

# EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

(This process is based on work by the lovely Thais Gibson, with some modifications by me - she graciously gave me permission to publish my version).

I'm also providing a filled in example of this, where I've run through a recent encounter with a telesales agent which was upsetting for me, so you can see how this works in practice.

I personally have a Word file per month, and usually one such session I run through every couple of days, when something really upsets me, when I feel down - in any emotionally stressful situation really. Good to know that most days there's not more than one :-)) and it gets better over time - just practice this tool, and you'll remove a lot of pain from your life, I promise!

## BEFORE YOU START

Some key tips before you start:

- **set a countdown timer for 20 min on your smartphone**

This is **very** important - otherwise you might find that the process takes too long, and will postpone it, because "you don't have time right now". But it's important to do it regularly, even if you don't do it perfectly - 20 min a day, or 20 min per upsetting incident, will save you a TON of time suffering & being unfocused, obsessing about the situation, etc.

Trust me - **everyone** has 20 min. And that's all you need.

Just set that timer, and go to work as soon as you're free and can do this.

Do this for yourself.

- **ensure that you are alone and can be honest & dump everything which is weighing on you, emotionally speaking, onto paper**

You'll be (hopefully) putting a lot of your internal thoughts, worries, etc. out on paper. This is very private stuff, and therefore you should be by yourself, safe from interruptions.

- **get comfortable - get tea / chocolate / a cozy blanket**

I recommend getting as comfortable as possible for this work, so that you will actually enjoy it on some level. You're doing it for your soul, and to remove suffering from it. This is very noble work, and deserves to be celebrated with some comfort around it.

- **do this regularly, make this your go-to process when you are upset**

Frequently many good insights will come out of this. You will be calmer in your interactions with other people. This is a virtuous cycle which we're starting here.

This time will be well invested, even if it seems hard to eke it out sometimes. In fact, I'll drop some other todos and things clients want, etc. - because I need to be in a calm emotional state to work, and this tool is what gives me that (which helps tremendously, every single time!).

<CURRENT DATE>

<PERSON YOU HAD THE INTERACTION WITH / NAME OF EVENT WHICH UPSET YOU>

**(Step 0) Situation:**

Describe the situation which upset you, try to be as neutral as possible and only give facts, not interpretations.

The interpretations ("meaning" / aka "your story") will come later, don't worry.

This is also an interesting thing for historic reasons, so you will be able to go back and see which events used to upset you in the past.

I promise if you follow this process, you will become a much calmer and more balanced person.

But you've got to stick with it for many repetitions for this to become automatic.

It's worth it - it will remove a LOT of pain from your life.

(I've included this step myself, also to focus my thoughts on the situation - Thais doesn't have it, therefore it's my zeroth step)

**(Step 1) Feelings:**

Write down a list of the feelings you feel.

I prefer to write a list, instead of having a "singular feeling".

I use Thais Gibson's handout of emotions and run through the entire list, and see if anything in there matches for me. (I highly recommend to join Thais' personal development school, so you can get the handout, and a ton of other tips for how to grow & have healthy thriving relationships!)

I will put emotions which are especially strong for me in **bold**.

**(Step 2) Loc(ation):**

Listen into your body, and identify where you feel that the emotions are located - e.g. I feel a lot of emotions in my belly usually. Try to describe how the emotion in that particular area feels.

Thais says that this work is already an important step towards calming down, and getting out of the hyperaroused state - as you are switching your attention.

Write these body locations down. Thais says that emotions are just feelings in your body, and nothing more scary than that. This part of the process will help you to get acquainted with these feelings.

I frequently close my eyes while doing this body scan.

### **(Step 3) Meaning:**

This is now the step where you can dump everything which is upsetting you about this situation, this encounter with this particular person, etc. out into your word processor.

This is the time to be really write what you're thinking currently, e.g. I feel it's also good to really dump out things which include cuss words, etc. - so that they are out of your system.

