

## **Naming: Naming Your Truth and Tools to Feel Connected**

### **The Potential of Words**

How often do you find yourself having the following generic, barely revealing exchange at a cash register?

*Cashier: "How are you?"*

*You: "I'm good, the weather is nice."*

Now, imagine what it would be like to say something like:

*"I feel a little sad right now. There is this heavy sensation over my heart, my breath feels a little shallow and I feel kinda foggy."*

That cashier probably wouldn't know how to respond. It's no wonder because that was really intimate information. Considerably intimate for a stranger whom you are about to walk away from in a few moments.

In our mainstream culture, revealing words about your feelings and sensations doesn't happen very often. Most "How are you?" questions are responded to with generic reports on what is happening in your external life. Many times the person asking the question isn't quite present and able receive authentic information very well.

On the other hand, sharing with this degree of transparency to a loved one or a trusted ally will have an entirely different effect. Putting words on your emotions and sensations creates depth to your sharing.

Naming your truth will help you feel more connected to yourself and the listener. The receiver of your words will be given the opportunity to feel more connected to you. You have just given them quality information about the status of your inner life, which will foster more of a sense of intimacy and connection.

Finding the words that describe your inner state also has the benefit of helping you feel more present and connected to yourself. My guess is that by naming your sensations and feelings accurately you will start to notice them shift and morph into something else... something more spacious... something more integrated.

### **Naming Defined**

This module's somatic skill explores **Naming** or *Naming Your Truth* without judgement and finding the words that describe your inner experience. In particular, I would love for you to learn how to describe your *feelings* and *sensations* with more accuracy.

## **Creating Connection with Your Truth**

Throwing words in somebody's direction doesn't always lead to more connection and intimacy. No doubt you have had the experience of telling somebody that you feel "great" when you are not "great." Did you feel closer to that person? I highly doubt it. Chances are you felt kind of disconnected. Not just from them but from yourself.

There is enough disconnect in this world. I'm interested in words that connect. I'm hoping that you are interested in the magic of authentic communication. I'd love for you to discover how words that describe your truth can help you connect even more deeply with yourself and others. Words that reveal your inner life create intimacy. They can also help you resolve conflict, feel seen and give people the opportunity to respond with empathy.

If those words don't get shared, then many opportunities to connect, create intimacy and resolve conflicts get lost. And if you won't create the time to tune into what you are feeling long enough to find the resonant words, the process of connecting, intimacy and resolution becomes a whole lot more difficult.

Certainly we can enjoy some sublime wordless states of connection. Touch, presence, sight and shared experience can do wonders for creating connection and intimacy. That said, naming your truth and finding the words to describe your internal reality opens up a world of connection that wouldn't otherwise be available.

## **A Moment of Inquiry**

Here's a question:

**"*What are you feeling right now?*"**

Please go ahead and take some time to write down an answer (here or in your journal):

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I'm curious how that was for you.

The first time I stepped into a healer's office back in 1997 and was asked that question, I felt like a deer in headlights. I barely had any idea how to respond. Sadly, at that point in my life, I hadn't been asked that question very much. I had a childhood that inspired me to become numb to my body in order to get through it. As a result of that particular history, I couldn't feel what was happening inside (at least immediately).

Fast forward almost 18 years. Now I could write a novel about the various shapes, sizes, qualities and nuances that accompany the myriad of sensations and feelings that move through me. It was a learning curve, but with practice, I've figured it out.

### **Finding the Words**

The truth is that for many of us, finding the words to describe feelings and sensations is an awkward affair. It may be uncomfortable at first. You may come up blank. Please persist, as learning this somatic skill is sooooooooooooo worth it. It lays down a foundation upon which many beautiful and intimate connections can be built.

If describing what you are feeling right now was not at all a problem, then awesome! You may want to skip this module, or not—it's up to you, of course.

