



## Identifying Beliefs About Emotions

*Adapted from **Released From Shame** by Sandra D. Wilson, Ph.D.*

We may not always live what we profess, but we will always live what we believe. Therefore, what we believe about the role of emotions in our life is very important. The left column below lists common mis-beliefs about emotions. Contrasting truths appear on the right.

In the column of the left, circle the beliefs that seem familiar to you. What did you discover? What substances, activities, or relationships do you use to numb feelings you believe you should not have? (E.g., alcohol, food, overworking, pornography.) How would your living and relating be different if you deeply believed and consistently lived out of the truths on the right?

Lies	Truths
1. Emotions are unnecessary, bothersome, unspiritual and embarrassing. I need to work on eliminating them.	1. Emotions are a gift from God and an integral part of our human natures which reflect His Image. <u>Jesus came to take away our sins, not our feelings!</u>
2. Emotions are bad and dangerous, so it is safer when I avoid them.	2. Emotions are neither good nor bad. They can be expressed appropriately and I can learn to do that. I am less fully as God created me when I avoid feeling emotions.
3. If I begin to feel my emotions, I will "lose it," "fall apart," "go crazy" or hurt someone.	3. When I am able to feel my emotions, I will become more authentic and alive. Recognizing and expressing emotions may feel strange and scary at first, but I can find "appropriate emoters" to help. And I don't have to hurt anyone!
4. It is stupid to get all upset over things that happened years ago. It is best to	4. It is appropriate for children to feel confused, afraid, sad, and/or angry when their parents neglect and/or abuse them.



"let sleeping dogs lie." Besides, none of that affects me now.

Those feelings did not go away just because I had to learn to disown them. They are still inside, affecting my life today, and it is best to face them and feel them honestly.

5. When I felt sad as a child, no one was there for me. I couldn't stand to feel that despair and loneliness again. Besides, I am showing weakness if I cry or act sad.

5. I have resources now as an adult that I did not have as a child. I can find more reliable (but imperfect) human comforters. And I know (or can know) God personally and have His comfort. It will be painful to grieve childhood losses, but I can survive.

6. As a child, I was told I should never be angry. I just know that God is angry about my anger, both my anger about the past and about present situations. Besides, good Christians never feel angry.

6. It is appropriate to feel angry about what angers God. Misleading and/or abusing children angers God. I can learn to express anger appropriately and without sinning. (See Ephesians 4:26.)

7. As a child, I learned that I was a "sissy" or a "coward" if I was never afraid. And my church seems to teach that really good Christians are never afraid. I don't want my church or my family to think I am a sinful sissy, so I will do whatever it takes so that I never feel fear or any other "unapproved" emotions.

7. It is natural and human to be afraid of people and situations that have, or can, harm us. God seems to have made provisions for this unpleasant human emotion by repeatedly encouraging us in Scripture to trust His power and presence in our fears. When people see me honestly face and feel my fears and choose to trust God anyway, they will be learning a very valuable lesson.