

Reconnecting with Emotions: the Power of Curiosity

Caroline Winzenried

- Review:
 - What is spiritual bypassing and why is it harmful?
 - Why is it important to be in touch with our emotions?
- Tuning into emotions
- Building emotional awareness

Overview

Recap:

Spiritual bypassing

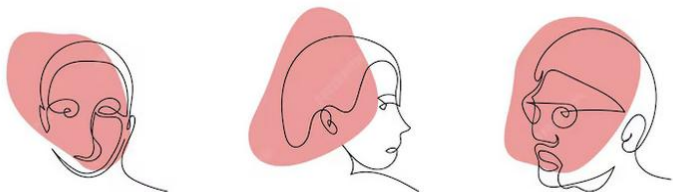
“Spiritual bypass occurs when a person attempts to heal psychological wounds at the spiritual level only and avoids the important (albeit often difficult and painful) work at the other levels, including the cognitive, physical, emotional, and interpersonal” (Cashwell et al, 2007).

- Tell us about what we value
- Motivate us toward action
- Help us make decisions
- Communicate our intentions

Recap: Emotions as information

Recap: Case Study

- Joined AA and "turned his life over to a higher power" through prayer and reframing (spiritual bypassing)
- This helped with alcohol and drug use, but not with pain and anger from childhood
- Counselling helped Paul to listen to and understand his anger so he could choose how to respond to it through emotional regulation and feel in control of his actions



Relationships to our emotions

We all have relationships to our emotions. What do you know about yours?

Relationships to our emotions

- Which emotions get the most attention and compassion from you? Which get the least?
- Are there some emotions you've been taught are “good” or “bad”?
- Where did you learn these messages from, and how do you carry them with you now?
- How are your emotional relationships influenced by the values you learned to attach to each emotion?



Getting in touch with emotions

- Mindfulness
- Curiosity
- Compassion

Mindfulness

- Being present with your experience
- Noticing what's there without judgment
- Allowing whatever is there just to be

Curiosity

- What does the emotion feel like *right now*, in *this situation*?
- Does it bring an image to mind?
- Does it have a colour/temperature/shape?
- Do you feel it somewhere in your body?
- What thoughts is it connected to?
- What happens when you notice it?
- What does it want you to know?

Compassion

- What does this emotion need from you?
- What would soothe it?
- How can you let it know you're listening?
- How can you thank it for the information it's offered you?

Questions for specific emotions

Tailored questions for anger and sadness

Recap: Emotions as Information

Sadness

- Signals that we need to process a loss and adjust to it
- Helps us seek support

Anger

- Indicates boundaries have been crossed
- Signals unmet needs
- Motivates us to enact change

Fear

- Alerts us to threats
- Motivates us to find safety

Anger

What is this
anger trying to
protect?

Have
boundaries
been crossed?

Do I have needs
that aren't being
met?

Do I sense
something I
value is at risk?

What changes
can I make to
address this?

Sadness

What was
meaningful to
me about what
I've lost?

What about the
loss do I need
to let go of?

Is there an
element of the
loss I can hold
onto?

How can I adapt
to the loss?

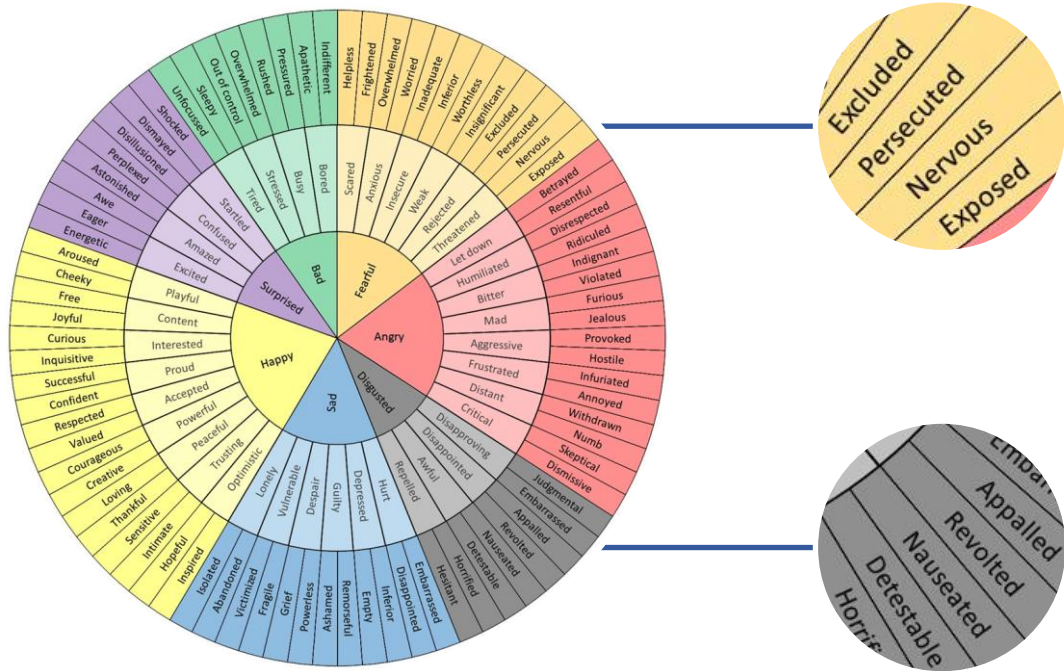
Do I need extra
support?