You'll stop obsessing about them so much, since they're written down and can't be forgotten this way :-)

Also an important pro tip here: In the next step, where you're going to be offsetting, don't do a "balanced view with pros and cons". If you come up with additional negative feelings / beliefs - put **them in here** (in the meaning part) at the end.

This way it will be sorted, too.

### **(Step 4) "Can I 100 % know?" (emotional offsetting)**

Copy sentence for sentence and go through each sentence individually questioning it, by prepending the sentence with "**Can I 100 % know that ...** (*paste the sentence from meaning here*)". The goal is not to do "all sentences" but to offset your emotionally activated state, once you feel calmer (or indeed have done all sentences) move on to the next step.

This is at the core of the process, and what will help calm you down (before you can get to the actual need, which right now is overlaid by your painful stories). It will help you to act from a calm place, instead of reacting from pain.

What I do is to write bullet points with any thoughts which come to my mind about why possibly my stories are just that - **stories**. Why I should not take abrasive behavior of other people personally, ... any points which I come up with.

I will also drill down into subpoints which strike me, e.g. tangents of a particular idea.

I will come up with examples from my own past, where I've acted in a similar way for an innocent reason.

I will question my own expectations of the situation.

It's especially important to question all-encompassing (black & white thinking) statements - e.g. "I'll be ruined by this mistake" or "they can't be trusted at all" or "this person doesn't care about me at all".

Practice with this will help you to come up with better ideas in the future, and will also help you to start questioning and offsetting in real-time, when the incident happens.

You can find a good example of what I write in such a situation in my example file.

The bulk of the time you spend on the emotional processing should be spent in here.

Keep these important points in mind when you're doing this:

- The goal is not to find "justice" in here - the goal is to become emotionally calmer, and to see the situation for what it is - to then be able to see what your actual needs are and how to address them.
- **Therefore do not try to "balance" & find "negative proofs"** - if any additional doubts pop up, put them in "meaning". You've got a word processor, so use it to edit into the appropriate places.

- You are doing this for yourself, not for the other person. You are doing this to remove unnecessary pain from your life. The other person may have behaved in a very unfair manner - but this is your life, your emotions, and you shouldn't punish yourself extra and on top of their behavior with painful stories, about how you're not X, not Y, etc. - do this tool, remove the pain, consider what you need, and take action (see the next two steps)

I have to honestly admit that I frequently keep going in this part, even though the alarm on the smartphone goes off - because I feel that I'm not quite offset yet, but that it feels good and the pain is lowered.

Also I'm obsessive, and I want to finish tasks I start :-)

But even a little bit of this will help you, I promise! Do this, try this for 30 days, try to do it every day, and there will be wonderful results in less emotional reactivity.

Also, when I feel completely offset, I will go to the next step - no need to step through ALL sentences which you've put in meaning. Remember, the purpose of this step is to reduce your pain.

It feels wonderful to have a tool like this, which doesn't numb the pain, but shifts your perspective on things :-)

#### **(Step 5a) "What do I need from this person?"**

This is also a deviation from Thais' original tool which I found helpful.

To find out what you need in this situation, write down "What do I need from X in this situation", and then list what you would like them to do / change / ...

Remember, you should only do this step after having offset your painful stories. Otherwise, you might not end up getting at the real underlying needs, but act from pain (e.g. "I don't want to see this person ever again, ... ")

#### **(Step 5b) "How can I give that to myself?"**

Step 5a was just a preparation - if you see ways of how the other person can give that to you, that's fine. But if you can give that to yourself, that's super fine.

So I've formulated it as "How can I give that to myself", and I brainstorm strategies of what I could do.

This is going to calm you down even further.

The next step, of course, is to implement these strategies :-)

Good luck!

I find that running this process made me a much calmer person over the course of about one and a half years I've been doing this.

I am deeply grateful to Thais Gibson for sharing the process with us in her school and in her YouTube videos. It has taken so much pain out of my life, and it is wonderful to know that I can always fall back on this process when I'm upset.

**Do it.** Stop reading about it :-)