

MAKING FRIENDS WITH EMOTIONAL MONSTERS

Regaining Our Connection, Power and Place in the Universe



Written and Illustrated by Mo Gillis

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DEDICATION:

This book
is dedicated to
our emotional health.

With gratitude
To my mother, Julia F. Gillis, who told me over & over
"Try to walk a mile in another's shoes".

And...
To my father, John R. Gillis, who told me hundreds of times
"This above all, to thine own self be true".

And...
To my husband, Sonny Polnick, for committing to
a challenging marriage
with great tenacity, loyalty, and love.

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Updated 09-08-2019

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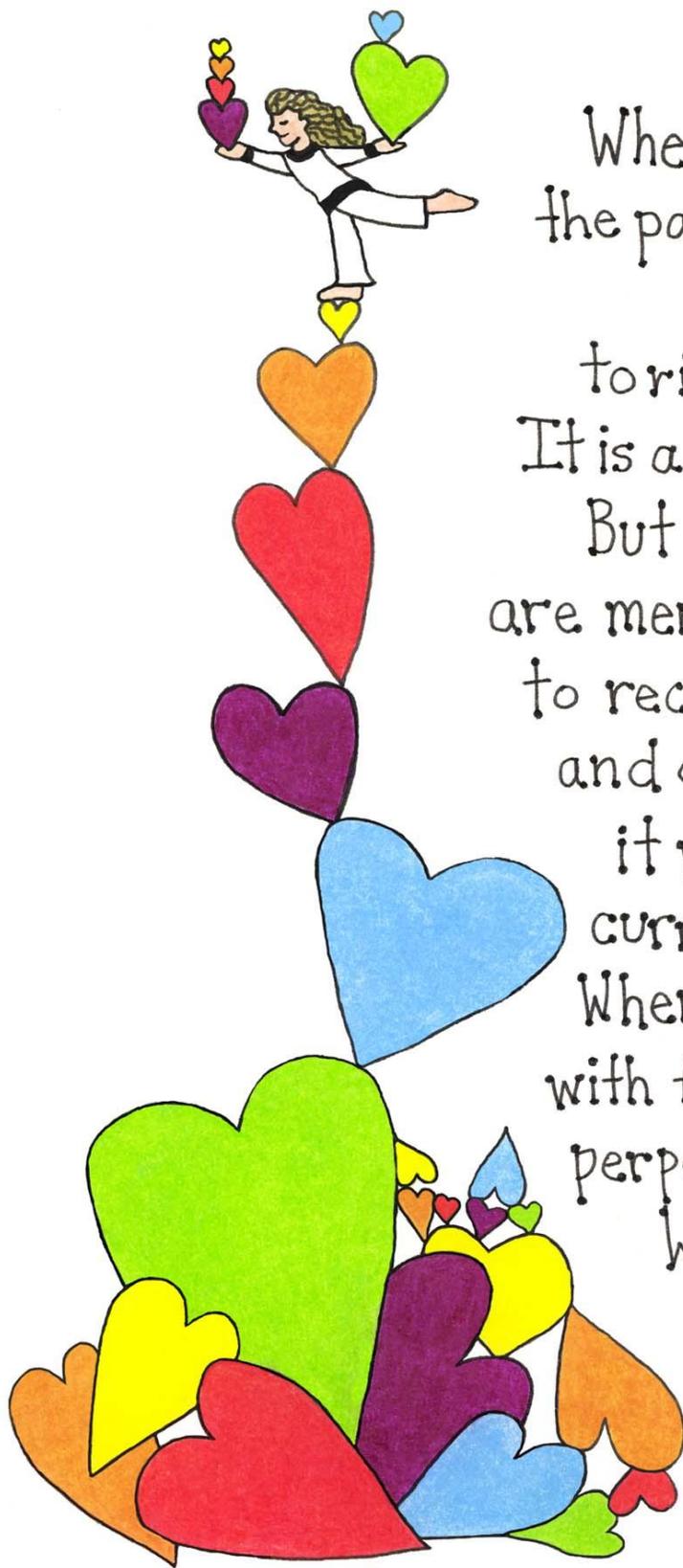
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When we love,
the pain of our past
is bound
to rise up in us.
It is a call for healing.
But unless we
are mentally equipped
to recognize this
and deal with it...
it will sabotage our
current relationships.
When the pain is met
with fear or anger, it
perpetuates the cycle.
When it is met
with love,
the healing begins.

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Introduction

Angry, hurt, resentful, frustrated, jealous, who among us hasn't felt one or all of these strong emotions? Sometimes emotions are so strong, it seems almost impossible to refrain from reacting. But not reacting is exactly what we must do if we are to learn the priceless lessons our emotions can teach. It's a journey, a process. Am I going to continue to be a hostage to my unconscious, unhealthy, unresolved emotions or do I want to heal and love and grow?

So what if I feel like a total mess, unworthy, unlovable? It's a lie. We are totally lovable. At our very core, that's all we are, Love. We must honestly begin where we are. It's a journey. Every pain, every hurt can be turned into a strength. No bad, no good. Set judgments aside for a good long while, forever if you can manage. Let's make a decision to allow ourselves to think things we may never have thought before. Let's give ourselves permission to make mistakes, to have flaws. It's a journey, a process. Now, consider this. We are all perfect just the way we are. Yes, we are, mess and all, perfect, yes, yes, yes! Each one is a work in progress. The first time I heard someone say that, I thought "How can that be?" Now, I consider it without judgment. The more I simply allow the idea *perfect as is* to be a part of my consciousness, and not try to force it into a construct of right /wrong, or good /bad, the more I realize every experience is an opportunity to learn, to be and to live Love.

Our history is a history of clan-ism, sexism, racism, religious intolerance; that is where we came from. Where are we going? I believe the choice is ours, individually and collectively.

Our training, or lack of it, has created a few obstacles for us to overcome. Each of us has been trained to view the world through a certain set of perceptions depending upon our culture, gender, race, and the time in which we were born. Breaking out of that primary set of perceptions can be a difficult proposition. Most of us did not receive any training regarding how to respond to emotions, so our response to uncomfortable, heated situations is mostly unconscious, and automatic. Without training, it is difficult to grasp the connections between thoughts, feelings and the strong chemicals that surge through our bodies in response to what we call emotions. In short, unless we have intentionally sought it out, emotional training has been left on the default setting; our default is to react.

Without training, strong emotions can seem like an *enemy* of sorts, something to be avoided at all costs. For lack of understanding, many of us react to strong emotions with fear because the out of control feelings can be so overwhelming. On the other extreme, there may be times when we actually enjoy the juice that strong negative emotions create and have no concern about how it might affect the self or others. It is these unhealthy reactions to emotions that I am calling *emotional monsters*.

We, humans, have figured out a *million* ways to avoid our unpleasant feelings. Some of us even avoid the pleasant feelings. Either way, we do it out of fear. We are all afraid of feeling that terrible awful hurt we once felt so long ago when we were powerless to do anything about it, perhaps before we could even speak. For survival's sake, we stuffed, squashed, squelched, or in some way suppressed our hurt and anger because we intuitively knew to express it would mean more of the same or worse, possibly our very destruction. Our *emotional monsters* are basically our unfinished business from childhood and baby days. They are emotions that were not properly processed and released, emotions that have become lodged in our psyches and bodies. Quietly hidden, they have grown into *emotional monsters*. At some point they become obstacles, stumbling stones, giant brick walls that impede, or totally immobilize our growth and happiness, and our ability to connect and create loving relationships.

So you think you don't have them? When you dare to care, you will find them there. Really! I, not unlike most of the people I know, want to be more loving, or better yet, to be love. Because of that goal, the more I love, the more every bit of garbage in me rises to the surface to be healed. Hey! I didn't make it up. That's just how it works. When we resist the work of healing, we create suffering for ourselves. This work challenges us to our very core, but nothing is more rewarding. These *emotional monsters* are not to be shamed, banished or destroyed; these *emotional monsters* are to be listened to, loved, and understood. They lead us to the deepest loving part of ourselves. Besides, what else are you going to do with the rest of your life?

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About The Author/Artist

I was emotionally disturbed. I was high functioning in the work place and in most social situations. I followed and follow the beat of a different drummer; I attribute this to my artistic, inquisitive nature. An observer probably would not have noticed the torment I was carrying around within me, unless they had X-ray vision to see into a person's soul. I was carrying so much hurt covered over by anger and self-loathing. Please understand, it was not black and white. It was not total self-loathing; I had talents, skills and qualities like kindness, generosity, and honesty. People liked me, especially my bosses because I worked so hard. I think trying to hold those opposing views in the one container of my soul created the terrible inner torment. It was in the area of personal, intimate relationships that I felt like a total failure. I wanted a healthy relationship. I wanted to love in all situations, but I simply did not know how to navigate when difficulties or disagreements arose in interpersonal communications.

I was so broken-hearted. I was in excruciating pain. There was no doubt I was on the road to self-destruction until I got down on my knees and with every cell and fiber of my being made a promise to do whatever it would take to be a better person. That was 1976. Wow! I had emotional monsters, lots of them. I did not like how I felt when those monsters would wake up in me. An important key for me was to accept the split off parts of my self, parts of me that had, in the dark shadow of denial, become *emotional monsters*. Writing and drawing helped me to see, outside of my head, on the paper, the *craziness* that was going on inside my head. That allowed me to be a little more objective so I could recognize, think about, sort through, and discard thoughts that created turmoil and pain in my life, and replace them with quality thoughts.

I read "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free". I hung onto that promise. Being true, being honest with myself became a core principle of my life. I knew the combination of honesty, perseverance and plenty of patience would set me on the road to recovery, healing, and sanity. It was not an over night success story. It was not a quick fix. I will not quit, no matter how long it takes. Since I made that heart-felt promise, I have experienced bits & pieces of freedom mingled with, resistance, struggle, pain, joy, peace and love. Very recently I have begun to experience a new found freedom, peace and ease in life that I only hoped was possible. There's still pain and pleasure, but with a great deal more acceptance and grace. It is possible. It's a liberating process. I can start and restart anytime, anywhere, and with no special environment or equipment needed.

This material is not new. I learned from so many others. I had a great hunger to be free from the deep emotional torment I thought was my life. I read books and more books; I listened to audio tapes and CDs. I watched DVDs. I attended seminars, lectures; I joined all sorts of groups and organizations. I exposed myself to many new ways of thinking and looking at the world. Ways that I thought would help me be a more loving human being. I set about practicing whatever principles were being taught. I tell myself "If it's truth it will stay; all falseness fade away". I keep what works and move on to where ever Life leads with the intention in mind of serving the greatest good.

I hope this overview gives a starting point from which I can share. I organized this material the best I could. There is some overlapping. I stashed and saved bits and pieces of documentation over the years, so I could tell this story. We all have a story to tell.

I know there is no end to the journey, no arriving. I am just so glad I don't hate myself anymore. Love all life in all its manifestations. Many great teachers encourage this. Love all. This includes us, fully, completely. Allow and accept; live and let live. I dare you.

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The Making of an Emotional Monster

1. We are born. We are sponges. We absorb everything around us. Voices from outside us train us. We have no filter to say "Keep this, not that." The phrases we hear over and over become ingrained. The voice on the "outside" becomes an inner voice that stays with us in both our unconscious & sometimes conscious mind. If the voice is critical or cruel, and that is the voice we internalize, it is the seed from which *emotional monsters* grow.
2. The critical voice is now inside us; the voice becomes our thoughts. The voice shames us, berates us and causes us pain. So, the #1 goal becomes to avoid the pain, to stop the pain. We hide, avoid, repress, suppress, and stuff those uncomfortable, painful feelings. We want to kill them, get rid of them, or simply deny their existence. How can that work? We are trying to destroy and deny a part of ourselves.
3. We think we are done with it, until something is triggered and those awful feelings rise up to the surface. Our survival instincts kick in; we have a knee jerk reaction; we fight, flee, or freeze. We might even explode, but then we somehow manage to push it all back down again.
4. We must be on guard. Anxiety and fear are our constant companions. We must keep those feelings from getting triggered. Control becomes a focus.
5. It's too painful to accept responsibility for what's going on at this stage so the responsibility and blame for the pain is projected outward. Blame something or someone else. Act out, lash out; try to eradicate it *out there*. Reason, argue, or rage at something or someone out there. Once we get into the mindset that the problem is out there, it becomes increasingly more difficult to look within. Yet, that is the only place where true relief and freedom will be found.
6. Until we make a firm commitment to do whatever it takes to heal, we will be stuck in the muck, energy blocked, light dimmed... it's definitely toxic.

My theory about how we become so *messed up* - We are born love. It's who we are. Through the experience of separation, the loss of connection, we come to know pain. We think we are not seen, or heard, or understood, and it hurts. The severity of the pain depends on the severity of the situation, and the sensitivity of the person. When we are little, most of us do not have the information, wisdom, or capacity to understand what is happening to us. So, on some pre-verbal level, we begin to formulate our own theory that there must be something terribly wrong with us to feel so awful and abandoned. It probably feels to us like we are dying. Part of us is dying, as our innocent, trusting, blissful self begins to shut down to protect us from suffering and pain. We shut down because we are afraid, and we don't know any better. The shutting down protects us in the short term. For years, we practice over and over these defensive patterns of thought and behavior. At some point, on some level, we realize something is terribly wrong. At first, we may think it is out there. But if we honestly, courageously look inward, we realize these well established thoughts and defense mechanisms that perpetuate the painful patterns of our lives are in us. We are now causing the pain we were trying to escape. We couldn't help being *messed up*, but now that we are older and hopefully smarter we can do something about it.

