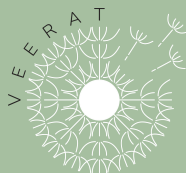


INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL FOR WOMEN AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE



Themes

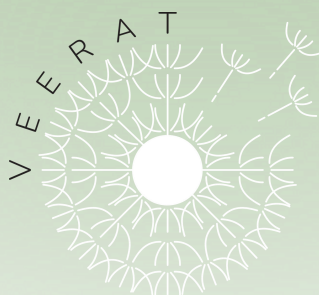
Emotions

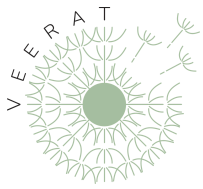
Personal boundaries

Intimate partner violence

Shame

Self-compassion





The Meaning of Emotions

Emotions are a part of everyday life. Every emotion carries a message it is trying to convey to us. No emotion is inherently good or bad, and no one should feel guilt or shame for experiencing any emotion.

The experience and expression of emotions are individual. Childhood environment and past experiences influence how emotions are perceived and expressed. One's temperament also affects whether emotions are expressed quietly or loudly.

Emotions are always valid. What matters most is how emotions are expressed in behavior. We are responsible for managing our emotions and our actions.

FEELING OF ANGER

Anger is one of the basic emotions. It may not be pleasant to feel, but it is part of a healthy emotional life. Anger helps recognize personal boundaries and important values. It often stems from feeling hurt or misunderstood. When experienced in moderation, anger helps to identify such situations and defend one's rights.

Anger is not the same as violence.

The feeling of anger may be accompanied by a desire to harm someone or break something, but acting on such impulses is not an acceptable way to express the emotion. Sometimes, anger arises as a reaction to other emotions, diverting attention from them. Other times, emotions such as disappointment or shame lie beneath anger.

Examples of Emotional Expression

Physical
expression:

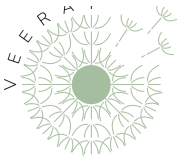
crying, smiling,
laughing, shouting,
etc.

Speaking:

verbalizing emotions,
processing them, and
working through them.

Writing:

A good option when
there is no one available
to listen at the moment
or when one does not
wish to share feelings
with others.



Identifying Emotions

Encountering difficult emotions such as sadness, fear, nervousness, uncertainty, or disappointment can be uncomfortable. There may be an urge to quickly transform these emotions into something else. While emotions can be challenging, it is essential to learn to tolerate discomfort and sit with emotions for a while. Difficult, intense emotions are like waves, they eventually pass.

Rather than trying to change an emotion, it is more valuable to learn to accept it and develop strategies for managing different feelings without immediately trying to replace or eliminate them. By allowing and accepting emotions, it becomes easier to move forward from them.

Emotional regulation involves influencing the intensity and duration of emotions. We can also get stuck in our emotions, becoming, in a way, carried away or trapped by them. Even if emotions are suppressed, they will eventually manifest in some way—whether through indirect behavior or physical symptoms.

Practice identifying your emotions

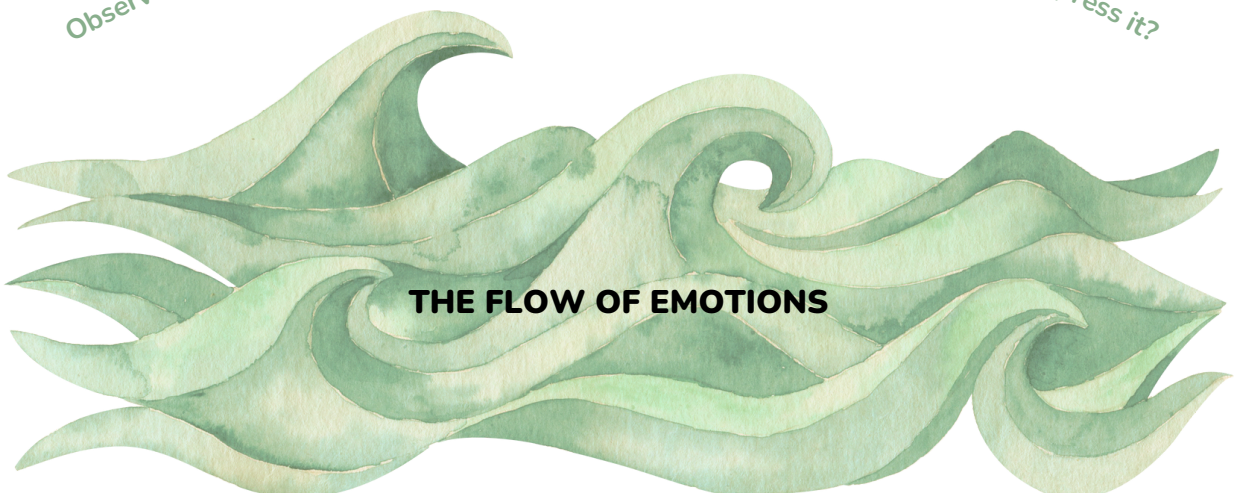
What is this emotion?

