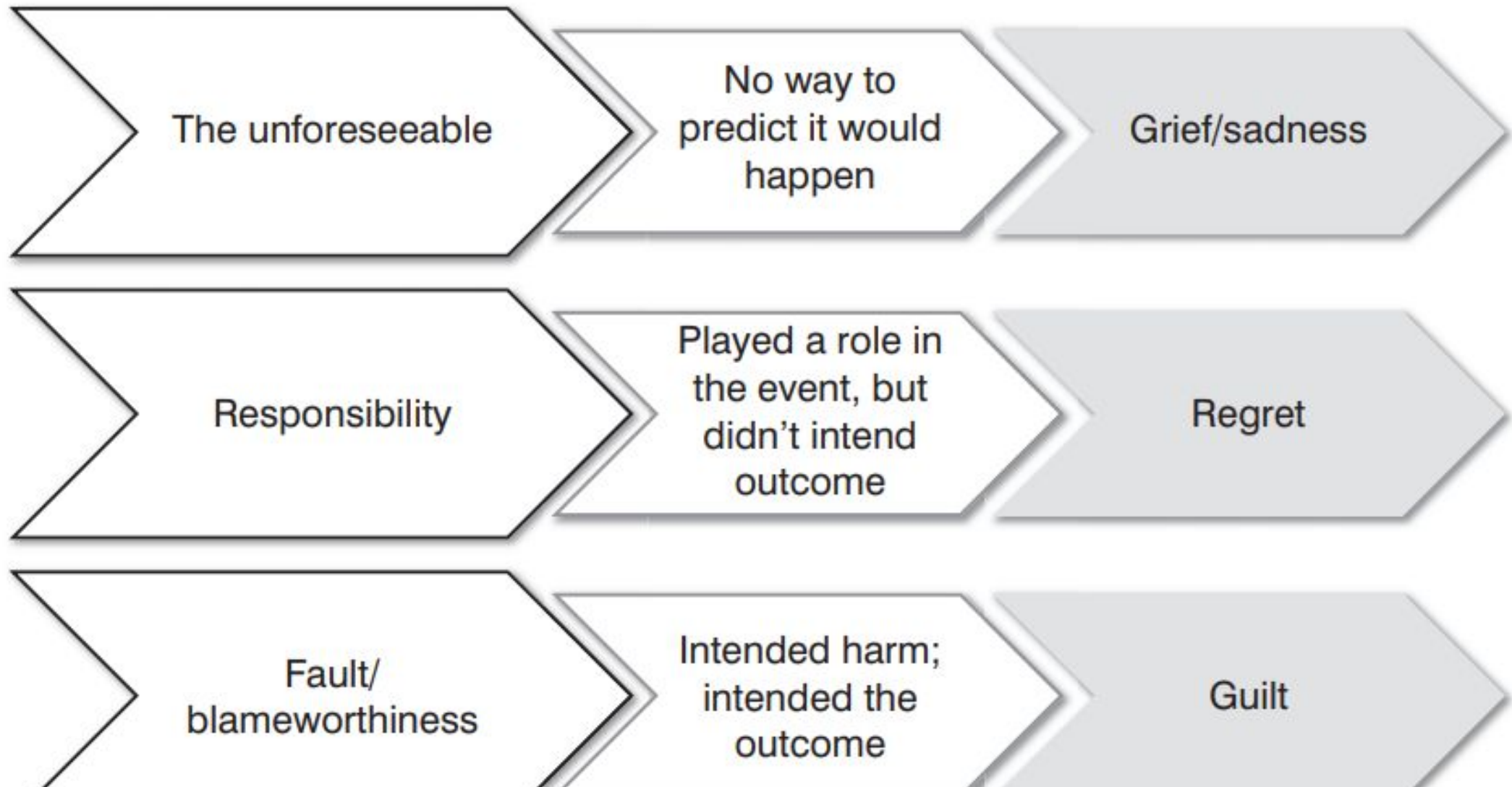
Tied to our sense of right and wrong



Healthy guilt can be helpful. It can guide us to repair relationships, take responsibility, and make better choices.