We want to be different, but how many years have we been practicing the ineffective, unhealthy, perhaps destructive thought and habit patterns, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, or more years? How do we heal? We can, in an instant, with a decision, change the direction of our lives. It is our choice what kind of life we will live, now, and now again, and now again. We are not victim's, once we reach a certain level of awareness. We are the directors of our own destiny. Patient-endurance is written about in many of the sacred books. Once we choose to set foot on the path to "enlightenment" or "becoming a better person" or what ever we want to call it, we will develop patience, if we are committed to our decision. How long it will take to undo destructive habits, heal and learn new ways of being? I don't know, but it's worth it. We can learn to be true to ourselves. We can learn to be love.

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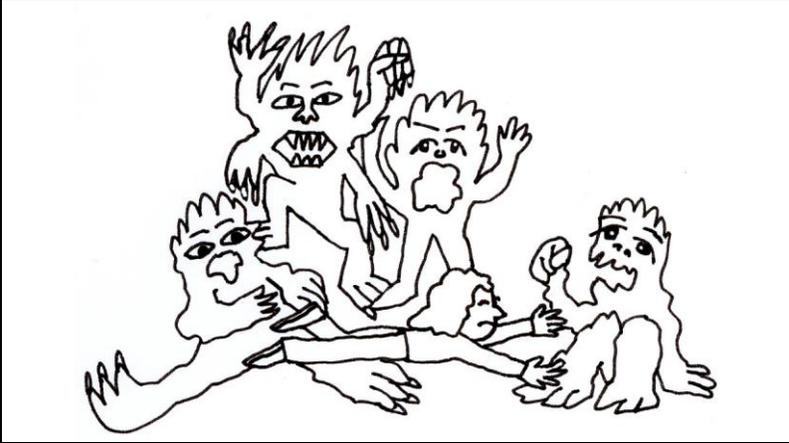
Identification : Part I

Our uncomfortable emotions are signals that something needs to be addressed. When our emotions are suppressed and ignored to the point of becoming toxic, they can transform into destructive *emotional monsters* that turn our lives upside down.

Attributes – General Characteristics

Emotional monsters are persistent/tenacious. They will not give up: they will not go away. You can try to ignore them, stuff them, squash them, or hide them in a closet. They are not going anywhere. They are split off parts of us; they have no where to go. They want healing.

Emotional monsters are needy. They want to be recognized and loved.



Emotional monsters require energy to maintain. Holding *emotional monsters* at bay takes a large amount of energy. It's exhausting to hold all that down and back and in. *Emotional monsters* might take a nap, a very, very long nap, but when they wake up you better be ready for a wild ride.

Emotional monsters have a message and it needs to be heard.



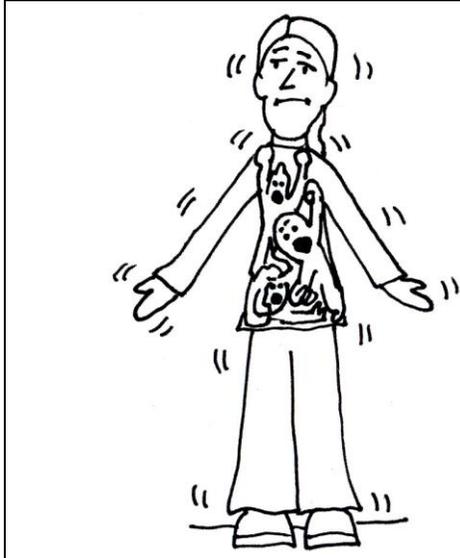
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Identification : Part I - Attributes – General Characteristics



Emotional monsters are sometimes invisible to others. Some of us carry all our emotional monsters on the inside; we don't want others to see. There are many rationalizations for why we do this. Maybe, we are concerned what others will think of us. Maybe, we are confused or ashamed about how we feel inside. Bottom line is we are in need of healing wholeness.

Emotional monsters are sometimes invisible to us. Sometimes others see what we do not see, our *emotional monsters*. Maybe we are not ready to see.



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Identification : Part I - Attributes – General Characteristics

Emotional monsters have layers like an onion. They have a complex nature. It takes time to get to know them and appreciate the valuable lessons they offer.



Emotional monsters are our friends. They are not the enemies we think they are at times. They are parts of ourselves we split off in order to protect ourselves from hurt or something we once found threatening. This probably happened before we could understand the hurt or put the threat into words. The *emotional monsters* have been carrying our hurt for along time. They want to be our friends, to be heard, and loved, and made whole.



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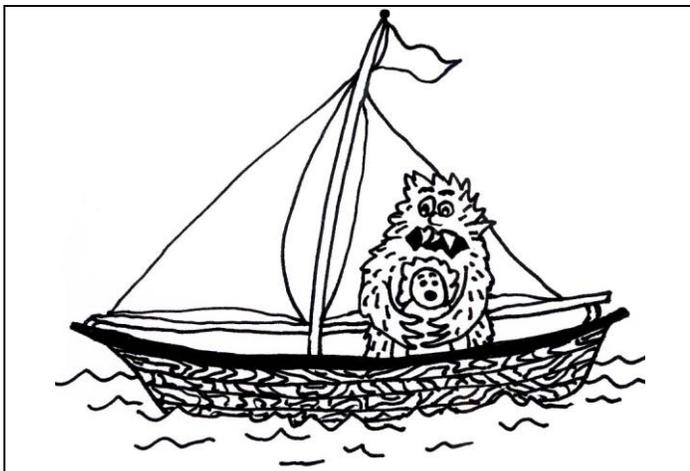
Identification: Part I - Red Flag Alert – Signs of Emotional Monsters in Action

Emotional monsters act out when triggered.

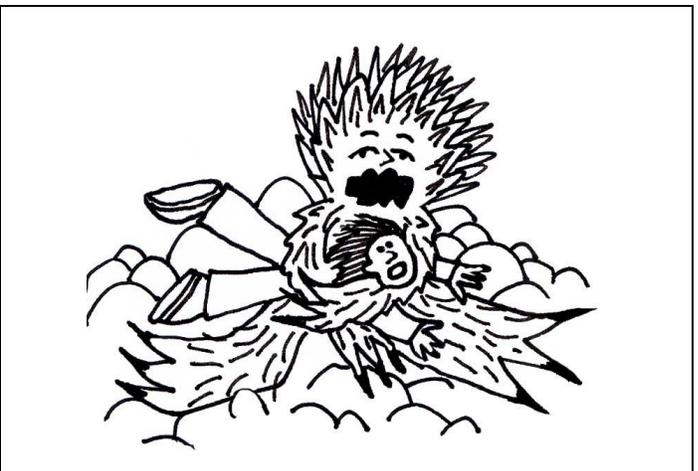
Emotional monsters take us by surprise, more than we would like to admit. It's like an invisible button is pushed and out of no where the *emotional monsters* seem to appear. Sometimes emotions get so exaggerated, we feel overwhelmed. It's an emotional monster sneak attack. Our guard is down. Our filter is off. One judgmental thought, in us or about us, and the *emotional monsters* are awake and acting out. There's no telling how long it will take to quiet them down.



Emotional monsters are at the ready. Our monsters seem to wait in the background; they lurk below the surface ready to ruin. How long can they be held back, before they will have their say?



Emotional monsters like to keep us isolated.



Emotional monsters like to hold us captive.

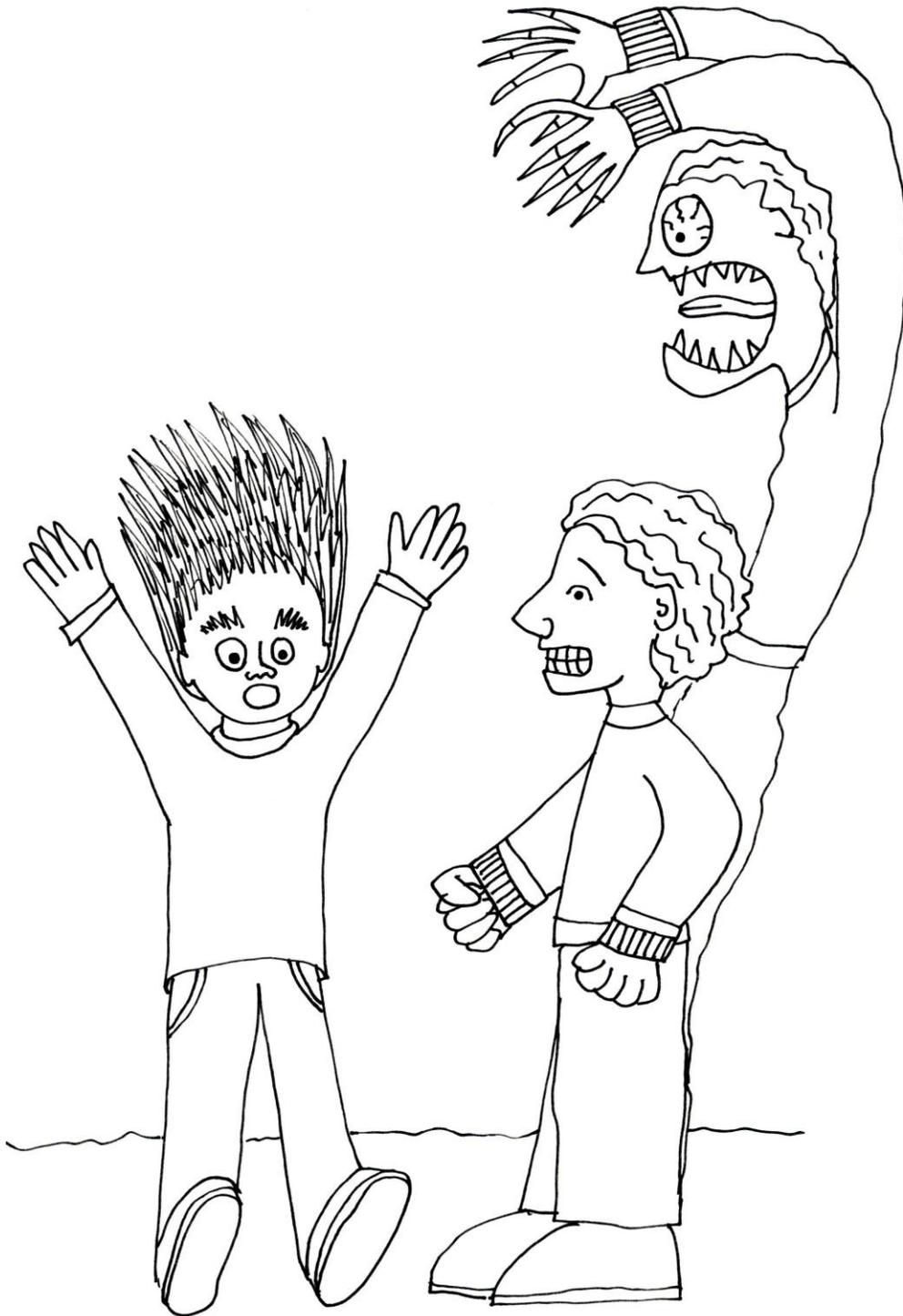
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Identification: Part I - Red Flag Alert – Signs of Emotional Monsters in Action



Emotional monsters appear inappropriately strong for the situation. Escalation of a difference of opinion is a red flag of the presence of *emotional monsters*. If I can't allow another to have a different view or opinion without getting upset about it, I need to take a look at myself. What's going on with me that the emotions are on the rise? Some indications of escalation are raised voice, insults, swearing, put downs, raised energy and tensed body language.

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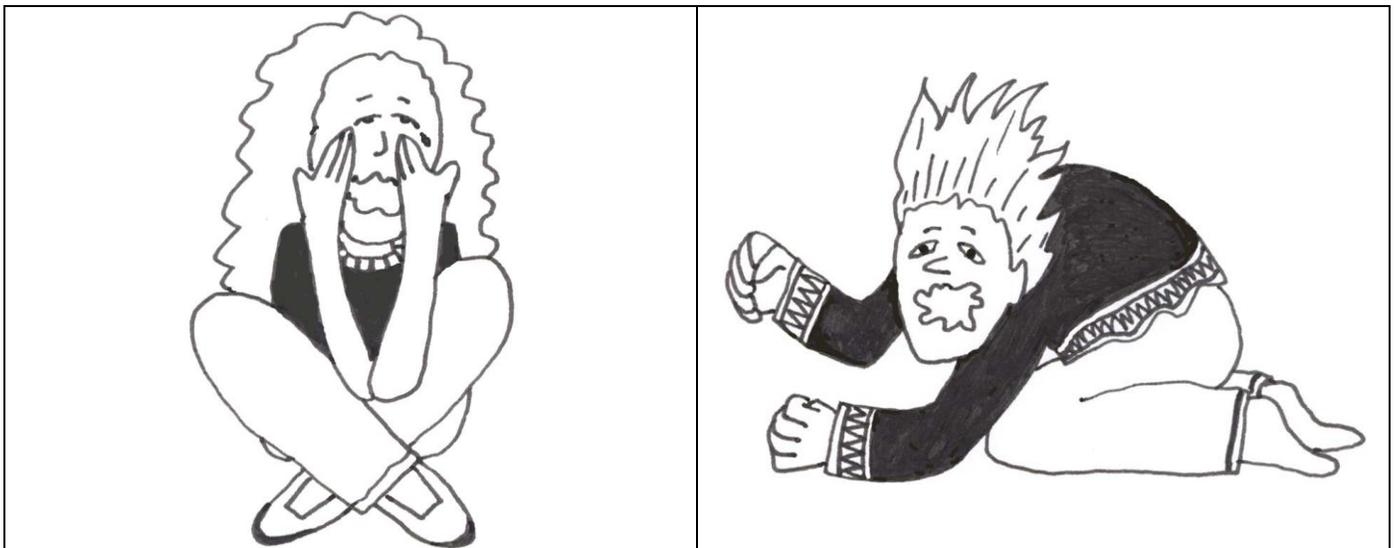
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Identification : Part I - Red Flag Alert – Signs of Emotional Monsters in Action



Emotionally over reacting to a situation is a sure sign emotional monsters have awakened. If I refuse to accept what is, it will surely wake the *emotional monsters*. If I hear myself saying, "How can this be?", or "I can't believe this is happening to me", I know I am not accepting what is and creating suffering for myself. Not believing or resisting what is awakens and feeds the *emotional monsters*. What if I try to control myself and everything around me, will that keep the *emotional monsters* still? Extreme control is a sure sign they are already awake.