How strong is it?

What does it contain, and what is it trying to communicate to you?

Do you need to react immediately, or can you sit with it for a while?

Identify the emotion - Name it - Accept it - Let it be and let it pass
Observation: What is it signaling? How do I relate to this emotion? How do I express it?
Do I need to act on the impulse?



"No" is a complete sentence.

What Are Personal Boundaries ?

1. Boundaries define what is acceptable and what is not for you.
2. Boundaries mean holding onto what is important to you and what makes you feel good, even if others do not approve.
3. Boundaries include communicating how much personal time and space you need, how people should behave around you, what topics are appropriate, and what requests you are comfortable fulfilling.
4. Everyone has the right to decide on and defend their personal boundaries.

Practicing Boundary-Setting and Expression

- Boundaries emerge through self-awareness—by understanding your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.
- Strengthening boundaries takes practice, and with time, it becomes easier.

Helpful strategies for setting boundaries include:

- Calming yourself through breathing techniques
- Using "I" statements (e.g., "I feel that..." or "I think that...")
- Listening to others and respecting their boundaries
- Requesting a pause if needed (e.g., "Can I think about this and get back to you tomorrow?")

Personal boundaries signal to others how you wish to be treated. Expressing them clearly and respecting others' boundaries is crucial. Setting and enforcing boundaries may confuse or frustrate those around you, but remember, you have the right to regulate your own boundaries.

However, you can't be responsible for whether someone else respects the boundaries you set.



Necessary Boundaries

PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The right to personal space, comments about appearance.

"I don't like when you come this close."

PROPERTY BOUNDARIES

Using, borrowing, and handling of personal belongings.

"I can't lend you money."

TIME AND ENERGY BOUNDARIES

Being late, constant messages, favors, unpaid work.

"Unfortunately, I can't be available all the time. I'll respond when the time is right for me."

EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Emotionally charged conversations, the right not to take on others' emotions.

"I support you as a friend, but for this, you need help from a professional."

VALUES BOUNDARIES

The right to personal beliefs and opinions.

"I respect your opinion, but I won't be pressured to think the same way."

PRIVACY BOUNDARIES

The right to decide how much to share about yourself and when.

"Today, I don't feel like sharing my personal experiences here."

SEXUAL BOUNDARIES

Closeness, touch — you should only do things that feel right to you.

"This doesn't feel right. I don't want to continue after all."



INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

Conflict

is the resolution of disagreements in an equal and respectful manner between the parties involved.

Both individuals are free to express their opinions.

They can also admit when they are wrong.

There is room to take a time-out. The discussion mostly stays on topic.

These are normal aspects of any human relationship.

Violence

A desire to force or dominate the other person to comply with one's own will.

The other person doesn't dare to express their opinion.

There may be an intent to punish or seek revenge.

The other person may feel fear or begin to fear the consequences.

It should never be a part of any relationship.

If you have experienced violence repeatedly, you have gone through crisis after crisis. This is highly traumatic for the mind, meaning it causes emotional wounds. These wounds may manifest in various ways through your emotions and behavior. The mind may even shut out the emotion of fear in order to survive a difficult situation.

Violence continues to cause harm, even if it becomes part of daily life.

The most damaging aspect of intimate partner violence is:

The trauma caused by someone close to you

When the perpetrator of violence is someone close to you

When the same person both loves and abuses you

When the violent person is someone from whom you expect care and protection

Home should be the safest place

The cycle of hope and despair

Women who struggle with substance use are in a high-risk group for experiencing intimate partner violence.

For some, violence is the reason behind substance use – a way to endure the abuse or to self-medicate its effects.



Experiences of violence may increase the risk of heavy drinking or using other substances.

Trauma perspective:
Substance use may be an internalized coping mechanism developed by someone who has experienced trauma – a way to process difficult experiences and emotions, and to momentarily survive daily life.



