EMOTIONS VERSUS FEELINGS

We will be using techniques to increase your sensory awareness of your body senses. This is the first learning stage to “rewiring” past “Old and Outworn” habits and behaviors. This training develops your awareness of the difference between “emotions” and “feelings” and this awareness will be vital for your “self-identity” changes.

Antonio D’Amasio (professor of neuroscience, University of California) writes: “Emotions play out in the theater of the body. Feelings play out in the theater of the mind.”

Feelings are mental interpretations of your body states, which come to you as the brain gets the messages from your body’s responses to external and internal stimuli. The order of events is: There is a threat: the body responds with fear (emotion) and the mind thinks “horror” (feeling).

Dr.Sarah Mckay, (<https://drsarahmckay.com/>) neuroscientist explains it as:

Although the two words are used interchangeably, there are distinct differences between feelings and emotions. Understanding the difference between the two can help you change unhealthy behaviors and find more happiness and peace in your life. Feelings and emotions are two sides of the same coin and highly interconnected, but are two very different things.

**Emotions** are lower level responses occurring in the subcortical regions of the brain, the amygdala and the ventromedial prefrontal cortices, creating biochemical reactions in your body altering your physical state. They originally helped our species survive by producing quick reactions to threat, reward, and everything in between in their environments. Emotional reactions are coded in our genes and while they do vary slightly individually and depending on circumstances, are generally universally similar across all humans and even other species. For example, you smile and your dog wags its tail.

The amygdala play a role in emotional arousal and regulate the release of neurotransmitters essential for memory consolidation which is why emotional memories can be so much stronger and longer-lasting. Emotions proceed feelings, are physical, and instinctual. Because they are physical, they can be objectively measured by blood flow, brain activity, facial micro-expressions, and body language.

**Feelings** originate in the neocortical regions of the brain, are mental associations and reactions to emotions, and are subjective being influenced by personal experience, beliefs, and memories. A feeling is the mental portrayal of what is going on in your body when you have an emotion and is the byproduct of your brain perceiving and assigning meaning to the emotion. Feelings are the next thing that happens after having an emotion, involve cognitive input, usually subconscious, and cannot be measured precisely.

Feelings are sparked by emotions and colored by the thoughts, memories, and images that have become subconsciously linked with that particular emotion for you. But it works the other way around too. For example, just thinking about something threatening can trigger an emotional fear response. While individual emotions are temporary, the feelings they evoke may persist and grow over a lifetime. Because emotions cause subconscious feelings which in turn initiate emotions and so on, your life can become a never-ending cycle of painful and confusing emotions which produce negative feelings which cause more negative emotions without you ever really knowing why.

While basic emotions are instinctual and common to us all, the meanings they take on and the feelings they prompt are individual based on our programming past and present. Feelings are shaped by a person’s temperament and experiences and vary greatly from person to person and situation to situation.

Your emotions and feelings play a powerful role in how you experience and interact with the world because they are the driving force behind many behaviors, helpful and unhelpful. It’s possible to react to emotions and the feelings they evoke which are guided by unconscious fear-based perceptions which you may not buy into anymore, yet you’re living your life, making decision and behaving according to these out-dated tendencies. Living unaware like this almost always leads to problems and unhappiness in the long run.

By understanding the difference between and becoming aware of your emotions and feelings, determining which is which and their root causes, and then inserting conscious thought followed by deliberate action, you can choose how you navigate and experience the world. Being able to do this means responding or reacting which can make the difference in a calm or chaotic life.

In the gaps between emotion, feeling, and acting, we all have the power to change and direct our lives for the better. Understanding your emotions and managing your feelings with conscious thinking so they don’t hijack your brain followed by conscious action can actually change your brain through neuroplasticity, the scientifically proven ability of your brain to change form and function based on repeated emotion, thought, and behavior, and change your life.