If it seems there is no end to the overpowering emotions, it is a sure sign the emotional monsters have awakened. We all cry and get upset from time to time. That is part of being human. It's when the emotions are so strong we cannot stop, and it interferes with our daily functioning, that we need to look deeper because *emotional monsters* are in play.

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Identification : Part I - Classifying Emotions - Emotional Families

How ever we label or categorize these emotional states, there is no doubt that understanding emotions will help us experience the deeper invisible part of ourselves; it is a gateway to peace of mind and the ability to be love. This is a booklet about *emotional monsters*, so, the emotions covered here are those that give us the most trouble. With that in mind, below is a brief list of some major troublesome emotions and emotional energetic states grouped into families.

| CATEGORY | EMOTIONS/ EMOTIONAL ENERGETIC STATES IN THE SAME FAMILY |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anger | Agitation, annoyance, argumentativeness, belligerence, callousness, coldness contention, explosiveness, frustration, furiousness, hate, impatience, indignation, irritation, madness, rage, resentment, stubbornness, vengeance (revenge), vexation, violence |
| Apathy | Confusion, dejection, despair, despondency, depression, discouragement, disorientation, downcast, down-hearted, gloom, hopelessness, lethargy, oppression |
| Fear | Alarm, anxiety, dread, franticness, fright, hesitancy, horror, insecurity, overwhelm, panic, paranoia, reluctance, scatter-brained, skepticism, suspicion, uncertainty |
| Guilt | Condemnation |
| Pride | Arrogance, rebelliousness |
| Sadness | Anguish, bereavement, depression, distress, grief, heartache, misery, pain, regret, remorse, sorrow, suffering, torment |
| Shame | Self-condemnation, self-doubt, self-loathing, self-pity |
| Wanting | Addiction, attachment, aversion, craving, envy, greed, gluttony, graspingness, insatiability, miserly, selfishness, stinginess |

Emotions can be healthy. Emotions have their place in keeping us in balance. *Emotional monsters*, in contrast, cause chaos and imbalance. *Emotional monsters* are emotions in their most unhealthy, exaggerated form. It is wise for us to have an understanding of a variety of emotions of which we are capable. It is also crucial to our well being that we have an understanding of the difference between healthy emotions and *emotional monsters*. *Emotional monsters* are our toxic, unprocessed feelings we carry with us from our past. They are exaggerated, larger than life monstrous emotions until we face them head on and make friends with them. Yes, we can make friends with our *emotional monsters*. They have many amazing things to teach us about ourselves.

There are many great books written about understanding emotions. Check the appendix for other helpful books to read. This book is mostly about emotions of the monstrous kind.

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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Anger

It's tricky, but in rare situations anger can be healthy. Whether anger is an appropriate response has to do with the how, what, why and where of a situation. Will an angry response bring about an outcome that will help those involved grow in wisdom and hopefully love?

That's not the kind of anger I am addressing here. I am writing about the all too familiar effects of out of control anger. It can be a fatal emotion. Anger can make us feel powerful. It can mask the feeling of vulnerability we feel in emotionally open and revealing situations. Anger or even rage can be a reaction when that which is being exposed in us is something of which we are ashamed. When we are mean, picking on another, it is usually because we don't feel good about ourselves. When out of control anger is directed at us, it can leave us feeling powerless.

Anger has its own body language. There's no mistaking it, when it is seen.



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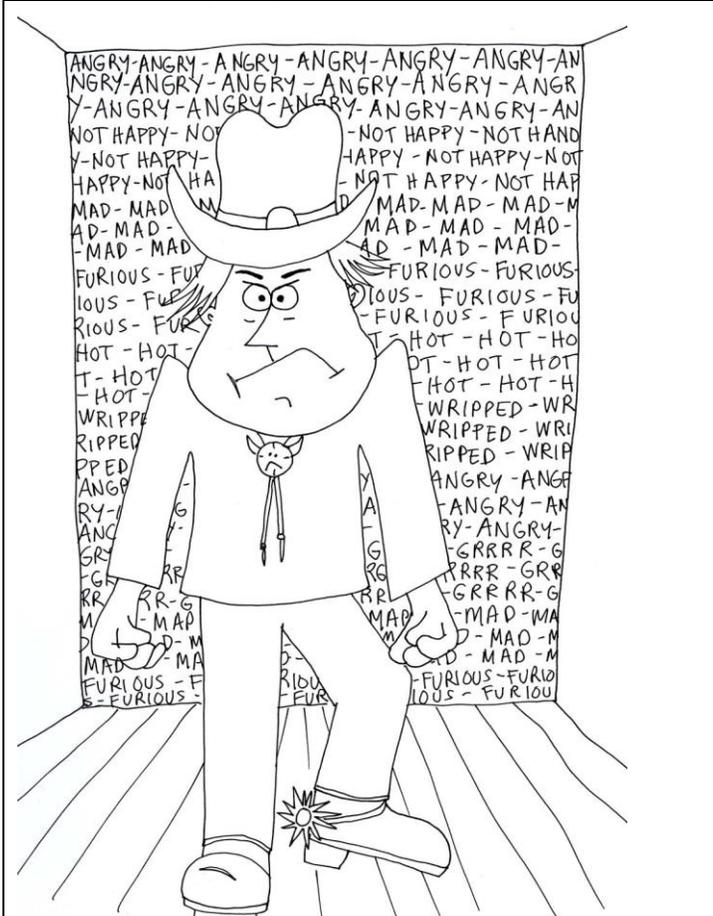
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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Anger



Anger can be explosive. Try as we might to put a lid on our anger, if it is toxic, we will explode.



Anger has degrees of heat and explosiveness.

Anger can show itself as impatience.

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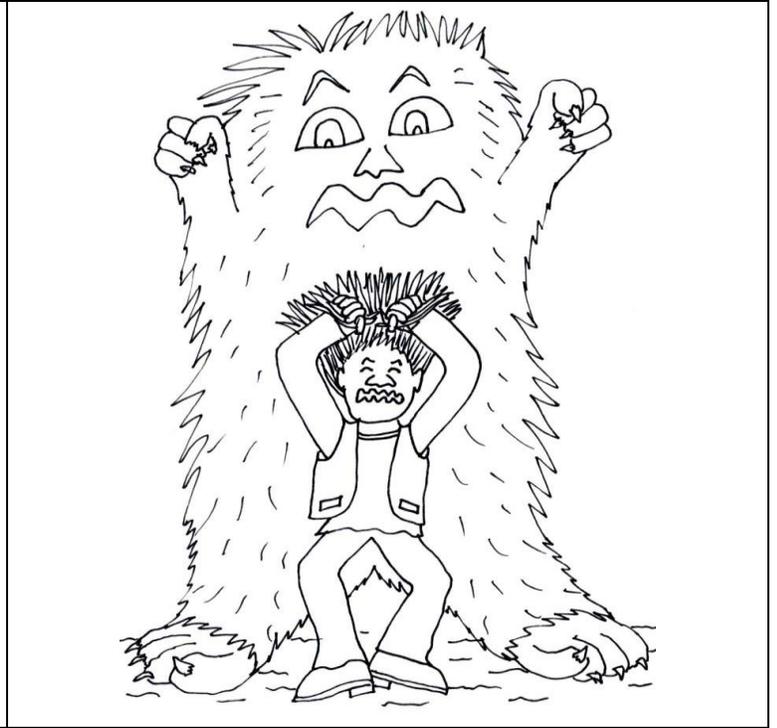
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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Anger

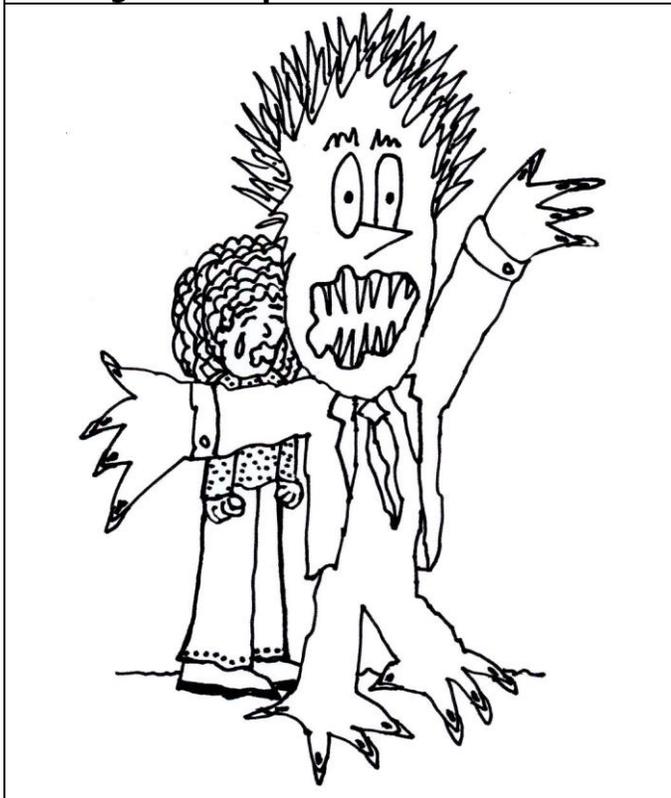
Anger has many faces and names.



Anger can express itself as irritation.



Anger often manifests as frustration.



Anger can be masking a huge load of hurt.



Anger can be shockingly intolerant.

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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Apathy

Apathy can drain the energy, will, desire and life right out of us. Apathy leaves us with a feeling of heaviness and a sense that life is totally hopeless, just not worth living.



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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Fear

Fear can be healthy. Healthy fear can be a warning sign that danger is present. Fear of an unwanted outcome can motivate us to make positive changes in our lives.

The fear emotional monsters are made of is F.E.A.R. or false evidence appearing real.

This kind of fear keeps us from seeing what actually is in the present moment. It distorts our view of life. **Fear keeps us from being our true selves.**



Fear looks shaky, jumpy, wide eyed, startles easy and worriedly looking around every corner. **Fear sounds like...** "If it can go wrong, it will go wrong", "I won't ever have enough", "People will take advantage of me", "Trust no one".

Fear has many forms.

News media and advertisers are masters at playing on our fears and insecurities in order to keep us tuned in and buying the products they are selling. When our *emotional monsters* are active, we are more susceptible to manipulation by the media.

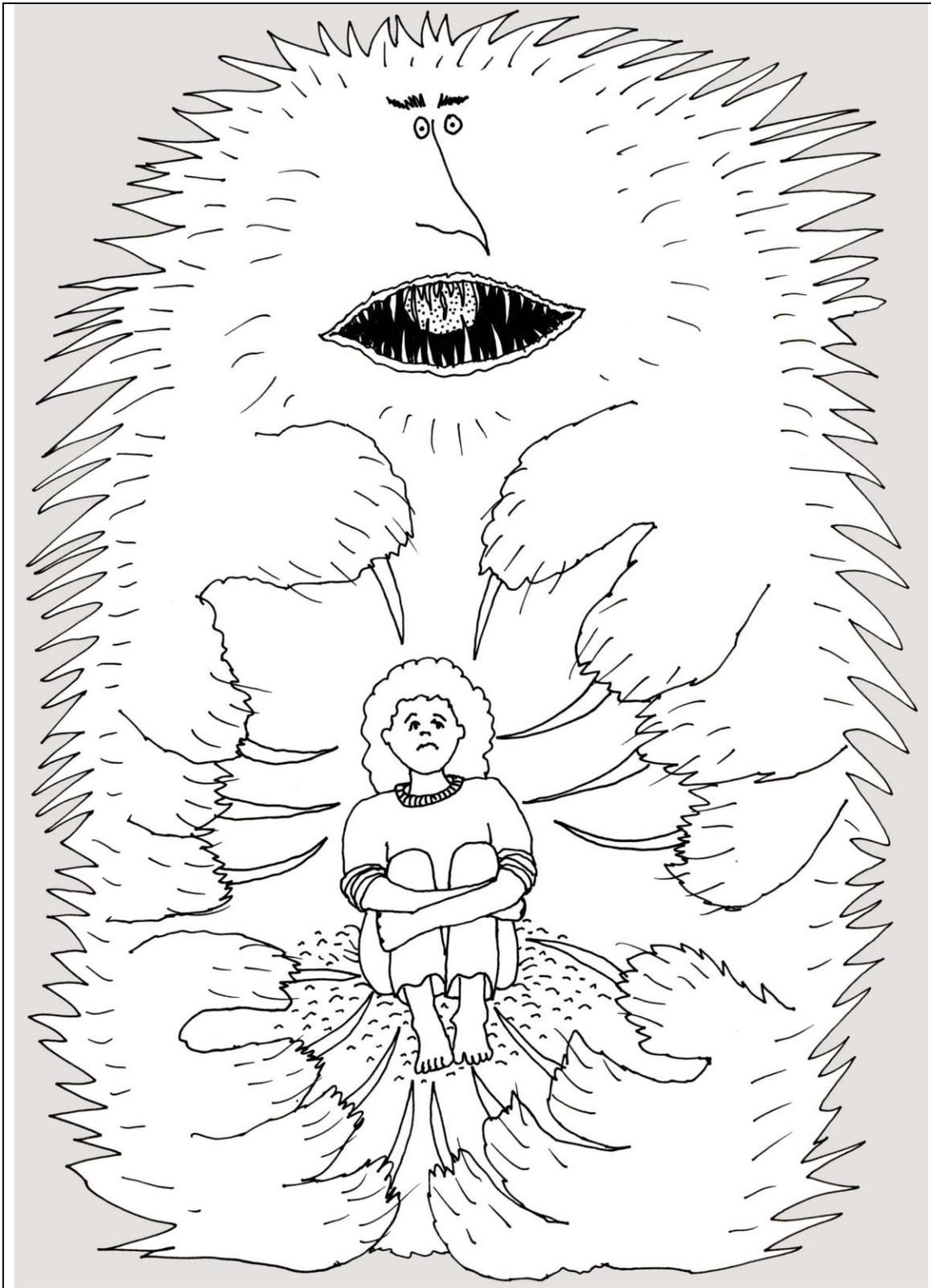
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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Fear



Fear has a way of making us feel bound up.

