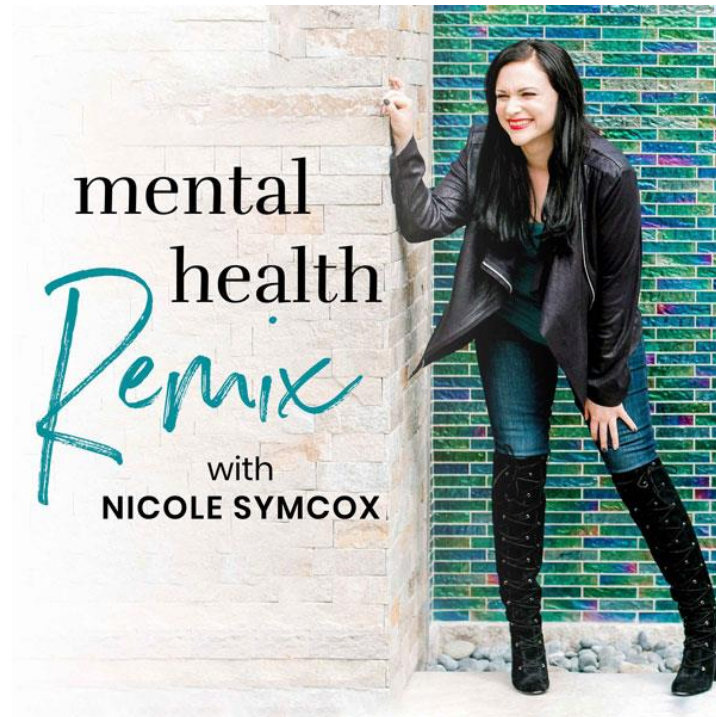


Ep #50: Busting Emotional Myths



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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If you've been doing life one way and it's not working, find another way. And sometimes, finding another way is taking a class or working with a therapist or joining a support group. There are many different avenues to support yourself along the way. But I don't want you to settle for a life of big, heavy, scary emotions that get the best of you and interfere with you living your best life when there is another way. There is potential to feel differently.

Welcome to *Mental Health Remix*, a show for ambitious humans who are ready to feel, think, and be different. If you want to stop struggling with perfectionism, build better relationships, and connect with yourself and your potential, this is the place for you...

Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

Hey, hey, everyone. Welcome to episode 50. So, today I want to bust some myths around our emotions. Because I think this is where we get tripped up a lot, is when we start feeling feelings, we don't know what to do with them, and then we start judging them.

And once that internal judgment process starts, it usually starts leading us down a negative path with our thoughts. And if you have been listening to me for a while, you know your thoughts impact your emotions and your emotions impact your actions. And it does this big triangle that's part of the cognitive behavioral therapy model, that our thoughts, our emotions, and our behaviors all intersect with one another. And it kind of leads us to how we show up in the world or the decisions we make or how we behave.

So, let's just bust some of the myths that are around emotions and talk about, like, what can we do to support ourselves when we are having an emotional response to something.

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So, the first myth I want to bust is that emotions are bad, okay. So, this is probably one of the first things that comes out of people's mouths, like they don't like their emotions and they think that they're bad because it might make them feel weak or they have an idea that crying is unproductive, or if you feel a feeling then you're sitting in a pity party. It's all these judgments on feelings are bad.

And the truth about that is that feelings are just feelings. And I know that's so annoying that us therapists say that kind of stuff all the time. But it really, really is true.

So, feelings are just energy in the body and then your brain interprets, based on past experiences, current circumstances, and the current health of your mental health. You make decisions about those feelings or you start telling yourself a story about those feelings. And that is what makes the intensity of the feeling better or worse.

But at its primal root, it's just energy in the body. So, what do I mean by that? When I talk about energy in the body, it means emotions carry a surge.

So, if you've ever felt angry, the energy in your body is probably intense. Like you want to maybe hit a wall or you feel like you need to go running. And largely, that's because so much energy is being generated from anger. Your body's trying to expel it. It's trying to find an outlet for all of that energy. So, that's what I mean when I say emotions are energy in the body.

