

(1) 3 Foundational Attitudes for a Healthy Emotional & Relational Life

[00:00:00] Hello, and welcome to the Emotional and Relational Wellbeing Series. I'm Allie Andrews, and I'll be your guide through this series. I'm a Somatica trained relationship coach, a certified holistic health coach, and a certified yoga teacher, and I'll be pulling from various aspects of my training and my own life experience to help you learn skills and tools to deepen your relationship with yourself and your inner world of emotions, as well as create healthy.

Building supportive relationships with others. Today, we'll be sinking into the three attitudes that are foundational to the tools, skills, and practices you're going to learn in this series. These attitudes are essential for having good relationships and taking care of yourself emotionally. Don't expect yourself [00:01:00] to adopt these attitudes with all people all of the time.

Rather, view these as anchors in your emotional and relational journey that you can keep returning to. The first attitude that we want to adopt when we're relating to ourselves and our own emotional experience, as well as relating to other people and their experience, their emotional experience, is one of embodied awareness and mindfulness.

So let's break down what each of these words mean. So mindfulness is this awareness of the present moment without judging it. So not only awareness of our present moment, our thoughts, our sensations, our feelings without judgment, but also. Bringing this into how we relate to other people in their present moment experience.

Right. So trying to bring in that, that concept of non-judgment and of, of being open to what their [00:02:00] experience might be, even when it's different than ours or we don't understand it. Embodiment is similar to mindfulness in that it is awareness of our present moment without judging it, but more specifically an awareness of our felt experience in the present moment.

So we're really connecting to the sensations that our body is feeling. Um, Maybe noticing that your heart is beating quickly when you're about to go into an important meeting, or that you feel pressure on your chest when you haven't heard

from a loved one who you were expecting to hear from, or you feel heat building in your face.

When someone says something that makes you feel angry. So it's really a lot more focused on the, the felt experience, the sensations, our breath, and our emotions, so we can use this awareness of our felt sensations [00:03:00] and our felt emotions and the signals. That we're getting from our body of, of how triggered we are or whether we feel safe in a situation to create more connection with ourselves and create more connection with others.

This embodied awareness can help us slow down when we feel triggered so that we can be more choiceful. Rather than reactive. It's often when we react out of trigger that we cause ourselves and others the most pain and even harm. So well being reactive is totally a part of being human and I never want you to expect yourself to to never be reactive.

The more awareness we develop to our felt inner experience and impulses, the less harm we cause and the more we can choose connection over disconnection. Now socialization, this process of socialization that we all go through disconnects us [00:04:00] from our body and the inner wisdom that lives inside of us and is.

Being communicated to us all the time through our body and, and the sensations that we are experiencing and the emotion, the emotions that we're experiencing, and this disconnection from self inhibits our full self-expression. There's a lot of reasons why we disconnect from ourselves. Can be because of traumatic experiences, culture and achievement centric living.

So even thinking about just our education system is very disembodied. We live in a culture that very much values intellect and rational thought and logic over feeling, and the body and emotions. So there's a lot, a lot of things that contribute to this. And to a certain degree, it's. It's unavoidable to do this.

So dissociation from the body and the felt experience really happens on a spectrum. There's no way that we will never do this, and sometimes it's necessary to do this to [00:05:00] feel safe, and it is really a, a protective mechanism. So I don't want. Anyone to be hard on themselves about this. But I just want you to start to bring more awareness to when you're starting to leave your body and leave your emotional experience.

And again, we're gonna go a lot deeper into this throughout this series. So embodiment is really this re attuning to and listening to our felt experience of our emotions, of our capacity, our physical capacity, our emotional capacity, our mental capacity of our boundaries and triggers and needs so that we can use this information to show up more honestly and fully in our relationships.

And feel more resource. The next attitude to cultivate that is foundational to the work that we're going to be doing in this series is vulnerability. I wanna first note that you don't ever have to be vulnerable with anyone. You always have the choice of being vulnerable or not, and being [00:06:00] vulnerable is not always emotionally safe with everybody in every situation, of course.

So I just wanna name that. But if you do want close relationships, if you do want emotional intimacy, if you do wanna feel more connected in your life, Vulnerability is the way at the root of vulnerability is the truth that none of us will ever have this thing called life and being human totally figured out.

There is a messiness and imperfectness to being human that we are all subject to and. Part of vulnerability is being our messy human self, and this is actually one of the ways that we can connect with each other is by sharing our messiness. So one major block to vulnerability that I. See, and I've really had to unlearn myself is [00:07:00] this tendency to intellectualize everything.

And this is actually really connected to the importance of embodiment because one of the ways that we dissociate from our body or become disembodied is by going into the mind, going into the intellect. Try to kind of grasp or reasons or solutions, trying to rationalize what's going on in our, within our felt experience.

Which often is not rational because when the emotional brain or the limbic brain is activated, the rational mind literally goes offline and turns off. So our emotions. Are not logical. So another block to vulnerability that is similar and goes along with this is to always be looking for pointing out the silver lining to everything.

So when we do this, we again bypass our human experience of the hard emotions that we or someone else is feeling, so no one can be positive all the time and also be vulnerable. Vulnerability requires us to be really [00:08:00] honest with ourselves about. What we're feeling, even when it's hard and it doesn't make sense, it requires that we allow ourselves in each other to be human and to be messy, and

to really be here in our human experience, cuz this is how we feel each other and feel connected.

