

# 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  
Developed by Dana Millar, CCC

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