



Fear of Feelings Course

The Foundation of Emotion Focused MI

Working with Emotional Ambivalence in Ourselves and Others

<https://sky-feelings-found.youcanbook.me>

You know that moment mid-conversation when someone says something that hits you wrong, and suddenly you're not listening anymore - you're defending, explaining, arguing or planning what to say next? Or you 'blank out' and lose the conversation completely?

Maybe it's when a client challenges your approach, or when someone gives you feedback that stings. In that instant, all your MI training can feel like it just flew out the window.

This happens because triggers aren't just about thoughts - they're full-body emotional experiences that can knock us right out of the collaborative stance we're trying to maintain.

The Challenge of Staying Emotionally Present

This course is about understanding what's happening when emotions feel overwhelming, and learning to work with them instead of against them.

This course is for anyone who wants to stay more present in difficult conversations - whether you're a helper, parent, partner, or just someone who gets thrown off by big emotions (yours or others').

What We'll Explore Together

1. **What are Feelings?** - Nov 21, 2015 and [Now available as a Video Course](#)
2. **Understanding Triggers, Anxiety, and Avoidance** - Dec 19, 2025

Video course of class 2 will be available soon

3. **Curiosity** - Cultivating openness to our inner experience - Jan 16, 2026
4. **Anger and Guilt** - Setting and holding healthy boundaries - Mar 20
5. **Sadness** - Learning to let it in and letting go - Apr 17
6. **Shame and Healthy Pride** - Repairing and taking in the good - May 17

Take the classes one at a time or take the whole course

Dates: Nov 21, Dec 19, 2025 and Jan 16, Feb 20, Mar 20, Apr 17, 2026 (3rd Fridays)

- **Time:** 1:30 - 3:30pm ET
- **Format:** Live on Zoom
- **Cost:** \$50 per 2 hour class (\$250 for the whole course)
- **Registration:** <https://sky-feelings-found.youcanbook.me>

This course will go beyond learning concepts. We'll use real examples, videos, cultural stories, and your own experiences to understand what's happening when emotions feel scary or unwelcome.

Who This Is For Anyone interested in understanding the complexity of human emotions - whether you're a therapist, coach, healthcare professional, manager, or just someone who wants to have a better relationship with feelings, yours and others.

No background in Motivational Interviewing required. Everyone is welcome.

What Past Participants Say

"I sometimes feel like I am on an 'emotion island' in a sea of people who don't want to or don't know how to be present to their feelings. It is so life affirming to be in a group that cares so much about empathic conversations, learning and growing."

"This class is teaching how we can honor our feelings AND pause and think about what to do with those feelings."

"I've experienced every emotion in the last eight sessions that we talked about and I've allowed myself to sit with them without judgment (not an easy task). And I feel lighter knowing that my typical amygdala response doesn't have to be the deciding factor in how my emotion is acted out."

About Your Instructor Sky Kershner is a MINT Certified Trainer and Associate Professor at WVU School of Medicine, where he teaches Motivational Interviewing and Psychodynamics. This course builds on his work in Emotion-Focused MI, which he has presented at international conferences in New Zealand, San Diego, and Minneapolis.

For Those Who Want to Go Deeper

This is foundational work in understanding emotional ambivalence - how we can be conflicted about our own feelings. We'll look at emotions that humans often struggle with: anxiety, curiosity, anger, sadness, guilt, shame, and pride. (I'm tempted to say "healthy" pride, because we're so quick to stigmatize our natural emotions as bad or wrong.)

Clinical Track - Case Consultation

If you're a clinician interested in advanced training in Affect Phobia therapy, email me about the Clinical Track: skykershner@gmail.com

Recommended Reading *Living Life Like You Mean It* by Ron Frederick

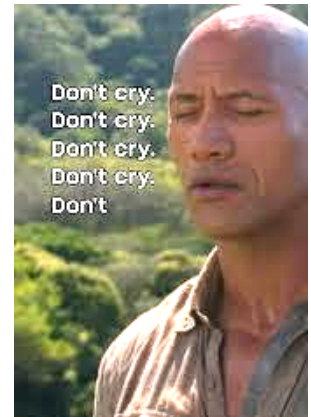
Get a jump start on your New Year's resolutions by understanding what you're feeling about your life and your relationships.

Just in time for the awkward Thanksgiving Dinner moment, and those sometimes sad Christmas mornings.

