

PROCESSING EMOTIONS

I'm Diana Swillinger, and this is the Renew Your Mind podcast. Episode Number Nine: Processing Emotions

Welcome to The Renew Your Mind Podcast. I'm your host, Diana Swillinger. A lot of us have tried to do the right thing all our lives, but we still feel overwhelmed and stuck. I believe that you deserve to get unstuck and experience more joy, more peace, and more contentment. Regardless of what life sends your way, I'm here to help you renew your mind and make it all possible.

DIANA: Hey. Hey. How y'all doing today? I'm great. I'm always great these days. Even when things aren't going how I'd prefer, I'm still great. I like feeling great. It's coming from the power of renewing the mind, and I love it. One of the things I'm super excited about these days is watermelon. I just thought I'd share that with you all. It's watermelon season.

I don't know, maybe watermelon is available all year round. I don't even look because I've just decided that summer, spring and summer is when the good stuff's available. My sister and I were recently talking about the top five foods we just can't stop eating if someone puts them right in front of us. So those of you who haven't talked with me outside of hearing me on the podcast, you might not know some of this, but those of you who know me, you know double stuffed Oreos. You put those in front of me, I'm in trouble. I can't stop eating those watermelon. It's probably a better thing to have trouble with, right? If someone puts watermelon in front of me, I can't stop eating it. But at least it's a fruit. It must be good for me, right? Even though it's made of sugar and water and that's about it. I mean, there's got to be vitamins, right? It's good for me, and I just can't stop eating it. So I'm really glad watermelon season is back. It's pink, it's juicy, and it's so yummy. So I decided to share that with you.

I also want to thank any of you who've been heading over to iTunes and leaving a review for the Renew Your Mind podcast. The more reviews we can get over there, the more women who need to hear this and hear what I'm teaching are going to be able to find it, and they're going to be able to start renewing their minds and feeling better. So please go over there and leave a, uh, review so we can get the Renew Your Mind movement really going. It needs traction. You guys can all help with that. I know people need it, and I know it's helping people because you all tell me. So if you haven't left a review yet, go over and do that, and I'm going to read one to you. I recently got one from the iTunes handle south by Southwest, and it was referencing episode number seven on the list. So if you hear the review and you're like, wait, what is she talking about? Head back over to episode number seven and listen to that one. Then it'll all make sense. But here's the review from south by Southwest. It's funny how we want people to read our minds and magically do all the things, but we hide the list, setting them up for failure.

What a great message. Letting others off the hook for trying to figure out what we want makes us responsible for our own feelings. Thanks for being a champion of others' success, Stephanie. So south by southwest is actually Stephanie. Thank you so much, Stephanie, for that. I'm glad what I'm offering is resonating with you and helping so many of you already. And we're just getting started. As far as I'm concerned, the Renew Your Mind podcast is going to be around for a long time. There's a lot to share about renewing the mind. I'll be here. And today we're going to talk about emotions, which I'm just noticing. That's what Stephanie said. She said that we're responsible for our own feelings, right?

So let's talk more about emotions. We've talked about what's in our control and what's not. And that's really important to understand. And we've talked about the thoughts that we have about things in life. And not all thoughts are true. They don't all serve us. So the next thing I want to hit on is emotions. Because next week for episode ten, I'm going to start putting it all together. And I want to share with you all, uh, how these components work together in this main tool that I use when I coach people that helps them solve for whatever is going on in their lives. It's a great tool that helps you dissect what's going on in the brain and then open up all sorts of options where you can choose what you want to think because it affects everything.

It's all interconnected. But when we can kind of uncover what's going on in the brain, we really start getting leverage. So episode ten for sure, you're going to want to listen to that one. It's going to be foundational for what I teach and give you insight into a very practical tool that you can use to renew your mind intentionally. So before I get to that next week, I want to talk about emotions a little bit more today and processing them. Um, so here's the deal. God has equipped us with the ability to feel a whole bunch of different emotions.

There's a diagram I use with my clients. It's readily available on the Internet. Go ahead and search it. It's called the Emotional Wheel or the Wheel of Emotions or something like that. And it's just a big wheel with colors. And it breaks up all these different emotions into layers and categories where you can kind of see a whole bunch of emotions you can choose from to learn to identify what you're feeling. There's got to be at least 100 emotions on there. But I still find with my clients, when we're looking at that wheel, sometimes there's emotions we're feeling that aren't even on there. There's just so many different emotions that we're able to feel that God gave us the ability to have and feel they're supposed to be there. And if God gave it to us, let's consider it a gift.