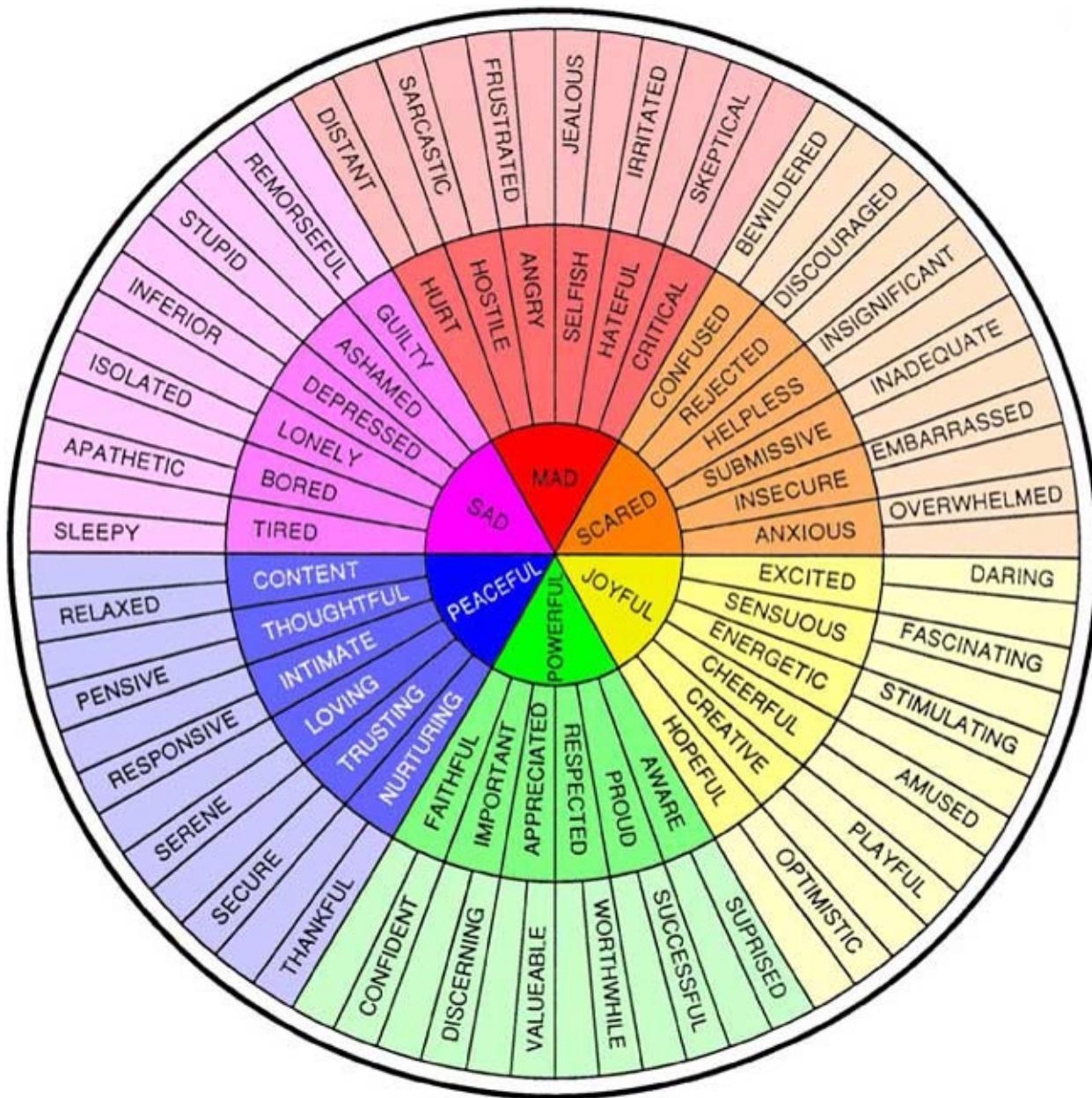
In this module you will get: 1) more information about why naming your truth is so connecting, 2) support to deepen and refine this skill, and 3) some neuroscience explanations about the benefits of naming your truth.

In this next section you will find oodles of vocabulary words to describe sensations and emotions. Feel free to get absorbed to whatever level of curiosity feels good. Skimming is just fine and dandy, as is deep meditative inquiry.

