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COACHING

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DISCOVERING THE MESSAGES IN YOUR EMOTIONS

Take a moment. What are feeling right now? Happy? Sad? Angry, contented, scared, jealous, fearful, joyful, lonely or...? What are you are *feeling* in your body? Pause from reading this for a moment so you can check-in with yourself and give it a name.

So many people are not really aware of what they are feeling at any one time. In part it's because we lead lives that are full of distractions. Another large part is due to our social conditioning. If someone feels happy, joyful, peaceful, filled with bliss or full of fun, we want them to show it and share it with us. But if they are angry, sad, fearful, jealous, or lonely we say things like, "Get a grip", "Don't be such a misery", "There is nothing to worry about!" and such like. In our busy, rush-rush lives, it seems that there is no time for emotions that don't conform to those we define as good or positive.

Who decided that? As it appears to be the common viewpoint, I guess we've all bought into this notion that it's OK to express positive emotions but it's a different story for our negative emotions. But this is crazy because we are all, every one of us, emotional creatures – everyone has both positive and negative emotions at all times.

I often find looking at the flip side of an issue is useful. So, what if I asked you to never smile, laugh, or beam with joy ever again. Could you stop yourself in a moment of happiness? No – nor would you want to. When you feel happy, you want to enjoy it, relish it and share it with others. Can you see how daft then it is to tell yourself never to feel anger, fear, sadness or loneliness? But with so much social conditioning it is hard to admit having negative feelings let alone express, understand or deal with them. Let me flip the coin again.

Think back to a moment of real happiness. How long did it last – seconds, minutes, hours? There will have been happy days that are full of contentment, but the feeling of glowing, joyful happiness rarely lasts very long at all. And this is the way it's meant to be. Emotions are supposed to flow in to your psyche and out again. With happy emotions this is no problem – we wouldn't dream of trying to ignore or suppress happiness. What though of those we're not supposed to express? Well, most people push them back inside of themselves. When emotions aren't allowed to flow, either the emotion stays stuck inside, festering often showing its presence in bitterness, hatred of the self, sarcasm and moodiness. Or, at the

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certain point, it explodes out like a volcano, spouting forth everything that has been denied, resisted, repressed for so long. These eruptions often flow over our loved ones and sometimes the damage this does, is irreparable. Neither of these options is palatable, so we need to find a different way.

Emotions and feelings – all of them – are vital to our well being. Emotions and feelings flow into us simply to convey messages to us. Nothing more: nothing less. When we feel happy, well that's an easy message – life is good! But emotions like anger, frustration, and deep sadness – especially when we don't understand why we're suddenly feeling these emotions – often leave us feeling unsettled and confused. So let me share with you what I have come to understand about the emotions that people struggle with the most. I am also including the powerful, revealing questions to ask of your emotions as defined by Karla McLaren*.

The Angry Emotions

Anger is often squashed. Our society dictates that anger should not be expressed because people feel it's connected to being out of control and violence. Unfortunately, we have not been taught how to express anger in healthy way. When anger is expressed properly, it can powerfully change things for the better, and in far less time than when anger is not present.

Why does anger arise? It's when our personal boundaries have been breached and we are in danger of losing something, someone or losing the sense of who we are. Anger's message then is that we need to take a stance to protect ourselves and the things we believe in, or what we stand for. When we ignore anger's message, it festers and becomes rage and fury. The energy in rage and fury is far more than anger because we feel more vulnerable. If we suppress anger, it often turns into hatred, jealousy and resentment. If we break our own boundaries then it turns into shame and guilt.

All of these emotions – anger, rage, fury, hatred, jealousy, resentment, shame and guilt – are all about our boundaries. The questions to ask of your angry emotions are:

What must be protected? What must be restored?

The Fear Emotions

Our fears are messages that come from our intuition that is trying to guide us safely through life. If we push fear away, then our instincts become dulled and our fears build up and turn

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into worry and anxiety. If we further ignore or suppress our fears then often we find it almost impossible to make choices because we are no longer listening to our intuition and we live in a state of confusion. Heightened emotions of fear are panic and terror. At this point we are so disconnected from our intuition that we have no idea how to deal with the situation.

To get clarity of these emotions, the questions to ask are:

What must be done? What action must be taken?

If you are experiencing confusion, you may not be able to answer these questions immediately. If so, try asking, *What is my intention with this situation?* When this is clear, then go back and ask the fear questions.

The Sad Emotions

Sadness is a great healing emotion. Sadness brings forth tears and with tears the body releases that which is blocked and the letting go process can begin so we can move forward. Most of my life coaching clients have shed tears at some point. I don't set out to make my clients cry!! Just that tears are part of the healing process and so I welcome them when they appear. If we wallow in our sadness, in time it turns into despair and despondence – the message is getting louder that we need to let go of people, things and situations that are no longer serving us. The questions to ask of sadness are:

What must be released? What must be rejuvenated?

Grief is a sadness – but one life landed on us. Grief comes to us because we have lost someone or something in our life that was precious to us. We didn't choose for it to happen. My belief is that when someone you love dies, you need a year to grieve and experience the all of the firsts, like: the first birthday, the first Christmas, first summer holiday and the first anniversary of their death. This is not to say you need to spend a year being sad: but rather you need to honour the 'firsts' where your loved one is no longer physically present in your life. The question to ask of your grief is:

What must be mourned? (Note, not 'who', but 'what')

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Depression contains sadness, but it is more than just this. Depression is like a cloud that envelops you. It saps you of your energy. Everything is a huge effort when you are suffering from depression. Karla McLaren calls depression "An Ingenious Stagnation" and asks those who suffer from it, to bless it, for it is stopping you from moving forward in the wrong direction. Your energy leaves you because what you are doing in the physical world doesn't match-up with your inner desires. Depression is acting as your Emergency Break.

Depression always follows a period when sadness, fear or anger wasn't listened to. Depression is telling you that you to stop that you need to move in a different way in your life. The question to ask of depression is:

Where has my energy gone?

...And finally

I hope this has helped you understand more about what your emotions are telling you. If you are struggling with your emotional balance, please call me on 01305 772220 or email me jennie@reddandelion.co.uk and I will help you or, if appropriate, put you in touch with someone who is a specialist to help you with your emotional imbalance.

* If you are interested in learning more about the emotions, my favourite teacher in this subject area is Karla McLaren and I strong recommend her books and CDs in particular "Emotional Genius" which is available from Amazon.

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