

MEN, WOMEN & RELATIONSHIPS

The Feeling Letter Technique

THE FEELING LETTER TECHNIQUE is probably the most important skill a person can learn in order to have a successful and lasting loving relationship. This technique will help you learn to release resentment and other negative feelings in order to become centered in the positive attitudes of love, understanding and forgiveness again. It has saved thousands of marriages, and has helped others experience divorce in a more loving and peaceful way.

Since it was first published in 1984 in my book, *What You Feel, You Can Heal*, the feeling letter technique has been rewritten in three other best-selling books by other authors, and is used by numerous therapist, self-help groups, twelve-step programs, church groups, college counseling courses, and hundreds of other support groups. The feeling letter technique is the ultimate method for processing and transforming negative feelings into positive feelings.

In brief, the feeling letter has two parts. The first part consists of writing out the complete truth about how you feel, while imagining that you are being heard and understood. The second part is then to write a loving response to your letter. In this response letter, imagine the person to whom you have written the letter responding with an open heart. Write a response expressing the feelings and acknowledgments that you need to hear.

The Purpose of a Feeling Letter

THE PURPOSE OF writing a feeling letter when you are upset is to expand your awareness, to incorporate positive, loving feelings without having to repress your negative emotions. It allows you to open your heart.

Writing feeling letters helps you to incorporate all of the new and loving strategies in this book. No matter how much you know about having a good relationship, if your feelings are hurt it is difficult to be loving and supportive.

The feeling letter helps you give yourself the support you need when your partner can't. When you are writing a feeling letter, you are taking the time to listen to yourself with love, caring, and understanding. If you are not willing to take the time to love yourself by listening to your feelings, you cannot realistically expect others to do this for you. Then you feel the need for emotional support but you are not getting it, this is a sign that you need to give to yourself by writing a feeling letter.

The purpose of a feeling letter is not to dump resentment, judgment, and criticism on your partner. It is not written to try to change them or correct them, nor to point out their inadequacies. If used in this way it will not work. The feeling letter works only when it is written *for you to feel more loving*.

What a Feeling Letter Accomplishes

WHEN YOUR FEELINGS are not being heard by your partner, it is essential that at least you hear them. Then, once they have been expressed, it is essential that you imagine the response you need in order to feel supported and heard. Writing a feeling letter assists you in removing the obstacles that are in the way of giving and receiving love. When you experience and explore the full range of your feelings, negativity is released quite automatically.

In writing out the response letter, your subconscious mind gets to feel and hear the support it deserves. Through being responsible to express what we need to hear, we open our hearts to feel and accept the support that does exist. The response letter also helps the recipient of your feeling letter know what you need from them in response to your letter.

The precise structure of the feeling letter format assists you in experiencing and feeling deep levels of emotion. As you write, your awareness spontaneously expands until you discover the positive feelings that are always there, but are generally hidden.

Whenever you are upset or disturbed, it is because your awareness is focusing on the negative side of things. But through exploring your negative feelings, your awareness begins to expand and see the good side of things. Instantly, you are free from the gripping influence of negative emotions. You are suddenly aware of a wealth of positive feeling and emotion.

To bring about this catharsis and transformation, here are four levels of negative emotions you need to consciously experience or feel. Then, as a result, you can feel the loving emotions that were blocked by the negativity. Thus, after writing out the four levels of upset, you always finish the letter by writing out the fifth level, the level of love. When you write out these emotions, you experience them more consciously and are therefore able to release them fully. These levels are:

Level 1: Anger

Level 2: Sadness

Level 3: Fear

Level 4: Remorse

Level 5: Love and other positive attitudes

Following this emotional map you are able to explore the depths of negative emotions, and rediscover the loving feelings that are so quickly forgotten during times of stress. When your feeling letter is complete, write a letter in response. Write out expressions of apology, understanding, agreement, acknowledgment, love, and gratitude. In response to your feeling letter, write out what you need to hear, what would make you feel good, and what you feel the other person's response would be if they were able to hear you and respond with an open heart.

How to Write a Feeling Letter

IN WRITING A feeling letter, you write out the feelings of one level and quite naturally your awareness moves to the feelings of the next level. Begin by writing out any feelings of anger. As long as you are feeling anger, continue writing at level one. At some point you will notice a softening of your awareness. Then you are ready to explore the feelings of level two.

Write down your feelings of sadness. As you fully explore level two, your awareness will shift automatically to experience the deepest and most vulnerable feelings of level three. Write out your feelings of fear. As you write out the feelings of the first three levels, you may notice the emotions becoming more intense. This is a sign that you are letting go of these feelings, and a catharsis is taking place.

Spontaneously you will begin to feel a sense of responsibility. At this point, move to level four. Write out your feelings of remorse and apology. This shift will most effectively release you from holding on to any negative feelings. A surge of positive and loving feelings will emerge.

