

How To Feel Your Feelings

Karen Goldsum

Knowing how to feel your feelings seems obvious, but totally isn't.



“Feeling your feelings” means getting curious about what’s happening inside you instead of immediately trying to fix it or push through it. It’s about noticing and naming what you’re experiencing so you can actually move through it instead of getting stuck.

Lots of very smart people tend to intellectualize their feelings, instead of experiencing them.

Intellectualizing your feelings occurs when you think your feelings rather than experiencing them. It happens when your mind creates a story that accompanies the feelings. Themes you may be familiar with are: “I am unlovable,” “I am a loser,” “no one will ever love me,” or “I resent my body.” This is a learned behavior. Most of the time, a key to many people’s success (academically or in their careers) is their ability to people analyzing situations from every angle. So, these same people try to apply this same logic to their bodies and it doesn’t work that way.

Unfortunately, this is not the best approach to take with our emotions. For better or worse, our emotions are embodied. When we refuse to feel them, they get stuck in our bodies and crop up in unfortunate ways later. Unacknowledged feelings can manifest as pain, anxiety, depression, and panic attacks.

In this zine, I am going to teach you five ways to feel your feelings that I use with my clients everyday.

Sensations You may Feel

Vibration Buzzing, Tingling, Pulsing, Trembling,
Shaking, Quivering, Prickling, Throbbing

Shape Round, Flat, Blob, Cube

Texture Rough, Soft, Fuzzy, Grainy, Jagged, Silky,
Fluffy, Squishy, Spongy, Fragile,

Size, Position Large/Small, Compact, Expansive,
Constricted

Temperature Hot/Cold, Burning, Fluttering Flame,
Falling snow

Speed Rapid, Slow, Still, Consistent,

Pressure Crushing, heavy, constricted, tightness

Absence Numb, Hollow, Stuck, Melting, Release

Other Dizziness, Sensitivity, Color



Body Scan

Tapping into your innate senses is the OG way to feel your feelings. Get comfortable. Lying down is a good option. If you choose to sit, place both feet on the ground, lengthen the back of your neck. If you feel safe enough, close your eyes.

Take a few deep, slow breaths. Let your abdomen rise and fall. Turn your mind towards the sensations in your body.

Start at your feet and slowly move upward. Draw your awareness to your feet. Observe sensations in your toes, arches, heels...

Gently notice the rest of your body. Work your way up, paying attention to bodily sensations from your feet to your head—concentrate on your lower legs, calves, thighs, buttocks, your tummy, lower back, upper chest, along your sternum, how is your spine doing?, let your shoulders soften, settle into your hands, fingers, wrists, and work progressively upward, along the neck, your jaw line, cheek bones, eyelids, forehead, crown

Therapeutic Questions



Two questions I ask a lot in therapy is **“Where do you notice that in your body?”** and **“What emotion words describe this?”**

“And, how does that make you feel?” Therapist used to ask this question so often that it became a cliché of the industry. But there’s a good reason to utilize it. Overthinking is actually a sign that you are under feeling. When clients get stuck in their heads and their minds are spinning it is time to bring them back to their bodies. Often times I have to walk my clients through an exercise to help them discover their truth, but they often get there eventually.

