



# **Emotional Awareness**

In 3 Steps

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## Why Emotions Matter

Emotions are **not bad**—but they can feel confusing, overwhelming, or even disproportionate. The goal isn't to avoid emotions, but to **build awareness, understanding, and strategy** around them.

### Think of Emotions Like a Smoke Alarm

Emotions are **signals**—they notify us when something is happening:

- **Chirp:** A subtle emotion you might ignore
- **Alarm:** A louder, more urgent emotional response that's hard to miss

If we ignore the *chirp*, we often end up overwhelmed when the *alarm* goes off. Instead, our aim is to **notice and respond early**, when emotions are just starting to stir.

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## Step 1: Awareness

**Notice and Name** - You can't regulate what you don't recognize.

- Label what you're feeling. The more specific, the better. ***"Name it to tame it..."***
- Ask yourself:
  - *WHAT* am I feeling?
  - *WHEN* does this feeling arise?
  - *WHO* tends to be involved?
  - *HOW* does it show up in my body or behavior?
- Explore the underlying **WHAT**:
  - What story, script, or belief might be fueling this emotion?
  - What is the purpose or utility of this emotion? Aka – *"What's it doing for me?"*
  - Is that narrative still accurate, is the purpose useful, or does it need updating?
- Expanding your emotional vocabulary builds emotional intelligence.
  - Words matter and how you label the emotion has an impact on how you respond.

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## Step 2: Understanding

**Manage & Differentiate** - Understanding the distinction can help with reducing how one responds to their emotional reactivity.

### Primary Emotions

- Your *first, instinctual* reaction. Felt in the body and often visible to self and with others.
- Natural and normal responses. E.g., *Feeling grief when losing someone you love.*

### Secondary Emotions

- Your *reaction to your reaction*. E.g., *Feeling shame about being anxious, or anger about feeling hurt*
- Shaped by thoughts, judgment, or social conditioning

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## Step 3: Emotional Flexibility

**Regulate & Ride the Waves** - Emotions usually pass in **2–5 minutes** if allowed space to flow.

- Acknowledge your emotions without over-identifying with them.
- Hold emotions **loosely** - let them inform, not define you.
- Let emotions **move through you**, rather than bottling them up - avoid building emotional knots.

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## Practice & Skill Building

Here are practical tools to help you build emotional regulation as a **daily practice**:

- **Pause & Step Back** Create space between emotion and reaction.
- **Review the Tape** Reflect after the fact to build insight.
- **Get Upstream** Anticipate patterns before they escalate.
- **Express Honestly** Practice naming emotions with others.
- **Check Alignment** Ask: Does this align with my values?