

Exercise: Exploring Emotional Feelings as Sensations in Your Body

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Background: Some sensations in your body are not related to emotional holding patterns such as the feeling of your sitting bones against the chair or floor, the movement of your breath, a cool chill on your skin as a breeze blows through the room. There are other sensations inside your body that are the physical/ energetic expression of held emotions and unprocessed feelings.

In this investigation, you will have the opportunity to explore the underlying sensations in your body as gateways to unraveling patterns of emotional holding. Often “feel your feelings” can be an overwhelming, nebulous statement. Accessing feelings on the more tangible level of sensations in the body can begin a deeper intimacy with ourselves and allow a natural unraveling, unwinding and integration of repressed, unfelt, abandoned parts of yourself.

Throughout the week, notice when you feel triggered. Notice if you become aware of emotions and feelings that you’d rather not be feeling. When you have an opportunity, do this exercise to become more intimate with what is going on inside you. Or, if you’d prefer, you can see what story comes to mind about an incident in your life where you bypassed deeper painful emotions and chose at the time to turn away from them.

If you are doing this practice alone it's suggested that you start with situations that are a level “5” on a scale of 1 – 10. So, not the most intense buried emotions, but just like a yoga warm up stretch, choosing something that will allow you to begin to explore yourself on this level. If you want to go into deeper explorations, you might want to contact a friend or professional to accompany you on this journey. It can be very helpful to have another person their witnessing and holding space for your sacred process.

1. Ground yourself in your breath. Feel your hips against the earth or chair.
2. Go inside sense and feel your body and choose a spot in your body where there is some tension, contraction, or holding.
3. Bring your attention there. Your attention is like a spot light to illuminate this previously hidden area.
4. Does it have a shape? If so, what shape is it – a line, a circle, a square, or some other shape?

5. How big is it?

6. Does it move or is it stationary?

7. Is there anything happening to it as you are paying attention to this area of contraction – is it intensifying or relaxing or a pulsation of both?

8. Is the contraction all by itself or is it connected to another area of holding in your body?

9. Does it have a color?

10. Is there anything that it wants to say or express to you? Your body is wise – it can speak through its sensations.

11. Please pause for a moment and thank the sensation and your body, thank yourself for taking the time to be this intimate with what is really going on inside you.

Enlightenment is intimacy with all things.

- Dogen Zenji