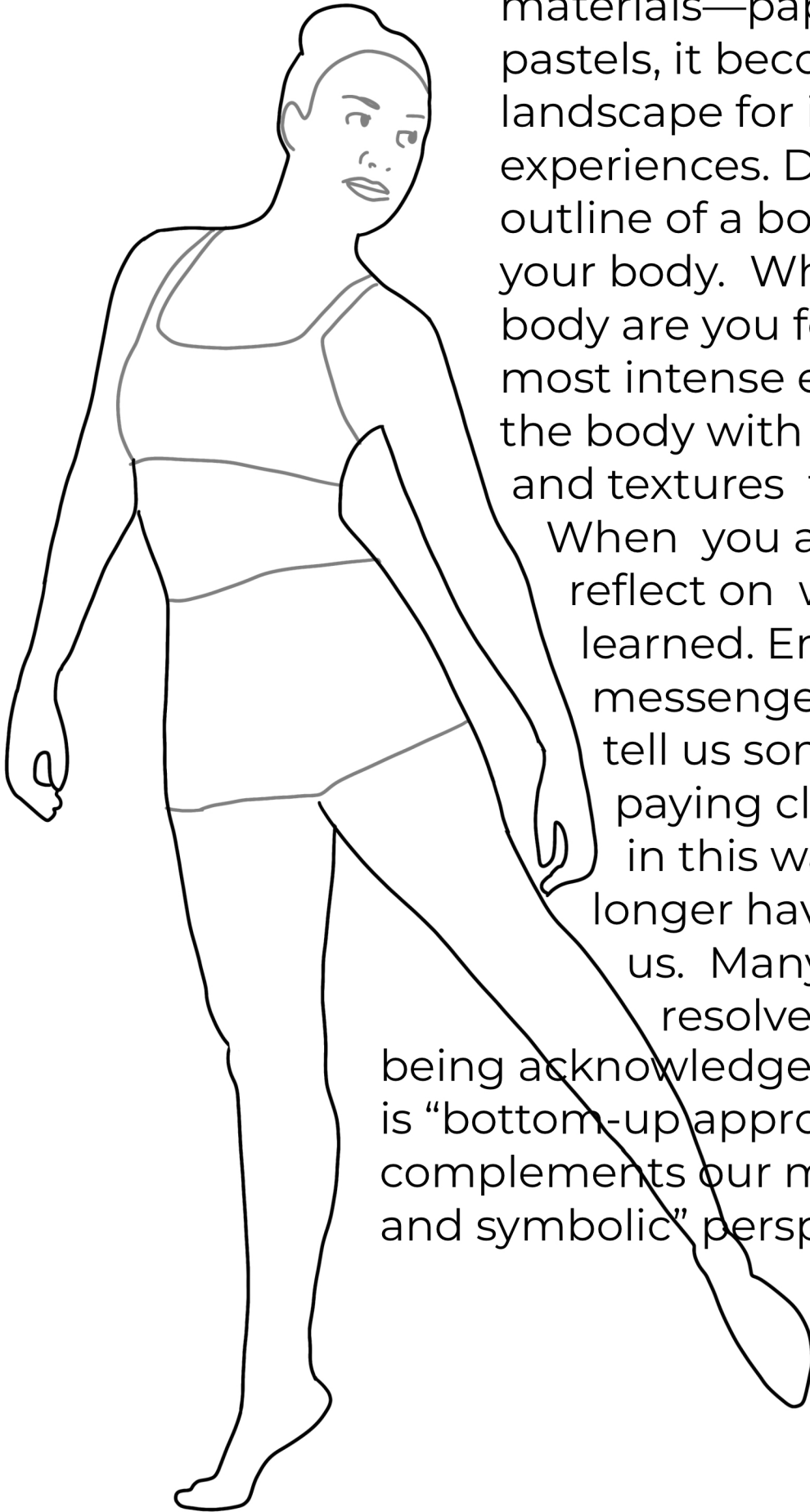
Write It Out



Journaling your thoughts and feelings can help you process emotions, gain clarity, and improve your mental wellbeing. Focus on your body. As thoughts arise write them down. Don't judge what comes up. Try to write stream of consciousness. This will help you untangle how you are feeling.

When you feel done, go back and read what you wrote. Ask yourself, what can I learn from this? What does my body need right now? Some possible answers might be that you need to set a boundary, have a conversation, or make a change. Sometimes, your body will just tell you that you need a snack. Emotions point us toward important realizations. They are encoded wisdom.