Unhealthy or excessive guilt can become overwhelming and may be linked to anxiety, depression, or low self-worth.

Guilt does not define who you are—it is simply a signal that something matters to you.



GUILT VERSUS SHAME

GUILT

Feeling remorse or responsible for something you've done wrong or perceived you did wrong

Relating to a specific action like making a mistake, committing an offense, or hurting someone (intentionally or unintentionally)

Those who feel shame are more likely to:

- feel angry
- avoid their triggers
- have low self-esteem

SHAME

Feeling that you are bad, worthy of contempt, or inadequate as a person

Relating to our behavior or self, often in relation to other people's opinions, not necessarily about a specific behavior or event

Those who feel guilt are more likely to:

- apologize
- attempt repair
- feel compassion for others

Emotions are a reflection

Resentment

Reflects something that needs to change, be accepted or grieved

Sadness

Fullness, Mourning, loss,
Anticipatory grief

Loneliness

Need for connection

Fear

A threat /perceived threat to something that matters, Loss of control

Start with your Nervous System

01

Safe Place

02

Long slow exhailes

4-5 breaths make a wave manageable.

03

Tapping/Physical Touch/Hug

Cross arms over shoulder and alternate taps.

04

Movement

Shake, cry, drink cold water, any discharge mechanism. Helps to process emotional energy. Physically calm the storm.

05

LOOK UP

Change perspective. Relax. Interrupt the spiral.

07

Trust your track record

You've survived every difficult emotion you've ever had. The feeling will peak and fade. Trust the process.

Riding the Waves

01

This too Shall Pass

Temporary. No need to fix it or change it. Allow it. Most emotions peak and soften. You're not denying it — you're trusting the process.

02

Stay in the body

Notice sensations: chest tightness, heat, a lump in the throat. Stay present. Without judgement

3

Name it quietly

"There's grief here." "This is anger." Shift to rational brain. Observe without being swallowed.

04

Create Distance

Separate from it. What is it telling me? What is it a reflection of? What would I tell a friend? You can choose your response.

05

Self Compassion

Be as patient with your self as you would be to someone you love.

06

Grab your Buoys

Small replenishments. 20 min bites-a walk, a book, a pet, a chair, a song, outside, a garden. Fill spaces between hard moments

The Don'ts of Difficult Emotions

1 Isolate and Avoid

Share what you're carrying. Just one person who can hold it with you. Don't Moat off from bad or good.

2 Limit Amplifiers

Alcohol, Doom Scrolling, 2+ hours of NEWS, and Sleep Deprivation make hard emotions even harder.

3 Add a story

The emotion is manageable. The narrative we add: "this always happens", "I can't do this" is what makes it unbearable.

4 Blame others

Do not blame others for how you feel or tolerate other's blame. Take responsibility. No one makes you feel anything.

When Feeling Overwhelmed

Flooded systems need different strategies. Something needs to change.

First

Stabilize

Don't try to solve anything. Slow your breathing, sit down, feel your feet on the floor, drink water.

Then

Understand

Too much accumulated?
Over-responsible?
No sleep? Knowing the cause helps you address the right thing.

Next

Shrink the Frame

Not "how do I handle all of this" — just "what's one thing I can do in the next hour."

Finally

Tell Someone the Truth

Not a watered-down version. People calibrate support to the problem they hear. Be honest about how hard it is.

There is support

- We are not meant to do this alone.
- We can't do more if we don't do less. Release impossible standards you may hold.
- Beware of martyrdom traps:
 - Shouldn't enjoy self when there is pain/difficulty
- Watch for burnout:
 - Numbness, chronic exhaustion, withdrawing from life, hopeless, angry at others.
 - Running yourself down creates 2 people who need help.
- Don't wait for things to get worse to get help.



**You are doing something
extraordinarily hard and human.**

Give yourself the same compassion you give others.

Reflections

