1. My “Emotional Code” Screening Tool

Instructions: the term “emotional code” refers to the belief (usually unspoken) that guides how you deal with emotion—how you feel them on the inside and what you do with them. Take a few minutes to reflect on your style of managing emotions (such as joy, hurt, anger, frustration, grief, compassion, love). Remember: your “Emo-Code” isn’t necessarily right/wrong, good or bad. You’re not judging—just exploring. So, just check the statements below that seem true. (Note: this is a draft and not a scientifically validated instrument. Your feedback is welcomed!)

1. ___ I’m usually pretty tuned into my emotions and I’m comfortable expressing them to those I trust
2. ___ I notice and feel most all my emotions but prefer to keep the distressing ones (like anger, sadness, fear) inside
3. ___ It’s hard for me to stay with vulnerable emotions like sadness and fear for more than a few seconds
4. ___ I often feel really positive emotions like joy, happiness, deep contentment, silly, carefree, deep peace
5. ___ I seldom feel strong positive emotions—it just seems like I’ve got to be serious all the time
6. ___ I can cry when I really need to, and it feels like a relief afterwards
7. ___ I don’t think crying really helps—and you just feel worse afterwards
8. ___ I’m not very tuned into what I feel emotionally—I just keep pushing and try to be strong
9. ___ Before expressing anger towards someone, I think first about the impact it will have on them
10. ___ When I am angry at someone I tell them immediately without reflecting much on how they’ll take it
11. ___ Others tell me I handle stress and my emotions well
12. ___ One or more persons I respect have told me I don’t handle my emotions well
13. ___ Usually when I am angry I feel it, think about it, and talk about it when helpful
14. ___ I don’t express anger to others—I just move on
15. ___ Usually when I am angry I hold it in until it feels like too much then it just comes out
16. ___ It’s really hard for me to admit to others when I am afraid
17. ___ It’s okay to tell others when I feel fear and I do so when it is important to.
18. ___ I release difficult emotions and stress by exercising, recreation, and/or having fun with friends/family
19. ___ When I am upset I tend to respond by self-medicating (over-eating and/or drinking, sex or other…)
20. ___ I hate conflict and will do anything to avoid it
21. ___ I can assert myself (speak respectfully and clearly about the matter) as needed with peers I trust
22. ___ I can assert myself when I need to with my superiors
23. ___ People tell me I am a very confrontational person
24. ___ When people I care a lot about start to cry, I can feel some of their hurt and try to support them
25. ___ When people I care about start to cry, I feel anxious OR shut down my own feelings AND/OR try to “fix” them

• Now, remembering to not be judgmental, just look back over your responses. What do you notice?

• Check any of the following statements that would help summarize your own Emotional Code:
  A. ___ It’s okay to express difficult emotions at work after highly distressing events (when time permits) as long as I don’t hurt anyone and it doesn’t interfere with my work
  B. ___ I’d like to be more open expressing hard emotions at the workplace after highly distressing events but that wouldn’t be supported by my peers and/or superiors
  C. ___ It feels weak and not very helpful to express painful emotions
  D. ___ It doesn’t feel safe to express vulnerable emotions
  E. ___ Other (if none above applies, summarize yours):
  F. ___ My Emotional Code is similar to my family’s when growing up
  G. ___ My Emotional Code is different than my family’s when growing up

• How would you summarize the Emotional Code you want to live by, if different than above? Write it here:

• What would you need to DO to best fulfill your healthy Emotional Code in the future?

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