TAKING OUR EMOTIONS CAPTIVE

EMP “Emotional Movement Practice”

Emotions are meant to lead us to the Lord. He gave us emotions because sometimes life needs to be celebrated, and other times, something isn’t right within us. When something isn’t right, it’s like an alarm going off, alerting us to something we need to address and bring to Him. This could be that someone hurt us or sinned against us, that we have sinned, or that we’re struggling with a circumstance unrelated to sin.

Some emotions are difficult to process, while others are delightful. Some of the words on the emotion wheel describe what I’d call positive emotions, while others describe more difficult ones. You can practice this emotional movement practice with positive emotions, too, not just the hard ones. God wants to hear about both our joys and our sorrows. When you experience positive emotions, praise the Lord and give thanks. Recognize growth and celebrate God’s blessings and victories.

Conversely, as you pray through what troubles your heart, you can begin to work through those more difficult emotions. The Lord longs to connect with us and wants us to share what’s happening in our hearts. Scripture tells us that He is close to the brokenhearted. Depending on your emotional state and circumstances, you may need to go through this practice once or repeat it several times.

Be present with the Lord without judgment. As Christians, we sometimes struggle to admit that we’re feeling a certain way. We read the list and think, *I shouldn’t feel that way.* While that may be true, we first need to be honest about how we’re actually feeling. This is not the time for judgment; it’s the time for brutal honesty. It may feel scary, but you are in the arms of your Heavenly Father, and He loves you more than you could EVER know. Cry out to Him. Move your body. Engage your soul, and ask Him to fill every crack and crevice.

This “Emotional Movement Practice” is something the Lord gave me, and I view it as a gift. I grew up in a home that, in many ways, was emotionally underdeveloped. Over the last few years, some emotionally charged circumstances knocked me off my feet. I read God’s Word and other books on emotional health, and this practice became a significant part of my personal growth. It helped me learn to deal with difficult emotions rather than getting stuck in a cycle of “checking out” or coping.

For me, this practice has been life-changing. It increases my emotional awareness and helps keep my emotions from getting stuck. Through it, I bring my very real struggles and feelings to the Lord for His healing balm. Bringing my emotions to Him can change the trajectory of my day. When I’m in a “low place” and allow Him to lift my gaze, I begin to see things from His perspective. There is no better “high place” than that. I also ask Him for wisdom to understand why I feel the way I do and how I should respond.

The first step in working through emotions is to NOTICE that I’m feeling something. Sometimes we don’t even recognize that we’re struggling. Have you ever had someone ask what’s wrong, only to realize you didn’t even know you were in a funk? We can be surprisingly blind to what’s happening inside us.

The second step is to NAME what I'm feeling. So often, we don't know exactly what we're feeling or why. We simply find ourselves thinking, feeling, or making choices in reaction to something that has happened or to an emotion we haven't yet identified.

Sometimes I feel bad, angry, or sad. That's a start, but more specific language can bring greater clarity. Reading a list of emotions or looking at the wheel can feel like flipping a switch and turning on a light, suddenly illuminating what was previously unclear. This happened to me last summer, and it brought so much clarity. I could finally identify the nuances of what I was feeling instead of simply feeling overwhelmed.

Once I identify the emotion, I need to NAVIGATE it with God. Then I can counter the lie with the truth. When I read through the list of emotions last summer, one word practically screamed at me: *insignificant*. As soon as I read it, I knew I had finally identified what I'd been unable to put my finger on for months. Naming the emotion gave me a starting point for speaking truth over it.

The truth is that I am significant to the Lord. He loves me and died on the cross for me. He chose me before the foundation of the world. I also remembered that I am significant in other relationships, including the very relationship in which I hadn't felt significant in that moment. Sometimes our emotions can be deceptive.

Identifying the emotion also allowed me to talk with the person about how their actions had made me feel. The more I work through my emotions with the Lord speaking truth over them, the freer I become. I can also grow in emotional intelligence, which can bring healing both within me and in my relationships.

EMOTIONAL MOVEMENT PRACTICE

1. Read through the words on the emotion wheel.

2. Write down any words that tug on your heart. Don't start working through them yet; simply write them down. Depending on what you're experiencing, there may be a couple or a whole list. No judgment—just write them down. If you have a long list, review the words and circle the ones that stand out most to you.

3. Move your body as you process your emotions.

Once you've settled on the words you want to work through, decide how you'd like to move your body as you process each emotion. Engaging your body, mind, and soul helps you recognize that you are a whole person. Our emotions affect our physiology and biology as well as our minds.

- **Movement:** I've used gentle stretching, deep breathing, and walking, but you can choose any activity that engages your body and mind while allowing you to connect with the Lord.
- **Music:** I like to have quiet music playing. Music adds such a beautiful element to the experience. I usually choose ambient music or soft instrumentals so the lyrics don't distract me. Instrumental hymns and worship songs are some of my favorites.
- **Lighting:** I like to use candles or soft lighting, especially when stretching or practicing deep breathing, to create a peaceful atmosphere and help me be present.

As I listen to the soft music and breathe, stretch, or walk, I begin to focus on each word I wrote down in Step 2. I pray through each emotion with my Heavenly Father. I allow myself to **feel the emotion** and **consider why I feel this way and what may have triggered it**. I pray about the situation, asking the Lord to align my heart with His and help me see it through His eyes. If another person is involved, I pray for them, too.

4. Speak truth over any lies or hurt.

Recall Scripture that speaks truth to the lie or addresses the hurt you're experiencing.

