

10 Rules You Need to Break for an Emotionally Healthy Marriage That Pleases Jesus

It is time to get emotionally stronger! This exercise is going to take you to another level of experiencing your emotions and expanding your ability to feel any emotion you choose. Remember, emotions are not cognitions or thoughts. Emotions are an entirely different way through which we experience, process and influence our environment and relationships.

Unlike work done learning in classical education, you cannot memorize an emotion and then have it the rest of your life. You have to experience an emotion. If you have laid the groundwork by identifying and communicating your emotions, what we are about to do will be much easier for you to grasp and experience.

Before I explain this exercise, I want to take you back in time. I do not know about your life, but when I look back into mine, I see moments—some more providential than others—when I was going through an experience but did not realize how powerful it was at the time or how it would impact my future. For me, that “moment” was high school.

In high school, I did a lot of acting in school plays: *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Pillow Talk*. Along the way, we had a drama coach who walked us through some strange exercises.

One of those exercises involved improvisation. He would give us a character and a situation, and we would have a minute with our partner to create a believable scene.

Another was an exercise that had to do with emotions. Our teacher had us lie down on the stage and then told us to get quiet so we could feel the stillness through our entire body.

This was the first time I ever remember focusing on one emotion. I distinctly remember feeling still and calm. I am certain this was the first time I knew my whole body could actually feel an emotion.

Then the teacher led us in guided meditation. Two of my takeaways from this exercise would later revolutionize my life and lead me further down the path to emotional fitness.

We are going to walk through these two takeaways, as they are truly integral to the body connection exercise we will be doing later in this chapter. Before I did the exercise of lying on that stage in my high school auditorium, I never thought I could choose to feel anything. I would have thought, like so many others, that feelings or emotions just happen.

Lying there on that black stage floor, I realized that I could choose to feel what someone was asking me to feel. I could choose to feel something. Never, in a thousand years, would I have guessed that I could, on demand, choose an emotion and actually command myself to feel it. For me, this was extremely outside my experiential comfort zone.

My second major takeaway from this experience was that my whole body could feel this one feeling. Up to that point, if I became aware of a feeling, I would run it through my cognitive process to try to figure out what was going on with me emotionally.

I had no real access to identifying or feeling an emotion in my emotions. I could only sense emotions cognitively. This lack of emotional connectivity kept me stunted for years.

When I could actually give myself permission to feel a feeling, I was at least 10 years past high school. At that point, I was able to accelerate my emotional fitness significantly. Now I am able to feel an emotion physically as well as emotionally without fear or shame.

I say this because in the early stages of becoming emotionally fit, there were rules you were given or that you created to manage your limited emotional life. I will list a few of these below.

As you do the next two body-connecting exercises, you may remember one of these rules, and if so, you may have to break it cognitively and experientially.

Rules

1. Feelings are for girls.
2. You cannot trust your feelings.
3. Feelings are for the weak.
4. Do not feel.
5. People will take advantage of you.
6. You will look ridiculous.
7. Feelings do not change anything.
8. Feelings are for cowards.
9. If you feel, you will lose control.
10. You cannot express your feelings well, so do not express them. You might embarrass yourself.

There are probably hundreds of other rules similar to these that you may come across as you do some of the emotional fitness exercises. As you think of these rules, make note of them. They will come to you as you are feeling or expanding your range of emotions.

These rules will come in the form of a voice in your head, starting with, "You shouldn't do this because ..." If such a message surfaces in your mind, you have found a rule. That is good news. It means you are going further than you ever have emotionally. If you listen to the rule, you will retreat and thus limit yourself from living an emotionally fit lifestyle. Simply put: Do not listen to the rule.

To break a rule, you can do a simple exercise given to clients for decades. This exercise is simple and effective. {eoa}

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