**Sensation Words:**

Achy	Electric	Icy	Ragged	Tall
Airy	Empty	Insensitive	Radiating	Taut
Aliveness	Energized	Irritated	Raw	Teary
Awake	Exhausted	Itching Jabbing	Restricted	Tender
Breathless	Expansive	Jittery	Rigid	Thick
Brittle	Faint	Jumpy	Saggy	Thirsty
Bruised	Fiery	Jagged	Satiated	Throbbing
Bubbly	Firm	Knotted	Sensitive	Tickles
Bumpy	Flexible	Light	Shaky	Tingly
Buoyant	Floating	Lightheaded	Sharp	Tired
Burning	Flowing	Limp	Short of breath	Throbbing
Bursting	Fluid	Liquid	Shuddering	Trembling
Butterflies	Flushed	Loose	Sick	Twinge
Buzzy	Fluttery	Luminous	Sizzling	Tense
Calm	Foggy	Moist	Smoldering	Thick
Clammy	Fragile	Molded	Smooth	Thin
Cloudy	Frozen	Nervy	Soft	Tight
Cold	Full	Numb	Sore	Twitchy
Comfortable	Fuzzy	Nauseous	Spacey	Uncomfortable
Compact	Grounded	Packed	Spacious	Vague
Congested	Grabbing	Pain	Spinning	Vibration
Constricted	Grating	Paralyzed	Spongy	Warm
Contracted	Gritty	Parched	Squirm	Weak
Cool	Heavy	Pliable	Squishy	Weighty
Damp	Heated	Poking	Stabbing	Wet
Dark	Hollow	Popping	Stiff	Whispy
Dense	Hot	Pounding	Stifling	Wobbly
Deadness	Hungry	Pressure	Still	
Disconnected	Hurting	Prickly	Stinging	
Dry	Inflamed	Pulsing	Streaming	
Dull	Inflated	Quaking	Strong	
Dizzy	Itchy	Queasy	Stuffed	
		Quivering	Suffocating	

## **Words that Describe Feelings:**



*Created by Kaitlin Robbs*

# **Music Appreciation (of Your Inner Life)**

Wow! Lots of words right? Why, in God's name, would one want to bother with all these words?

I suggest that you think of this vocabulary study like an element of music appreciation. These words can help you differentiate the various "tones" of emotions and sensations that are possible. By getting familiar with these words and being curious about how they resonate with your inner experience, you are learning to hear your heart and body with a more refined ear.

It just so happens that because you are fully responsible for the contents of your sphere of sovereignty (where your heart and body reside), it really helps to be able to track the subtle and not-so-subtle shifts that are happening in there. If you are listening well to the subtle sounds of your inner life, you are in a better position to respond and make more satisfying and integrated choices.

As the person responsible for your sphere, you are like the conductor of an orchestra. If the oboe is out of sync, hearing that discordant sound is necessary in order for you to make some sweet-sounding modifications. If your ear isn't refined enough to hear the off-key oboe, then unpleasant music will be clamoring around in your spherical orchestra. Fewer people will feel inspired to hang around and listen to your orchestra's music if it's out of tune. And it's no wonder, because you aren't listening to it either.

### A Few Words on Shame

Before we get too far from our vocabulary list, I want to say a few words on the importance of the word shame. The word shame doesn't appear on the feelings wheel above, which is a well a shame, because it's a word that ultimately invites deep healing and connection. At the root of every addictive tendency (*e.g., repeatedly blaming somebody, getting involved with the same type of intimate relationship*) is an experience of shame. That might not be the whole story, but somewhere in there is a feeling of being deeply unworthy of love.

Brene Brown PhD, preeminent shame researcher and powerful speaker, defines shame as:

*"[T]he intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging – something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection."*

Her research has revealed that the people who are most shame-resilient (i.e., capable of successfully bouncing back from the experience of shame) have a habit of using this word. Those of us who are more vulnerable to being taken down by shame and subject to addictive behavior don't use the word as much, if at all.

Shame thrives in the dark halls of secrecy. Naming it helps shine a light on the experience of disconnection and invites greater connection.

