

Surfing Emotions

Practice

One:

- When you feel a strong emotion, the kind you might typically try to avoid, ignore, or push away, take a few deep breaths and focus your attention on that emotion.
- Do a body scan: bring your attention to your body, move through your body, and notice where you are experiencing the emotion. Where is it located? For example, in my jaw, in my throat, in my chest, in my stomach.

Two:

- Focus on the area where you feel the emotion and notice the exact sensation. Is it hot or cold? Are your muscles tense or relaxed? Does it feel tingly or fluttery? How big is it? For example: "I feel fluttering in my stomach," "My mouth feels dry," or "There's tension in my jaw."
- Side note: if you're more of a visual person, you can imagine giving the emotion a colour. What's the texture or density of that colour? Is it bold, transparent, or shifting?

Three:

- Sit with the sensation you've found. Keep your breath steady: in through the nose, out through the mouth. Notice how the sensation moves and increases and decreases in intensity. Our emotions are fluid, not fixed. Instead of pushing it away, see if you can soften around it. Breathe into the area and gently relax your muscles.
- For the visual: imagine a soft white light surrounding the sensation, easing the edges.
- For the verbal: offer yourself a few kind words. For example: "It makes sense that I feel nervous, this is a nerve-racking situation." Or, "Of course I feel upset, that was hurtful." This validation is part of the softening.

Four:

- Take a deep breath in, letting it move through your whole body. Then breathe out slowly, imagining you're releasing the emotion as you exhale allowing it to move through and soften as it leaves. With each breath, feel yourself settling a little more.

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Explained

- You can treat this practice like a short meditation. At first, it helps to rehearse it rather than waiting for an intense emotion to arise in real time. Set aside five to ten minutes once or twice a week to intentionally explore it.
- You might choose to lie down or sit somewhere comfortable, close your eyes, and take a few slow breaths. Do a gentle body scan and see if you can notice any emotion already present. If nothing comes up immediately, think of something small that happened during the week that created discomfort or unease, just enough to evoke a feeling you can work with.
- Move through the steps on the next page as a way to practice moving with the wave of emotion, rather than fighting it. With repetition, you'll find it easier to use this same process naturally when strong emotions show up in daily life.
- What you're teaching your body through this practice is that it's safe to feel difficult emotions. At a nervous system level, you're learning that even though emotions can be uncomfortable, you can sit with them and still be okay.
- It doesn't mean you'll ever like feeling mad, sad, or hurt, no one does. But you'll start to trust that you can experience these emotions without being overwhelmed.
- By processing emotions in this way, you're also building awareness of your body's cues. Over time, you'll catch the signs earlier, noticing that small twinge in your chest or jaw before it *"hits you out of nowhere."* Instead of going from zero to one hundred, you'll notice the shift much sooner and have more space to work with it.
- This isn't about removing emotions. We can't, and we don't want to. Emotions are messengers; they're communicating with us. Surfing your emotions is about creating safety, learning to interpret what your emotions are telling you, and building a new way of relating to them.