

WELCOMING EMOTIONS

Interactive booklet
for couples in intercultural family



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With the support of:



**Welcoming Emotions -
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To the reader


Intimate relationships are a meaningful source of nurture and love, and it is also where our deep emotions can easily be triggered. In intercultural families, the couple's background differences can intensify experiences of distress. This can make difficulty to find common understanding that is caring and loving.

The good news is that through the development of our emotional intelligence we can use challenging situations to get a better understanding of our own and our partners' needs.

The work to be done is to welcome all emotions while getting to understand what they are pointing to, which personal needs they are giving voice to. There are no bad or good emotions, all are complements to life's enrichment if you accept and give them constructive meaning.

Enjoy this booklet, we wish you an insightful journey!

*Inspired by Emotional Intelligence⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾ and Nonviolent Communication frameworks⁽³⁾



First lesson: Some emotions help move you towards the fulfilment of unmet needs while others point out the joy of having your needs met.

Intercultural couples in Finland

Why do intercultural couples deserve more attention?

The demography of Finland is rapidly changing.⁽⁴⁾

Between 2015 and 2020 the number of intercultural couples and families has grown from 70.000 to 93.000.

5,5% of marriages in Finland are intercultural

Intercultural couples can have unique challenges.

Divorce rate is higher among intercultural couples than monocultural ones.⁽⁵⁾

In disagreements between couples, we tend to give in or give up. This unbalanced power dynamic does not create sustainable solution. This leads consciously or unconsciously to rebellion or submission, which eventually blocks the flow of love and caring in a couples' life.



Why should I read this booklet?

Because many of us haven't been educated to welcome, understand, and express emotions constructively, and this can have an influence on the quality of our intimate relationships.

In a non-constructive argument, one or both partners tend to point fingers at the other (blaming), using the dichotomy of right and wrong, winner and loser. This does not solve things on the long term, even worse, they lose the opportunity to understand what is going on inside themselves. In other words, we spend our energy on making people wrong rather than tuning in to our own emotions and needs and giving space to those of others. This makes it hard to find a solution in which needs of both are observed.



Where do I stand in my relationship now?

“A good relationship is one where there is enough room for the feelings and needs of both partners. The fulfilment of needs is in direct proportion to how satisfied- or dissatisfied- the spouses are in their relationship. That’s why it’s important to share your wishes and needs with your spouse; neither partner can be a mind-reader. Open discussion is the key to understanding your partner, and both spouses carry the responsibility for having effective conversations. The skills of talking and listening are worth their weight in gold in a relationship.”

(Familia ry)⁽⁶⁾



Take a moment to reflect.

Where on the line below would you place your current relationship?



Very
dissatisfied

Completely
satisfied

Good news: if your relationship is not satisfying at this moment, you and your partner can increase its contentment by acknowledging your emotions and unmet needs.

If you are already in a satisfactory relationship, you can make it even richer by deepening your awareness of giving and receiving empathy in daily life.

How can I use the reflective tools to increase my self-awareness?

Emotions are in essence impulses to act. The word's root is the Latin "emotere", which refers to the verb "to move".⁽⁷⁾

Emotions are not good or bad, neither right or wrong. Actions can be right or wrong. Actions carry a moral responsibility. One of our objectives with this booklet is to provide insights on how you can respond constructively to emotions. It means, how to use emotions to act in a way that you will likely to satisfy your needs without harming others.

The first step is to understand the meaning of the basic emotions and what are the triggers behind them (development of emotional intelligence);

The second step is to identify your personal triggers and reflect on them. In this part, self-reflective questions will lead you to increase self awareness.

After you have gained self-awareness, next step will be to identify the needs behind the emotions so that you can find constructive strategies to meet them with others.

Tips and insights on how to communicate those strategies come as the final step.

How do emotions work?

These 5 emotions are the most universally accepted by scientists⁽⁸⁾⁽⁹⁾



Fear

helps us to predict threats to our safety. It protects life, enhance presence, helps to understand cause-consequence.



Sadness

is felt in response to loss, it allows us to take timeout to heal and to ask others' support. It helps us to create space for "letting go".