We are all here to connect—our hearts yearn for belonging. So despite the intense discomfort of being present to the feeling and the very understandable impulses to ignore it and not name it, I would highly suggest that you do just that—listen for it and name it.

### **The Costs of Not Listening to Your Inner Life**

If you are in the habit of turning a deaf ear to what is happening inside due to the unpleasantness of it all, lots of big internal experiences will go unacknowledged and unmet. Unacknowledged and unmet feelings and sensations want your attention. They are trying to tell you something. If you aren't getting the message, they will start to get louder and louder, creating unpleasantness and drama in an attempt to get your attention. Some illnesses could be thought of as your heart and body's dramatic attempts to get your attention.

Of course, some sounds are hard to hear, so I can't blame you for not listening. But for the sake of love, connection and potent intimacy, I hope you do make an effort to listen to those uncomfortable feelings with as much compassion as you can manage. Those undesirable feelings will transform into sweeter sounds a lot more quickly if you acknowledge them sooner rather than later.

### **Make Listening to Your Body and Heart a Practice**

Rather than ignore what's going on within and disconnecting, I suggest that you regularly ask yourself:

***"What am I feeling?"***

Depending on your history, you may have a deer-in-headlights experience. If you ask yourself this question often enough and sincerely enough, you will get better and better at sensing what you're feeling. You will then become more skilled at noticing the myriad shapes and sizes, textures and directions that feelings and sensations come in. At which point, you will be able to put words on them.

Through this process of naming your truth, your feelings will feel felt and acknowledged. When your feelings feel felt and your sensations feel acknowledged, they don't have to scream. If you pay attention to them with mindful curiosity, they can give you the message they've been wanting to share. This is how they communicate their needs and desires (something we will explore more deeply in the next two modules—Attune and Shine).

Now, if all this talk sounds like a foreign language, know that it's one of those things that makes sense once you experience it. I wouldn't expect you to know what I mean by purple if you never had an experience of purple.

The guided meditations and exercises will help you have some illuminating experiences. This, in combination with your own efforts, will eventually give you the experience of purple that I am talking about.

### **Listening to the Messages of Your Body and Heart**

If all this "feelings" talk sounds like a foreign language, it's probably because we barely speak this way in our culture. Men are particularly encouraged to ignore their feelings, especially if they are vulnerable ones. Our culture mostly focuses on thoughts and actions. Fortunately, feelings are now getting more attention. Sensations, however, barely get any airtime. This is precisely why I feel called to bring attention to them here.

In many ways our culture asks us to ignore what our hearts and bodies are telling us. We override our bodies' messages A LOT. As children we are told to "sit in that desk" even though we want to play outside; this gives our bodies the message that what our bodies have to say is unimportant. Habitually ignoring our bodies' messages will bring us to the point where we can't even understand what they are saying and they may even stop talking to us altogether. We become numb to our bodies and, thus, our bodies become dumb (in both senses of the word). Perhaps our bodies go mute because they think, 'Why bother if you aren't even going to listen to me?'

Sitting in front of computer screens and hunching over smart phones has a way of drawing our attention outside of our bodies. Hyperfocusing on other people's behaviors and opinions also draws our attention outside of ourselves. Feelings and sensations are left unacknowledged when our attention gets pulled outside of our bodies and into our electronic devices and other people's business.

So again, some revolutionary spirit and healthy boundaries are required to call your attention back into your sphere of sovereignty and prioritize developing an intimate awareness of what you are feeling, so much so that you can put words to your internal experience.

### **Knowing Your Truth and Making Life Decisions**

Speaking of revolutionary spirit, another benefit of being intimately aware of your feelings and sensations is that they will help you make soul-nourishing, heart-blossoming choices based on your unique needs and desires as opposed to being based on society's standards or your family of origin's agendas.

In the absence of knowing intimately how you feel about something, you are more vulnerable to make choices, set goals and travel down certain paths because of somebody's else's concepts or ideals.