Building emotional awareness

A few strategies

Expand your emotional vocabulary

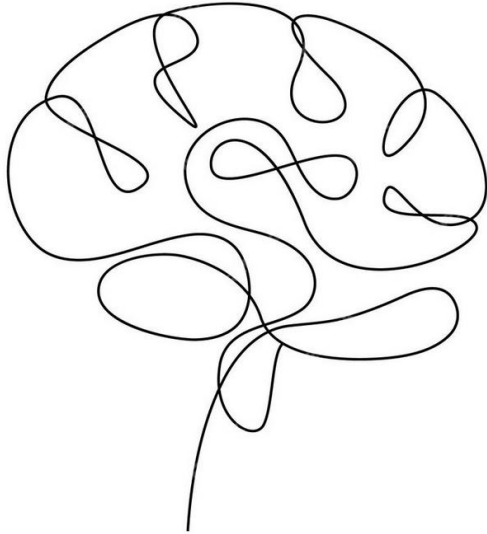


Media reflections

- What is this character feeling?
- What clues into their emotional experience?
- Have you ever felt like that before?
- How do they respond to their emotions?
- Is that how *you'd* respond in a similar situation, or would you respond differently?



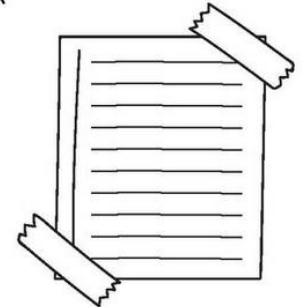
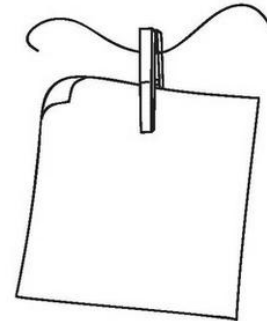
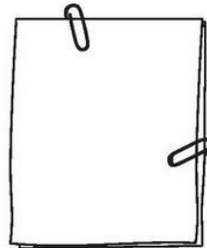
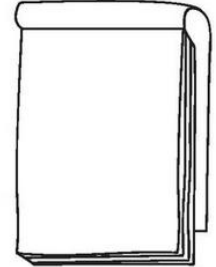
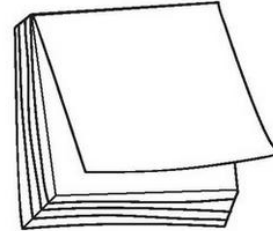
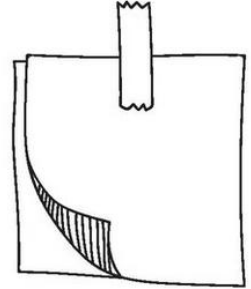
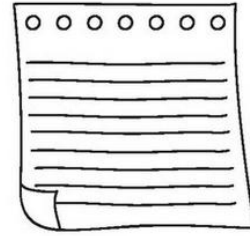
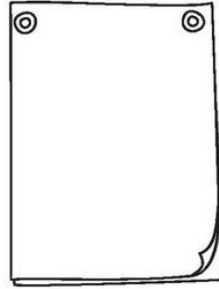
Drawing on memories



- What memories do you have of strong emotions?
- What kind of cognitive/physical/interpersonal/spiritual or philosophical experiences accompanied the emotion?

