

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT EMOTIONS

You can identify your misconceptions by listening to what you say to yourself about an emotion. These repeated statements are often unexamined, so please sharpen your awareness of what you tell yourself. These statements are so much a part of you that it hasn't yet occurred to you to question them—so listen carefully because until they are identified, they are running the show. Identify your belief, examine it in accord with the Dharma, and ask the question: Is this statement true (in accord with Dharma)?

MISCONCEPTION ABOUT EMOTIONS	COMMENT
The Fix It approach: I want to take care of this feeling (or fix a particular situation that makes me feel this way) and never have to deal with it again. Or, I already dealt with that so why am I feeling like this again?	Emotions arise according to causes and conditions. You have no control over these or when an emotion will arise. What you can control is your behavior and how you respond—how you meet each arising as new right now. Saying it is the “same emotion” is a story about it.
It's bad to feel.	Emotions are part of being human. You may assign the values of good and bad to emotional energies, but these values are not inherent in the energy itself. This misconception also sheds light on your conditioning (familial and societal) that feeling is bad. There is no right or wrong to emotions—there is just energy.

MISCONCEPTION ABOUT EMOTIONS	COMMENT
Other people make me feel bad (or make me feel happy).	People and circumstances influence your emotions. It is unskillful and immature to project responsibility for your feelings onto others. When other people trigger emotional states within yourself, turn the light inward and feel the energy directly. Take responsibility for your feelings by stopping the projection, withdrawing blame, and dropping your story.
My story justifies how I am feeling.	Discern between the feeling and the story. Story telling about an emotion actually takes us away from directly feeling. This can be a very subtle dynamic, so pay attention.
Identify your particular misconception:	State in what way it is false:

LIST OF DISTURBING EMOTIONS AND MENTAL STATES

Some of the emotions listed below are more “states of mind.” For example: envy, guilt, or greed. These have a corresponding emotional tone that can be identified in your body. Emotions are multi-faceted, meaning that they may also have a positive impact. For example, the thought of being humiliated or shamed may cause you to not commit certain actions. Or a cluster of emotions may arise together, i.e. anger, fear, hurt. Review the list below. It is just a starting point. You may come up with a different definition or antidote.

The Buddha spoke of sensing feelings as pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. Here we are focusing on the so-called unpleasant. He also talked about antidotes. Feeling directly dissolves the duality of self-centeredness (me and emotion). Skillful discernment can arise when we are connected to feeling.

EMOTIONS	DEFINITION	ANTIDOTES
ANGER	Reaction to someone or a situation that you perceive has hurt you.	PATIENCE
HATRED	Anger and fear that solidify and fester over time so that it becomes persistent and directed at someone or something.	WISDOM
ENVY	When you want what someone else has.	JOY IN THE JOY OF OTHERS
JEALOUSY	When you are worried that someone else will take what you have.	GENEROSITY
PRIDE	Exaggerated sense of your own self worth; a lack of humility.	INTERDEPENDENCE
SHAME	Sense that you don't measure up to societal or others' expectations or standards.	SEEING SITUATION CLEARLY

EMOTIONS	DEFINITION	ANTIDOTES
SADNESS	Sense of loss and distress suffered by yourself and/or others.	IMPERMANENCE
ANXIETY	Sense of uneasiness due to feeling that you cannot cope with a situation.	ACCEPTANCE EQUANIMITY
FEAR	Sense of dread that something or someone is dangerous to yourself and/or others.	LOVING KINDNESS
DESPAIR	Loss of hope that situations will change for the better.	ACTION
LONELINESS	Sense of feeling unloved or alone due to a belief that one is separate.	CONNECTION
GUILT	Feeling that you have done wrong or failed to meet an obligation.	REPENTANCE
GREED	Sense that you cannot be satisfied or contented.	GENEROSITY
LACK	Sense that you are missing in something essential to your life, that there is a hole within yourself that cannot be filled.	CREATIVITY
BOREDOM	Sense that nothing is happening. (By the way, this is a significant phase of meditation.)	AWARENESS
GRIEF	Response to a loss or change in circumstances.	REFLECTION
HOPELESSNESS	Sense of feeling low and that life has no meaning.	ENERGY