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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Fear

Fear of being inadequate to deal with a situation can overtake us, and overwhelm us to the point we become paralyzed, unable to make a productive move on our own behalf.



Fear of being swallowed up in emotions, like sorrow, is common among us.

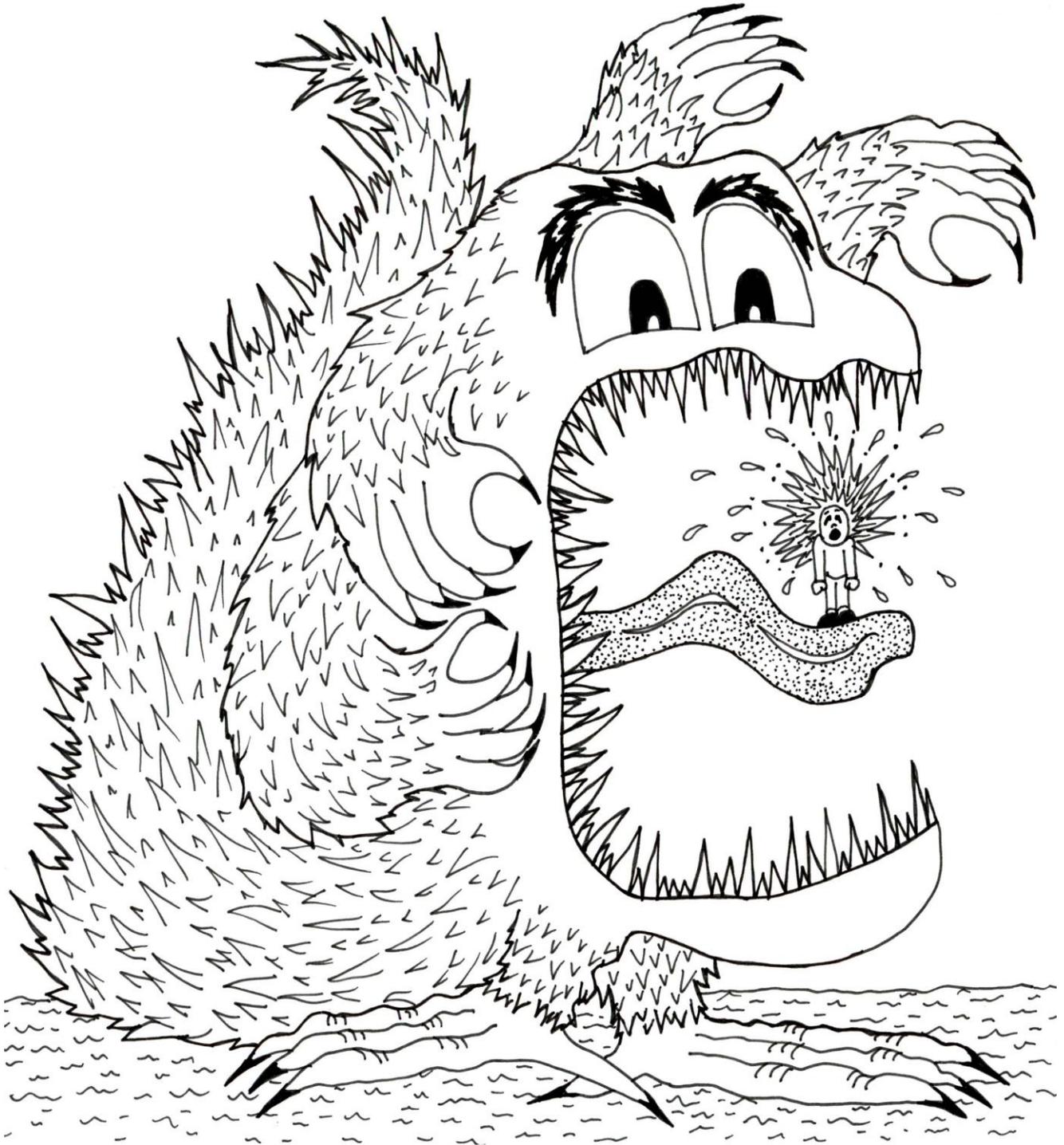
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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Fear



Overwhelming fear is stressful. Chronic fear can effect our overall health.

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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States -Guilt

Healthy guilt is a wake up call. Healthy guilt helps us to realize we have done something that has negatively impacted us or some one else. Then, we can make amends and choose other ways of thinking and being. Healthy guilt knows we all make mistakes and can learn from them.

Guilt in emotional monster mode is focused on how ill advised our deed was and more.

Emotional monster guilt sounds like "Look what you've done", "How could you do such a thing", "You deserve whatever punishment you get".

Emotional monster guilt makes us wilt.



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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States -Pride

Pride can be defensive, arrogant, and divisive. **Pride** is vulnerable because it's dependent on external conditions. **Pride** is puffed up. **Pride** thinks it's righteous. **Pride**, without doubt, will proclaim it knows what's best.



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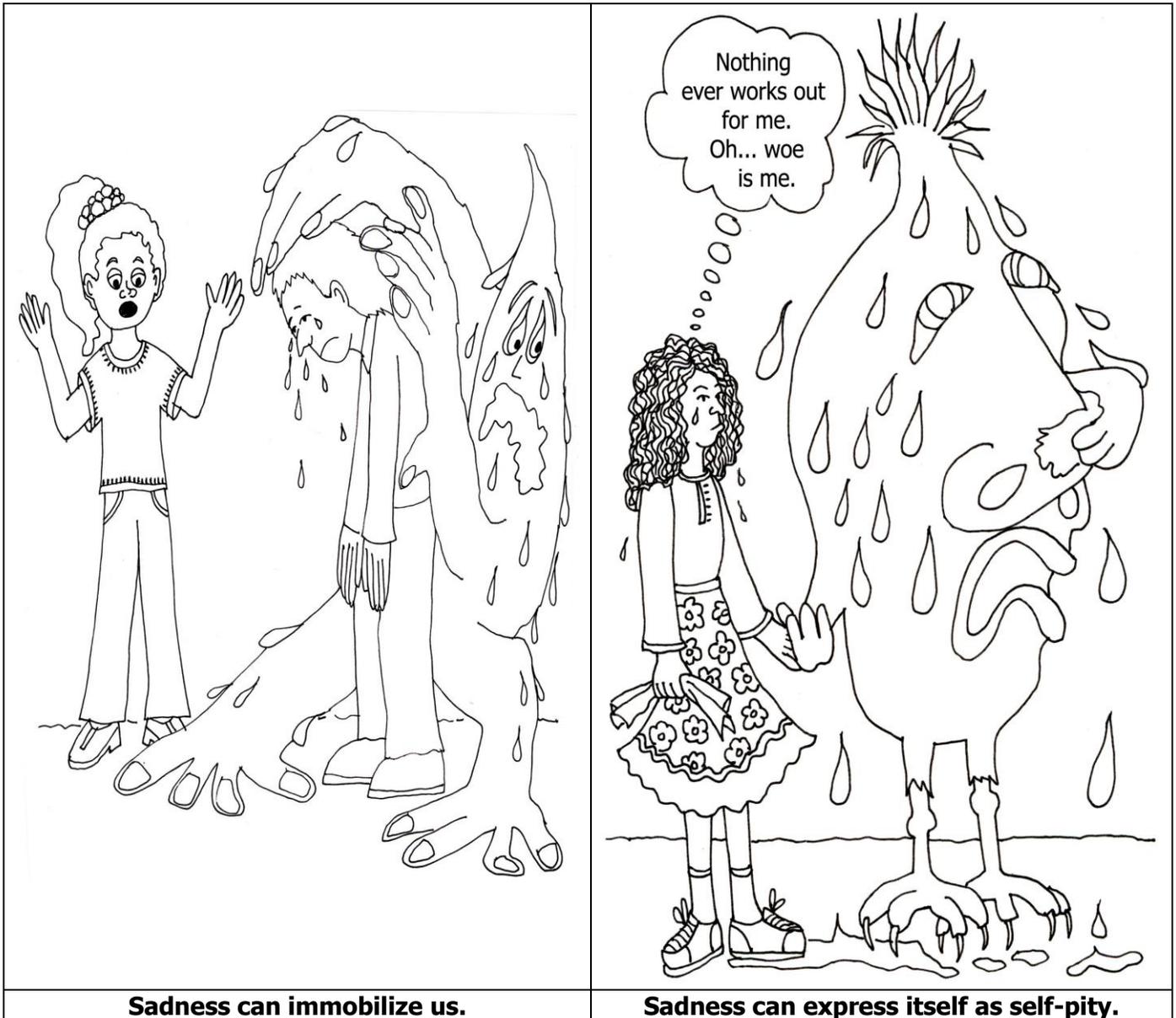
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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Sadness

In healthy sadness, we cry and the sadness dissipates; it goes away. **Emotional monster sadness does not go away; it stays and stays and stays.**

Sadness is often accompanied by tears, but not always. Some of us are taught not to cry so we must carry our tears inside.

Sadness has a body language. It has slumped posture, downcast look, mouth turned down, watery eyes, low energy, and dragging feet.



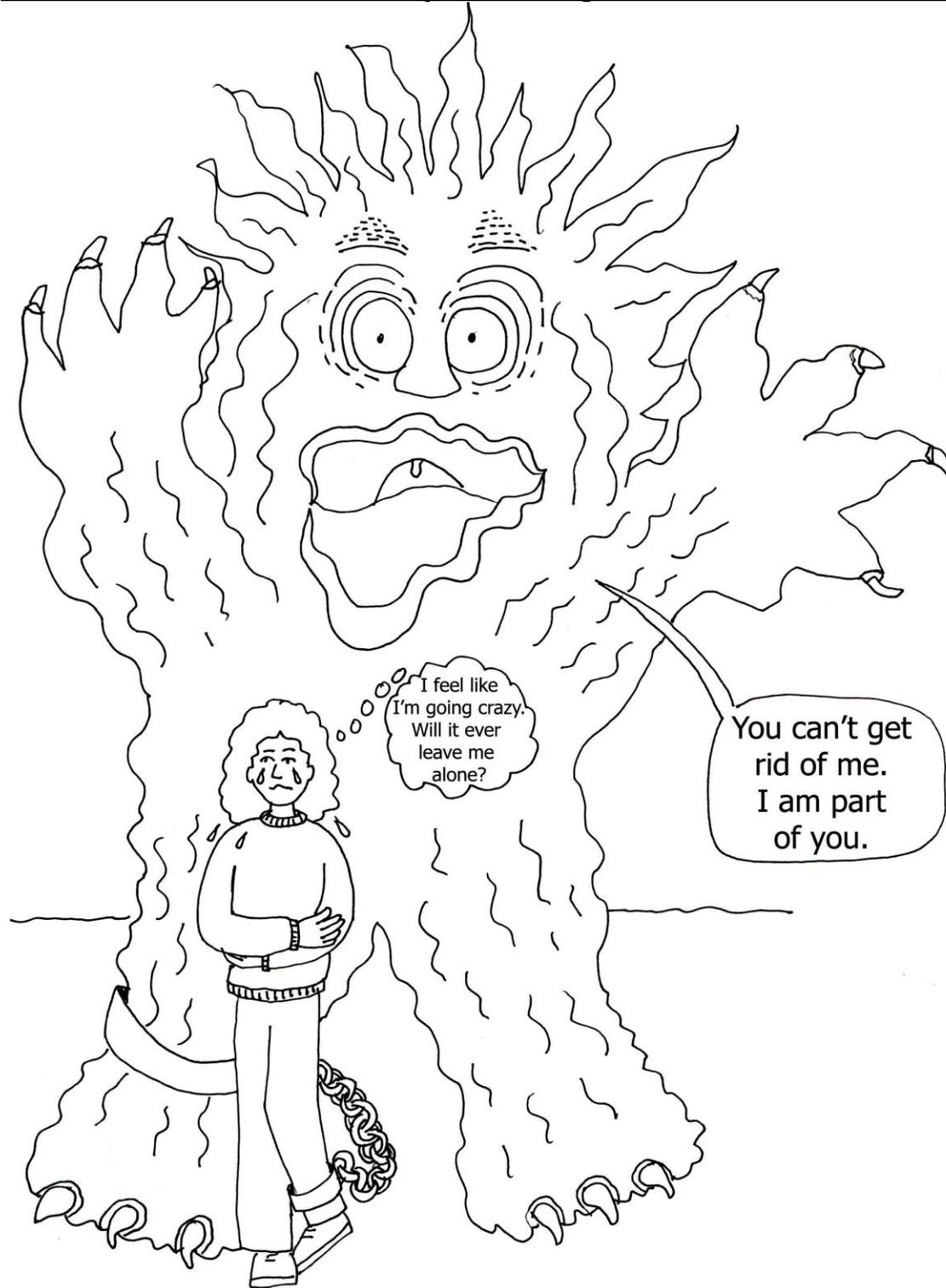
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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Sadness



Emotional monster sadness has depressing, grief-filled, remorseful, ruminating thoughts from which we feel we can not escape. It sounds like "Will I ever be okay?" "Without that which I love, life has lost all meaning." "People aren't there when I need them." "The world is a terrible place."

