



Be Brave. Make Space.



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Hi! I'm Coach Margie
I'm glad you're reading the Brave Space newsletter. My newsletter is written to share information and support.

Happy Monday, all!

This week I'm featuring an article written by Dr. Rubin Khoddam Ph.D. that appeared in Psychology Today entitled "How to Stop Intellectualizing Your Emotions. Feeling your feelings is a journey to authenticity."

There is something of value to learn from this article for everyone who is sober-curious or who is in the process of changing their relationship with alcohol. I hope you enjoy this week's newsletter and I'd love to hear your thoughts!

As a coach in the area of alcohol recovery, and as someone who was on the client end of the coaching relationship for the better part of a year, I know the fear of facing the one thing that kept me stuck - my feelings. It wasn't until I learned that I was holding on to the feelings intellectually, rather than letting them drop down into my body where I could process them, that I found freedom from alcohol.

Yes, alcohol is an addictive substance that is glamorized and promoted in society, and yes, many people become physically addicted to the substance. But those of us who fall into addiction to alcohol are both emotionally and physically addicted. It's the emotional, not the physical addiction that brings people back over and over and over again. The sooner we all learn how to honor our emotions and learn to process them properly, the sooner we can finally free ourselves of the addiction.

I work every day with clients to help them see the value of vulnerability and letting their feelings - no matter what they are and how painful they are - process through them with compassion and grace so they may learn to let them go. I hope you enjoy the article! I added some prompts for you at the end to get started with your emotional exploration.

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How to Stop Intellectualizing Your Emotions.
Feeling your feelings is a journey to authenticity.

In a world that often values rationality and control, we frequently find ourselves intellectualizing our emotions. This process involves dissecting our feelings, analyzing them, and attempting to manage them with logic.

While intellectualizing emotions can be helpful in some situations, it can also lead to a disconnection from our true emotional experiences. This article will help you stop this habit and have the tools to reconnect with your emotions more healthily.

Understanding Intellectualizing Emotions

Intellectualizing emotions is a defense mechanism that serves as a shield against the overwhelming intensity of feelings. It's the process of suppressing emotions by overthinking, analyzing, or explaining them away. It can be rooted in our upbringing, societal expectations, or personal coping strategies.

The Consequences of Intellectualizing Emotions

While intellectualizing emotions might seem like a coping mechanism, it often has detrimental effects on mental and emotional well-being. Here are a few reasons why it's essential to address this habit:

Emotional Suppression: When you intellectualize your emotions, you suppress them. This can lead to unresolved emotional issues that fester over time, potentially resulting in more significant problems like anxiety or depression.

Interpersonal Relationships: Intellectualizing emotions can hinder your ability to connect with others on an emotional level. It might make you appear distant or unapproachable, making it challenging to build meaningful relationships.

Physical Health: Continuously suppressing emotions can lead to physical health issues such as increased stress, high blood pressure, and weakened immune system functioning.

Recognizing the Signs of Intellectualizing Emotions

Before you can address the habit of intellectualizing emotions, you must first recognize when you're doing it. Here are some common signs to look out for:

Overthinking

One of the most apparent signs of intellectualizing emotions is overthinking. When you find yourself caught in a cycle of constant analysis and rumination about your feelings, it's a clear indicator that you're avoiding your emotions.

Rationalizing

Rationalizing is another sign that you're intellectualizing your emotions. You might find yourself coming up with logical explanations or excuses for why you're feeling a certain way, rather than accepting the emotion itself.

Minimizing

Minimizing your emotions involves downplaying their significance. You might tell yourself that your feelings aren't that important or that you should be able to handle them on your own.

Using Humor as a Defense

Some people use humor as a way to deflect from their true emotions. While humor can be a healthy coping mechanism, using it to avoid addressing your feelings is a sign of intellectualization.

Learning to Embrace Your Emotions

Now that you know the signs of intellectualizing your emotions, it's time to learn how to embrace and accept them.