I do. He must have given it to us with purpose. Then, uh, what do we do with this wonderful gift of being able to feel emotions? Well, we try to reject half of it. If you look at the diagram half or more, actually, we might actually consider to be negative emotions, and the other half we would consider to be positive. We all love the happy side of the wheel and all those positive emotions we're like. Joy. Yeah. Bring it peace. Yes. I'm down for some of that. Satisfaction. Pride. Freedom. Powerful. Successful. Calm. Lay it all on me. I'll take all of those m. But what about all the other emotions? What about doubt? We're like, oh, no, not that one. Fear? Definitely not. Disappointment? You rejected? Nope. Sad? Nope. Disillusioned? Nope. I don't like it. I don't want it. And we try to push it away, but if you think about it, it's kind of like saying, hey, God, you made a mistake when you gave me the ability to physically feel all these things. I don't like it and I don't want it. We're rejecting this part of humanity. We're rejecting this part of ourselves, the part where we feel pain. I know pain is uncomfortable.

I know it is. But when we reject it, we're shoving it down to deal with it later, and then it leaks out in ugly ways, like anger or blame. Or we might try to numb it with double stuffed Oreos, or binge watching Netflix, or shopping or drinking, eating whatever it is that we turn to to get some relief. I'm not saying every time a negative emotion pops up, we should drop everything and deal with it immediately. Sometimes it's not the right time. I usually choose not to ball in front of my kids or in a meeting or in a public place, but that doesn't mean I should just ignore it. I want you to understand that part of being emotionally mature, part of the human experience is purposely processing emotions. There's lots of articles out there in research about the benefit of processing emotions. It was even popping up in people's Instagram stories this weekend, and people were tagging me on some of their stories with charts and things about how to process emotions because it's helpful.

Here are some of the reasons to make it a priority. Hanging on to unprocessed negative emotions takes up emotional bandwidth. It's using space and energy. When we're hanging on to it, it keeps us from feeling the positive emotion that we want more of. Imagine a space where we could plunk down all the unprocessed emotion on it. Let's just say like a kitchen table. So you fill up the kitchen table with all your unprocessed emotions. Maybe you've got three casserole dishes filled with resentment, a couple of platters filled with grief. The plates are filled with disappointment, frustration, anger. Now there's some good stuff happening, and you want to feel the joy and love and contentment that come along with it. So you want to find a plate to have some of those emotions, but the table is too crowded with all the other emotions that you haven't even dealt with yet. Okay?

We only have so much space to process our emotions. We do have a bandwidth. We can only take so much. That's why we get overwhelmed and all this kind of stuff. We're not processing emotions. We hang on to so many unprocessed emotions, there's not room to process and experience the good ones you want. And like I said, all those plates and dishes of negative emotion that are crowding up your table, it's going to feel like overwhelm or stress or depression. Anxiety. Who wants a table full of that stuff? And when we're stressed and overwhelmed, it spills over into judgment and blame with the people we love. It gets in the way of how we communicate and deal with other people.

The plates of unprocessed emotion, they get heavy. We carry them around with us. And we're feeding off this steady diet of toxic thoughts and feelings in our subconscious because we're not dealing with it. It feels icky. If we don't process the emotion, they'll stick around in some way or they'll come out in some other ugly way. And when we're trying to suppress them and fight them off, we're using a lot of energy. It's exhausting. Trust me, I've done it. I've been there. I'm guessing a lot of you have too. Maybe you're even eating healthy and exercising and trying to do good things, but you're always exhausted. Could be unprocessed emotions. It might be.

What I really want you to know today is that you can process these emotions on purpose. And it won't kill you. It's not going to kill you. In fact, when you do it right, you're going to start feeling relief and you're going to make more room for positive emotions. So it's actually good for you.

So let's just pause a moment and decide what an emotion is. Anyway, if you don't know this about me yet, I love words. I've played Scrabble with my mom every day on an iTunes or an iPhone app for almost a decade. And if I could just gripe for a moment. The EA Scrabble app is disappearing in a month, and I am not happy because the app that somebody's replacing it with is terrible. But I won't get into that. Okay? Um I'm the queen of Boggle in my family. Nobody can beat me. Maybe for one game, but if we're having a tournament, no way. And I love to look up words in the dictionary, dictionaries can really help us understand concepts. And because we just say words and think words all the time, and we don't bother to really dissect what they mean. So let's do that with emotion.

What is emotion anyway? So here's what I got from the dictionary.