At this point you will probably feel much better. However, it is still vitally important to write out your positive feelings. Express love, appreciation, respect, understanding, acceptance, caring, and trust. Setting down your positive feelings will make them last longer. Each time you write a feeling letter you will be strengthening your ability to sustain a positive and loving attitude, especially during stressful, upsetting times.

When writing a feeling letter, imagine that you are sharing your feelings with someone who is really listening to you and willing to support you. If you are upset with someone, you may address the feeling letter to that person, but keep in mind that you are just sharing your feelings with them; you are not trying to tell that person about himself or herself. You are not giving a critique of that person. Rather, you are sharing feelings with them so that they will better understand how to support you.

You can benefit from writing a letter to someone even if you don't give it to them. If someone can't support your feelings, by all means write the letter to them, but do not give it to them. By writing the letter you will feel better. It is much more powerful to be able to

share your feelings with the person you are writing to, but if they cannot hear your feelings with love and understanding, sharing them will only upset both of you.

To help you discover the full range of your feelings, the feeling letter format includes lead-in phrases for each level. Write out the lead-in phrase and then complete the sentence. This sentence completions technique helps draw out your feelings. Lead-in phrases are especially helpful when you are not sure how to express what you are feeling.

These lead-in phrases not only help to bring up feelings, but they also lead you to deeper and deeper levels of emotion. You may choose to use just one, over and over at each level, or you might use them all. It is up to you to use the phrases that best assist you to express your feelings. Most of the lead-in phrases are “I sentences,” which will help you stay in your feelings.

Whenever you feel upset, find a pen and a couple of pieces of paper and just start writing. Writing out what you are feeling will always help you to become more centered. Following the feeling letter format ensures that you will quickly find your loving center again.

The Feeling Letter Format

Dear _____,

I am writing you this letter to release my resentment and negative emotions, and to discover and express the positive feelings that you deserve. I am also writing this letter to ask for your support without demanding it.

Level 1: Anger

I don't like...

I resent...

I feel frustrated...

I feel angry...

I feel furious...

I want...

Level 2: Sadness

It hurts...

I feel disappointed...

I feel sad...

I feel unhappy...

I wish...

Level 3: Fear

It is painful...

I feel worried...

I feel afraid...

I feel scared...

I need...

Level 4: Remorse and Apologies

I apologize...

I feel embarrassed...

I am sorry...

I feel ashamed...

I am willing...

Level 5: Love, Understanding, Gratitude, and Forgiveness

I love...

I appreciate...

I realize...

I forgive...

I would like...

I trust...

Love,

Remember, whenever it is hard to be loving, that is the time to write a feeling letter. Following the feeling letter format will help you fully process your negative feelings and bring out the true and loving feeling within you.

Give yourself the time to explore each level. Even if the feelings don't seem to be there, take a deep breath, relax, and search for them. Take whatever comes up and write that out. Try to spend equal time at each level. When one level is missing, sometimes that level needs most to be explored.

Feelings letters generally take about twenty minutes to write. Take about four minutes to explore each of the five levels. Don't worry about spelling or punctuation. Just continue to feel the emotion as you write it out. Whenever you get stuck, just start writing the lead-in phrase or even unrelated to the person to whom you are writing this letter. Writing a feeling letter is a tool, you will gradually develop the ability to keep your heart open all the time.

The Response Letter

AFTER WRITING A feeling letter, take a few extra minutes to write a response. For many people this is what allows the feeling letter to be most healing. In formulating a response you are giving yourself the love you deserve. We generally get upset because we are telling our feeling self that we are being abused in some way. To write a response letter is to tell our feeling self what we deserve to hear in response.

After writing a feeling letter, your feeling self is wide open to receive positive input. A response letter allows you to take responsibility to affirm the love and support that you deserve. The response letter should include:

1. Apologies expressed in a way that makes you feel heard and supported
2. Understanding and validating statements that express warmth and compassion for
your feelings
3. Loving statements that praise, appreciate, and acknowledge what you deserve

4. Whatever else you need to hear to feel good

In addition to being a good way to take responsibility for your own emotional well-being, response letters train the people in your life to know how you need to be supported. We are all different, so by this time you probably know that it is unrealistic to expect our loved ones to know the right words. By writing a response letter and sharing it, you give your partner a chance to express love and support through the channel that will be most effective and fulfilling for you. For more information about how and why feeling letters work, refer to my book *What You Feel, You Can Heal*.

The Challenge of Relationships

As we learn to overcome our differences in our relationships with the opposite sex, we are challenged to love ourselves and to give of ourselves unconditionally. Through studying and diligently applying the principles of this book, not only are we ensuring our own increasing happiness and fulfillment, but we are creating a better world for our children to grow up in.

For more information or help, please call:

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