

# WHY FEEL-FREE?

*Creating the Feel-Free Processes and Exercises*  
by Joseph Browning

I have always been curious about and intrigued by my own feelings and by the feelings of people around me. An avid perceiver and receiver of people's feelings and experiences, I delight in figuring out how people think about, behave around, and evolve with their feelings. I love watching people as they sort out their feelings through words when we are hanging out together. Witnessing how one person communicates their feelings with another is endlessly fascinating to me.

I am continually amazed at how varied our ability is to share information while also creating and revealing our feelings with each other. It is exactly this dance between all the pieces of how we communicate and feel together that inspired me to start studying it and writing about it, in an effort to share some of my own feeling-based processes that I have learned and employed over the last few years.

I give credit to my wife Olga Browning for helping me develop the Feel-Free Processes, simply by being married to me, and also by being willing to stick around and see what I was cooking in my feeling-kitchen, day after day and year after year. After a quarter century of marriage, we have learned how to be open to teaching each other what works best for each of us in the long fantastic dance of our committed relationship. And part of this teaching included coming close to separation and divorce, where we suddenly found ourselves quite far apart from any kind of agreement or solution. We spent a couple of years deeply questioning each other and experiencing the utter pain of judging each other to be wholly incompatible in our relationship and needing to acknowledge that we were very, very different people.

From this extremely painful and challenging time, we slowly emerged from numerous exchanges of sharing our feelings honestly, into a place of new understanding, new opinions, and new levels of acceptance that have allowed us to remain friends and partners.

Also during this time, the things that were fundamentally different between us had almost completely driven us apart. However, with our ongoing feeling-based work together, these same differences are now touchstones of awareness and acceptance that we can utilize together in positive ways. I still sometimes get annoyed with Olga and Olga still gets cranky with me when our fundamental differences show up, but because we've honestly revealed our deepest fears and proclaimed our fundamental

truths to each other, the annoyance and crankiness is not as volatile as it once was. Our differences still show up, but we practice being less at the effect of them by intentionally focusing on the challenging feelings behind the differences. After simply naming these feelings to each other, it clears the way for us to get right to the heart of what we both really want in regards to the challenging feelings: "I'm mad at you," but since I can just tell you of my anger and you can hear it and understand it, I can now more easily let go of being mad at you. And then I can tell you, "I want to be glad with you instead, and I want you to be glad with me too." By practicing naming our feelings with each other, the process of moving from a challenging feeling to an easier feeling can actually take mere seconds or minutes to complete, instead of hours or days.

The key to the success of our marriage is in choosing to make conscious feeling choices in tandem with each other, as well as with our families, friends, and work associates. The Feel-Free Processes are about practicing the acknowledgment of all your feelings, especially the uncomfortable ones that you'd rather avoid or pretend aren't there. Prior to developing the Feel-Free Processes, I was the master of being able to deny any challenging feeling simply by thinking happier and lighter thoughts. And you know what? I got away with doing that and having it work for many years. Yes, pretending that everything is fine and dandy can absolutely work for a while. But if you are denying or ignoring the darker and heavier feelings, eventually these feelings will rise up and command your attention, usually when you least expect it. In the face of my problems with Olga, I soon found myself immersed in all these terrible feelings that I had so successfully avoided prior to the problems we were having. These darker feelings of shame, sadness, loneliness, and anger surrounded me and demanded that I acknowledge them. After all, they were always there along with my lighter feelings and together all these feelings made up the truth of my feeling-dynamics with Olga. It took me a long time to see these darker feelings as simply a part of my overall set of feelings, mostly because I was ashamed of them and judged them to be wrong.

I've listened to and have read the work of a lot of other authors, teachers, and philosophers and there was one message that I kept hearing over and over from all of them. It is a message centered on trying to let go of the feelings they judged as "bad" or "negative," by intentionally thinking about and embracing only the feelings they judged to be "good" and "positive." Since I too wanted to experience only these good and positive feelings, I followed their advice and instructions as best I could and I did manage to have many "happy" years. The authors and teachers I was tuning into were speaking this kind of happy language, and it all came with this easy and seductive solution of just "changing your mind about sadness, pain, anger, and shame in order to create more joy." I felt so smart as I simply bypassed my challenging feelings and made a bee-line for pure positive happiness regardless of any fundamental truths that would suggest otherwise! I felt great being intelligent enough to raise myself above the ordinary painful truths suffered by everyone else and dance in the wonders of ecstatic bliss just by changing my mind!

