

## THE JOURNEY: A Guide for Reflection

### Emotional Intelligence

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On a spring evening in our former home at 175 St. Clair Avenue West, a group of eight gathered in a bookcase-lined room for the first session of a new program called “Heart to Heart.” With a spirit of openness and uncertainty about what to expect, we began by reflecting on our lives as a series of stepping stones, each marked by five key “eras” defined by pivotal decisions or life events.

Each participant arrived with five small objects to represent the milestones they were comfortable sharing. Some brought coins or pebbles; others offered tokens that symbolized each era. One person even brought music CDs, each representing the “soundtrack” of a particular life stage.

At first, the room was filled with nervous energy. But it soon gave way to a sense of calm as the group established agreements to honor each other’s confidences and resist the urge to comment or offer advice. This created a safe space for everyone to generously share their stepping stones. In the center of the circle, a chalice flame flickered on a small table, gradually surrounded by forty tokens. Our individual sets of five melded into a mosaic of stories—stories of love and loss, challenge and resilience. Each narrative was unique, yet a deep sense of kinship emerged among us.

Within that sacred space, we had accessed the core of “emotional intelligence.” We set aside our reflexive habits of judging, assuming, or analyzing, and instead practiced self-awareness and empathy as we encountered one another.

The group expressed gratitude for the honor of hearing each story and then disbanded into the warm, welcoming night. As I made my way home, I couldn’t help but wonder about the stories of the other passengers on the subway. What “personal Mount Everest” were they each facing? And how could I more faithfully uphold my commitment to monitor my own emotional responses and offer extra grace in encounters with people whose stories I don’t yet know?

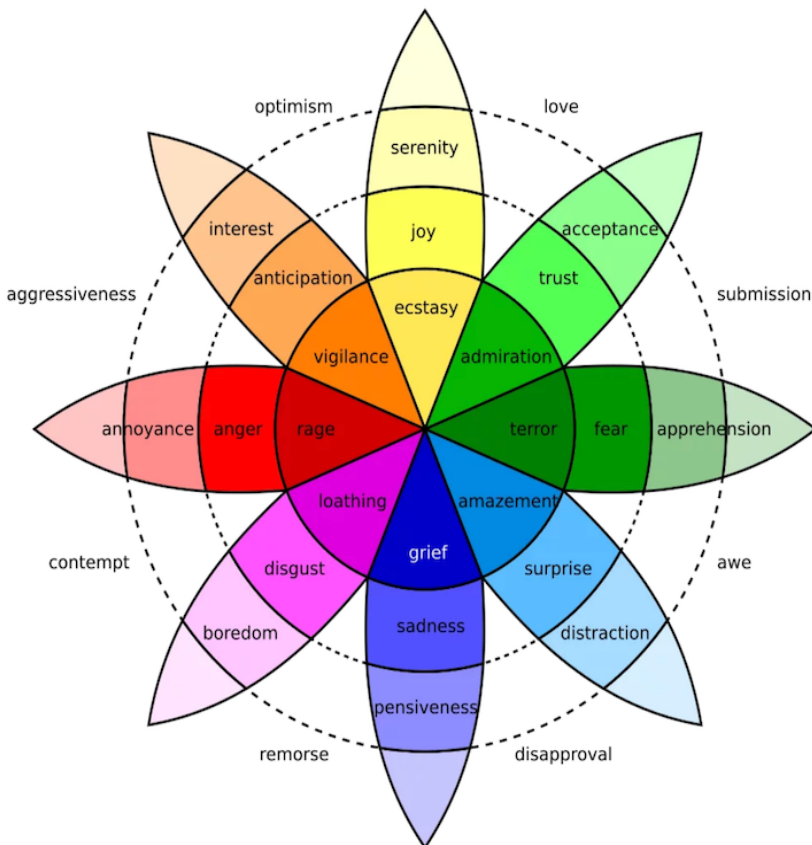
As we reflect on this month’s theme, I hope you’ll find inspiration on these pages, and within your group, to continue your lifelong cultivation of this essential competency.

Particularly in these times of political polarization, may we be aware of our own emotions and compassionate toward those whose feelings drive perspectives that differ from our own—whether at home, in the workplace, in our community, or even globally.

In faith and love,  
Angela

## Consider This...

**Plutchik's Wheel**, created in 1980 by American psychologist Robert Plutchik, is a graphic depiction to show how emotions are related and the varying intensities with which we may feel them. Learn more about how to use this tool to help grow your emotional vocabulary, a foundation of emotional intelligence.



### Understanding Plutchik's Wheel:

**Eight Primary Emotions:** The model starts with eight primary emotions, depicted on the wheel in four pairs: joy opposes sadness, trust opposes disgust, fear opposes anger, and surprise opposes anticipation.

**Emotional Intensity:** The most intense emotional states appear in the centre of the wheel, and the strength of the core emotion dissipates as you move out towards the edge of the wheel. This gradation of intensity is represented by the depth of the colours used in the wheel.

**Blending of Emotions:** The space between the emotional spokes on the wheel highlights how different emotions can blend together to create more complex feelings. For example, combining joy and trust results in love, while combining anticipation and joy can lead to optimism. This illustrates the nuanced nature of our emotional experiences, and how they are rarely singular or static.

### Applying Plutchik's Wheel:

**Practical Applications:** By recognizing and labeling our emotions, we can enhance self-regulation, improve decision-making, and communicate more effectively.

