

- How can we feel better when it seems like the system is burning down around us?
 - changing your surroundings doesn't help and burns you out fast
 - trying to artificially manipulate your feelings by numbing out doesn't help in the end as the feelings always come back
- I've learned if you want to feel better - you have to learn how to actually feel your feelings, instead of running away from them by taking action or numbing out.
- "We heal when we can be with what we feel".
- I want to share with you how I learned to feel better - how to really feel my feelings, in hopes that you can try these strategies yourself and notice if they help you feel better too.

First, what are some of the Inhuman Stories we've been told about emotions

- They are a sign of weakness
- They represent a character flaw or broken part of you
- They are dangerous and must be resisted and controlled otherwise they'll force you to do bad things
- They are evil or sinful

How to Feel Your Feelings: Remember, Listen, Nourish

1. Remember: What emotions actually are (because weirdly I missed this if they did teach it to us in medical school)
 1. Emotions are physical sensations in your body - not evil forces, not signs of moral character flaws, not a sign of weakness or illness
 2. Emotions are signals from your brain, telling you you something important about the safety of your current environment - if you feel good, that means either something dangerous is gone, or something nourishing is here. If you feel bad, that means either something dangerous is here or something nourishing is gone. That's it!
 3. Emotions can be false alarms - but that doesn't make them bad. As I talked about last week, we've gotten some very wrong message about what IS actually dangerous, which is why you suddenly feel terrified in the middle of a meeting because someone asked you a question that you don't know the answer to. In fact it can be very helpful to actually listen to these false alarms - because this is how they come to the surface, so then you can start to change the underlying Inhuman Story attached to the false alarm
 4. Emotions are from you, they cannot harm you - it's resisting emotions that actually causes harm, and also actually what makes them feel so intense and difficult to manage. When you resist or numb, your body thinks you haven't heard the original message, so it starts to scream louder. HELLO there's danger hear!
2. Listen:
 1. Allowing an emotion - usually takes a few minutes to dissipate. Sometimes it takes longer if the story behind it is something you've been holding onto for a while, but it feels way way less intense than if you are trying to fight and resist and talk yourself out of your emotion, or numbing out to avoid the feeling
 2. Helpful phrases: "This is how it's supposed to feel", "This is what it feels like when my body is trying to take care of me"
 3. Write out the story that the emotion is trying to tell you - what does your body sense as dangerous? Nourishing? - getting curious without judgement helps

4. Noticing and even describing what you are feeling.
5. Taking safe action to release the urge that your emotion is expressing (scream, cry, run on the spot, shake out your body)
3. Nourish:
 1. Speak to yourself like you would to a toddler freaking out at the monster under your bed - don't berate yourself or say what's wrong with you. Say things like "hey, I know you're feeling a lot. I get it. You learned to be afraid of this a long time ago. I'm here with you and we can get through this together". This is a lot easier when you already remember that your body isn't trying to attack you, but rather take care of you

New Healing Human Story: **Emotions are all taking care of you.** They are evidence that your body, your constant companion, your home in the world, is always there for you trying to keep you safe and sound.

And the cool thing is - if you practice this skill of feeling your feelings, the benefits are really compounded:

1. You feel less bad and feel more good - hooray!
2. You can do anything you want if you're not afraid of the bad feelings that might come with doing it. Say you've been trying to get back to exercising, but whenever you try to start, you feel all this anxiety and shame. You can look out for any false stories that are driving that anxiety and shame AND you can keep taking action towards getting back to exercise WITH the anxiety and shame. Because you know how to feel those feelings, so why would they stop you?
3. You can start to generate helpful emotions on purpose to take actions that you want. Again, the exercise example - you can think about what emotions will help you actually start exercising - maybe motivated or confident, and start telling yourself stories that generate those emotions instead. So when the anxiety story comes up that exercising is too hard and it's hopeless to try, you can feel those feelings AND tell yourself a motivated story like "I know I can do hard things" that will make it more likely you actually take the action of starting to exercise

Invitation:

- **What emotions are you most afraid to feel? How many emotions are you familiar feeling throughout the day?**
- **When a yucky emotion comes up, and you're tempted to try and push it away, could you set a timer for 5 minutes and try some of the phrases and allowing techniques I discussed earlier, and see if that changes your experience of the emotion?**