Journaling

Journaling can be a helpful way to consolidate what you've learned and build a reference to look back on



Friends and loved ones

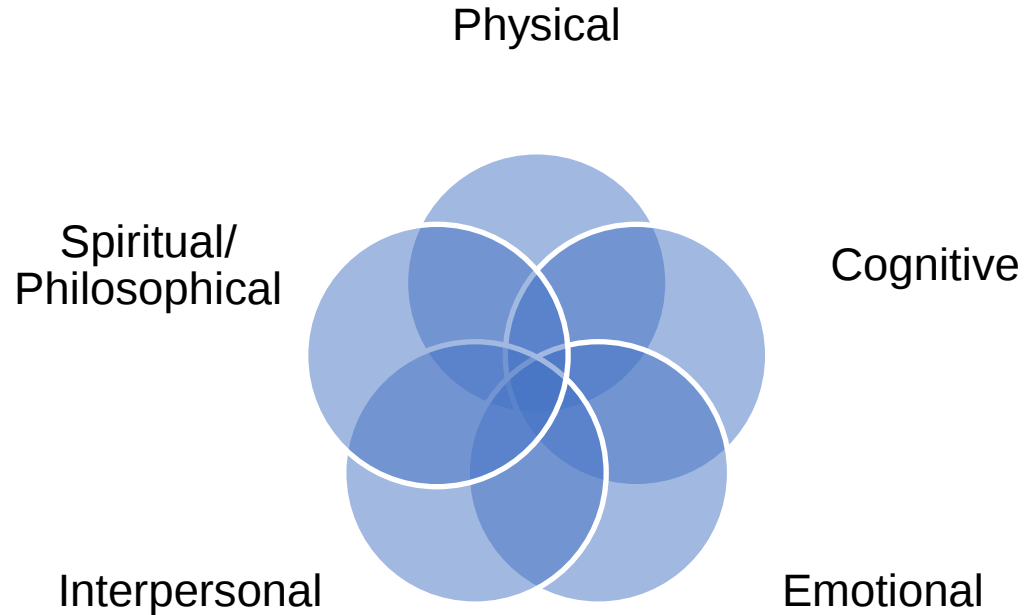
- Listening to a friend or loved one's experience of us can give us a window into our emotions from the outside
- But keep in mind that their perspective is just that: a perspective



Check-in exercise

- Set aside time each day to reflect on your emotional experience
- Draw on information from other domains (physical, cognitive, etc.) and a feelings list to help put a name to the emotion
- See if you can rate the intensity from 1 to 10 and notice what tells you it's at that number