**Empathy:** Better identify the emotions others are experiencing, making it easier to respond with empathy and understanding in social interactions.

**Constructive Communication:** The wheel can be used to help people articulate their feelings more effectively, which can help diffuse misunderstandings and foster dialogue.

Other "emotion wheels" like the "Feelings Wheel" or "Geneva Wheel" offer alternative approaches for those who would like to explore further.

## Questions to Live With



*The Deep, 1953 Jackson Pollock*

1. What did you learn about feeling, expressing, and managing emotions as a child? Was this helpful or not? Why?
2. How do you know if your words or actions have a positive impact on others? A negative impact?
3. Which emotions do you find the most difficult to manage? Why?
4. What kinds of activities help you get a better handle on your emotions?
5. How might emotional intelligence help you take the perspective of, and find compassion for, someone you really disagree with?
6. Which of the following abilities, listed by author Gavin de Becker, do you find most important, and why: the ability to motivate yourself, to persist against frustration, to delay gratification, to regulate moods, to hope, to empathize, or to control impulse?
7. If these questions don't address how you need to explore emotional intelligence this month, what is your question?

## For Inspiration

I feel therefore I am.

- Amit Abraham, Academic, Author, and Psychologist

Anyone can become angry —that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way —this is not easy.

- Aristotle, Greek Philosopher and Polymath

Intelligence comes in many forms and academic prowess is just one of them. In business, I would give far greater weight to emotional intelligence and the ability to communicate effectively.

- David Bateman, Entrepreneur and Author

Emotional versatility is the art of making peace with the entire emotional spectrum by honing your capacity to channel various feelings along creative and constructive lines. It is not about controlling or condemning your feelings.

- T.K. Coleman, Educator and Entrepreneur

The skill of emotional intelligence is simply the ability to recognize your feelings and understand how you're responding to them—and to do it without judging yourself.

- Susan David, Ph.D., Psychologist and Author

An emotion does not cause pain. Resistance or suppression of emotion causes pain.

- Frederick Dodson, Author

When you sing with a group of people, you learn how to subsume yourself into a group consciousness because a capella singing is all about the immersion of the self into the community. That's one of the great feelings - to stop being me for a little while and to become us. That way lies empathy, the great social virtue.

- Brian Eno, Musician, Songwriter, Producer and Visual Artist

Socrates's injunction 'Know thyself' speaks to the keystone of emotional intelligence: awareness of one's own feelings as they occur.

- Daniel Goleman, Psychologist and Author



*Orange and Yellow, 1956, Mark Rothko*

Even when I am very upset, I keep reviewing the facts over and over until I can come to a logical conclusion.

- Temple Grandin, Animal Science Doctor and Autism Activist

One of the easiest ways to discover if someone is compatible with you is to gauge their emotional intelligence. Are they a kind and sensitive person? Will they be respectful towards your sensitivities? Or, are they emotionally stunted? Remember, we tend to attract narcissistic types who lack empathy.

- Aletheia Luna, Author, Educator and Intuitive Guide

Emotions can get in the way or get you on the way.

- Dr. Mavis Mazhura, Adult Development and Leadership Psychologist

The only way to change someone's mind is to connect with them from the heart.

- Rasheed Ogunlaru, Coach, Speaker, Author

Love the heart that hurts you, but never hurt the heart that loves you.

- Vipin Sharma, Actor, Editor, Filmmaker

Highly sensitive people are too often perceived as weaklings or damaged goods. To feel intensely is not a symptom of weakness, it is the trademark of the truly alive and compassionate. It is not the empath who is broken, it is the society that has become dysfunctional and emotionally disabled. There is no shame in expressing your authentic feelings. Those who are at times described as being a 'hot mess' or having 'too many issues' are the very fabric of what keeps the dream alive for a more caring, humane world. Never be ashamed to let your tears shine a light in this world.

- Anthon St. Maarten, Psychic Medium

We all have the same pallet of emotional paints. It is how we pigment them on the canvas of life that dictates our artistry.

- Ged Thompson, Writer, Poet, and Storyteller

Emotional intelligence allows us to respond instead of react.

- Unknown

A person with high emotional intelligence grasps what makes us human and at the same time what makes each of us different from one another.

- Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, Chair for Truth & Reconciliation, Lakehead University

For news of the heart, ask the face.

- West African saying

## Optional Spiritual Exercise

### A Culture of Empathy

What would it actually look like, to live in a culture where empathy and EQ were part of our vision? Cleveland Clinic made [this video as one vision of empathy, and the ability to see the struggle others are facing](#).

If you watched the video, what parts did you find most insightful? Bring your insights to share with the group.



*Mountains and Sea, 1952, Helen Frankenthaler*

## Join Us

### Join a Journey Group

Journey Groups are a great way to go deeper with our monthly theme by sharing with a small group of people for a couple of hours each month.

Groups meet online on Zoom and are scheduled at different times during the month.

For more information, visit our website [firstunitariantoronto.org/journey-groups/](http://firstunitariantoronto.org/journey-groups/).

### Upcoming Themes

May – Activism

## The Journey Team

Margaret Kohr, Coordinator | Mary Anne Roche, *Proofreader* | Yvonne Raaflaub, *Curator* | Josée Thibault, *Layout Editor* | Angela Klassen, Lead

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