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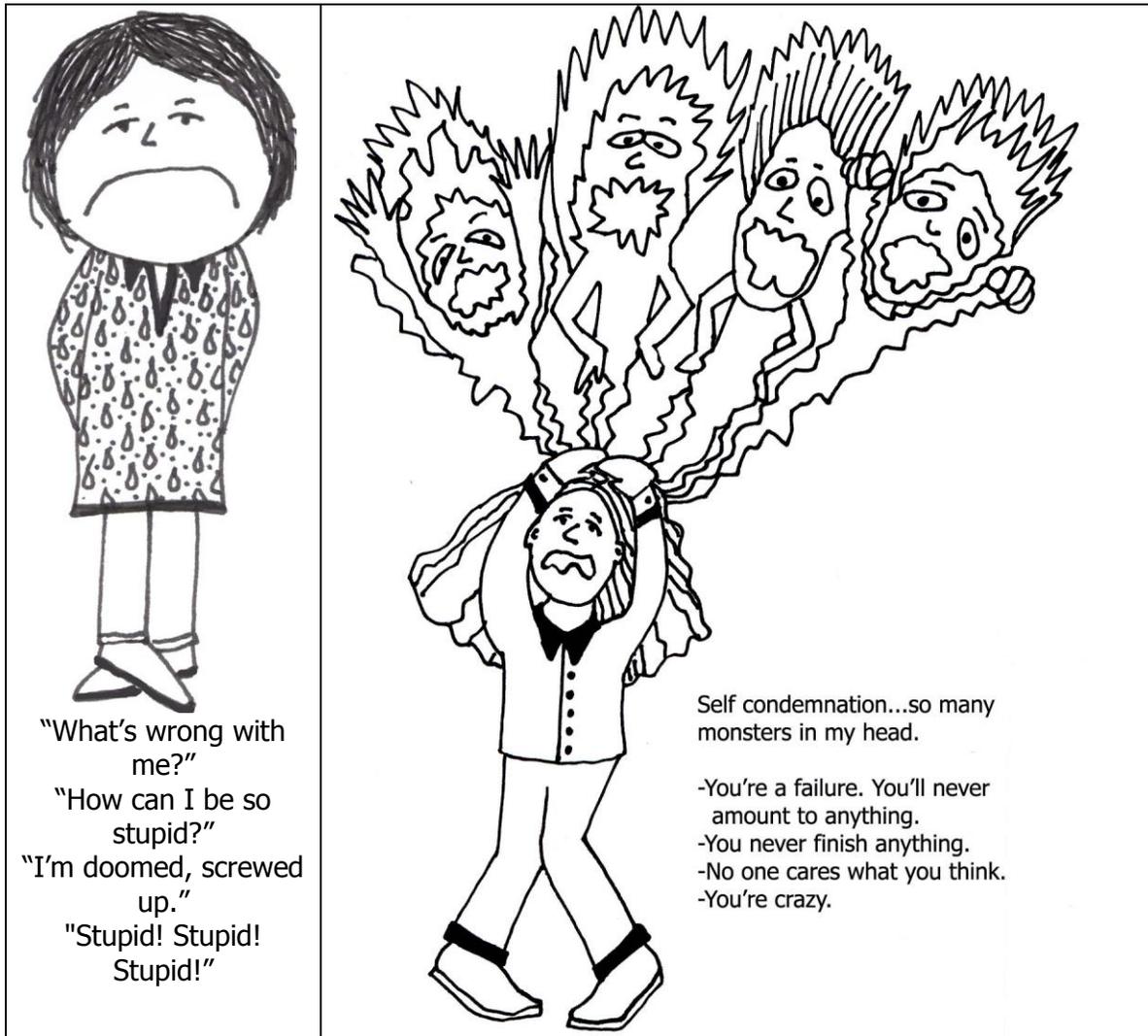
Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Shame

Shame is guilt on steroids. There is no such thing as healthy shame.

Shame is a thief, a robber, a murderer of souls.

Shame tears us down and leaves us with no hope of redemption.

Shame has many faces.



Shameful dialogue becomes internalized. It often takes the form of self-hatred or self-loathing. **Shame sounds like** "I don't deserve love", "I am unlovable", "I deserve to be neglected, sad, hurt and alone", "I must be crazy". **In shame** the relationship with the self is greatly damaged.

Untreated chronic shame can manifest in very self- destructive behaviors.

Please get help if you feel this way.

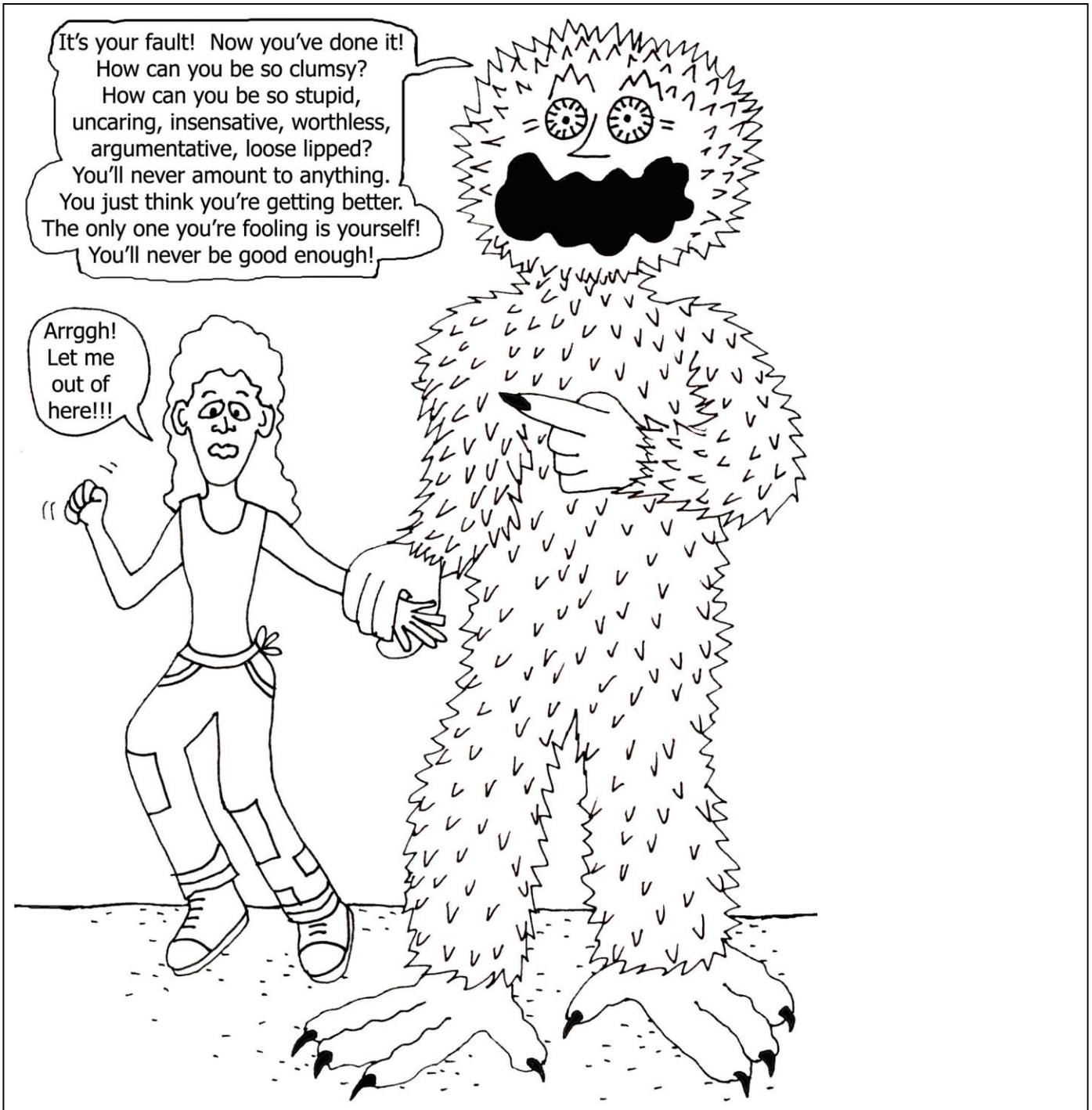
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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States - Shame



Shame tells us we are fatally flawed and doomed to remain so.

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Identification : Part II - Commonly Acknowledged Emotional States -Wanting (Desire)

Wanting can be healthy in that it can motivate us to accomplish goals for the betterment of ourselves and others.

Wanting in emotional monster mode involves unhealthy attachment. Unhealthy attachment creates suffering.

Wanting looks like grasping hands, clutching, hoarding, grabbing from the hands of others.

Wanting sounds like "I must have more", "There's only enough for me", "I want, I want, I want", "I'll die if I don't get what I want".

Emotional monster in wanting mode can manifest as jealousy, lust, envy or greed.

Wanting in emotional monster mode will never be satisfied; it will never have enough.



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Strategies That Do Not Work

What do the strategies that do not work share in common? Avoidance. That's right. Avoid feelings. Avoid anything uncomfortable. Avoid responsibility. Avoid all those *emotional monsters*. Behind all the avoidance is a terrifying fear of what might happen if we faced our *emotional monsters* head on.

This is not to say these strategies never worked. They used to work; these same strategies helped us survive and cope with our childhoods. We had no filters, no understanding with which to navigate the difficult emotional terrain of childhood. Avoiding the feelings was our best option at the time. Now, not only are these strategies no longer effective, they are giant obstacles to our being true to ourselves, to being love. These strategies do not let love in or out. These strategies no longer serve a purpose. Strategies that do not include courageously facing what is, are doomed to fail.

The following strategies that do not work are more alike than different. These strategies that do not work share many of the same characteristics, such as: defensiveness, offensiveness, force, misdirection, deception, dishonesty, manipulation, demands, judgment and/or attempts to control. These strategies are not really conscious; they have a knee-jerk quality about them. We feel attacked, so we attack back. We feel judged, so we judge. We feel blamed, so we blame. We speak of feelings in terms of what others make us feel.

These strategies that do not work are known as defense mechanisms. The few listed here are just that, a few. There are many more. What follows are a few of the strategies that do not work, but we still use in order to avoid feeling: **blaming, disassociating, projecting, denying, pretending, ignoring, freezing, running, numbing, suppressing and controlling.** **Denying** is probably the most insidious. We cannot change what we cannot recognize.



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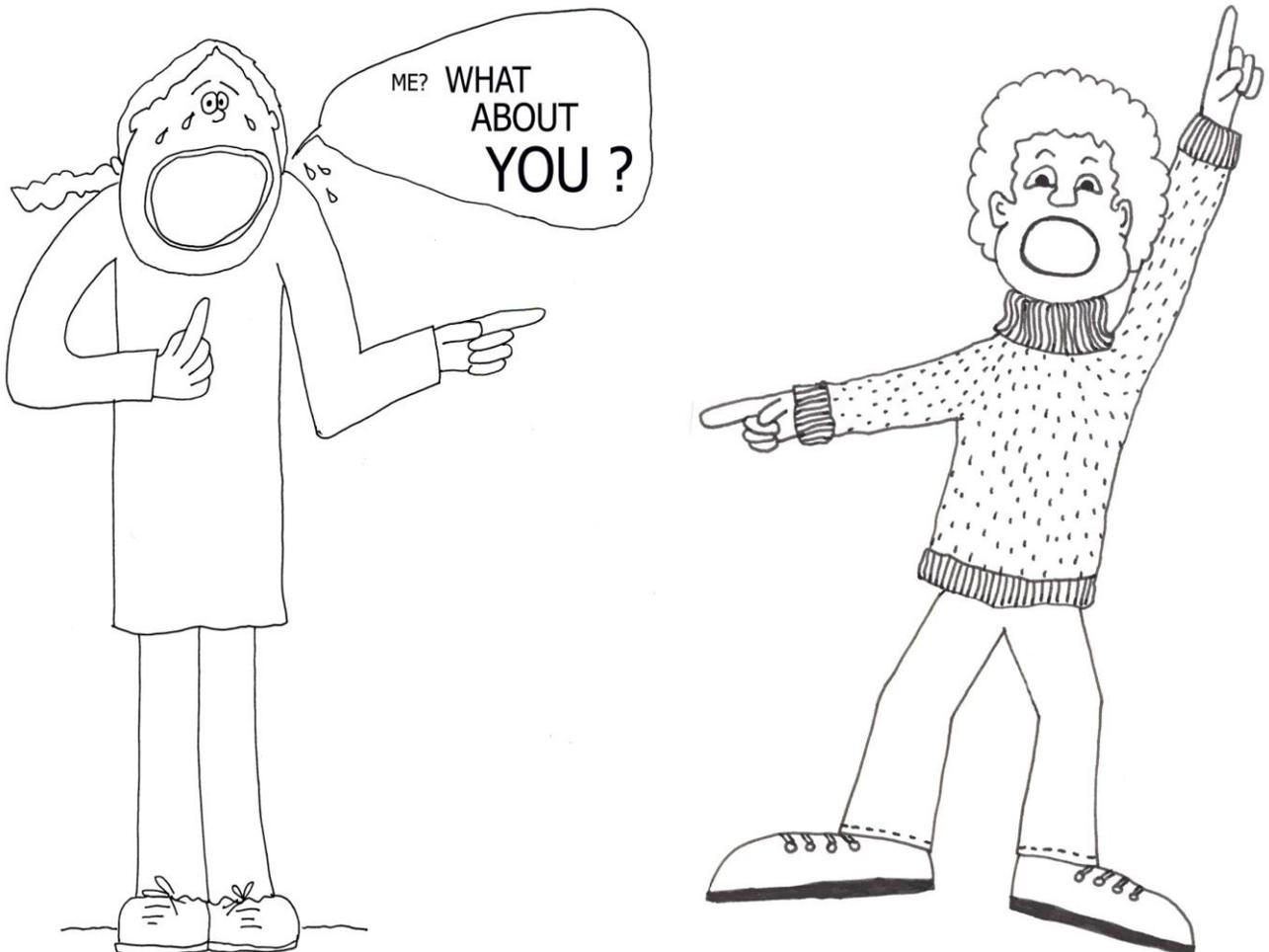
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Strategies That Do Not Work

Blaming - Blaming, in the context of *emotional monsters*, is placing responsibility for an error, fault, or pain on something or someone other than ourselves. We are unable to accept responsibility for what is going on with us. In blaming, the focus is on finding who or what is at fault, not us.