Anger

is a response to an unfair situation. It can be felt when something blocks us as well. It helps us to set boundaries, to pursue our values.



Disgust

helps us to perceive and avoid what is toxic to us, physically or socially.



Enjoyment

is felt when our needs are met. Helps you to move forward in life, to see beauty despite of challenges, to establish connection with others.



Exercise

In the next pages, you will find self-reflective questions which can help you to understand how external situations might trigger emotions in you.

Knowing yourself better helps to cope with the triggers, creating space for more constructive responses in the situation.

You can concentrate on those emotions and questions that are relevant for you. Every page has a place for personal notes.



You can work individually or with your partner, chose the option which is more comfortable for you!



Fear

Think about a current or past situation within your actual or previous relationship where you have felt fear. Now, read through the questions and reflect.

- Does the fear come from a past situation or an actual threat?
- If I feel fearful, who are the people that I can count on and trust?
- Do I put myself in situations that feed off past fears?
- Is the danger/threat real in the moment?

FEAR



Your notes/ answers

Sadness

Think about a current or past situation within your actual or previous relationship where you have felt sadness. Now, read through the questions and reflect.

Have I created an expectation that was not aligned with reality?

Is my sadness related to an unfulfilled expectation?

Am I sad because I lost someone, something?

Was that loss in anyway under my control?

What have I actually lost?

SADNESS



Your notes/ answers:

Anger

Think about a current or past situation within your actual or previous relationship where you have felt angry. Now, read through the questions and reflect.

What has been denied from me?

Was it fair or unfair?

Has any agreement been broken?

Was it a spoken agreement or an implicit?

What are my boundaries?

Which one of my boundaries hasn't been observed?

ANGER



Your notes/ answers:

Disgust

Think about a current or past situation within your actual or previous relationship where you have felt disgust. Now, read through the questions and reflect.

Do I put my needs aside to attend someone else's needs?

Do I often give in or give up in conflictual situations?

Am I surrounded with people that has similar values to mine?

Am I taking care of my physical, social and mental wellbeing?

How easy is it for me to say no?

DISGUST



Your notes/ answers:

Enjoyment

Think about a current or past situation within your actual or previous relationship where you have felt joy. Now, read through the questions and reflect.

- Do I celebrate and share my achievements with others?
- Do I have balance between receiving and giving in relationships?
- Am I able to enjoy my partner's happiness?
- Do I exaggerate in celebrative moments?
- Am I grateful daily?

ENJOYMENT



Your notes/ answers:

Getting to the root of emotions

Now that you have reflected on yourself with those questions, for a moment try to forget the narrative around the emotions. Think about the root of emotion, where does it come from?

Remember that an emotion points to a fulfilled or unfulfilled need.

You can use this list to acknowledge the most common underlying needs that we all have.

Connection

Honesty

Authenticity
Integrity
Presence
Transparency

Acceptance
Affection
Appreciation
Closeness
Empathy
Caring
Love
Mutuality
Support
Trust

Physical well-being

Balance
Safety
Shelter
Protection
Touch
Comfort
Rest
Relaxation
Exercise
Nutritious

Meaning

Awareness
Effectiveness
Challenge
Celebration
of life
Clarity
Hope
Purpose
Growth



Play

Adventure
Fun
Joy
Humor
Laughter
Spontaneity

Peace

Beauty
Communion
Ease
Equality
Inspiration
Harmony
Order

Autonomy

Independence
Choice
Confidence
Freedom
Privacy
Space

Needs and feelings

Emotions and needs are correlated. For example, if your need for friendship is fulfilled, you might feel comfortable.

On the other hand if your needs for connection is unmet, you might feel sad.



fulfilled
you might feel....

comfortable
hopeful
inspired
thankful
touched
moved
optimistic
proud
glad
energetic
empowered
optimistic
radiant
pleased
calm

IF YOUR NEED IS...



unfulfilled
you might feel....

angry
annoyed
confused
disappointed
concerned
discouraged
distressed
ashamed
lonely
numb
hurt
unhappy
guilty
restless
scared

Needs and feelings

Reflect on your current situation. What are the needs that are met and unmet within your relationship?