Register: <https://sky-feelings-found.youcanbook.me>

Background Info

Feeling feelings is not always easy for us humans. Have you ever heard someone say "I hate to feel sad" or "I don't like to get angry"? It's a real problem then when an emotion like sadness or anger shows up at the door for a visit, and you don't want to let it in, isn't it? Have you ever given someone a compliment, only to have them brush it off, unable to feel the healthy pride in their accomplishment? Have you ever done this yourself? If you have, you are not alone!



In this course we will seek to understand what's going on behind these common human approaches to emotions. In particular we will focus on five basic human emotions that we tend to have trouble with: curiosity, anger, guilt, sadness, and pride. I'm tempted to say healthy pride, because some of our natural emotions are so quickly stigmatized by us as bad or wrong, so we sometimes need to distinguish between 'healthy' pride and 'unhealthy' pride. Do you see what I mean?

Who is This Course For?

This course is ideal for anyone interested in understanding the complexities of human emotions and how the avoidance and fear of emotions impacts our lives.

You can expect to gain valuable insights into the nature of emotions and learn practical techniques to help yourself and others navigate difficult feelings. By the end of this course, you'll have a deeper understanding of emotional processes, as well as avoidance of emotions and anxiety about emotions, and be better equipped to address emotional challenges in both personal and professional settings.

Anyone: "You look nice today"
My anxiety: they're making fun of you

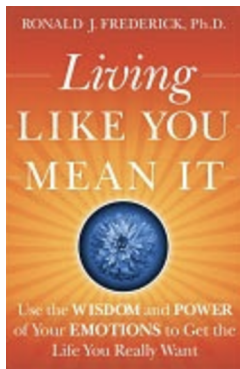


Whether you're a mental health professional looking to expand your skillset or an individual seeking personal understanding and growth, this course offers valuable tools for emotional awareness and support.



Instructor

Sky Kershner is an Associate Professor at WVU School of Medicine, where he teaches Psychodynamics and Motivational Interviewing. Sky is an Approved Supervisor for AAMFT, a MINT Certified Trainer in Motivational Interviewing, a Member of the IEDTA, , and serves on the Editorial Review Board of the Journal of Contemporary ISTDP. www.wv-mi.com



Additional Material

For those who like to read, the book Living Life Like you Mean It by Ron Frederick will be very helpful for this course.

We will be using social media, videos, myth and cultural stories to exemplify the material, as well as case examples from this book

What Past Participants Are Saying

"This class is teaching how we can honor our feelings AND pause and think about what to do with those feelings."

"The video resources were really good. It makes it real for me."

"Your selections of videos with your annotations are always such clear examples of our topic. I always learn so much. Thank you."

"Thank you for your openness and vulnerability, it invites the same. Your groups and classes are becoming more and more important to me. I sometimes feel like I am on an "emotion island" in a sea of people who don't want to or don't know how to be present to their feelings. It is so life affirming to be in a group that cares so much about empathic conversations, learning and growing."

Fear of Feelings - Clinical Track and Case Consultation

A Clinical Track is also available for clinicians who want to enhance their clinical expertise in the realm of Affect Phobia.

Email me for more info: skykershner@gmail.com

Testimonials

"This course gave me a clearer understanding of how difficulties in experiencing and expressing emotions can create barriers in our internal experiences and relationships. Sky fosters a safe and engaging space to learn how emotional and bodily awareness can enhance conversations and empower change. I highly recommend this course to anyone looking to better understand the role of emotions in their clients' experiences and improve their ability to support meaningful change."

"I just wanted to send a big thank you for putting together such an engaging and beautiful course on the fear of feelings! Your tremendous knowledge and excellence at group facilitation is unparalleled. I am a bit of a slow-processor, so I needed a minute to think about everything I absorbed during our eight weeks together. And all I can say so far is that I've experienced every emotion in the last eight sessions that we talked about and I've allowed myself to sit with them without judgment (not an easy task). And I feel lighter knowing that my typical amygdala response doesn't have to be the deciding factor in how my emotion is acted out. And the same goes for applying that to helping my clients recognize how emotions work. So much to process, but I wanted to thank you for putting so much of yourself (and your time) into this course!"

"By the end of this course, you will be able to recognize and work through emotional ambivalence both in yourself and in your clients."