Under society's explicit standards it might be stupid to not go for that high status career, buy a house and have babies. But what if your soul shrinks every time to go to that job? And what if your heart lights up every time you think about traveling around the world? And what if your stomach contracts when the topic of babies comes up?

Chances are you won't be happy following that career path, buying that house or having babies. At least not right now.

While contemplating life choices, it's important to not only differentiate between your truth and society's standards, but to also be able to sense when uncomfortable feelings are coming from old wounds. Many choices in life don't feel that great when traumas from the past distort our perceptions of the present moment. But if you make a practice of Sourcing, Delineating, Resourcing and Naming what's true for you, you will get better and better at discerning which emotions, sensations and impulses are old, outdated messages coming from ancient defense patterns and which are valid messages from your deepest truth.

### **Creating Conscious Connections to Your Instinctual Self**

This practice of naming the sensations and emotions that come to your awareness is an essential element in the dance of resolving old traumas and clearing out the noise so you can trust your instincts and feelings more and more.

As an sex and relationship coach and trauma resolution practitioner, I will regularly ask people to find words to describe the sensations and feelings that come up for them as they resource and touch the edges of old traumatic, implicit memories.

In essence, what is happening when I ask them to use words to describe their emotions and sensations is that I am encouraging their neocortex to get more connected to their mammalian and reptilian brains. These lower and more primitive centers of our brains are responsible for instinctual responses like fighting, fleeing, freezing and f\*cking. (Sorry, I couldn't resist the temptation use alliteration.) Impulses towards deep bonding are also informed by these parts of our brains. Without the neocortex monitoring the situation, impulses to bond, fight, flee, freeze and f\*ck can run amok.

Without an alive, integrated connection between our higher brain centers and the lower brain centers, we are more prone to think one thing, feel another and do something else. That sounds like a set-up for a lot of drama to me. Life and relationships aren't nearly as juicy, coherent and joyful when there is a disconnect between your head, heart and body.

In a trauma-shaped nervous system, many of those painful and skewed sensations and emotions are old survival strategies replaying themselves beneath our conscious awareness. The act of asking yourself what you are feeling, feeling into it long enough to notice the details and then putting words to your experience connects the language center

of our brains that reside in the neocortex with the lower mammalian and reptilian parts of our brains. It also activates the hippocampus which ultimately helps us differentiate between the patterns relevant to the past the patterns relevant to the present moment.

The neocortex has this way of helping us have more discernment about our choices. If you connect its discerning monitoring skills with those parts of yourself that want to bond, fight, flee and have sex, then you will be more apt to make healthier, integerous choices. You will be well-positioned to inhibit reactive, unconscious and self-protective mechanisms that can mess with your love and sex life. You will also be more able to make satisfying, life-enhancing decisions.

### **An Example**

To illustrate what I am talking about, let me give you a taste of a coaching session where a client starts to put words to her internal experience. In the dialogue below, my client, James, is thinking of breaking it off with a woman he has been seeing, even though he really doesn't want to. We're on the phone having this discussion.

**Lorina:** *Before we get into this piece, I would love for you to find something in your environment that is attractive and draws your attention. Please tell me when you find that something.*

**James:** *(Pause.) Okay. I have something. It's a tulip growing outside of my window.*

**Lorina:** *Great. Tell me about that tulip. What do you notice?*

**James:** *It's a deep purple, partially opened. The way the petals are rounded and parted reminds me of two hands shaped like a cup, as if they are holding something important.*

**Lorina:** *Wonderful. Notice that... And as you tune into those details of that partially opened purple tulip, what do you notice happening inside of your body?*

**James:** *My breath gets a little deeper... my shoulders drop some... I feel this some tenderness around my heart.*

**Lorina:** *Beautiful. Tell me more about that tenderness around your heart.*

**James:** *Well, it's like I can feel those imaginary hands holding my heart and it feels safe to open up more.*

**Lorina:** *Good, good. Would it be okay if we hung out there for a bit? And you took some time to feel more deeply into that feeling of safety and openness around your heart...*

**James:** Yes...

(Silence and breath)

**James:** Wow! Now that I am feeling this, I'm seeing that a big reason I was thinking about breaking up with Sarah was because my heart didn't feel safe with her. But now I'm realizing that my heart just rarely feels safe. And that was true long before we started dating.