1. List some of the needs that are fulfilled:



2. List some of the needs that are unfulfilled:

Nonviolent Communication⁽¹²⁾

Now that you had identified the fulfilled and unfulfilled needs behind the emotion, the next step is to create a strategy to enrich your life. You can do this by giving voice to your emotions.

One way to do this is to use an approach called nonviolent communication (NVC). Its' advantage is that you take care of what is alive inside you (your emotions) while requesting what you need and prevent triggering your partner into submission or rebellion.



By considering your own emotions and being realistic about what another person can really offer to you, you avoid judging them for what they can't. If your request to have your needs met is not granted, through empathetic communication, you try to understand why they say "no" and what emotional need is preventing them from saying "yes". You can then move on to find another strategy to fulfil your need without feeding the conflict.

An example

THE SITUATION

A couple (person A and B) go out for a date. They decide to eat in a nice restaurant. Shortly after taking a seat at the table, person A pulls out a mobile phone and gets carried away. Person B becomes angry and disappointed and says: "Why the hell are you on your phone? I thought we were coming out for a nice dinner!" When person A pulls out the mobile phone, person B's need to connect and have a good time is not being met. Nonetheless, the way person B communicated the unmet need led A to feel attacked and controlled.

SUGGESTION

Using empathetic communication, person B could say: "I see you might have something important to you on your phone as you are checking it constantly during our date. I feel angry and annoyed because I need to connect and have a good time with you. Would you mind putting your phone away so we can have space to connect without disturbance?"

This way the other partner is more likely to understand and empathize with the request as there is no blame or judgment.

Nonviolent communication model ⁽¹³⁾ (NVC)

1. When I see (hear)...
2. I feel ...
3. Because I need...
4. And I would like you to ... (specific action)

Expressing in NVC way

Think about a recent scenario in your life that raised positive or negative emotions. How would you express it according to the above mentioned model?

1. When I see (hear)...

SITUATION

2. I feel ...

EMOTION

3. Because I am needing...

MY NEEDS

4. And I would like you to ... (specific action)

REQUEST

Your notes:

Closing Words

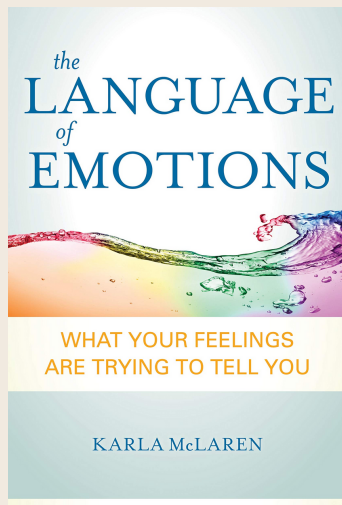
We hope you had gotten a clear idea of how to enrich your relationship through the understanding of emotions and empathetic communication. Your journey doesn't stop here. It is your decision from moment to moment to make space in your daily life to recognize which emotions are alive in you and give meaning to them.

Your relationship satisfaction, and ultimately your own wellbeing, rely on how constructively you share and guide the energy behind your emotions. Remember that there are no bad or good emotions, all of them are essential to the full development of life. We hope that you have gotten some insight into making your life with loved ones better.

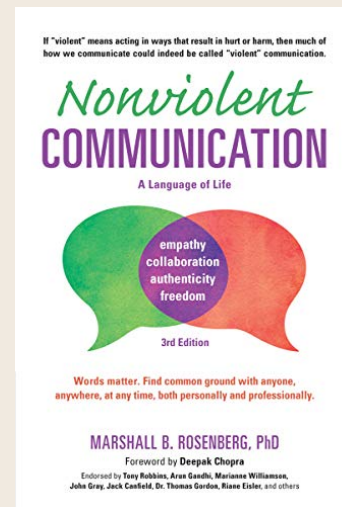


Whatever I feel, it helps me move towards a richer life. I am a river, my destiny is the vast ocean and my emotions are the compass to its fulfillment. I don't bother with the mountains, the rocks or the banks, they make my journey more beautiful and meaningful.