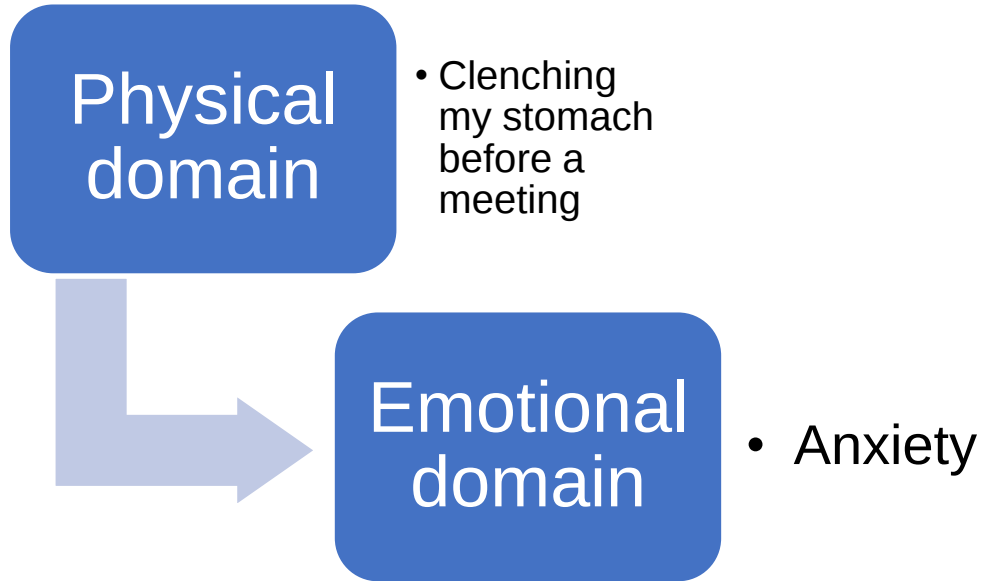
Experiential domains are interconnected



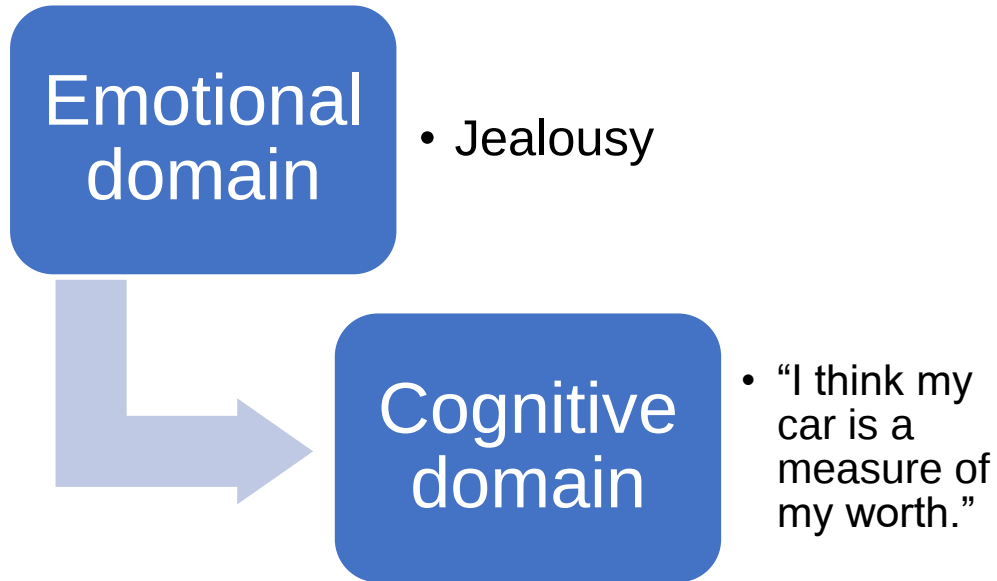
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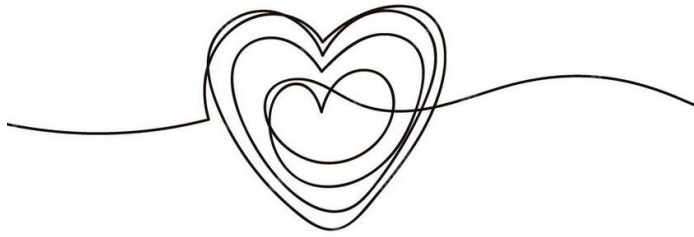
- The information we get from each domain provides clues to others
- By putting all the pieces together, we can form a complete picture of our experience

Other Domains → Emotional Domain



Emotional Domain → Other Domains





Exercises to practice

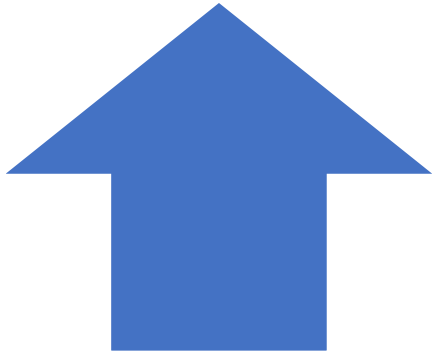
- Focusing
- RAIN Meditation
- Dropping the Anchor

Emotional Regulation

Turning the volume up or down

- Emotions are spontaneous and automatic. We don't choose to have them, but we can choose how to respond
- We can “turn the volume up” to listen to the important information they offer
- We can also “turn the volume down” to soothe overwhelming emotions and make space for other parts of our experiencing

Turning the volume up or down



Bringing attention to emotions, being curious about them, using meditative and reflective exercises to tune into them



Cognitive reappraisals, contextualization, mindfulness, acceptance, flexible attention

