Feelings and Emotions as Messengers

Feelings such as comfort, discomfort, hot, cold, dull or sharp, as well as emotions such as anger, fear, joy, sadness, disgust, shame, excitement, are exquisite messengers that provide us with a rich source of information on how we need to respond to the world around and within ourselves.

If we reach out to touch a hot stove, pain comes as a warning that we are in danger of burning our hand. If we have an expectation that is thwarted, irritation arises to alert us that we need to re-examine the reality of the situation. In themselves feelings and emotions are neither good nor bad, nor right or wrong. They simply provide information.

Our first task, then, is to acknowledge and welcome the legitimacy and necessity of our feelings and emotions as messengers. We need to welcome them and understand their purpose if we are to be healthy, happy, and well-adjusted human beings.

Our second task is to become proficient at recognizing the variety of feelings and emotions we may experience in life. We need to be sensitive to the entire range of feelings and emotions, and to have the attitude that they each are to be welcomed and understood rather than repressed, denied or even, in some cases, expressed.

Yoga Nidra is a process that helps us recognize, welcome, understand, work with, and move beyond our feelings and emotions rather than becoming caught up and hopelessly mired down in them.

Witnessing during Yoga Nidra sharpens our ability to witness feelings and emotions as they arise. Witnessing is a neutral stance wherein we place no judgments upon what we experience. Instead, we observe what passes in front of us as a neutral witness of all that arises internally as feelings and emotions. Witnessing allows us to see the larger picture that so often escapes us when we only become embroiled in emotional reaction.

As we become established in witnessing we realize that all feelings and emotions are transitory in nature. They are constantly changing. To the degree we identify with, and react to our emotions, we become slaves to them. As we develop the capacity to welcome and be with all our emotions, without repressing or reactively expressing what we feel, as if by magic emotions shift and change. Only then can we clearly recognize our appropriate response to each situation in our life.

By our willingness to meet, greet, welcome, and experience our emotions, we go beyond them. In fact, the word ‘experience’ means “to go through something fully, leaving no trace behind.”

When practicing Yoga Nidra use the sheets to work with feelings and emotions that constantly trouble, confuse or re-occur for you.

You can also use this technique during your day if you find yourself in a challenging situation that leaves you feeling unsettled. For instance you have had a disagreement with a loved one that leaves you feeling angry.

• Locate the feeling of anger in your body – where do you feel it in your body – what is the quality of the feeling – notice it without judgment or falling back into the story
• What is the opposite to anger for you – when you think of this word where do you feel it in your body – stay with this opposite for some time
• Alternate between anger and its opposite for some time – noticing where and how you feel it and any changes
• Then call in both together and notice how this feels – both anger and its opposite ....
IDENTIFYING OPPOSITES OF FEELING

To personalize your practice, fill in this worksheet before beginning Yoga Nidra. Choose two feelings and their opposites that are relevant for you.

Feeling and its Opposite

Feeling and its Opposite

Examples of Feelings and their Opposites

These are examples to help you locate feelings that are relevant and meaningful to you. There is no need to limit yourself to just this list when you make your choices.

Alert – Sleepy
Cold – Hot
Cool – Warm
Comfortable – Uncomfortable
Constricted – Spacious
Deep – Superficial
Dry – Wet
Dull – Sharp
Floating – Sinking
Hard – Soft
Heavy – Light
Lethargic – Awake
Loose – Tight
Numb – Sensitive
Painful – Pleasurable
Prickly – Soft
Relaxed – Tense
Spacious – Restricted
Thick – Thin
IDENTIFYING OPPOSITES OF EMOTION

To personalize your practice, fill in this worksheet before beginning Yoga nidra. Choose two emotions and their opposites.

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Emotion and its Opposite

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Emotion and its Opposite

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Examples of Emotions and their Opposites

These are examples to help you find emotions that are relevant and meaningful to you. There is no need to limit yourself to just this list when you make your choices.

Aggressive – Passive
Approving – Disapproving
Assured – Perplexed
Boisterous – Mellow
Calm – Agitated
Composed – Worried
Confident – Insecure
Cooperative – Competitive
Delighted – Disgusted
Domineering – Meek
Empathetic – Indifferent
Fearless – Frightened
Flexible – Rigid
Generous – Resentful
Grateful – Ungrateful
Happy – Sad
Helpful – Uncooperative
Innocent – Guilty
Interested – Bored

Loving – Hateful
Peaceful – Enraged
Potent – Impotent
Powerful – Helpless
Proud – Ashamed
Responsive – Apathetic
Safe – Abandoned
Safe – Threatened
Satisfied – Frustrated
Secure – Apprehensive
Sensitive – Numb
Tender – Violent
Tolerant – Contemptuous
Trusting – Suspicious
Unafraid – Anxious
Unreserved – Shy
Vital – Exhausted
Vulnerable – Invulnerable