

Week 6: Mobilizing, Transforming & Celebrating Emotion
Developed by The Center for Mind-Body Medicine

I. Emotions are constantly changing:

They are only problematic when you get stuck and can't move through them. If you're constantly seething with rage or resentment, contracted by fear or anxiety, or burdened by sadness or grief, you affect not only your emotional life, but also your physical body, and you increase your risk of developing or exacerbating a chronic illness. Emotions are intimately connected with sensations. Physical sensations may bring up emotional feelings, and emotions may in turn affect physical functioning.

One of the keys to stress management is experiencing your emotions fully and moving through them, rather than becoming stuck in them. Getting stuck in sadness can become depression. Getting stuck in joy can become hysteria. Anxiety can turn into panic. Fear can become paranoia. Anger may become hostility. If you get stuck in them, these very normal feelings may lead to depression, decreased immune cell activity and increased ongoing levels of stress hormones.

The first step is to become aware of your emotions; the next step is to express them. Meditation practices help you to develop awareness of emotions, and activities like drawing, dancing, and journaling provide an opportunity for self-expression.

The work of mind-body medicine depends on the continual interplay between becoming aware of our emotions and expressing them, between exploring emotions through words, actions, images and written dialogues and allowing them to work in us and to change us.

II. Experiential Exercise: Dialogue with an Issue, Symptom or Problem:

In this exercise, you will have a written dialogue with a particular issue, problem or symptom, as if it were another person sitting across from you. Symptom dialogue is a way of accessing the unconscious knowledge that you have. It is similar to guided imagery and drawings. It is a way to find out what is really going on, and the message and/or answer is often contained in the symptom. You will write fast without analyzing what you are writing. Just let the dialogue unfold.

Possible Challenges: if you can't think of anything to write about, think about what primary feeling is coming up for you right now? Is it boredom? Is it resistance? Is it stuckness or anger that you are not doing something else? Whatever feeling that comes up, write about that.

If nothing is coming to mind, start with writing about not being able to write, and go from there.

III. Questions for your reflection writing and group discussion

As you look over the dialogue, what did you learn?

What surprises you about the dialogue, if anything?

What are some of the most important lessons?

What new directions does this dialogue suggest to you?

Write these down along with anything else that comes to you.

IV. Continue the Dialogue Process:

The dialogue process can continue to be useful because you're constantly changing. The answers you receive tomorrow will likely be different from those that come today. As you become aware of your emotions and explore and express them, you naturally change and become aware of new emotions to explore.

Think of the Dialogue with a Symptom as an ongoing process. If you don't feel complete now, feel free to continue the dialogue at a later time. If you do feel a sense of completion and you've received the information you need, you may want to dialogue with the question: "How am I going to act on it."

V. Homework:

Set aside 10 minutes this week to dialogue in writing with a problem, issue, or symptom. Then review what you've written for any new insights.

