

Essential Facts About Feelings

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I so often meet people who divide feelings into “good” feelings which they call “positive” and “bad” feelings which they call “negative.” By “negative” they mean uncomfortable, painful, fearful, and maybe even spiritually shameful.

These people feel bad about themselves when they feel the negative feelings and are determined to get rid of them. Or they may feel hopeless at not being *able* to get rid of them forever. Sometimes they do anything to avoid feeling those feelings- including shutting off their own vitality and life choices.

How did this self-criticism and cruelty develop?

As we grew up we learned that people in our lives did not like it when we felt certain feelings. We learned that when we were who we were, we got into trouble. We learned that when we felt those things, there was “something wrong” with us. The disapproval of feeling could be any feeling- exuberance, pride, anger, or sadness.

Since it felt so bad to have others feel that way about us, we tried harder and harder to be the person they wanted, to be the person we thought we were supposed to be.

But the TRUTH is there was never anything wrong with our feelings, and there was never anything wrong with you for feeling them.

It is truly okay to be who you are and it is okay to have all your feelings.

When grieving, give yourself permission to feel whatever you feel instead of having “standards” about how you should be.

It is not true that some feelings are okay and others are not.

We can get into trouble with ourselves when we put thoughts in charge of feelings.

It's not the feeling that's a problem, it is our judgment about the feeling. We could be feeling anything, and if we weren't telling ourselves it was wrong in some way, there would be no problem.

The problem is when we reject ourselves for what we are feeling.

Our feelings are the most intimate experience we have of ourselves. But we often think we need to find fault with ourselves for our feelings, or feel guilty for them. Then sometimes we try to punish ourselves or discipline ourselves out of the feelings.

But it is how we treat ourselves with our feelings that builds the kind of relationship we have with ourselves. If we can create a safe, loving place inside ourselves for how we feel, we will have a good relationship with ourselves.

And since the judgments we have towards our feelings are judgments we usually apply to others, the more we accept our own feelings, the more we can accept and love others.

Dr. Jane Bolton, a marriage and family therapist, certified master life coach and contemporary psychoanalyst is dedicated to supporting people in the fullest self expression of their Authentic Selves. This includes Discovery, Understanding, Acceptance, Expression, and Self-Esteem. Call 310.838.6363 or visit www.DrJaneBolton.com.