Emotion, it's a noun, a, uh, conscious reaction, subjectively experienced as a strong feeling accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body. So an emotion is a conscious reaction. That means we're aware of it, and it has physiological reaction in the body. That means we feel it. Have you noticed that thoughts just happen in the brain? But emotions, we feel them. Nervous is a great one to think about when you want to recall feeling an emotion. When you're nervous, you feel it in your body, right? Where do you feel it? Twirling tummy butterflies in the stomach? That's just 1 quick example that we're all familiar with. This is why emotions are commonly called feelings, because we feel them in our body. So what I would like to share with you today is how to feel an emotion on purpose without pushing it away. And that means feeling it in our body.

That's where emotions happen. And when we purposely feel an emotion, the beautiful thing is, a lot of the time when we're purposely feeling a negative feeling that we maybe have been resisting or dreading, it turns out when you feel it on purpose, it can dissipate in moments or minutes. I've experienced that, especially with grief. My sister died of leukemia 18 years ago, and at that time, I refused to feel the grief. I was resisting it. I was not feeling it. I didn't want it. I thought it was too painful. Instead, I just got angry at God and started drinking to numb the pain. Well, that didn't work. I was just angry and drinking. Now, that's not better than grief.

By the way, I stopped drinking over nine years ago. I had been using it to numb my feelings for a decade. Doesn't work. I just felt terrible all the time. And I had a massive, unprocessed emotions, and I was not showing up well for my family. Now, when my dad died a couple of years ago, I decided I wasn't going to repeat that. I was going to grieve well, and that meant allowing feeling the pain on purpose. And by the way, I'm here today recording this podcast. So, news flash it did not kill me. I survived it. I did not need to push it away. I didn't need to bury it with alcohol. I didn't need to deny it or run from it or turn it into anger or blame. I felt it on purpose. And what I got was a more beautiful and love filled experience.

So much better than after my sister died. This time, it felt honest and like, what I was supposed to be going through, it felt true. When we truly love someone and we lose them, we're going to feel grief. That's normal. It's a good thing, and it's a beautiful thing. So the first year after my dad died, I had a lot of physical feelings of grief. Yeah, it wasn't easy to go through that. But it has gotten easier over time to process it. And I still grieve. Just a couple of days ago, seemingly out of the blue, I felt a real rush of grief when I was thinking about my dad. Not just like, oh, I miss him. I'm like, this is a big deal. I don't know where it's coming from or why, but I chose not to ignore it. I didn't push it away. I didn't cover it up. I was alone. I didn't replace it with anger. And I didn't also try to just do the feelgood thing and replace it with gratitude. I am, um, filled with gratitude for having my dad in my life. But I didn't need to bury my grief with gratitude. I can still have that gratitude later. Right now, I needed to feel the grief. So here's what I did to process the emotion, first thing you need to do is name the emotion.

So I started there. I said to myself, oh, grief. Yes, this is grief. I miss my dad. I love my dad. My dad's not here. This makes sense. This is grief. Then I paid attention to how it was feeling in my body. For me, with grief, my lungs feel heavy. Like, I couldn't quite get enough air. My throat tightened, the corners of my mouth turned down, and my face crinkled up. And I could feel water filling up behind my eyes. Then I started to imagine what might grief look like? This grief I'm experiencing right now, if I could see it, and if I could feel it and touch it, how would I describe it? I thought, wow. The color? I'd say medium to a dark gray. It's dull, not reflective, not shiny. It's not slippery. Smooth, but it's still flat and not bumpy. And then I went back to noticing my throat is still tight and that water was still there. And I let the tears fall, and I cried. About five minutes later, it had passed. And my mind moved on freely just to the other tasks of the day. It wasn't an issue anymore. It was amazing how difficult it felt when I was going through it.

Like, maybe I wouldn't choose this, but it's here, so I'm just going to do it anyway. And I could have easily thought, I don't like this. I don't want to do this. It's very painful. That's what I used to do. Now I'm like I can do pain. I don't know how long it's going to last. Even if it lasts 20 minutes or half an hour or a day, I can do this in five minutes, it was gone. I honored my thoughts and my emotions. I didn't disrespect them like I used to. I didn't try to numb it. I didn't turn into some other ugly emotion. And I didn't see myself as a victim. I just thought I'm human. This is what happens. This is totally fine. I just honored it. And I took responsibility for my feelings.