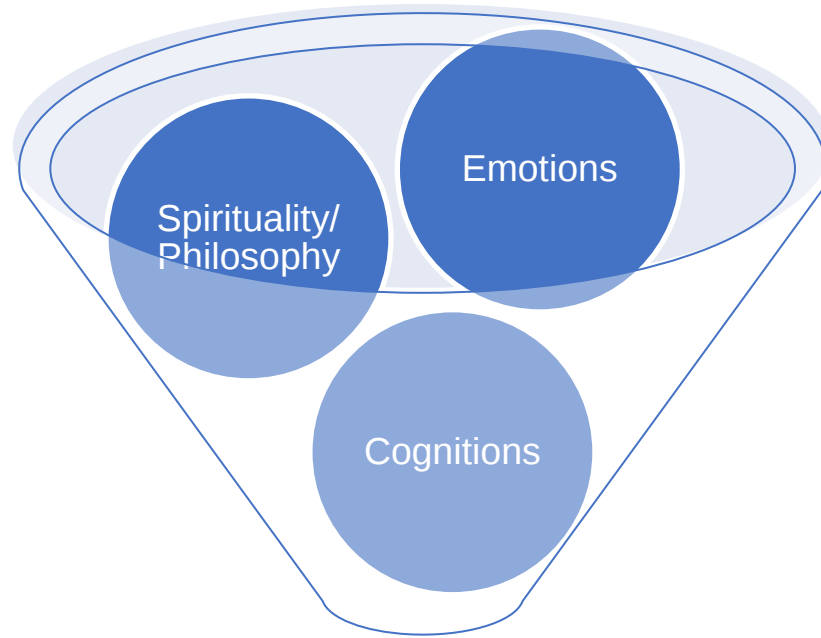
Turning the volume up or down

Emotional regulation should be a flexible process that allows for us to hold our emotions gently—not turning the volume off (trying to get rid of them) or blasting the volume so it drowns out everything else (leaning into them so much they take over)

Emotions are morally neutral

Emotions are morally neutral

- No emotion is “good” or “bad”
- Emotions are just experiential information
- We may not like the way an emotion feels or want to change the way we *respond* to an emotion, but that doesn't make the *emotion itself* “bad”

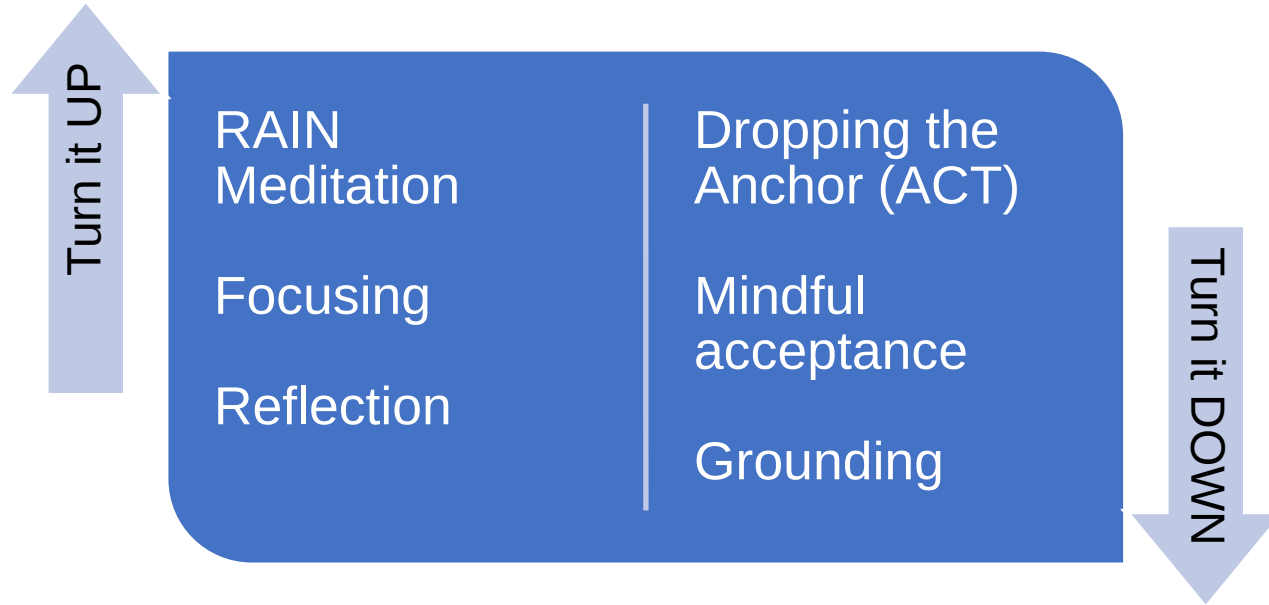


Choosing a response that
aligns with our values

Listen to learn how to soothe

- People often worry that they'll be overpowered by emotions if they listen
- In fact, we *need* to “turn the volume up” sometimes to know how to “turn it down”
- Situational context is key: learning when it's appropriate to turn the volume up or down

Exercises to turn the volume up/down



Healing factors



SUPPORT GROUPS

It helps to talk to others who have been there



TELL YOUR STORY

Stories empower us and help us to understand



THERAPY

Professional support can help you navigate



LISTEN

Hearing others' stories reminds us we are not alone

Thank you

Caroline Winzenried
contact@consideredcounselling.net
www.consideredcounselling.net
0435 855 382