

THE EMOTIONAL COMPASS

A GENTLE GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONS, UNMET NEEDS, PROTECTIVE PATTERNS, AND THE PATH TOWARD HEALING.

1 OUR ATTACHMENT NEEDS

We all have core needs that must be met to feel safe, secure, and connected.



LOVE
to be cared for



TO BE SEEN
noticed for who we are



TO BE HEARD
to have our voice matter



BELONGING
to be part of something



TO BE VALUED
to matter and be appreciated



SAFETY
to feel safe and secure



AUTONOMY
to have choice and control



GROWTH
to learn, grow and thrive

2 EMOTIONS ARE MESSENGERS

They tell us whether our needs are being met or not.

WHEN OUR NEEDS ARE MET

Our emotions communicate:



Joy



Peace



Connection



Confidence



Message: "My needs are being met."
I am safe. I can stay open and engaged."

WHEN OUR NEEDS ARE NOT MET

Emotions step in to get our attention:



ANGER

A boundary has been crossed.



FEAR

Something feels unsafe.



SADNESS

I've experienced loss or disconnection.



DISGUST

Something doesn't feel right for me.



EMBARRASSMENT

I fear rejection or exclusion.



LONELINESS

There is an unmet need, longing or threat to connection.

3 OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM PERCEIVES A THREAT

"This feeling is dangerous."

Our threat response activates:



FIGHT

Defend, confront, take control.



FLIGHT

Escape, avoid, get away.



FREEZE

Shut down, disconnect.



FAWN

People-please, appease, keep peace.

These responses helped us survive, but can keep us stuck.

4 PROTECTIVE PATTERNS DEVELOP

Over time, we find ways to cope and protect ourselves.



ISOLATION

Withdraw and shut out.



PERFECTIONISM

Strive to be perfect to feel safe or worthy.



OVERTHINKING

Cycle in worry and what-ifs.



DEPRESSION/ SHUTDOWN

Lose energy, motivation, or hope.



BLAMING OTHERS

It's their fault, so I don't have to feel.



SELF-CRITICISM

I'm not good enough. It's my fault.



BINGING

Numb or soothe with food or habits.



RESTRICTING

Control, deny or push away needs.

These strategies protected us in the short term, but keep us disconnected from our needs and others.

5 WE CAN CHOOSE A DIFFERENT RESPONSE

When we pause and get curious, we create space to respond instead of react.



NOTICE

What am I feeling right now?



LISTEN

What is this emotion trying to tell me?



IDENTIFY

What need is not being met?



RESPOND

How can I meet this need with compassion?

Curiosity creates the space that compassion can grow.

6 WE BEGIN TO MEET OUR OWN NEEDS

Little by little, we learn to become our own safe place.



REGULATION

Finding greater calm and steadiness in your mind and body.



CONNECTION

Developing a more compassionate and authentic relationship with yourself and others.



HEALING

Creating new patterns that reflect who you are, rather than the ways you've had to cope.

REGULATION • CONNECTION • HEALING

The foundation of secure self-attachment.

Learning to meet your own emotional needs with compassion and care.



Dana Millar
COUNSELLING

Compassionate. Curious. Connected.

The Emotional Compass
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IMAGE
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