



Making Space for Feelings as a way of strengthening sense of self

by Kolmi Majumdar

For those who have lost a loved one recently, or long ago, some of the feelings connected with loss of normal due to the pandemic may be particularly difficult.

We may find ourselves having “old feelings.” The feelings may be combined with sensations in the body – such as tightness, achiness, agitation, or heaviness. These may remind us of yet other troubles and experiences we’ve been through.

New feelings may also be coming up that seem foreign to us. We may feel, “this isn’t like me.” Previous ways of coping with our feelings may be less available, or they may not work as well as they used to.

I am going to share a simple process for making space for difficult or stuck feelings that can nurture your sense of *self*, that core sense of *who you are* that can grow and strengthen in hardship, as well as in good times.

Often our deep feelings are gateways to a personal knowledge of self. At the same time, when feelings are overwhelming or we get stuck in them, they can override our ability to feel present and live our lives. Much of the time, our feelings are complex.

I think of feelings as the energy that moves or stagnates along a natural river. The water is the essential self, yet the movement and shape of the river gives it life and uniqueness.

Process Suggestions for Making Space for Difficult or Stuck Feelings

- **Notice the feeling** when it comes up. Take a moment to just acknowledge, “I’m feeling something difficult or stuck.” Perhaps you might notice a sensation in your body.
- **Make some space for the feeling or sensation.**

Take a few breaths on purpose.

Get support for your body.

You might...

Slow down if you've been moving fast

Stand up, feel your feet on the floor

Lean against a wall

Get up and walk a little

Sit down in a chair or on the floor with your back against a firm surface

Lay down on the floor

- **Become curious** about the feeling or sensation. Just notice how it feels to be curious about the feeling or sensation while having some support for your body.
- Notice how the feeling or sensation is **changing as it moves** down the river or how it **may be clarifying** like water settling in a deep pool.
- **Name the feeling or sensation**, keep it simple or be descriptive if you like. Maybe Sadness or Frustration, maybe Prickly Tense Sadness...
- **Greet the feeling** – verbally greet your feeling or sensation, say “Hello....”

If you do this process with enough time, you might ask the feeling or sensation what it has to say and allow yourself the imaginative space to listen for an answer.

- **Thank your feeling** and **thank yourself** for making space and taking time.

If you're in a context where you aren't able to take much time, even a few moments with one of these steps can help for now. You can set an intention to touch back into your feelings and sensations at a later time.

Making space for feelings and sensations as a regular practice can support you in strengthening a core sense of who you are.

Making space for feelings and sensations can help us grow a more spacious sense of self for meeting life.