The next thing that happened took me by surprise and then *threw me to the ground, hard - really hard, again and again, without mercy or escape*. I found myself deep in a dark hole of painful feelings that I didn't recognize nor did I ever see coming. This group of challenging and "bad" feelings were there surrounding me the whole time, but I never knew it because I was too busy pretending they weren't there. And then it occurred to me: "Logically speaking, if I am spending all of my time convincing myself of how happy I can feel, I must be also avoiding feeling something that is decidedly *unhappy*."

At first I was scared – really, really scared. I cried a lot and felt like a small child who had lost his soul somewhere and couldn't find it anywhere. The magic happy feeling thoughts I'd been thinking no longer worked for me and I couldn't believe how scary my fear and darkness thoughts were. The worst part was that there didn't seem to be anyone with whom I could share any of these feelings with, mostly because they were either too busy or too intimidated by my dark reality to be able to support me. And all my "just create happy thoughts" authors and teachers had nothing to say about this kind of darkness I was experiencing.

Here is where Olga proved to be one of my saving graces by always making room for my feelings and experiences, even if she had no idea how truly deep my pain and darkness was. Olga's kind patience and willing ear was a cool breeze in my own personal hell I was going through. And this dark hell was not some place outside of me that I was just passing through – it was my own hell, lodged deep inside of me, in the worst way you can imagine.

Then my anger showed up. I didn't even know it was anger at first because I was too busy reacting. I was also relatively unfamiliar with my anger – what was this new awful feeling I was deeply consumed by? I really didn't want to know anything about this anger as I was taken abruptly and unwillingly into its shadowy depths. And it was in these depths that I finally awoke from my happy state of denial to realize the serious trouble that I got myself into by assuming that "happy" can somehow exist apart from "sad" or "angry." Added to this assumption was my incorrect belief that we humans were somehow grossly imperfect because we occasionally felt really bad. I believed, really believed, that I was a flawed individual because my darkness was so damned dark – *incredibly dark – scary dark*. It was so scary that I was ashamed to be a part of any of it. *And that's when I started writing.*

I wrote to understand my *personal fundamental dark truths* and to understand how I could better tolerate existing with all the feelings that we human beings are privileged to experience. I wrote to grapple with my most profoundly challenging feelings, such as anger, sadness, fear, and shame. I wrote to accept and embrace the entire Spectrum of Feelings, to grasp the magnificence that exists within **ALL** of our feelings, not just the happy, joyful, and positive ones. And from my observations, from my years of working out my own feeling truths with Olga, from my admiration of our innate human

complexities and abilities, and mostly from my overall love of people, the Feel-Free Processes were born.

## **ABOUT JOSEPH BROWNING**

Joseph has created the Feel-Free Processes to further develop some of the ideas and practices that he often employs in both his marriage with his wife Olga as well as in his business as a freelance Graphic Designer. Producing real-life tangible results in his marriage and design business has inspired Joseph to bring his work with feelings to the public in order to share and expand on what is possible when you become aware of the power of your feelings.

Prior to developing the Feel-Free Processes, Joseph studied "A Course in Miracles" and the Law of Attraction as interpreted through Abraham-Hicks, along with the philosophy of various authors such as Richard Bach and Eckhart Tolle. He has researched Buddhism, Christianity, and various factions of the New Age Spiritual movement, looked deeply at the work of Werner Erhard (EST) and Byron Katie (The Work), has practiced Energy Reading, taken part in Psychic and Intuitive Workshops, Kundalini Chakra Dance, Ecstatic Breath-work, and participated in the Mankind Project's New Warrior Training Adventure.

Joseph has a BFA in Illustration, created over 300 fine art paintings in a 10 year period, and has held multiple art exhibitions. With over three decades as a fine art painter and graphic designer, Joseph has literally put his feelings into the practice of creating art and design in order to make his living. Working carefully with the intentions and feelings of his graphic design clients, Joseph Browning Design has helped oversee the graphic development and branding of dozens of different businesses.

Joseph continues to enjoy reading and listening to various books, songwriters, teachers and seminars in a passionate effort to understand and appreciate why people are so pre-occupied with going from one set of feelings to another different set of feelings, over and over again.

Joseph wishes to thank and acknowledge the Mankind Project and their New Warrior Training Adventure program along with the subsequent Integration-Group meetings that he took part in - "I learned a tremendous amount about myself and about how feelings can work in open-hearted exchanges with other men. A lot of what I garnered from my I-Group meetings is found in Process One of the Feel-Free Home Study Course."



Joseph Browning and Feel-Free warmly invite you to participate in the wonders and opportunities that are possible within the Full Spectrum of Feelings that we all live in and share.

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