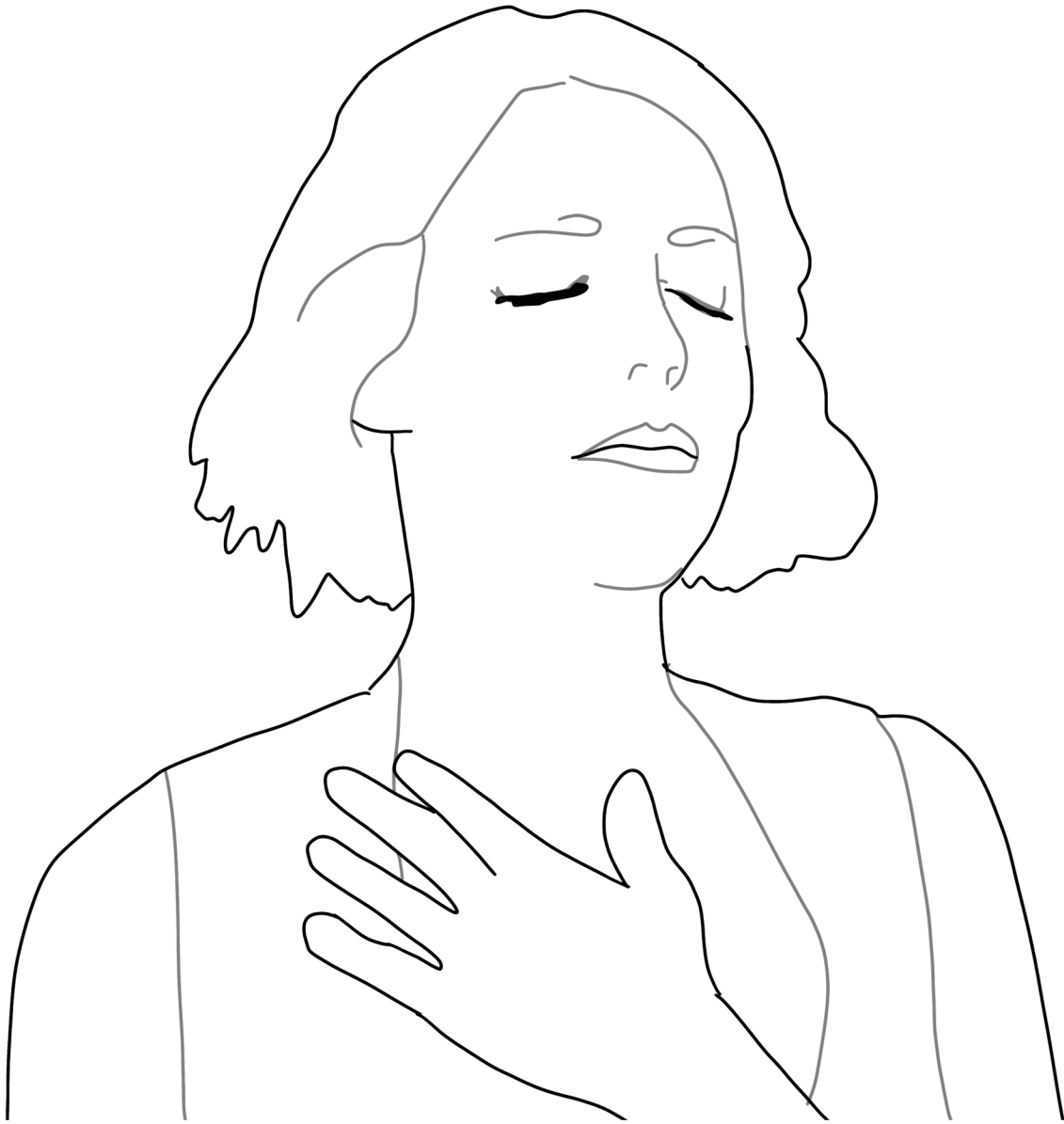
Body Map



Gather a range of art materials—paper, pencils, pastels, it becomes a landscape for internal experiences. Draw the outline of a body. Focus on your body. Where in your body are you feeling the most intense emotion? Fill in the body with colors, shapes, and textures that represent.

When you are done, reflect on what you have learned. Emotions are messengers, trying to tell us something. By paying close attention. in this way, they no longer have to shout at us. Many emotions are resolved simply by being acknowledged. This process is “bottom-up approach” that complements our more “cognitive and symbolic” perspective.

If you're still stuck, Consider Therapy



If you feel overwhelmed by emotions or on the other end perpetually numb, this is probably a sign that you are disconnected from your body and its communications. Therapy can help when you are constantly cycling through the same patterns and thoughts. Therapists can help you learn to feel safe in your body again.

Emotions typically only last about ninety seconds. After that your mind starts up and creates a story. When this happens, redirect your attention back to your body.

Recognizing your feelings creates a mental space between you and your feelings allowing you to observe rather than react impulsively to them. When you learn to sit with difficult emotions you will often find more joy and connection in life.

Be kind to yourself when dealing with challenging emotions. Practice self-compassion. This involves recognizing your suffering, treating yourself with kindness, and understanding that suffering is part of the human experience. They are universal. There is no need to judge or be mad at your feelings.

Use healthy outlets to express your feelings. Some means of expressing your emotions are journaling, making art, listening to music, or chatting with a dear friend.

Howdy, my name is Karen Goldsum and I am a therapist, supervised by Elaine Brandon. And, I love dinosaurs.



Your body is meant to hold the whole range of emotions. Human bodies were designed to move through many emotional states throughout your day. You don't have to be afraid of any of your feelings. None of your emotions are more powerful than you are.