

Emotions as Honored Guests

Stephanie Noble

In dealing with emotions, the first step is awareness. Identify the emotion, but don't identify with the emotion. The emotion is just a whirlwind of activity passing through your body-mind. You co-create it, giving it added energy; or you deny it, forcing it to claim your attention any way it can.

When you become aware of an emotion, treat it as an honored guest in your home. Ask it questions:

- Where do you come from?
- What is your intention?
- What is it you require of me?
- How can I make you more comfortable?
- What information do you have to share with me?

Explore this emotion-guest with loving curiosity. Allow it to come and go. Neither cling to it, nor hold it hostage. Do not send it out in the cold to fend for itself.

As a guest in your home it will be expected to follow the house rules. It shall not take charge of your life or your behavior. If your neighbors complain of wild parties every night, it won't do to say, "I can't help it. My rowdy house guest made me invite all his friends." No, you are responsible for what goes on in your own home. Likewise, you are completely responsible for your own behavior. Learn to honor your emotion-guests without letting them take over. You are not their victim, you are their gracious host.

When a guest you thought had left, returns -- don't become impatient. Try not to say, "Oh, you again!" It is not here to torture you, but to inform you. Only you can turn the experience into torture.

Always honor your guest, but if its company makes you uncomfortable, you can develop techniques to shorten the visits. Your guest has certain needs as well as certain information for you. The quicker you get to the needs/information exchange the less time you have to spend with an emotion. The more time you spend 'suffering' its company, the longer it will be before it leaves. So, cut to the chase.

Here's an example: Anger arrives at the door. Instead of saying 'Oh, God, what kind of awful person am I that I'm always so angry?' or any of the other circular talk you tend to get caught up in, just say, "Hello, Anger. What brings you here today? What do you have to tell me?" Anger will give its report, you will gain a little insight into the nature of anger, and it will be satisfied and leave. Compare this to your usual exchange of bringing up past grievances, projecting an anger-filled future, regretting every angry word you've ever said, and inviting guilt in to share the meal. Yes, it is a meal by now, because you are truly feeding your anger.

If instead you have a 'cut to the chase' needs/information exchange right at the door, the emotion may not even feel it has to come in. But never bar the door to an emotion. That kind of denial only results in emotions breaking in the back way, climbing through the windows. (An example is when emotions speak to you through physical illness). It is much easier to deal with house guests than with burglars and vandals!

Sometimes we get ourselves into a situation where we think we are boarders in a house of emotion. We rail against our victimized fate of having to put up with all the noise and craziness. But we haven't a clue that, in fact, we own the deed to the house that it was willed to us at birth, regardless of who we are or what we have done. We don't earn this deed and we cannot lose it; it is just ours, free and clear. Maybe someone forgot to tell us! How very convenient for those squatter emotions! In truth those emotions don't feel comfortable having the run of the place. It's not their job description and they get very fearful and run amuck. The truth is that these emotions need the house rules and only you can provide them.

If you discover you've been acting as a boarder, your first response may be to want to evict all these squatter emotions and be done with them.

But it is not that simple. These emotions are here for a reason. They've just become unruly because there was no one to tell them the house rules, no one to explain that while they are honored guests and their input is valued, all final decisions will be made by the owner, namely you. But things have gotten to such a state that you could shout from the rooftops and you would not be heard. Anyway, at this point they would only laugh and carry on.

So, what you need to do is get to know each of these squatter emotions one on one. Ask them the questions, honor them and understand their intentions. They will respond with gratitude. As you get to know them, and as they understand you are in charge, things will quiet down. You will find ways to satisfy some of the needs of your guests, and you will also be surprised at what a wealth of information they have to share with you. Eventually you may find you have your house to yourself, and your emotion-guests just come to visit from time to time.

No matter what has happened to you, no matter what emotions seem to be holding you hostage, remember that your emotions only want to serve you, if you let them. You have the deed to your life, and your emotions are your honored guests.

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