

how to feel your feels

A short guide for rational men

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intro: why bother, and why listen to me?

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Simply put: Your emotions exist for a reason. Feeling them without resistance will make you stronger, more alert, and more aware. It will allow you to connect more deeply with others, and with your environment.

The opposite also holds true: Ignoring or suppressing your emotions will shorten your life, threaten your relationships, and literally make you sick. Yes, you can push them down and in some cases that's the right move. But think of it like holding in your pee—you can only do it for so long before you face consequences.

why listen to me?

Good question—I'm not a licensed therapist, and I don't have a PhD in feelings. I am just a guy who has made some progress in accepting and

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dealing with his own emotions, a process that's very much ongoing. I've had help along the way from my wife, from a few therapists, and in particular from a mid-20th century psychologist named Robert Plutchik, whose research I summarize in this book.

It's often easier to learn something from someone who's just a little bit ahead of you than it is to learn from an expert with decades of experience. I hope you find that to be true in this case. But if you're more comfortable talking to a trained professional, please do that. Or do that *in addition* to reading and applying this book's advice. There's no one correct path. Feelings are messy—though as you'll soon see, they make a lot more sense than you might think.

why “for men”?

Every human has feelings! In fact, so do other animals. But men face specific challenges when it comes to dealing with emotions—think about how rare it is to see a man cry in public, and how those who do so generally apologize for it.

Of course, not every man is the same—we grow up with different role models and receive varying lessons on what's acceptable. But focusing on men lets me make a few fairly safe assumptions, reference some of the cultural challenges we have in common, and cite more meaningful examples. It also gives me the perfect

excuse to talk to other men about how we feel, which is something I'm committed to normalizing if it's the last thing I do.

how to use this book

Read the chapters in order. Do the exercises. Really. Refer to the Appendices as needed. Don't be in a hurry, and don't forget to recognize and appreciate yourself for the courage it takes to explore this topic.

Most importantly, don't judge yourself. What matters is what you do next. Which I hope will be to read on, and change how you view feelings to begin with.

think about feelings in terms of their evolutionary purpose

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Your feelings—*all* your feelings—are true, and acceptable, and most importantly *useful*.

They might not seem that way. In fact, you might find that when strong feelings crop up, they cloud your judgment and drain your energy. They lead you to do or say things you later regret, or they keep you from acting altogether.

Emotions can have this effect, but only when you work against them. So how are you supposed to work *with* them?

The answer lies in embracing them. All of them. First, intellectually, by understanding their purpose and appreciating how they serve you. Next, physically, by giving them permission to run their course inside your body. (Might sound hard, but in fact this part of the process only takes about a minute and a half.) Then, so-

cially, by acknowledging them to people you can trust.

The intellectual part is easy, and probably something you already do—sometimes. Have you ever summoned anger to finish the last rep of a workout? Congratulations, you're doing it right—that's exactly what anger's for. It's there to help you overcome an obstacle. Evolution has wired it into your nervous system to temporarily up your pain tolerance and give you a burst of energy, perfect for knocking out one more deadlift, rowing that last half mile, or speeding up at the end of an exhausting run.

But you've probably also had experiences where anger did more harm than good—caused you to hurt someone you care about, destroy something important to you, or maybe just embarrass yourself. The key to preventing more of these incidents lies not in avoiding anger, or suppressing it, but befriending it and appreciating its value—which is exactly what the exercises in this short book will teach you to do.

Once you've done that, you can decide in any given moment whether you want to let anger take the lead, or not. You've got to feel it, but you don't have to act on it.

The same applies for every other emotion. Sadness is there to help us bond with others after experiencing loss. Fear exists to help us escape from threats.

They've all got a purpose, they're all helpful

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in the right context, and with perspective and practice, you can decide what the right context is. Let's look in more detail at what it's like to pull that off.

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That's the end of this free sample. You can buy the full book on Amazon or directly from the author—just visit

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