

Practice

Noticing and naming your emotions

Let's put this teaching into practice, so that what we're learning can become part of who we are.

The journey into emotional health involves learning to notice and name our emotions in the presence of God.

When we notice and name our feelings, they have less power over us. If you were to name a painful emotion like fear, anger, disappointment, or jealousy, a brain scan would show that your very act of naming it helps to process and quiet that emotion.

This is why psychiatrist Dan Siegel encourages us to "name it to tame it."

This session's spiritual exercise is a simple template for prayer designed to notice and name your feelings and offer them to God in prayer.

- Find a quiet, distraction-free place and time.
- Put away your phone or any devices, and settle into a comfortable but alert position.
- Take a few minutes to breathe and center your awareness in God's presence. And then do the following:

01 Notice: Now that you are centered in your body and in God, begin to let yourself feel. Let whatever is in you come up. Just notice it. Don't fight it or run away from it or feel guilty about it or judge it — just notice it. Let the feeling be.

02 Name: Then name the emotion and be as specific as possible. You may want to use the following list of emotions. Just pick out one to three words from the Feelings list on the following page that put language to what you're experiencing in your body.

03 Feel: Just sit in those feelings. Sink into them. Normally, we turn away from them and run in the opposite direction. Instead, turn and face them, like you would an ocean wave, and let it wash over you and then pass you by.

04 Offer it to God: Remember and follow Jesus' Gethsemane Prayer.

Offer it to God: Remember and follow Jesus' Gethsemane Prayer.

- Give God your feelings — Tell him what you are feeling, with no filter.
- Give God your desires — Tell him what you really want, good or bad.
- Give God your trust — Surrender your heart again to him. Stop grasping for control and yield yourself to God and his will for your life. You may want to pray Jesus' own prayer, "Not my will, but yours be done."

You can do this exercise one time before the next session, or every day. It's also an exercise you can practice for the rest of your life, to open deeper and deeper parts of your inner world to God.