Self-Compassion

Practicing self-compassion is a crucial step in reconnecting with your emotions. Treat yourself with the same kindness and understanding that you would offer a friend. Remember that it's okay to feel what you're feeling.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness techniques can help you become more aware of your emotions as they arise. By staying present and nonjudgmental in the moment, you can observe your feelings without trying to intellectualize or suppress them.

Seek Professional Help

If intellectualizing your emotions has become a pervasive and harmful habit, consider seeking help from a mental health professional. Coaching and/or therapy can provide you with the tools and support to work through your emotions more healthily.

More on Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is good for your health. It is a robust and efficacious method through which to promote immediate improvements to bodily feelings and the desire to self-improve.

Self-compassion is also associated with significant benefits for emotional well-being, positive psychological functioning, and lower levels of psychological distress, depression, and anxiety in both general and clinical populations, including in people with physical health problems.

Self-compassion is being kind and understanding towards oneself in times of pain or failure. Interventions such as compassionate mind training, imagery work, and mindfulness-based stress reduction can enhance self-compassion, which has consistently been related to well-being.

Five phrases to help with self-compassion today:

1. *"I deserve love and kindness just because I am."*
2. *"Mistakes are growth opportunities, and I will learn from them."*
3. *"I will treat myself with the same understanding and support that I offer to others."*
4. *"It's okay to not be okay sometimes; I'm allowed to feel my emotions."*
5. *"I am enough, and I have the strength to overcome challenges."*

The Journey to Emotional Authenticity

Stopping the habit of intellectualizing your emotions is a journey towards emotional authenticity. It's about allowing yourself to experience your feelings fully and acknowledging that they are a natural part of being human.

Self-Acceptance

Accept that emotions are an integral part of who you are. They don't make you weak or irrational; they make you human. Embrace the full spectrum of your emotions, from joy and love to sadness and anger.

Journaling

Keeping a journal can be a powerful tool for processing your emotions. Writing down your thoughts and feelings without judgment can help you better understand and express your inner world.

Practice Vulnerability

Embrace vulnerability by sharing your feelings with trusted friends or family members. Opening up to others allows you to build deeper connections and receive support during challenging times.

Self-Care

Engage in self-care practices that nurture your emotional well-being. This might

include meditation, exercise, creative pursuits, or spending time in nature. Such activities can help you stay connected to your emotions and reduce the need to intellectualize them.

Conclusion

Intellectualizing your emotions may seem like a way to maintain control, but it often comes at the cost of disconnecting from your true emotional experiences. To lead a healthier and more fulfilling life, it's essential to recognize the signs of intellectualization and take steps to embrace your emotions authentically.

The journey to emotional authenticity is a personal one, and it may require time and effort. But the rewards are profound—a deeper connection with yourself, healthier relationships, and improved overall well-being.

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I invite you to use this newsletter as a guide to assess your level of intellectualizing your emotions and feelings. Here are some journal prompts for you to get started:

- Am I using alcohol or other drugs to avoid feeling my feelings?
- When do I overthink, analyze, or explain away my feelings?
- What is intellectualizing my emotions costing me:
 - Emotional suppression
 - Interpersonal relationships
 - Physical health
- How do I rationalize, minimize, or use humor to deflect my emotions?
- How can I use self-compassion and mindfulness to help me embrace and accept my emotions?
- Would working with a coach or a therapist help me?
- How can I incorporate phrases of self-compassion into my day?
- How can I use the suggestions for becoming Emotionally Authentic to help me fully experience my feelings?
- How can I incorporate:
 - Self-acceptance
 - Journaling
 - Vulnerability
 - Self-Care

When I made the very brave decision to change my relationship with alcohol two years ago I was left with my raw, exposed, emotions. With the help of my coaches and the excellent program created by Annie Grace and This Naked Mind, I learned how to use all of the tools (many of which are in this article) to face my painful emotions with kindness and grace.

This is what set me free from alcohol. No white-knuckling, willpower, threats or ultimatums. I turned to the power that I had within me, the power that I had given away to alcohol, to step into the arena and realize that I could let those painful emotions process through me. The result is a happier, healthier, grateful me.

Margie

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