

Feeling-favoritism & Feeling-equity

a glimpse into the sub-text of my EL advocacy

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It makes familiar and practical sense to put happiness above all other feelings, especially sadness and grief. It is our cultural practice, as humans, to prefer happiness since the interactions and events that prompt happiness are highly desirable and the interactions and events that prompt sadness and grief are, naturally, not. Regarding a feeling as inextricably linked with the event that prompted it—and attempting to repeat or avoid that type of event and the feeling associated with it—makes familiar and practical sense.

Difficult as drawing this distinction can be—especially in traumatic situations—it is the capacity to be open to feelings, the capacity to be with and have all feelings, the capacity to understand their context and the capacity to empathize with ourselves and others that grants us resiliency and creative access to, and *say in*, the rich meaning, movement and direction of our daily lives.

Though it is important to be pro-active in life, and optimistic, and to reach for the experiences we easily favor, our lives ebb and flow with events, circumstances and relationships that are often outside our control, prompting a wide and often unpredictable range of feelings.

Even within a world of uncertainty and potential danger, it is within our influence and control to permit ourselves to sustain and stretch our capacity to feel, to house all of our feelings (lest they go homeless), to seek to understand, accept and embrace feelings, as we would a child in need of comfort and celebration. Given the inevitability of life's ups and downs—and, clearly, we definitely favor one kind of circumstance over another—this kind of open-ended, equitable relationship with feelings takes courage, clarity and practice with profound benefits to be had.

Feelings are like a river, constantly flowing within. Just think of the amount of time, energy, expense and potential loss, whenever you endeavor to impede that river's flow. ELA and I encourage a robust swim on a moment-by-moment basis with every wave. Feeling equity provides buoyancy in the swim and the

perceptual opportunity to distinguish the capacity to feel from the occurrence of an unwanted feeling-prompting circumstance.

Like life's ups and downs, the shape of the river's waves and the rate of their flow influences the nature of our swim and those waves and their pace don't have to be the final arbiter on whether or not we stay in the water.

What is true is already so. Owning up to it doesn't make it worse. Not being open about it doesn't make it go away. And because it's true, it is what is there to be interacted with. Anything untrue isn't there to be lived. People can stand what is true, for they are already enduring it.

—Eugene Gendlin