Harmful relationships



- You are afraid of your partner, or someone close to you is afraid of you. Remember! Fear isn't always easy to identify – but that doesn't mean violence isn't happening.
- You find yourself wondering whether it's safe to express your opinion.
- You worry about what might happen or what the consequences will be if you don't do what the other person wants.
- Someone else decides for you how you're allowed to behave, speak, dress, who you can see, or how you spend your money
- Your partner excuses or downplays their behavior by blaming it on alcohol or drugs. You find yourself explaining their behavior by pointing to substance use.
- Your partner uses substances as a tool of manipulation to get what they want.

REMEMBER THESE:

It's important to understand that violent situations have the same impact regardless of whether substances are involved.

Being intoxicated does not justify violence against you, and substance use does not give you the right to be violent.

Substances do not make violence any less serious — violence always causes harm. Substance use also doesn't eliminate the need for help or your right to receive support in the aftermath of violence.



Shame: The Good and the Bad

The positive side of shame

- Shame has a purpose: it helps create boundaries within which a person can feel safe.
- It helps us recognize when we've done something wrong.
- Healthy shame can be a resource that guides our behavior.
- When we become aware of our shame, we can learn to live with it in a way that no longer defines our lives or actions.
- Shame is a valid emotion. You don't have to get rid of it completely.



Harmful shame

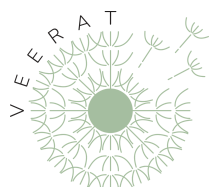
- Sometimes a person internalizes shame so deeply that it becomes a part of their identity.
- They no longer feel accepted or worthy of love
- A person ruled by shame may turn to addictive behaviors to cope.
- When it's hard to value yourself, it's also difficult to receive positive feedback from others.
- This can lead to constantly seeking approval and feeling inferior.

Remember these:

Emotions like shame, guilt, and anger are all allowed — you don't need to erase them.

Shame doesn't disappear, but you can learn to live with it so that it no longer controls your life or paralyzes you.

Shame doesn't make you a bad person. It simply makes you feel bad.



How does shame show up?

What shame-avoidance strategies do you recognize in yourself?

- lying
- downplaying
- over-functioning
- making excuses
- people-pleasing
- avoiding
- attacking
- feeling guilty
- blaming
- comparing
- self-criticism
- harshness and excessive demands on oneself
- seeking approval
- addictions

What could help you respond differently?

Unrecognized and unprocessed shame can make us feel unwell.

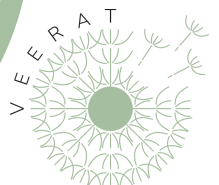
- Disappointment and shame are common emotions behind anger and rage.
 - *NOTE: Feeling angry or furious does not mean acting violently.*
- At its worst, unprocessed shame can be linked to domestic violence.
- Some try to control their shame through unhealthy means, such as jealousy or controlling behavior.
- Unhealthy ways of managing shame include lashing out at oneself or others. This can lead to relationship problems, more shame, and further difficulties.

Remember these:

You can learn to tolerate and identify shame.

When you acknowledge and accept it, you can better understand your behavior — for example, you may find it easier to manage your need to please others.

The antidote to shame is a compassionate attitude toward yourself.



Practicing self-compassion

Compassion is also a way of relating to yourself

- All people have strengths and weaknesses. Everyone is imperfect.
- Self-compassion means not letting your emotions or life experiences define who you are as a person or what your life is like.
- Our perceptions of ourselves and others are constantly changing.
- Treat yourself with the same kindness you would offer a friend — especially when you make a mistake or fail at something.

Comparing and labeling yourself is unnecessary

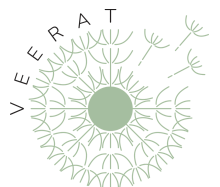
- Self-criticism and constant self-evaluation are not helpful. A person is not simply “good” or “bad.”
- Self-compassion is caring for yourself as an imperfect human being just as you are.
- Being compassionate toward yourself helps you accept who you are, not who you think you should be, or who others expect you to be.

Remember these:

Comparing yourself to others is unnecessary. You are enough as you are.

Success and failure are part of life and do not determine personal worth.

Self-compassion and self-esteem go hand in hand.





Self-compassion

Self-compassion is not about making excuses or covering up mistakes

- Being kind to yourself doesn't erase the mistakes you've made.
- It also doesn't remove your responsibility for your actions. Taking responsibility for your actions and mistakes is part of self-compassion.
- A compassionate mindset helps prevent you from falling into the belief that your mistakes make you a bad or worthless person.



Whose voice matters most to you?

Remember, the person you speak to the most is yourself, in your own mind. So be gentle with yourself. (Hidasta elämää)

Recovery takes time. It often requires support from loved ones, peers, or professionals — as well as compassion toward yourself. But there is always hope.