For example, if I'm feeling insignificant, I tell the Lord about that feeling and ask Him to show me why I'm feeling that way. Then I remind myself that I am loved by God and chosen by Him. I may meditate on Ephesians 1:3–5:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ, for he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will."

Each time you practice, the experience may look different. The important thing is to replace lies with the truth found in God's Word. You may need to ask God to reveal the truth to you. If you aren't sure what Scripture says about the lie or hurt you're experiencing, this may lead you to further study.

5. Ask the Lord for action steps.

I also ask the Lord whether this is something I can work through and allow love to cover or whether I need to take action. It may mean having a conversation with someone to address the issue, speaking the truth in love while also making sure to listen to their perspective. Or it may involve another step the Lord prompts me to take.

Write down any truths the Lord brings to mind and any action steps you need to take.

6. Move to the next word.

Continue working through your list, bringing each emotion before the Lord. Depending on how much time you have and what surfaces during the exercise, work through as many emotions as you're able. You can always return to the practice later to give the remaining emotions the attention they need.

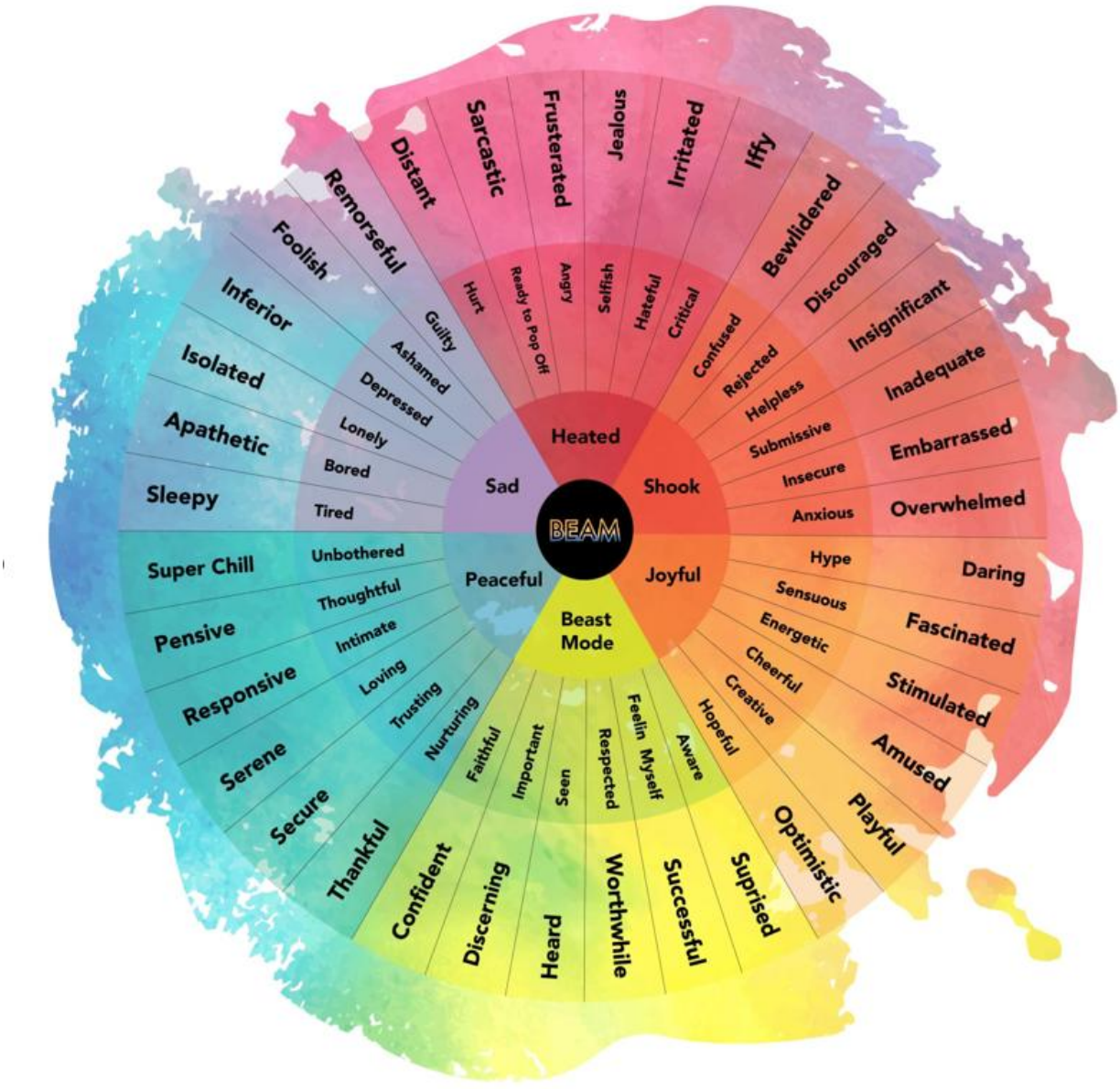
7. End with gratitude.

As you finish your time, spend a few moments expressing gratitude for what the Lord is doing in and through you. If He has prompted you to take action, make a plan to follow through in obedience.

The Psalms provide wonderful examples of David bringing his heart to the Lord with honesty and vulnerability. Often, by the end of a psalm, his perspective shifts as he remembers who God is and who he is in God. No matter what we're going through, God remains worthy of our praise.

Notice, Name and Navigate with God

B — Be aware
E — Explore what you're feeling
A — Accept what you're feeling
M — Make a healthy response



Inspired by Dr. Gloria Willcox