Blame is like quicksand. The more I blame and struggle and think of myself as a victim, the more sucked in and stuck I become. When I am blaming, I think you are the what's causing the pain I feel. If you would just be different, do different, say different, I wouldn't feel so awfully sad. That is not how it works. I am responsible for me. If I blame myself, I'm stuck the same as when I blame another. Thinking blaming thoughts trigger and reinforce the *emotional monsters*, the over-reactive part of me, and makes me most miserable indeed.

Do we blame because we don't know any better? Blaming is what we see all around us. Who's to blame? It's not my fault? Who started it? How about changing the questions? What kind of questions will lead us out of the confusion and pain? Am I ready to accept full responsibility for how I think, feel and act? Can I choose a different response? Of course I can. Am I ready to look inward and see the strength that lives inside of me?



Many times when we are blaming, we may also be disassociating, projecting and/or denying. We usually use a number of these ineffective strategies all at the same time. These strategies reinforce each other.

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Strategies That Do Not Work

Disassociating - Disassociating is a form of denying. Disassociating is a way of putting distance between self and our unacceptable feelings, our *emotional monsters*. We do such a complete job of distancing/disassociating the part of ourselves that we do not want to look at, we split off and deny a piece of ourselves. This is known as a split or disassociated personality. It is more common, in varying degrees, than we might think. This part of ourselves is so painful to look at, to acknowledge, to feel; we often end up **projecting** what we cannot look at, in ourselves, onto others.

How do we begin to be aware of what we cannot allow ourselves to look at, acknowledge, or feel? Our *emotional monsters* will still act out, but we will be unable to recognize they are us. What a predicament.



Projecting - Projecting is the unconscious diverting of unwanted characteristics or behaviors in the self, onto others. What I am projecting out there onto something or somebody directly corresponds to some painful thought I am thinking about myself. That painful thought is the very reason I am projecting it outward to avoid feeling it. The thing that appears to be out there which upsets, angers, hurts, shocks, depresses, that which I perceive the other as doing is something I actually do myself, but am not willing to admit. Projecting often occurs with close intimates, but it can also leak out onto any relationship, even onto inanimate objects.

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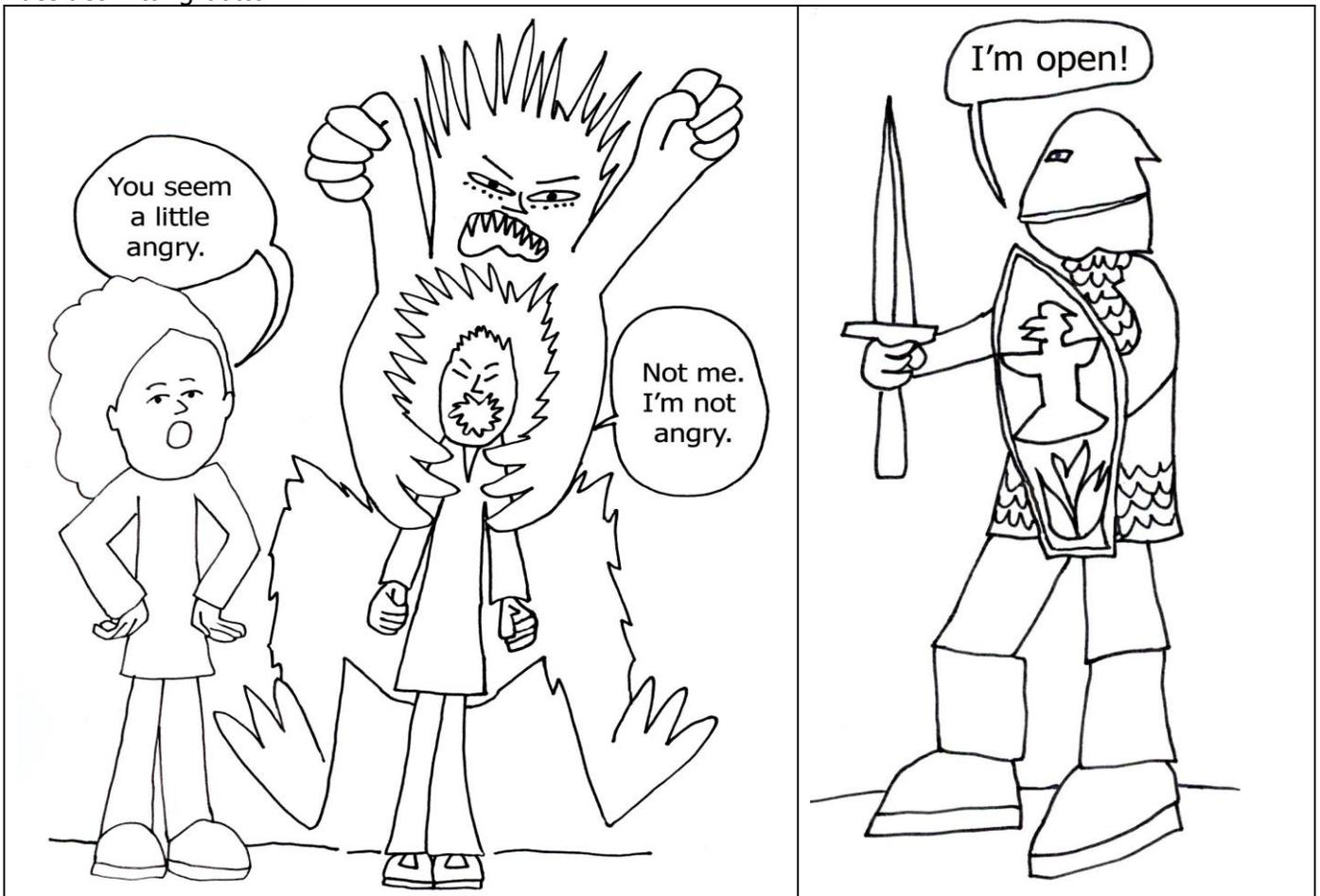
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Strategies That Do Not Work

Denying - Denying is an inability to admit what is true in the moment, a refusal to believe what is, in order to avoid those unwanted feelings, avoid those *emotional monsters*. When we are in a state of denying, we are not even present; we are in a disassociated state. Denial has a life of its own. Denial will be ferociously defended at all costs, even to the sacrificing of the self, in order to keep the unconscious thoughts and feelings, unconscious. We have abandoned a part of ourselves, and it has morphed into *emotional monsters*.

We can be so stubborn and prideful. Often it takes being in a great deal of pain to wake out of our denial into a state of willingness to consider other points of view. Most of us have to hit rock bottom to break through all that denying. Some of us have very, very, very deep bottoms. But when we hit bottom, feelings break through the denial, and allow us to get in touch with the underlying thoughts and emotions that created the pain in the first place.

Denying is an unconscious strategy; this makes it difficult to penetrate. We deny our *emotional monsters*, but others see and experience them. Is there some other way to break through our denying besides hitting bottom?



Denying can be an activity we do with others, or something we can do on our own.

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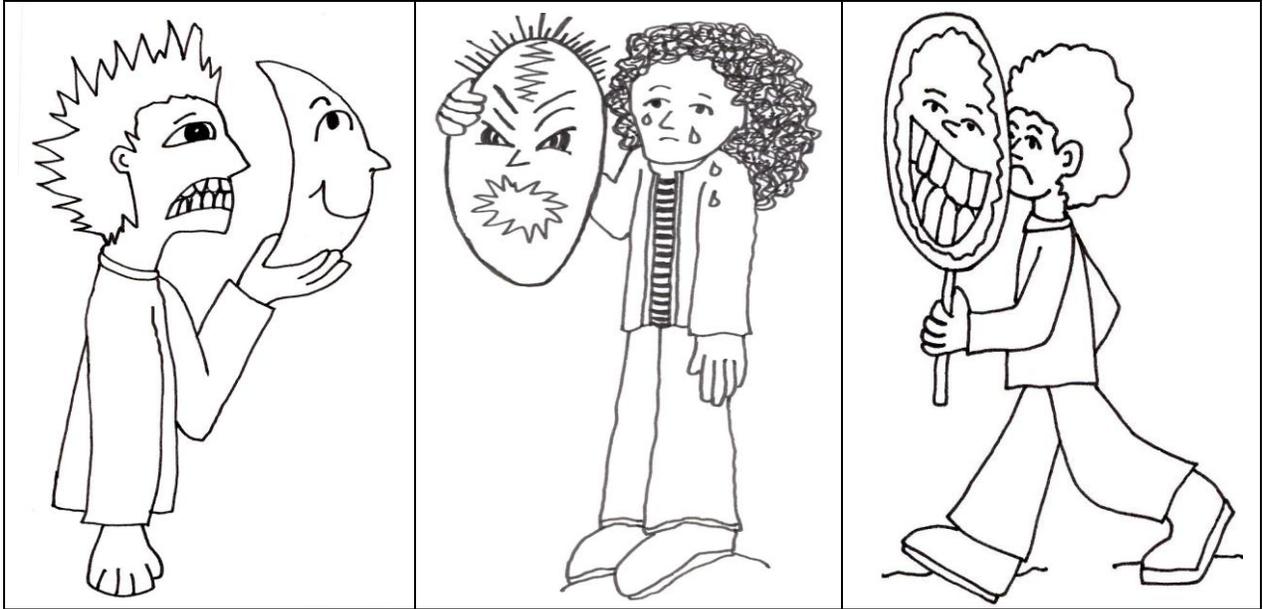
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Strategies That Do Not Work

Pretending - Pretending is an attempt to appear other than how one actually is. Pretending or putting up a front, a false face, keeps others and sometimes our own self from knowing what's going on inside. We pretend we are something we are not; we think we need to hide how we feel in order to survive. If I can't be seen, I can't be hurt. Behind the mask there is usually sorrow and fear. *Emotional monsters* fester under the mask of pretending.



Ignoring - Ignoring is to not recognize or even notice what is going on inside. Ignoring is probably the most passive of these strategies that do not work. Avoiding by ignoring, act as though the feelings, the *emotional monsters* are not even there. Instead of recognizing and changing what's on the inside, we ignore it and stay focused on the superficial for as long as possible. Energy can be spent on changing the outside instead of dealing with what's on the inside. Change styles, hair, clothes, as advertising and culture dictates. Keep ignoring the feelings; keep ignoring the *emotional monsters*. Ignoring is not bliss. Eventually, the *emotional monsters* will stir.



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Strategies That Do Not Work

Freezing - Freezing is a fixed, rigid state. Freezing makes it impossible to take action. Freezing is often in conjunction with a great deal of confusion. The self can become overwhelmed by a vast array of thoughts and feelings too numerous to process. Everything stops. Speech is frozen. Movement is frozen. Energy is frozen. The *emotional monsters* are on overload. The self is stuck, immobilized.



Running - Running is constant movement. We can run, run, run, run, run from how we feel, from our *emotional monsters*, but we cannot truly get away. It is a part of our own self we are running from; it's a physical impossibility.



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Strategies That Do Not Work

Numbing - Numbing is an absence of feeling. Numbing is a state akin to limbo or purgatory. Numbing out can keep us from being triggered, from feeling, and can also help us to quickly snuff out feelings when they are triggered, but being numb keeps us from growing. Some of us are so good at numbing ourselves, we can do it at will, but the majority of us use substances or events to accomplish this. There is probably no end to the creative ways we numb ourselves in order to avoid dealing with those *emotional monsters*. Evidence of this is the long list of addictive human behaviors, any activity or event can be used: eating, drinking, drugs, shopping, exercise, work, anything to excess. Wow! There is no end to what we can become addicted to because of how powerfully these behaviors can temporarily alter our moods and enable us to avoid just a little longer facing what we fear, our feelings, our *emotional monsters*.

Suppressing - Suppressing is a way to get rid of or put an end to those feelings we want to avoid. We get really *good* at recognizing the uncomfortable rising feeling, and suppress it, squelch it, squash it. Suppressing unwanted emotion doesn't protect us like we intend. Continuing to suppress *emotional monsters*, over time, causes them to get stronger and require more energy to keep them suppressed.

