Instructions: How Do You Shut Down Your Emotions?

Download the audio and script at www.kevinbillett.org/book-bonus

Let’s try another experiment to check out your habits. What strategy or strategies do you use to avoid your real feelings?

**Intention:**
That you discover how you shut down some specific emotions

**Time:**
10 to 12 minutes

**Emotional level:**
Mildly to moderately emotional

**What you need:**
Quiet space. Tissues

**At the end:**
Short break of 5 minutes or so

Let’s go back to an old memory or two and find out how you automatically responded when you were emotionally triggered. This exercise is not designed to be intensely emotional; in fact you may feel only subtle feelings, and that is fine. It is an emotionally disassociated introspection, and it is designed to illustrate how you unconsciously avoid some emotions.

You could ask a friend or loved one to read out the next section to you, use the CD or get online and work with the audio version of this enquiry. You could also do it as an eyes-open/eyes-closed exercise on your own - it just takes a little longer that way. In any case, read it through to the end of the exercise first so you understand it, then do it!

**Exercise 4: How do you shut down your emotions?**

*Find a quiet place, somewhere where you can just sit and be uninterrupted. Take a seat, make yourself comfortable, and relax. Now close your eyes, and take a good long deep breath in… and let it all the way out…*
Imagine that you are sitting safely on a comfortable couch in a viewing room, with a large, blank video screen on the wall in front of you… one on which we are shortly going to ask some old memories to play out.

You can welcome a mentor - a being you know or one that is born from your imagination… a soul that is wise, and open and can give loving guidance… And you can welcome a guardian angel of grace and absolute safety if you wish… feeling its protective presence safely enveloping you… You can even ask the mentor to provide a clear crystal dome of protection, and to wrap you safely inside it… one that allows in only love and positivity… and keeps everything else on the outside… Good… So just rest in the knowledge that you are completely safe here…

Putting your attention on the screen now… you can bring the screen closer, or push it farther away… You can adjust the size of the screen, to make it bigger or smaller… and at any time you can alter the focus until it’s either sharper or more fuzzy… You can adjust the color and brightness… You can even make it black and white if you like… So now, begin to make all these adjustments so that you begin to feel more relaxed and comfortable now… Great…

Notice the DVD player right below the screen… In your hand is a remote control device… and a DVD disc in its case… On this DVD is recorded some old scenes or memories related to a time when you were emotionally triggered and you shut down the feelings you may initially have had… You can rest in the knowledge that you are safe on this couch and in complete control of how this old scene plays out… You can even stop it at any time and move onto a less uncomfortable scene if you wish.

Now, as you remain seated on the couch, pick up the remote control… as you get ready to watch an old scene play out on the screen… Then give the mentor the case containing the DVD disc… and let the mentor put the DVD disc into the player… Great… You may not yet know what scene is going to play, and that is fine… You can simply watch from the safety of the couch and discover…

The first scene may be of a memory that caused you to deflate, to shrink or withdraw emotionally. Maybe it was a time when something triggered you and you muted or swallowed or choked back what you were really feeling… a time when something happened and triggered you into shutting down some emotion… Maybe something happened that felt like it was getting out of control… was too exciting, too energetic, too strong… Maybe it was time when you, or someone else, felt enraged or angry, and it scared you…

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Maybe it was a time when emotions ran so high that you automatically put a lid on them and closed them down… Or maybe it was a time when something happened that scared or frightened you and you suppressed the feeling…

Now press the ‘Play’ button on the remote and just let the scene play out… as you sit safely watching the screen … As you watch from a distance and see what unfolded… hear any words that were spoken… just get a sense of what emotion or emotions were triggered in you… What did you initially feel… even it was very subtle or fleeting?... What was that?...

Now, as the scene moves forward… how did you respond next?... How did you suppress the intensity of the feelings that were triggered?... How did you shut down, or subdue what you were really feeling?... What happened with your body?... And what story were you telling yourself… what was your inner dialogue?... And how did you eventually feel?... Was it a turned down, or muted feeling?... Okay…

Now press the pause button on the remote, and get ready to push the ‘next chapter’ button, the one that will take you to the next scene… still remembering that at all times you will remain safely on the couch, with the mentor and the guardian angel… behind the crystal dome… and safely in control of how the scene plays out…

And now press the ‘next chapter’ button, and get ready to press ‘play’ one more time… This time the DVD will reveal an old memory of a time when you were triggered in a different way… Maybe this time you felt hurt or embarrassed, or sad or lost… or some other deep-energy emotion… This may be a time when something happened… or someone said or did something that made you feel insecure or incompetent, or unloved… And this is a time when you blocked that feeling, resisted it… or in some way blew it off… This is a time when you steeled yourself against an uncomfortable emotion, hardened yourself against it…

So just press the ‘play’ button and let the scene unfold… Where and when is this?... Just watch as the memory reveals itself… Look as the action continues, and notice from a distance… Hear any words that were spoken… and just get a sense of what emotion or emotions were really triggered in you… What did you initially feel, even it was very subtle or fleeting?... What was that?...

And now, as the scene moves forward… how did you respond next?... How did you avoid the intensity of the feelings that were triggered?... How did you suppress or resist what you were really feeling?... How did you block it or brace against it… How did you
shut down to it?... What happened with your body?... And what was your mind saying?... What dialogue was running internally?... And now get a sense of what you eventually felt... how did you eventually feel?... Good...

Now you can press the ‘stop’ button on your remote... and now the ‘power off’ button that shuts the screen down, makes it turn to blank... Let the old memories fade with it, and turn to grey...

Take a few seconds to come back to neutral... then thank your mentor and your guardian angel... And now allow the whole imagined room with the screen to disappear... And gently allow awareness to come back to the present moment... and the present place... Sitting where you are sitting right now...

Take a fresh, long, deep breath in... and let it all the way out... And you can softly open your eyes now, when you are ready.

Great job!

So what did you discover? Can you see that a part of your tendency, at least, is to deflate, to collapse and mute your strong emotions? Just stop for a moment and consider: Are there other times when you have reacted similarly with this type of suppression? Has deflation, emotional collapse and smothering your feelings, become a habit in your life? And have you also played games of resistance with your emotions by blocking or resisting them?

If so, then congratulations, because you have uncovered a significant link with the condition of depression - and this realization will serve you well when we come to the clear out exercises, the Journey process work introduced in chapter 9.

But before we get to the process work that allows us to completely free ourselves from the limitations of our old habits, let us take a deeper look at an area that naturally feeds and sustains these patterns of avoidance - our beliefs and our vows.