

HEALTHY LIVING
HEALTHY PLANET

feel good
live simply
laugh more

natural awakenings

FREE



peace on earth

**UPLIFTING
HUMANITY**

Simple Ways to Give
and Do Good

**MEANINGFUL
GIVING**

Tips to Simplify
the Season

**HOLIDAY
TREATS**

Flavorful, Festive
Party Foods



EVERY ISSUE IS
A GREEN ISSUE

December 2011 | Portland/Vancouver Edition | nportland.com

Awakening to Emotions

by Tina Gilbertson



A divorced woman is told by her friends that she seems to be “stuck in grief” over her marriage.

A man who was fired from his job is accused by friends and family of “hanging on to his anger” about it.

A student is ashamed of “refusing to let go of her concern” about not doing well on exams.

As a mental health counselor, I often hear people talk about the painful feelings that bring them into therapy as if the feelings themselves were the problem. They see so-called “negative” emotions as a sort of psychic detritus clogging up their lives, rather than as valid and valuable responses to life’s challenges.

Emotions (or feelings—I use the words interchangeably) are more than meaningless waves on the surface of our minds. They’re more than random chemical occurrences in our brains. Emotions are nothing less than clues about who we are and what matters to us.

Like it or not, your personality, relationship style, career aspirations, mental health and subjective quality of life are all tied inextricably to your emotions.

Personality

Our feelings about what’s going on in our lives, and in the world around us, represent who we are. Without our unique emotional response, we would

all have the same personality (i.e., none).

The fact that you and I have slightly—or wildly—different emotional reactions to the same person or situation is largely a function of our emotions.

The more you’re aware of your own authentic emotional reaction to something, the better you know yourself. Refuse to pay attention to your own feelings long enough, and you will start forgetting who you are.

Relationship Style

Your emotions affect how you behave in relationships, especially if you’re not fully conscious of them.

We tend to act out feelings we’re not aware of. For example, a barely felt sense of being rejected might lead us to withdraw (the old “leave them before they leave you” maneuver), or else to seek repeated reassurances that eventually wear the other person out.

We need to be emotionally intimate with ourselves before we can be emotionally intimate with another person. Otherwise, how can we know

what to share? Without emotional self-knowledge, we don't have even the option of sharing our real selves. And if we can't do that, we're really alone.

Career Aspirations

Your career can be a reflection of your authentic self, if you want it to be. It can be a way of bringing your gifts to the world while getting paid to do it. But without access to all your emotions, you might not have the information you need to both identify and pursue your life's work.

Why? Because the work you were born to do is in your heart, not in your head. It's in what you enjoy doing, not what you think (or have been told) you're good at. Enjoyment is an emotion. So is interest, desire and motivation.

Connecting to these emotions can fill in large blanks in your career decision-making.

Mental Health

When someone sits in my office in obvious anguish over a loss, I silently celebrate their good mental health, even as I acknowledge and validate their pain.

Emotional discomfort, like physical pain, is a message that something needs our attention.



If you swat your emotions away, or try to ignore them, you will never experience high quality of life.

People who suffer from a rare genetic disorder that leaves them insensitive to physical pain are in danger of injury and even death (e.g., from a burst appendix) because of their inability to experience pain. To be truly healthy, you must have functioning pain sensors.

Quality of Life

How do you measure your quality of life? Is it how much money you have? How successful or good-looking your partner, your children, or yourself? Is

there even an objective measure of quality of life?

Quality of life can really only be measured in emotions. We feel good in our lives. We enjoy our lives. Or not. Regardless of what we have on paper, it's our feelings that rule the day. Hence, we can be poor and happy, rich and miserable.

If you swat your emotions away, or try to ignore them, you will never experience high quality of life.

Emotions like dissatisfaction, rejection and anguish coexist with hope, enthusiasm and joy. They're all in the same bottle, and that bottle is either corked or open. Let your emotions come out and guide you to make needed changes in your life.

Becoming aware of all your feelings may show you your pain, but if you're interested in living an authentic life as YOU, it's worthwhile to awaken to your emotions.

Tina Gilbertson holds a master's degree in Counseling Psychology and is a practicing mental health counselor in Portland, Oregon. She is currently working on publishing her first book. Connect at tinagilbertson.com.



Winner of 9 Natural Choice Awards in 2011!

CALL TODAY for pain relief, health & vitality!

**Injury Treatment
Auto Accident Recovery
Acute & Chronic Pain
Women's Health
Family Health & Wellness**



acupuncture & chinese medicine • massage • chiropractic care

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK!

Most insurance plans accepted



503-493-9398 • 4922 N Vancouver Ave • northportlandwellness.com