Controlling - Controlling is the most aggressive and time consuming of the strategies that do not work. Have you ever noticed the more we try to control, the more out of control we actually are? It doesn't seem to stop us from trying to control everything. We arrange our lives to live a life of orderly, scheduled, rigid, routine, even keeled, non-feeling. We fill our days with tasks that help us to feel *good* about ourselves. *Bad* is to be avoided at all costs. We can diligently work to remove everything and everyone that is upsetting from our life, it doesn't mean our *emotional monsters* won't get triggered.

When we are enmeshed in these **strategies that do not work**, we perceive the *threats* to be outside ourselves. This point of view/ perception that the problem is external keeps us from looking within, it keeps us from seeing ourselves clearly, and it keeps us stuck in mental illness, dis-ease.

When we are locked into these behaviors, **strategies that do not work**, it may take a life threatening experience or event to provoke change. We may have to experience a very painful hitting bottom experience or several before being able to admit something is amiss. Admitting something is not working is the first step on the road to healing heart, soul and spirit. Once we muster up some humility, willingness, and courage, we will have what it takes to live life anew. Once we make a deep commitment to do whatever it takes to be whole, to be all we can be, to be love, turning back becomes more difficult than moving forward on the path, our very own path, whatever we make it.

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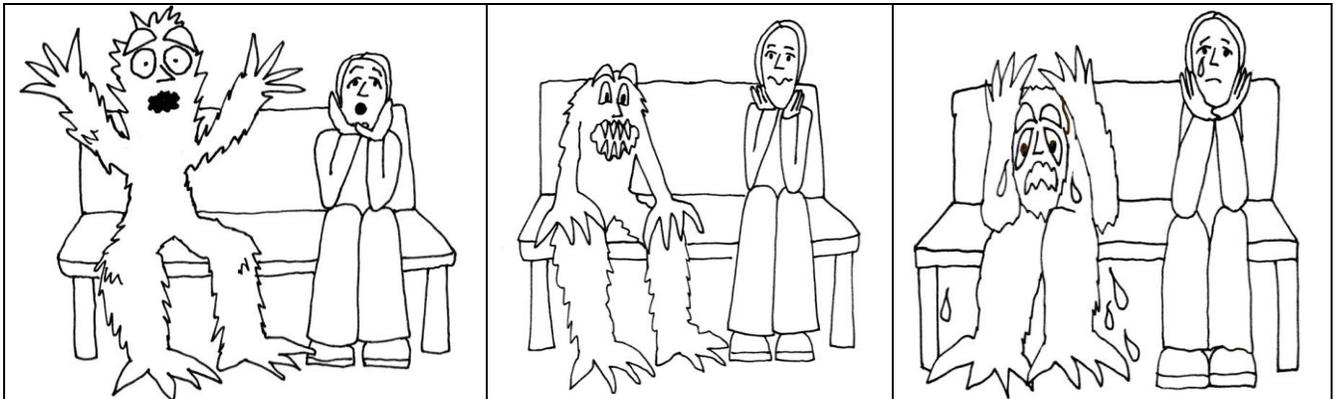
Strategies That Do Work

At the heart of healing, there is acceptance, forgiveness & love.

Short Term - Quick Fixes - Temporary Solutions

Once we can identify *emotional monsters* in action, and recognize strategies that do not work, we are ready to develop short & long term strategies that do work. It's helpful to have a whole "bag of tricks" at our disposal. If one strategy isn't working, try another. We need short term strategies to stop *emotional monsters* from escalating emotions out of control and hopefully to deescalate them. Short term strategies are necessary temporary solutions. The following are short term strategies that I have used. Please feel free to add to the list. (Long term strategies will be discussed later.)

1. Recognize and acknowledge the feeling. Identify the emotion. Where is it located in the body? What are the physical sensations?
2. Sit with whatever feeling arises without acting on it. Stay with the feeling no matter how uncomfortable it seems. Resist the urge to fight, flight or freeze.



3. Breathe; focus on physically calming the self.
4. Check body; relax. Unclench fists; assume a neutral posture.
5. Count, backwards and forwards, forwards and backwards; it's a form of distraction.
6. Remove self from the situation, if necessary and if possible.
7. Distract self by observing nature or doing something I enjoy doing or simply need to do. Don't suppress feelings, but don't act on them. Distract the monster. Take it someplace without triggers. "Look at the beautiful flower."



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Strategies That Do Work - Short Term - Quick Fixes - Temporary Solutions

8. Say positive affirmations to self. Remind self over & over, I have heart. Love is the answer. This will pass. I'll be okay.



9. Make a mental list of all the things for which I am thankful.
10. Think about an enjoyable memory.
11. Write about how I feel.
12. Vent to someone who is not involved.
13. Exercise.
14. Get with people who feel safe.
15. Help someone else.
16. Overwhelmed? Are there too many mixed emotions screaming for attention? Start small. Tell those *emotional monsters* to get in line; then deal with them one at a time.



No matter what someone else is putting out, if I feel something, it is "mine", I own it. That is where I need to begin. I need to look within, if I really intend to make friends with my *emotional monsters* and find peace.

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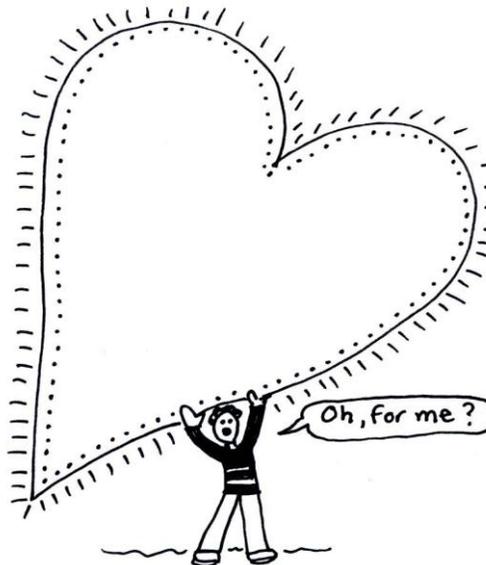
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Strategies That Do Work

Long Term - Adjusting Habits - Lifestyle Changes

Preliminary Attitude Adjustments

- A. **Work up the want** - Making friends with *emotional monsters* is not for the weak-minded or faint of heart. It requires some serious concentrated effort. Dabbling and dabbling will simply not do. We got to really, really, really want it. I know it sounds a bit dramatic. Some of us are so enmeshed and seriously entrenched in negative patterns with our *emotional monsters* that it will take a deep, deep, deep commitment to do whatever it takes to make an impact and turn it around. If we have a strong enough desire to heal, to get well, to make friends with our *emotional monsters*, the Universe will assist us in every way possible. Love, the Universe, wants us to be whole.
- B. **Accept responsibility for myself.** My condition, thinking, and feelings are choices I make. Even if the choices are unconscious, the choice, the responsibility is mine. I alone am responsible; therefore it is within my power to change. If I am upset, it is my choice. Oh my God, that's hard to accept. I suffer because of what I am thinking (my thoughts). I suffer because of how I am interpreting the situation, how I am perceiving things. My attitude is my choice. The ability to choose is a gift. I am free to choose what I think, how I will view this and any experience. **Accepting responsibility is empowering.** Transforming attitudes, habits and lifestyle is possible, and success is guaranteed simply by dedicating oneself to the journey, to making friends with *emotional monsters*. **Accept self as is.** This requires getting really, really honest with self. Know and admit weaknesses. Face, accept and learn from defects. Learn to live with mistakes; no beating up on self for past mistakes. Realize "I am not my behavior". If I am responsible, I can choose how I will respond; I can choose to change. **Accept the whole self.** Encourage self to embrace and walk through any emotion that reveals itself no matter how scary or dark. Freedom comes from loving the split off parts of the self. **Acceptance is receiving the gift of love freely given to us every moment of life.** We are love in the deepest sense of the word.



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Strategies That Do Work - Long Term - Adjusting Habits - Lifestyle Changes

Preliminary Attitude Adjustments

- C. **Encourage the development of skills, habits and attitudes that will promote healing.** Encourage attitudes like humility, patience, curiosity, forgiveness, and thankfulness to name a few. Encourage skills like listening deeply to ones own inner voice and to the stories of others. Encourage habits like asking insightful questions, considering other points of view, and being a possibility thinker.



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Strategies That Do Work - Long Term - Adjusting Habits - Lifestyle Changes

Preliminary Attitude Adjustments

- D. **Suspend judgment.** When we spend our time/energy sorting everything into "good" and "bad", or "right and "wrong", there is not much time or energy left for learning something new that might be essential to living a healthier, happier life. We can't make *emotional monsters* our friends by making them wrong and judging them bad. Just like us, they need to be loved and accepted into wellness, not judged. Practice non-judgment; make it a life-long commitment. Decide now. From now on, catch yourself; refrain from judging self and others. Start small and extend the practice. Observing and discerning is different from making value judgments (good/bad - right/wrong). Rise above dualities in our thinking. Observe without judging.
- E. **Embrace difficulties as an opportunity for growth.** I tried every way I could think of to avoid, ignore, block, resist, fight, eliminate, destroy, and, once and for all, rid myself of those awful, difficult *emotional monsters*. It wasn't working. Embrace them? What are you "crazy"? Make friends with my *emotional monsters*? No way! How could I be friends with them? Each *emotional monster* has a story to tell, a strength to reveal. Each time an emotional monster is triggered, it is an opportunity to release and clear pain from the past so I can be a stronger, more whole, more authentic, more real self. Embrace difficulties as an opportunity for growth.
- F. **Trust in the process.** There are many ways to describe or label this process. The process of making friends with *emotional monsters* is a tool which enabled me to be whole again, to be true to the deepest part of myself. This process availed itself because my *emotional monsters* were so loud and strong, and would not be stilled. I could not stand the pain. I had to get well. There was only one choice for me. I knew I wanted to love, and not hate. My process boils down to this, every experience is an opportunity to learn and grow in love for all, including myself. I trust this process. It works for me. It's now. It's where ever I am. There's no waiting to get started. The process is not rigid or fixed; it evolves as I evolve. It has some basics that can be identified: self-awareness, reflection, contemplation, study, practice, review and revision. There is no arriving. Once the *emotional monsters* are healed, the process can continue on with regards to what ever arises within, allowing the experience and what it reveals about the self. And so, it becomes a lifestyle, trusting in the process of life and the power of love. Being on the path to healing is more important than the results. Focus on staying in the process. Results will come.

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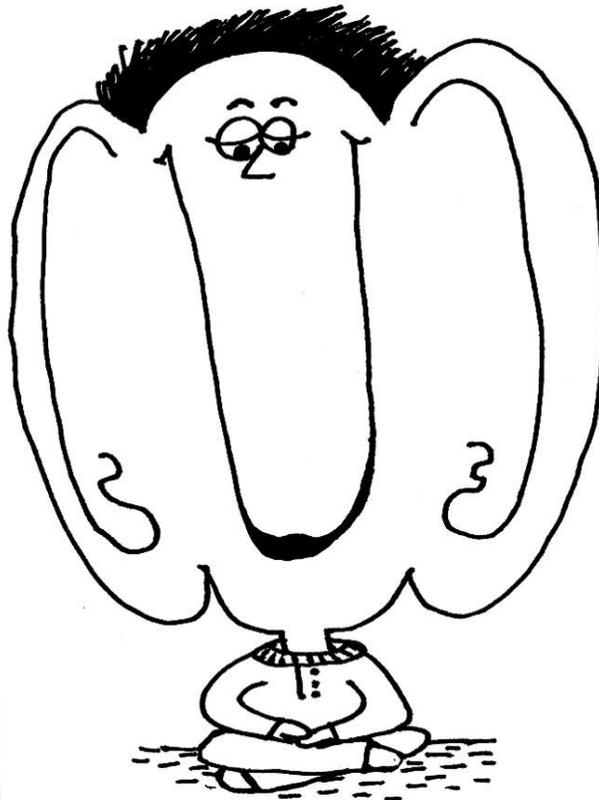
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Strategies That Do Work

Long Term - Adjusting Habits - Lifestyle Changes

Daily Practices

1. **Put new ideas and information in mind** to raise one's consciousness. Be open-minded. There is so much we have yet to understand about consciousness. Study the wide array of material at our disposal. If we really want to learn, there is no end to the information that will make itself available to us. Try on new concepts. Contemplate. Practice what we learn. If it does not move us in the direction of being a freer, more loving person, then, set it to the side and move on to something else. Keep practicing the skills and knowledge that allow us to be the love we are.
2. **Practice deep listening.** Try listening more than speaking. Really listen. No inner dialogue. No thinking about how to reply. Really give all attention to the one who is speaking. Practice listening to our inner voice in the same manner.



3. **Always question anger and fear.** These are two of the most common signs that our *emotional monsters* have been triggered. Until we really get a handle on our *emotional monsters*, we unconsciously carry so many fears from the past around with us. Here's a few common fears: fear of being hurt, ridiculed, humiliated, slighted, left out, abandoned, not good enough, unlovable, and on and on. We project these fears onto our current situation and so color our perception of the present experience. We are afraid of being hurt and not being able to do anything about it, just like when we were little. Once the hurt is triggered, most of us so quickly cover it with anger, we don't even realize we are doing it because it happens so fast. It can create a great deal of confusion. Because we so speedily move to anger, we usually become aware of the *emotional monster* anger first. Always question anger and fear.

