

Sample Chapter Excerpt

I Can

**Twelve Ways
to Witness the Heart**

Pamela Sackett



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Third Way

I CAN NAME AND CLAIM FEELINGS FOR THEIR OWN SAKE and as a safeguard against unwittingly disavowing my feelings and projecting them onto another person or situation, and to discern projections placed upon me.

The best way out is always through.

~Robert Frost

Feelings are like children; they want to be seen and heard and have their presence known. Feelings are a part of us and seek acceptance. Once we have been taught that parts of ourselves do not qualify for acceptance, that some of our feelings are acceptable and others are not, we embark on a censorship mission. Once the family and cultural rules are laid down, spoken and unspoken, we begin to separate from and then banish our unpopular feelings, sometimes before we know we are having them.

These feeling-prohibitive rules are enforced, in large part, by consensus, through dismissive body language and behavior-centric spoken expressions, on billboards and their ilk, in facets of the media, and through collected members of our very own circle. As a protection, we hide our feelings so well they become invisible even

to ourselves, fracturing our relationship to them.

And that imperative to keep feelings at bay, if introduced early enough, becomes internalized, deeply ingrained, a source of personal identification and alliance, placing us in a feeling-blocked default mode. Feelings and needs then move through us like frightened little creatures, dodging, festering, dwelling outside our radar, hungering for the light of recognition, becoming unwittingly resigned to the darkness.

Even among the most functional members of our society, great resources are spent on these underground feeling caves. Not recognizing that part of ourselves sets a path to complications. Self-knowledge and ownership of both feelings and needs are endowed through awareness.

The true opposite of depression is neither gaiety nor absence of pain, but vitality—the freedom to experience spontaneous feelings. It is part of the kaleidoscope of life that these feelings are not only happy, beautiful, or good

but can reflect the entire range of human experience, including envy, jealousy, rage, disgust, greed, despair, and grief. But this freedom cannot be achieved if its childhood roots are cut off. Our access to the true self is possible only when we no longer have to be afraid of the intense emotional world of early childhood. Once we have experienced and become familiar with this world, it is no longer strange and threatening.

*~Alice Miller, The Drama of the Gifted Child:
The Search for the True Self*