I do admit, though, if you have never heard of sitting with your emotions in this way and like, naming the color and is it bumpy or smooth, what does it feel like? It might seem a little weird. You also might be a little afraid of trying it because maybe it seems like it'd be too painful. But just trust me. I don't know anyone that has died from this or even felt worse off by processing emotions on purpose. Everyone I've talked to who's tried this has felt better. One time I was coaching someone. By the way, I tell you guys stories from coaching because otherwise it's just my stories. And really, the examples from other people's lives is very helpful. So I want you to hear stories from situations that are not just mine. Examples help. So this gives you a different perspective. So last summer, I was coaching someone. She was volunteering for a mom's group at church.

And she said there was a lady there who was always looking for help from other people. She had medical issues. She was a single mom. She had lots of stuff going on. She was always getting help from the woman at church, but not necessarily grateful. And she kept asking for help. And this was just going on month after month. Basically, my client was telling me that she felt like she was being taken advantage of.

The woman would ask for her to do laundry to be done, go grocery shopping, and all sorts of requests. So we were talking about creating boundaries. That's why this came up. My client wanted to create boundaries for this relationship. But the real breakthrough didn't come from creating the boundary. It came when my client was noticing that she kept saying yes to help him because she was trying to avoid negative emotion. She thought if, uh, she said no, it was going to be uncomfortable. And so she didn't want to do that. Whatever emotion it was, she didn't even identify it yet. She just knew it was going to feel uncomfortable. So instead of saying no, she'd say yes. So she wanted a boundary, but it actually wasn't a boundary issue. She already knew she wanted to say no, which she was free to do. No real boundary needed to be created because there's nothing wrong with somebody asking. People can ask, just say no. The issue was she didn't want to say no. We imagined that woman asking her for help again. Like, next time you guys are at church together, she's probably going to ask you for help. So my client decided what she would want to say. She decided she'd respond, I love you, and no, I can't help with that, but thanks for thinking of me.

Then I asked, when you say that to the woman, how are you going to feel? She said, I think I'm going to feel really awkward. I'm probably going to worry about what this woman is thinking of me for saying no. I said, all right, how long do you think that's going to last if you just allow that feeling? She thought about it. She said, I don't know, maybe five minutes, and then I'll just go on with my morning.

I said, So you could say yes, take her laundry home, go shopping for her again. Or, uh, you could say no and feel awkward for, like, five minutes. And then we were laughing, right? It seems kind of simple. Do you want just five minutes of discomfort or hours of helping someone that's taking advantage of you? We do that, though, don't we? Just trying to avoid our negative emotions. But my client was able to say what she wanted to say, which was no with love, if she was just willing to sit with an uncomfortable emotion. This process of feeling emotions works for positive emotions, too. Maybe you're missing out on that.

Sometimes we're so freaking busy, we don't stop to feel the good emotions either. Do you even know? What does happy actually feel like in your body? What physiological experience do you have with being happy? What color is it? What does it look like? What does it feel like? Where do you feel it in your body? How about calm, contentment? What does it feel like? Some feelings. We feel a lot of, like, anger, nervousness. We know what that feels like in our body. A lot of them are more subtle. They can be very subtle. But remember, by definition, we have physiological experiences for our emotions. So go ahead and take some time and feel them. That's my assignment for you, all of you who are listening to this. Because you actually want to learn skills, to feel better and renew your mind and have better thoughts and get through good times and challenging times and all of it better, and just show up as a better person. Try this. Make this be your homework. Pick one or two emotions, maybe one positive, one negative. Notice when you're having them. Name it and then feel it in your body. See what it feels like.

All right, then go ahead. Send me an email. Send me a message. Let me know what you learned. I'd love to hear from you. As always, I'm here to help you in your mind renewal journey and your emotional journey too. It's all connected anyway. Make sure you listen to the next episode where I'm going to give you my best tool to handle whatever life throws at you, puts all of this together, and I use it with all my clients. So that'll be episode number ten next week. Come back for that. Listening to this podcast is a great place to start. But for those of you who want to feel better now, or you want faster results in your life for sure, just go schedule a free one on one coaching session with me. I would be honored to coach you and help you. I'm really good at it. So go do that and you can start feeling better now and experience more peace, more joy, more contentment today. You don't have to wait. It's totally possible.

And if you want some of my other resources, go check it out at rympodcast.com. I have free webinars and all sorts of other stuff. If you get my email, you're going to hear all about that. So go get that if you want that. And that's it for today, y'all. Uh, I'll talk to you next time. Take care.

As an advanced certified life coach, I help Christian women trying to live their best lives. But they still feel unsettled, satisfied, and stuck. I teach thought management skills that work so you can enjoy life again and step into who God has created you to be. Don't forget to head on over to Rympodcast.com to get my free resources or a free coaching call.