"I learned to identify anxiety and get to its root cause and to help my clients"

More Background

This is a Basic Principles course for Emotion Focused Motivational Interviewing. Emotion Focused MI applies MI processes to work with the human tendency to be ambivalent about feeling and expressing our emotions.

This course was first presented as a full day presentation at the International MINT Forum in Christchurch, New Zealand in October 2024, and in a mini version at the IEDTA Conference in San Diego in November 2024. [See the intro promo video here.](#)

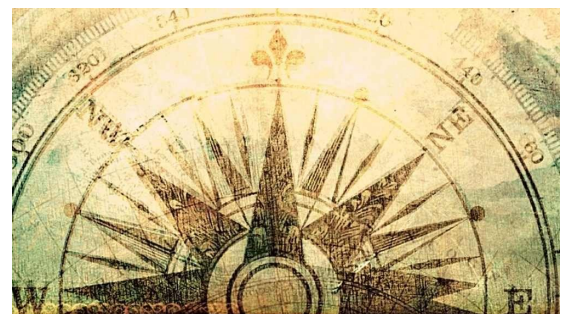
About Attachment-Based Emotion-Focused MI

This course is a foundation for learning Emotion Focused Motivational Interviewing. You do not need to know what Motivational Interviewing is in order to enjoy and benefit from this course. Everyone is welcome.

For those who are interested, Motivational Interviewing is a way to have a conversation with someone about making a change in their life. Usually that change is a behavioral change. In Emotion Focused MI we are also considering how we can make a change in our relationship to our emotions.

In MI, we listen not only to a person's thoughts about change, but also to their emotional and somatic experience as they talk about ways they might be feeling stuck or ambivalent in their situation or with their emotions. This can be very helpful, since emotional and somatic awareness can provide a person with important information about “what feels right” for them.

In this course, we will look at how bringing emotional and somatic awareness into a conversation can deepen our ability to evoke, empower, and affirm the person we are talking with as they tackle the hard work of change. By helping a person somatically feel the cost of staying the same and the deep desire for the



benefits of change, we can support them in becoming more grounded in their intentions.

This course is a foundation to an exploration of how conversations about feelings and their somatic pathways can enhance both personal awareness and healing, as well as help us be better listeners and friends in our relationships with others.

Have you ever given someone a compliment, only to have them brush it off, unable to feel healthy pride in their accomplishment? Have you ever done this yourself?

Or heard someone say "I hate to feel sad" or "I don't like to get angry" - and then watched what happens when those emotions show up anyway?

If any of this sounds familiar, you're not alone. Feeling feelings isn't always easy for us humans, and when we're afraid of our emotions or try to avoid them, it can create real suffering for ourselves and others.

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Staying Emotionally Present in MI - Understanding Our Triggers and Blocks
Fear of Feelings Series - Single Session Friday, December 19, 1:30-3:30pm ET

You know that moment mid-conversation when someone says something that hits you wrong, and suddenly you're not listening anymore - you're defending, explaining, or planning what to say next? Or you 'blank out' and lose the conversation completely?

Maybe it's when a client challenges your approach, or when someone gives you feedback that stings. In that instant, all your MI training can feel like it just flew out the window.

This happens because triggers aren't just about thoughts - they're full-body emotional experiences that can knock us right out of the collaborative stance we're trying to maintain.

In this session, we'll explore:

- *What's happens in your body when you get triggered (and why that matters)*
- *The difference between feeling anxious and feeling a feeling*

- *Why we avoid certain emotions - and what that costs us in our MI conversations*
- *How to stay curious when your fight-or-flight response wants to take over*
- *Practical ways to return to partnership when you've been knocked off balance*

This isn't about never getting triggered - that's not realistic or even helpful. This is about understanding what's happening when emotions feel overwhelming, and learning to work with them instead of against them.

Who This Is For: Anyone who wants to stay more present in difficult conversations - whether you're a helper, parent, partner, or just someone who gets thrown off by big emotions (yours or others').

You don't need a lot of MI experience to benefit. You just need to be human and curious about how emotions work.

[More info here](#)

Cost: \$50 single session, two hour class

Register: <https://sky-feelings-found.youcanbook.me>

Part of the Fear of Feelings series - each class stands alone

Recomended Intro Course - What is a Feeling?

<https://skykershnergmailcom.gumroad.com/l/feelings-1>