

DESCRIPTIONS of 12 PAINFUL EMOTIONS with MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS in QUOTES

Anger. “Strong feeling of displeasure and usually antagonism.” Other definitions include “Belligerence caused by a wrong; pain, smart or sore; grief or trouble.” Anger is a painful emotion. When we experience injustice, when we see people being hurt, when we have a loss, it is natural to feel angry. If anger continues to fester and grow, it can lead to destruction and harm.

Blame. “To hold responsible; find fault with; censure.” While it is important to hold ourselves and others responsible for our actions, blame can be counterproductive when presented in a condescending way. Skill, humility, and clarity are important when we are tempted to place blame on someone.

Envy. “A feeling of discontent or covetousness with regard to another’s advantages, success, possessions, etc.” You see something someone else has and rather than to be happy for them, you are envious. You wish you had what they have. The irony here is that envy, this disturbing emotion, may keep us from getting the very thing we wish we had.

Fear. “An unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger. Anxious concern. Reason for alarm. Apprehension.” Fear is distress caused by anticipation of impending danger, evil, pain or harm. The threat can be real or imagined. Fear can help us avoid danger. It can also be a figment of our imagination. Fear is a stressor and often things we fear never happen.

Guilt. “The state of one who has committed an offense, especially consciously. A feeling of deserving blame for offenses.” In grief, guilty feelings are common. We wish we had done things differently. We feel regret, often a valid feeling. Sometimes we need to review events with a trusted person who can help us sort it out. Good support can help us avoid making the same mistake in the future.

Jealousy. “Jealous resentment against a rival, a person enjoying success or advantage, etc., or against another’s success or advantage itself.” Jealousy takes away our peace of mind. It causes us to feel separate and in opposition to another. When we are jealous, we are ill-at-ease. Underlying feelings may include anger, fear, and resentment. Jealousy is a difficult state of mind to manage.

Rage. “Angry fury; violent anger. A fit of violent anger. A violent desire or passion.” Rage sets in when anger is left to simmer and build. The difference between anger and rage in definition is that it includes violence. So when rage happens, the situation becomes more dangerous, sometimes out of control.

Regret. “To mourn the loss or death of, to miss very much. To be very sorry for mistakes. Sorrow aroused by circumstances beyond one’s control or power to repair. An expression of distressing emotion such as sorrow.” We feel disappointment about a past event, whether it is something we or someone else has done. Intelligent regret points us to actions which help the world. Dumb regret keeps us in a cycle of continuing to feed the problems.

Resentment. “A feeling of displeasure or persistent ill will at something regarded as a wrong, insult, or injury.” If there is an unresolved issue that is incomplete between two people, resentment is likely. Old, bad feelings get in the way and cause disturbance. Literally, it means to feel again. Resentment is normal in grief, but if it persists, it becomes harmful.

Shame. “A painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety. A condition of humiliating disgrace or disrepute.” Guilt says, “I did something bad.” Shame says, “I am something bad.” Ironically, survivors of abuse and incest feel shame even though things were done to them and not by them. We feel disgraced, humiliated, and worthless.

Sorrow. “Deep distress, sadness, or regret especially for the loss of someone or something loved.” Pure sorrow without regret or other negative emotions is as natural as a waterfall. It is part of life. It gives our life depth, richness, and meaning. Because as humans, we love deeply, we feel emotions deeply. What makes sorrow more difficult is when negative emotions get in the mix.

Worry. “To subject to persistent or nagging attention or effort. To afflict with mental distress or agitation, make anxious.” Worry involves disturbing thoughts and feelings. We experience fretful thinking or anxiety about future events which may not ever come to pass. Worry is an uneasy feeling of anxiety and if it is not nipped in the bud, it can grow into a serious condition, which may take a toll on our health and well-being.

“Painful emotions are a natural part of grief. It is important to acknowledge these feelings and try not to cling to them. If not managed and diffused with kindness and human contact, they tend to become toxic and damaging over time. Expressing painful feelings with a trusted person can help them to dissipate, resulting in better mental and physical health.” – Shanti Vani