Which leads us right into myth number two, crying is bad, or crying is a waste of time. That could not be further from the truth. Because just as anger kind of launches your body into action and you sort of feel like you need to do something physical with your body to get some of that anger out, like going running or maybe take a kickboxing class, you usually need to do something with all of that intensity that's in your body.

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On the flipside, crying is a way for your body to release sadness, okay. So, it can't be bad. We have to have a way and an outlet for this emotional energy to come out so we can process it and reframe it and give ourselves the healthiest support that we need.

I think there was a study that was even done on tears. There are tears that fall out of your eyes that – I think what I read was something like it has large amounts of cortisol in them. Some of them is truly a stress-release for your body.

So, it can't be a bad thing. But so many times, and especially depending on how we were raised as children, we might have a narrative or a story around that, that crying is annoying or crying is bad or crying is a waste of time, whatever those messages were to you as a child are likely showing up for you now as an adult. So, it's important to unpack that and figure out, where is this story coming from around resisting crying or resisting letting me just feel the feelings?

So often, in therapy, when people drop into their feelings, it passes by. And you have to start looking at your feelings as not an enemy, but something that is literally looking for a way to feel healthy and whole. So, I want you to kind of change some of your thought process around feelings being bad.

Now, granted, we have choices. So, there are some feelings that produce a really strong energetic response in us, and we do have a choice with what we do with those feelings. So, if you take your angry feelings and verbally attack another person, then yes, the action was wrong. But the feeling itself is just a feeling.

And it's just a feeling, so you have to monitor what action steps you are taking with your feelings. And this is what can happen is, when we bury our feelings for so long, we don't even know what lives there anymore. It's like this closet that we have just stuffed all of our stuff in, closed it, and we don't even remember what's in there anymore.

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So, when stuff starts falling out that we don't like, we almost kind of get shocked by it. We get kind of confused and shocked, like, "Oh my gosh, I forgot that was even in there, what am I supposed to do with that? I don't even need that anymore." Or whatever the story may be on that.

And so, that is why it is so important to get mental health support if your emotions are getting the best of you. Like, if they are showing up in big intense ways and you're having a really hard time managing them and taking supportive action for yourself, that is where you can find some power and support, working with a therapist to figure out, where are these feelings coming from and how do I give them the support they need so I don't verbally attack someone or so I don't feel depressed for three days and not want to get out of bed?

Like, when you have these big indicators in your life where your behavior is showing up in a way that you don't like and it's emotionally driven, it's just a cue from your internal world that something needs support, something is looking for healing. And there's never shame or blame in getting mental health support.

You guys hear me say this like a broken record because I think that there's still a fair amount of stigma around, if you have an emotion, you're crazy. And that is myth number three. So, we're going to dive right there. Myth number three is that you're crazy if you have big emotions.

And really, you're human. That's all that that really means. You're having a human response and you need support. You never want to stay in that stuckness. Like, sometimes these emotions can be so big and out of control and they can feel like they're really hurting our relationships or they're hurting our productivity at work or they make us feel like crap on a daily basis.

Those are all indicators they are getting too big. You need some support and you need some help because letting these big emotions guide your life

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and inform your decisions and inform your thoughts is not going to lead you to good places.

If you're in that spot, you probably know what I mean because when you are stuck in these emotional mindsets where you feel heavy and you get locked into negative thoughts, it doesn't take you to feeling good. It doesn't take you to happy places and it probably is impacting you across the board because there is nothing separate from our mental health.

Our mental health shows up for us whether we want it to or not. And so, at some point, if you've been living your life not dealing with your emotions, there may come a day when they get so big it's all you can think about and in a way it's your emotional world saying, "Help me. Support me. Show me a different way."

They're not trying to hurt you. I want you to change your idea around emotions from these big scary things that are out to get you or out to hurt you. That's a story and a label you have put on your emotions somewhere along the way, either because you have a trauma story around that, a parent told you that when you were younger, somewhere along the way, you developed a story around that.