**Lorina:** That's a big aha. What happens for you when you name that?

**James:** It feels like a big energy release. Like a big weight has been lifted. My whole body settled down into my butt more. And now I feel this impulse to put my own hands on top of my heart.

**James:** Wonderful. Please do that. Let yourself enjoy that feeling of you holding your own heart. What happens when you do that? Take your time...

**James:** Mmmmm... I feel this warmth and space around my heart and some relaxation in my belly, some tears, it feels like young tears, tears that I didn't get to have in front of my mom, who was always so stressed she didn't have any patience for my feelings.

**Lorina:** Oh, dear. I hope you can feel safe enough now with me to let yourself have those tears.

**James:** I do. Thank you. And I can feel a smile coming over my face. I can see now how Sarah is very open to me expressing my feelings with her. I guess I just have this old story where it wasn't safe, but now I can see more clearly that she is safe. I can see that because now I know I can hold my own heart.

**Lorina:** Wow! Now I have tears in my eyes. What gorgeous work. Thank you for letting me see you and hold you as you held yourself so beautifully.

**James:** Thank you! Now I see that I don't really have a valid reason to break up with Sarah. And I can go back to her with more of an open heart.

What you have here is an example of the power of Resourcing and Naming in action, helping a man become more conscious of outdated self-sabotaging defense mechanisms running around in his lower brain centers.

### **Guidelines to Naming Your Truth in Relationship**

Naming your truth is valuable whether or not anybody is there to listen. You could write in a journal, talk to a tree, have a dialogue with your genitals and/or speak to your guides. It's all

good. There is something potent and healing about doing the inner listening and putting the resonant words out in front of you.

In terms of naming your truth in a relationship, I want to offer a few guidelines. These guidelines will help you name your truth in a way that creates more intimacy.

- **Stay close to your experience.** Naming the sensations, feelings, desires and impulses that come up for you can keep you close to the flame of truth. You can report thoughts, but try not to get too invested in them as "the truth." Interpretations, analysis and fear-infused stories can create distance between you and your listener. Recall the last time somebody told you what you were up to (*e.g., you were manipulating me*) without acknowledging that it was a story that person was carrying. My guess is that being analyzed did not feel good and cultivate intimacy. In contrast, if you were to share a perception in a way that acknowledged that it was a perception, it would have more of a chance of landing in a way that connected rather than divided. You can do this by sharing your perception with the words, "My story is..."
- **Own your experience.** Owning your experience means taking ownership of what you are feeling rather than blaming those feelings on somebody else. It means paying attention to what is happening inside your own skin, rather than hyper focusing on somebody else. This impulse to disown your experience can come from an attempt to create distance from the red-hot vulnerability that comes up. As natural and common as those defense strategies are, they rarely create the yummy connection we all seek. Try leaning into your vulnerability and watch the intimacy blossom.
- **Be mindful of what and when.** A loved one once introduced me to the practice of "2 of 2" early in our relationship. Basically, if I'm activated by something happening between us at a level of 2 or higher (on a 10 scale) for longer than 2 days, it's a good idea to share; otherwise, a distance creeps in. On the other end of the spectrum, I find if I'm extremely activated beyond an 8 and I am not able to own my experience or stay close to it, it's not a great time to attempt a conversation because my words will more than likely create division. If I have my wits about me, I'll journal or meditate

or dance or talk with a neutral ally to get myself at least into a state of 7 or below and, thus, have some capacity to both share my truth and hear his.

