

ORIENTING TO JOY & PLEASURE



Joy is often thought of as the ultimate emotion. And while it feels good to experience joy, all of our emotions are necessary and serve a purpose.

There are many benefits when we experience joy or something that brings us pleasure such as the activation of feel good, pain release and mood balancing chemicals from our brain. While we want to recognize and be with other emotions like frustration, sadness, anger, staying too long with those emotions can make us feel worse.

- ❖ When you notice another emotion that is not joy or is intense, name it and notice where it shows up in your body. For example, I feel angry and I feel it in my face or back. The more we name intense emotions, the more opportunity for them to decrease. Dr. Dan Siegel calls it: Name it to Tame it. Take a few deep breaths, inhaling to a count of 4, holding your breath to a count of 2, exhaling to a count of 4. Keep breathing until you feel calmer or the intensity of your emotion has decreased.
- ❖ Sometimes it is helpful to pretend an overwhelming emotion is a crying baby, we wouldn't turn away from a crying baby but we also don't want the baby to be crying all day so we soothe the baby. Simply tell your emotion: I see you, I recognize you, I will be with you for a little bit. And then tell your emotion, now is time for us to take a pause and do something else.
- ❖ Your next task is to orient yourself to pleasure or joy. Be compassionate and kind to yourself if you have trouble orienting to joy or pleasure. It takes practice!

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Start off by making a list of things that bring you joy or pleasure. Nothing is too small.

For example:

- ❖ Drinking a cup of tea
- ❖ Connecting with friends
- ❖ Watching your favorite show
- ❖ Reading favorite book

Add to your list:

And as you practice your activity, name the emotion you are feeling and where it is showing up on your body. For example, I feel calm and I feel it in my heart. The more we do this, the more we will rewire the brain to look out for pleasurable experiences, be with them and savor them.