Another important aspect of vulnerability is taking responsibility for how we feel. Right. So it's, it's being human, it's being messy. It's also taking responsibility for our feelings versus shaming or blaming someone else for how we feel. And we're gonna get more into this later in this series, but that's a really big part of vulnerability as using the language of I feel versus the language of you made me feel.

So, vulnerability is going to be at the root of a lot of the, um, communication tools and repair. Practices that you learn in this series. So the final attitude to [00:09:00] adopt that is going to be foundational to our work together in this series is, is empathy. And when empathy cannot be accessed, we wanna lean into compassion.

So empathy means to feel with someone. And I wanna distinguish empathy from sympathy. Sympathy is more of approach of feeling for someone, often feeling sorry for someone. There's nothing wrong with sympathy, but often it doesn't actually feel that great for the receiver. Maybe you can even think of a time in your life where you were going through something and someone.

Expressed their sympathy to you, and it just, something about it just didn't feel that fulfilling, like it almost felt a little icky or just off. And that maybe was because what you were really wanting was some empathy and someone to really be in the feeling with you and be there to and feel with you.

So empathy is when we put our. Self in someone else's shoes and, and really [00:10:00] imagine how they feel. It's not that we are imagining how we would feel in that situation. It's can we actually imagine how they are feeling and do the work, you know, the probing work, if that's something that this person is available for.

Not everyone likes to be probed, so that's also a part of this work is learning how people like to be listened to and empathized with, which we'll get into later. But it's doing the work to, to really try to understand how they're feeling. And it could be remembering a time when, when we have also felt that way so that we can conjure up the feeling.

And that doesn't mean I'm gonna go into a story about how I've also felt that way, but it's, it's a way that we can really be in a feeling with someone. Compassion is,

is very closely related to empathy and compassion is more of being in that darkness with someone. So even in moments where we can't necessarily.

Access the [00:11:00] feeling that they're having and feel how they're feeling with them. We can stay there with them in that darkness, in that hard emotion, in that hard feeling, and it's important to note that. When we're cultivating empathy, different backgrounds and different life experiences make us all sensitive in different ways.

So while one person might be really triggered by their colleague being late to a meeting, they might feel really disrespected. Another person could just totally brush it off and be super understanding of, oh no, it's not a big deal. I understand things come up. So if you're someone that relates more to.

The latter person rather than saying or thinking, why do they feel that way? They should just get over it. To empathize would be to think of a time when you too felt disrespected. It could be a completely different situation, and to feel into how crappy that does feel. We all have experienced joy and suffering [00:12:00] so we can all conjure up these feelings in ourselves.

And while we cannot ever know exactly how someone else feels, Because we each have our own unique life experience, we can adopt their perspective and, and really honor their feelings without trying to fix what they're feeling or make it better or make it go away. So empathy is a skill that most people, including myself at times, I've had to do a lot of work around empathy and still am.

Most people don't do it very well. The impulse to feel helpful and useful is so pervasive in our culture and is rooted in how we have learned to value ourself. Again, from our culture and family of origin, so many of us have learned that our worth is linked with what we do and achieve, and how helpful we are, rather than our worth being inherent simply because we are and we exist, and as a result of how we've learned to value ourselves, we don't see the [00:13:00] value in just being with someone.

And I'm sure you can think of a time when you were going through something hard and maybe someone was able to really be there in empathy with you and not try to say the right thing or point out the silver lining or fix what's going on or make you feel better, but was just really able to be in the darkness with you and.

And maybe you haven't experienced that, and on some level you're really longing for that. Another reason why we tend to jump to fixing rather than empathy or compassion is because we ourselves are not practiced at being with our own hard emotions. So what this means is when, when something hard, a hard feeling comes up, disappointment, sadness, anger, frustration, feeling rejected these are all normal feelings to have.

But a lot of us are, we, we live in a culture that really values happiness and positivity. So a lot of us have learned to suppress those feelings and to really move on from those [00:14:00] feelings quickly and to just find a distraction. And there's nothing wrong with that. But what this is doing is it's kind of bypassing these, these hard feelings.

And so when we do that within ourselves and we're used to doing that within ourselves, then it's really hard for us to be in someone else's uncomfortable feeling with them because, We can't even be on our own. So we're going to wanna do everything in our power to make them feel better. So that can be another reason why it's hard to stay in empathy and why so many people want to rush through or skip over empathy.

Lastly, empathy is perhaps the most challenging to access when we are the cause of someone's hard feelings. And especially when they are triggered and blaming us, and then we become triggered. This is when it's the hardest and also the most crucial to access our empathetic ear. When you get really good at this, you'll be able to deescalate [00:15:00] situations, and it's a great way to transform a conflict into an opportunity for deeper understanding and deeper connection and deeper intimacy.

And I just wanna reiterate that this is really hard to do, especially if you are feeling triggered. And so I want you to really be gentle with yourself and remember that you do not have to be perfect. That's not what this is about. This is about developing greater awareness, and we will revisit empathy and how it fits into the repair process later in the series. So stay tuned for that.

To recap, embodied awareness and mindfulness, vulnerability and empathy are the attitudes that we want to develop and keep returning to as we move through this series and as you move through your own emotional journey and your relationships and the different [00:16:00] things that will inevitably come up in your relationships.