- **Stay curious.** Notions of right/wrong and black/white are like kryptonite to curiosity. Labels can have that effect, too. If you have a definitive attachment to what something means and aren't open to exploring the pathways that surround it, you will probably experience the thud of hitting a wall. That wall will get in the way of true intimacy. One effective way of invoking this state of curiosity is to use the word "hmmmmm..." When a loved one says something that feels harsh to you, you could try asking yourself, "*Hmmmmm... I wonder where that was coming from. I wonder if I did something to invoke such a reaction? I wonder if they are feeling stressed and that it was nothing personal?*" And so on... What magical goodness is possible when you connect with the spirit of wonder?
- **Look for the sensations of truth in your body.** There is a way I feel it in my body when I express the words that describe my experience well. It's like a tuning fork has been hit with that particular choice of words and now my body is resonating with that truth. It feels good. There is both a settling and an aliveness. What does truth feel like inside of you?
- **For the hard truths, find a good container.** Telling a deep, dark truth to a stranger on a bus will not be nearly as satisfying as telling a trusted loved one, counselor or coach. It might be a good idea to test-run someone's capacities before you share your most vulnerable and shame-filled parts with them. It's similar to responsibly choosing a good caretaker for your inner child. In terms of naming your hard truths with loved ones and intimates, it helps to refrain from sharing while they are in a reactive state. Focus on infusing the relationship with goodness and appreciation and get into a more settled state together before you bring out the hard stuff. Of course, there are always some inherent risks involved, but in my experience they are sublimely worth it.

Of course, doing all of the above in the heat of a painful and fear inducing relationship situation is much easier said than done. The mp3 for this module is a guided mediation that can help you name your truth in ways that create more intimacy rather than perpetuate

disconnect. It integrates the three previous skills and is a great way to prepare for a difficult conversation.

For more opportunities to practice Naming your Truth please explore the exercises below:

**Solo Practice:**

**Step 1.** Get a pen and paper and sit down with those two lists of vocabulary words of sensations and feelings.

**Step 2.** On a series of small pieces of paper, write down a number of different choices you are facing in your life right now. Have at least three options, and if you have a good amount of time and desire, write down more.

They could be something like...

"Go to the next level with Samantha"  
"Ask to open up our relationship "  
"Make gluten-free blueberry pancakes for breakfast"

**Step 3.** One at a time, hold each piece of paper that presents a different option and ask yourself:

*"How do I feel when I think about this option?"*

Notice whatever sensations and emotions come up for you. Spend some time feeling into whatever comes up and try putting some words on it.

**Step 4.** Write down some words to describe what you are feeling for each option. If you need some help, reference the lists of vocabulary words.

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**Step 5.** Reflect on any insights that come up for you as you do this in a journal.

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### **Dyad Practice:**

Non-violent communication\* (aka NVC) is an excellent body of work that offers a lot of guidance on constructing sentences that can help you stay inside your own sphere of sovereignty and respect others.

This dyad exercise is inspired by NVC and I would highly recommend that you learn more about it if you haven't already.

**Step 1.** Sit or stand across from your partner.

**Step 2.** Complete the follow sentence structure with your own words:

When you \_\_\_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_\_\_.  
(some observable action)                    (some sensation and/or emotion)

For example:

*When you hugged her at the party I felt a tightening in my belly and some fear come up.*

**Step 3.** Repeat the above sentence structure at least five times. Go back and forth trading roles as the speaker and listener. I would recommend putting in some resourcing statements as well.

For example:

*When you left me that beautiful card the other day I felt a tingling sensation and a warm feeling of love grow inside my chest.*

**Step 4.** Debrief. What did you two notice?

**In the World:**

As you go about your day, frequently ask yourself the question:

***"What am I feeling right now?"***

Get curious about what you are feeling (both emotions and sensations) and put words to your experience inside your own head, if not in writing. You will not be graded here. There are no right words or wrong words. While there are no right or wrong words, some may feel more resonant than others.

Here are a number of occasions when you could ask yourself that question and put words to your experience.

- When you wake up (an excellent time to journal).
- When you are thinking about who you are dating at the moment.
- When you need to make a decision about something.
- After eating something. (This will help you discern patterns about healthier food choices for yourself.)
- When you are wanting to escalate the intensity of intimacy with someone.
- When you are feeling confused about what to do next.
- When you are feeling low in energy.
- When you are contemplating approaching that hot someone.
- When you are feeling disconnected from yourself.
- When somebody asks you how you are feeling. ;)

Write about your experience in a journal at the end of the day.

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