And there can be some power in the healing process unpacking where that idea is coming from because when you do give emotion the support that they need, you actually start living life differently. They don't get in your way the same way. In fact, they probably support you in ways you didn't even know was possible for emotions.

And I know, if you're in the thick of it right now, what I'm saying sounds like a myth probably in itself, and we're busting myths today. But it's not. It just takes strategic support and it is so possible for you. I want to encourage you with that.

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If you've been doing life one way and it's not working, find another way. And sometimes, finding another way is taking a class or working with a therapist or joining a support group. There are many different avenues to support yourself along the way. But I don't want you to settle for a life of big, heavy, scary emotions that get the best of you and interfere for you living your best life when there is another way, there is potential to feel differently. But you're going to have to put in the work and the effort in therapy.

And I know that can sound really daunting, but it's so worth it if you find the right therapist, you find the right treatment modalities. Find out what's possible for you. Get curious. Instead of defeated, get curious. What are my options? What am I ready for? And what do I think would support my next chapter? Because you're worthy of a next chapter.

So in talking about these myths, I also want to talk about how you can support yourself when you're having big emotional responses. So, as we've talked about, there are many tools and strategies for coping with your mind and emotions. This is what us therapists do all day long.

And so, definitely, if you're already working with a therapist, use whatever skills or tools they've already taught you. Obviously, whatever you're working on with someone is what you should take as something you should do rather than what I say, since I don't know your specific situation. But these are just some general ideas, when you're having emotional responses, of things you can do.

And one of them is, of course journaling. Journaling where your pen doesn't lift from the page and you just write continuously for about a half-hour. You can do 15 minutes to start, but you want to build yourself up to about a half-hour of unfiltered journaling where you just get all of that emotional mental static out of your brain, out of your body, and out on paper.

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It's not something that's meant to be kept. It's just something that's meant to be processed, okay. Now, almost everyone hates the idea of journaling, but when you start doing it, people start noticing that, "Oh my gosh, I started noticing I fall asleep easier or I just don't feel so anxious." It takes a little bit of the steam out of the pot is what it does.

It's not going to cure or fix, because in mental health, we never use those words. But it will take a little bit of the heat off of the burner, if that makes sense, if we're using, like, a stove metaphor here.

So, the other thing is we also promote physical activity like movement, exercise, cardio, strength training. Like, whatever your body is capable of doing. Because as I talked about in the beginning, anger has a surge of energy to it. And so, we have to find healthy outlets for that energy to go.

And sometimes, that is going on a hike or going on a walk or going on a run, you know, some type of cardio. Or maybe it's taking a spin class or maybe it's lifting weights. But channeling that angry energy into a physical activity can sometimes take some of the intensity down a little bit. It's that same idea of just taking some of the steam out of the pot.

And I think one of the benefits, if you're able to go outside and you happen to be a person who likes nature – now, you have to check in with yourself, like do you connect to nature? Is nature calming for you? Then that's a double win, basically. You're getting out and getting physical activity by going on a hike or a run outside, and you're getting the benefits of breathing in nature's calm and serenity into your body as well.

But you have to check in with yourself and see, is that something that would be supportive to me? And lastly, is to consider your feelings as feelings, validate, don't judge. Just let feelings feel. Sometimes, a good cry for 10 minutes can make you feel better. Sometimes, you feel like shit afterwards, but sometimes, you feel better. And so, training yourself not to

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have so many judgments on yourself, but just to have grace and curiosity when big emotional responses show up.

And, of course, if you're just feeling super-heavy, like no matter what I do, these emotions just get the best of me, take it as information that something in your internal world needs support and there is never shame or blame in getting mental health support in your local state of residence. It is probably the best thing that you can do for yourself, which is why I emphasize it so much. Find a therapist that works for you and do the work. And let your life change. Be open to that process of change and work with someone who can help you in that process.

Alright, my friends. If you enjoyed today's episode, feel free to leave a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. It helps other people find the podcast and get this information. Alright, my friends, I will see you next time.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Mental Health Remix. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to nicolesymcox.com.

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