Suggested materials



Deepen your knowledge about the inner processes of emotions



Learn more about the NVC model



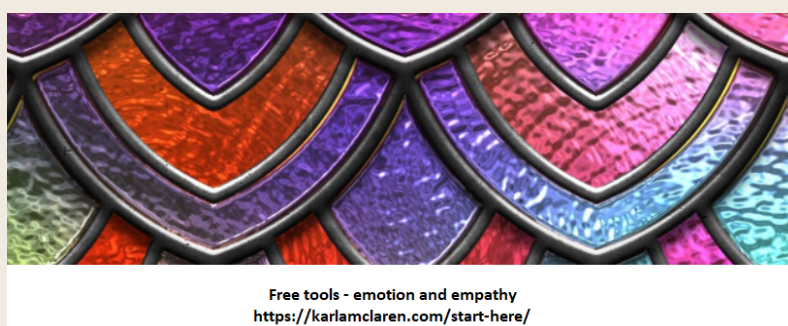
Listen guided meditation, short articles



Identify triggers, develop emotional vocabulary



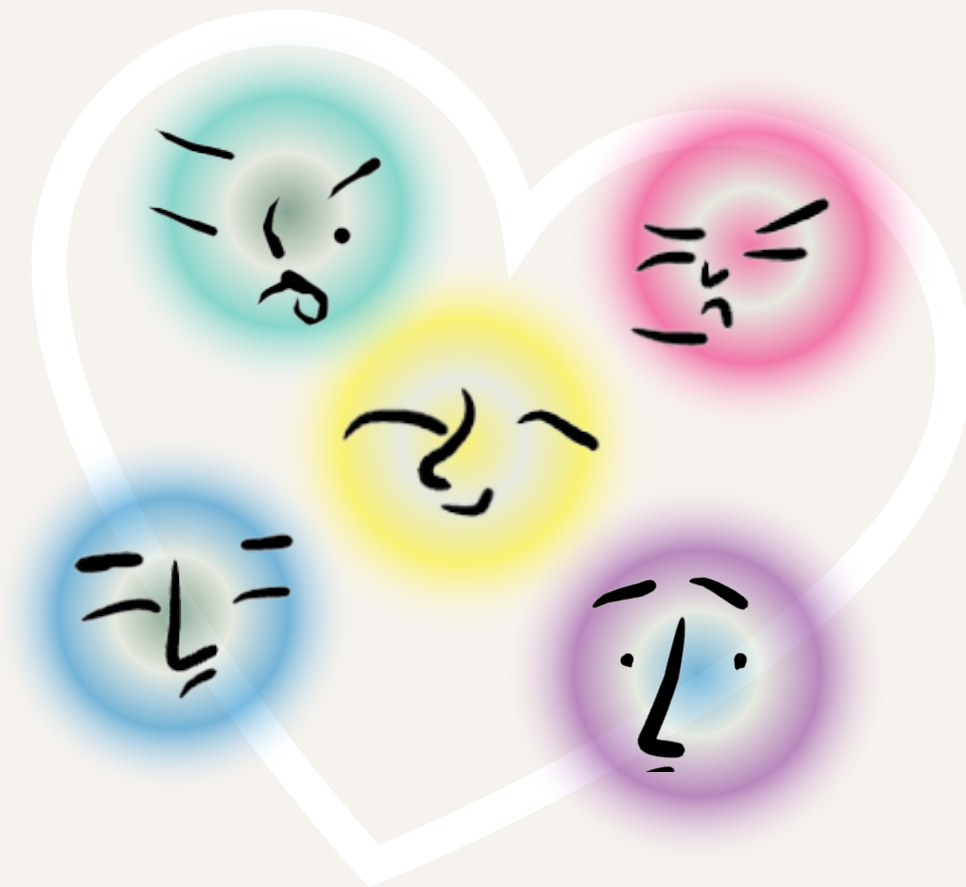
Online magazine
podcasts, articles, videos, quizzes



Discover the meaning of emotions

Resources

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