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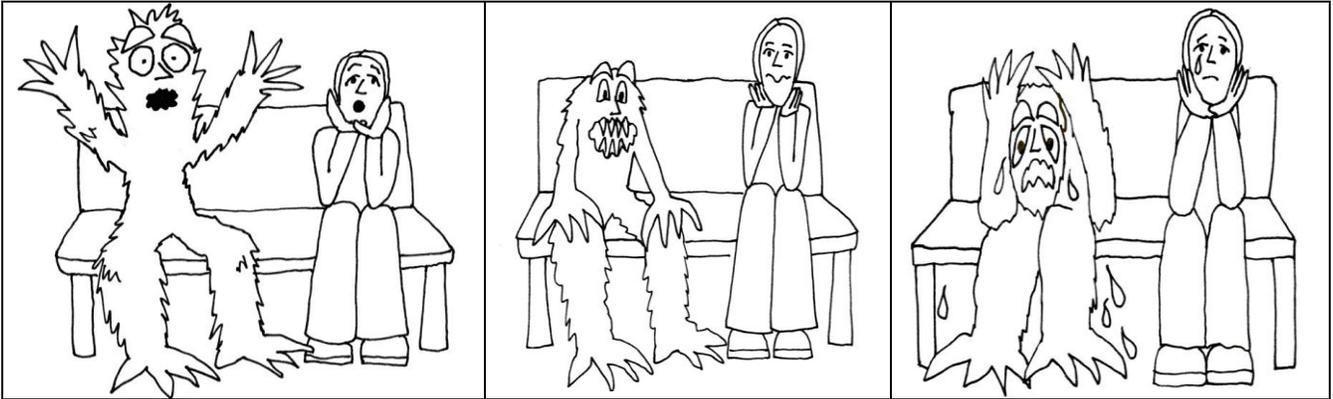
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Strategies That Do Work - Long Term - Adjusting Habits - Lifestyle Changes

Daily Practices

- Step back when emotions feel like they are getting out of control.** Create a space for self-reflection, to look within. The "suffering" is usually a result of resisting what is; our unmet expectations disappoint. It hurts to think we are causing most, if not all, of our pain. If possible identify the feeling with its associated thoughts. When an emotion rises to the surface, recognize the larger than life, out of control way it feels. Resist the urge to fight, flight or freeze.
- Stay with the feeling. Sit with the feeling.** This becomes a long term strategy when we add listening deeply to what the feeling is telling us about ourselves. Learn to be comfortable with feeling uncomfortable. Allow the emotion to simply be, no matter how monstrous it may seem. Do not take it on, or let it overwhelm self, but instead, sit with it, listen, be its friend.



- Become aware of self-talk.** We can say such horrible things to ourselves. Worse yet, we speak them out loud and give them voice and more power. A word, a phrase repeated enough times becomes "our truth", even if it's a lie from the darkest, unexplored regions of our soul. I am aware of negative self-talk. I heard the voice inside my head; it said, "What's wrong with me?" as though I was doomed, fatally flawed. I kept catching that inner voice berating the self and developed a strategy of the loud reply, "**What's wrong with me? Nothing is wrong with me! I am lovable! I am love! I can change! I will work on what I do not like.**" With repeated practice, I catch the negative self-talk quicker. The critical voice becomes weaker and weaker. Years pass. The critical voice becomes a memory, no longer emotionally charged, a voice from the past; it has no power in the present. Negative self-talk are usually lies we have learned to tell ourselves. Decide, right now. Make an intention to be aware of negative self-talk. Recognize the destructive nature of these thoughts; catch the thoughts at any stage of development you can. Sometimes, it might be after the fact. Just start. Replace lies with loving, truthful thoughts. Do it over and over and over again until the loving thought is the habit. Be patient. It is not only an emotional and mental habit being changed, but a physical habit pattern as well. We actually change the neural pathways in our brains when we train ourselves to think as Love would have us think.
- Set boundaries.** Learn to say what you mean, and mean what you say. Learn to say "no" as well as yes. Stand your ground. Do what your true self tells you to do; do not be swayed by the persuasion, passion or manipulations of others. Learn how to say what is needed and set boundaries in a way that is kind, loving and respectful to self and others. We know in our head, heart and gut what is true. Do what is true; be true to self.

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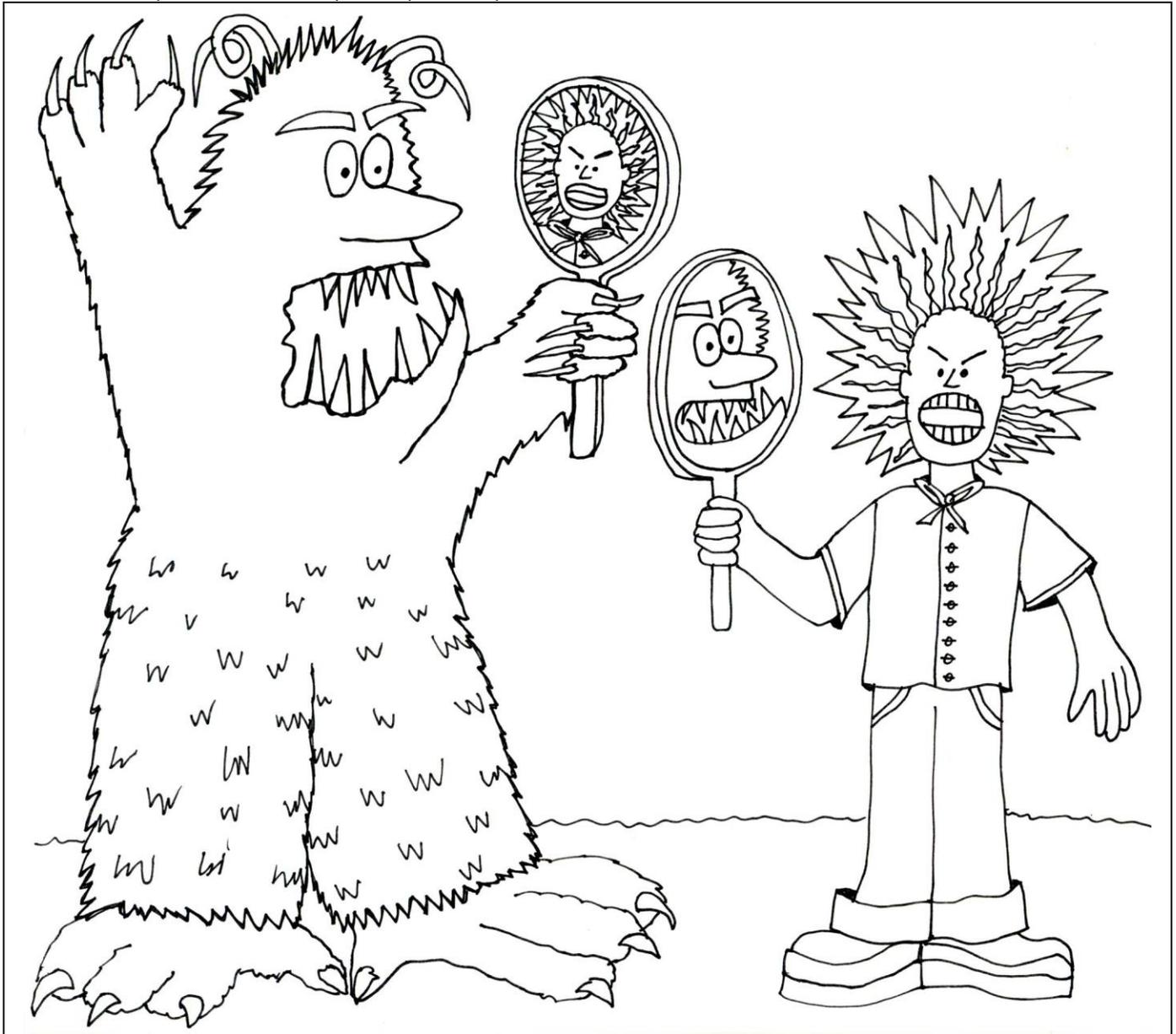
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Strategies That Do Work - Long Term - Adjusting Habits - Lifestyle Changes

Daily Practices

8. **Look in the mirror.** If I perceive something outside myself as causing me distress, I can take the mirror test. Is there some way, no matter how small, I am behaving in the same way as what bothers me about the other? I may not be seeing myself very clearly. It is often easier to see *emotional monsters*, unhealthy behavior patterns, in others than it is to see those patterns in myself. Too often we project a part of ourselves onto the other, usually, a part of ourselves from which we have disassociated, a part of ourselves we are to ashamed to own. If we become certain of our position, and self-righteousness sets in, it makes it even more difficult for us to see ourselves clearly. Remember to look in the mirror from time to time. It's not a literal analogy. Sometimes what we see in the mirror triggers a different behavior needing to come up in us, to be looked at, loved, healed, and released.



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Strategies That Do Work - Long Term - Adjusting Habits - Lifestyle Changes

Daily Practices

9. **Journal.** Sometimes writing things down is a good way to get stuff out where it can be looked at and sorted through.
10. **A last word.** Run for exercise, not from *emotional monsters*. I spent a great deal of energy suppressing, hiding, denying my emotions, and running away from how I felt, but the *emotional monsters* would not go away. When I stopped running, they were still right by my side.



All that running was exhausting. When I allow myself to be with the feeling, healing begins to take place. The *emotional monsters* actually have gifts to give. *Emotional monsters* become allies, friends. They are voices from the past crying out to be healed. Stop running. Turn and face those frightful *emotional monsters*. My personal experience is *emotional monsters* can only be tamed by connecting with them, and finding out the valuable lessons they offer. *Emotional monsters* offer insights into our true self.



Bringing my *emotional monsters* out into the light of day through acceptance is what I call compassionate acknowledgement. It takes courage and hard work. A dear friend who likes to escape from feelings said it well, "If I don't have emotions, then I won't have to feel." Yup! You won't have to feel alright. You won't have to feel sorrow or pain, but you won't feel joy or happiness or love either. The gift the *emotional monsters* give us, if we listen, is the ability to love fully and deeply. What a gift it is!

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Life After Emotional Monsters

Emotional monsters are a combination of ignored, unconscious feelings and thoughts we have been carrying around with us long enough, for years, even decades. We have misjudged these *emotional monsters*. We have been treating them in ways that inflame their toxicity and misbehavior. *Emotional monsters* are our friends, not enemies to be avoided. Anytime is a great time to stop avoiding and start embracing.

Emotional monsters are a gift. It is a gift to have an opportunity to awaken, to be present, to grow, to love. It's a gift to be able and willing to choose what is life affirming. It's a gift to be who we are. It's a gift to be genuine, honest, and fearless. It's a gift to live each day as an adventure because we are no longer stuck in emotional toxicity. After *emotional monsters* have been emancipated, emotions take on a whole different quality. Emotions are not going to go away, they are a part of our communication with life. Emotions will continue to inform us of our true self, our authentic nature, our very essence which is one with all life. I know that might sound a little "out there", but it's true. I wish you courage & compassion, the best kind of strength, on your journey.

Peace & love,
Mo



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Books Worth The Read

Since the 1960s, I have read many, many "self-help" type books. There are thousands of great books, not to mention CDs and DVDs. We are so fortunate to live in this age of information. The following are just a small handful of the books and authors that have fed my heart and mind.

Power vs. Force: The Hidden Determinants of Human Behavior by David R. Hawkins, M.D., Ph.D., ©1995-2002 Hay House, Inc., Carlsbad, California, U.S.A. This book was my introduction to Dr. Hawkins work. I continue to benefit reading his books and listening to many of his teachings.

The Diamond Heart Series by A. H. Almaas ©varied Shambhala Press, Boston and London. This series was my introduction to his writings. His teachings are deep. Reading his work gives me much to contemplate.

Man's Search for Meaning by Victor Frankel, © 1959-2006 Beacon Press, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. It is a timeless book about the subject of choosing responsibility. After surviving the German concentration camps of World War 2, the author created the system of psychology known as logo therapy. His experience taught him the one freedom that no one can take away from us is our ability to choose how we will respond.

Emotional Resilience by David Viscott , ©1996 Harmony Books, 201 East 50th Street, New York, NY, U.S.A. A quote from the book, " To initiate the healing process, a painful realization must exceed your threshold of denial and be felt." Best book ever for understanding our emotions.

Don't Bite the Hook by Pema Chodron, audio CD. Google her. She has written many books and has many teachings on CD & DVD. She is an articulate, compassionate teacher. Her teachings greatly helped me with some of the most difficult of emotional states.

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D. ©2005 A Puddle Dancer Press Book, Encinitas, California, U.S.A. Included in this book are some amazingly helpful chapters on observing without evaluating, and identifying and expressing emotions.

Dare to Forgive by Edward M. Hallowell ©2004 Health Communication, Inc., 3201 S.W. 15th Street, Deerfield Beach, Florida, U.S.A. He makes a powerful case for why forgiveness is necessary for our own healing.

The Addictive Personality: Understanding the Addictive Process and Compulsive Behavior by Craig Nakken ©1996 Hazelden Foundation, Center City, Minnesota, U.S.A. He states in his book that addiction is a process of nurturing, taking care of one's emotional needs, through avoidance. This book is an eye-opener.

Your Soul's Compass by Joan Borysenko, Ph.D. and Gordon Dveirin, Ed.D. ©2007 Hay House, Inc., International Publishing House. This is great survey of how many of the world's disciplines view spiritual guidance.

Why People Don't Heal by Caroline Myss (audio CD). In this teaching, she shares how we bond with others around our "woundedness". She theorizes our emotional wounds and hurts become our way of connecting with others. We hang onto these hurts because these behaviors feed us in some way.

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