

The Mastery of Life – Week 5

Chapter 5 Summary – The Plaza of Water

In *The Plaza of Water*, Don Miguel Ruiz Jr. introduces the element of **emotion**.

If *The Plaza of the Mind* represented our thoughts, then *The Plaza of Water* represents the **emotional currents that move through us**.

Ruiz Jr. uses the metaphor of water because water is fluid, shifting, and always changing — just like our feelings. Some days, our emotional waters are calm and still.

Other days, the waves are rough and overwhelming.

And sometimes, our emotions feel like a flood we can't control.

He explains that **emotions are not the problem** — it's our *relationship* to them that causes suffering. Most people try to control, suppress, or ignore certain emotions because they believe some feelings are "good" and others are "bad."

But emotions are **messengers**, not judges.

They tell us where we've been wounded, where we're healing, and where we're growing.

Ruiz describes how we tend to *identify ourselves* with our emotional reactions.

When sadness arises, we say, "*I am sad.*"

When anger arises, we say, "*I am angry.*"

But just like water flowing in and out of a riverbank, emotions *move through us* — they are not who we are.

When we identify with emotions as "me," we lose our ability to respond consciously.

Instead, we react automatically.

We become swept away in the current.

Ruiz teaches that **awareness** allows us to observe emotions *without becoming them*.

The goal is not to suppress or deny emotional experience — the goal is to allow emotions to move, to breathe, to pass.

In awareness, we notice:

- "*I am experiencing sadness,*" not "*I am sadness.*"
- "*I feel anger rising,*" not "*I am anger.*"

This shift is powerful.

It gives us back our choice.

Ruiz also highlights that emotion and thought work together.

A fearful thought can churn emotional turbulence.

A loving thought can calm inner waters.

But **the emotion itself is not the enemy** — it simply responds to the meaning we attach to life.

He reminds us that emotional pain often comes from trying to **resist** what we feel.

Just like trying to dam a river increases pressure, trying to control emotions intensifies them.

Instead, healing comes from allowing emotion to move freely — without judgment and without shame.

The Plaza of Water teaches us:

- Emotions are natural.
- Emotions are temporary.
- Emotions are part of being human.
- And emotions flow best when we meet them with compassion.

When we stop fearing our emotional experience, we stop drowning in it.

We learn to **float** — held by awareness, grounded in presence, trusting the natural ebb and flow of the heart.

Reflection Questions

Use these to process and deepen understanding:

1. Which emotions do you tend to suppress or avoid? Why?
 2. Which emotions feel easiest or safest for you to express?
 3. Think of a recent emotional reaction. If you had seen the emotion as an experience and not an identity, how might that moment have changed?
 4. What does emotional “safety” mean to you today?
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Journal Prompts

Write slowly. Let your emotional body guide:

- *The earliest message I learned about emotions was...*
- *When emotion rises in me, my body feels...*
- Finish the sentence:
“When I allow myself to feel fully, I discover...”