

Chapter 8

How do you feel?

Emotions are our path to the Self.

It is at this juncture that I depart more radically from formal Psychosynthesis theory and, for that matter, the ideologies of most of the current psychological thought. Emotions have been demonised, seen as immature, and generally associated with uncontrolled impulses. Current wisdom dubs them as little more than chemical impulses. There is a prevailing belief even in most of our religions, East and West, that emotions are to be avoided. I have come to see that their importance to us as healthy powerful beings is the very reason so much effort has been put into their suppression. To a large extent this has been successful and because of this, the human race has experienced increasing dysfunction both personally and socially.

To control our emotions is to place them into a box from which we can only extract those that have been deemed acceptable to our society and culture. Men are allowed to get angry but not experience grief openly. Women must never get angry but are allowed to be fearful and sad. *All* the emotions are there for a reason, for all people. I hope that by the end of this section of the book, you will understand how important the messages from your emotions are, and that you will have begun the process of taking them out of the box to see what they have been trying to tell you all of your life.

Primarily, the content of our thinking minds has come from what others have taught us. This process grows along with the child's cerebral cortex. The older we get, the more information we have stored there. The more developed our brain becomes, the more we make use of that information. The drawback is that all the information there is past tense. It has already happened for it to be able to exist in the storehouse of the logical mind. Its source may have been other people's past experiences, or our own. The degree that we listen and place priority on other

people's lives over ours is the degree to which we will make the same choices as they do, regardless of our own inner knowing. The consequences are often the same as for those who travelled the road before us, regardless of whether those consequences are desirable or not. This is how patterns spread throughout whole families and communities, regardless of the effect they have on the well-being on the individuals involved.

For example, consider marriage and childrearing. Not all of us are suited to the difficult and specialised calling of parenthood. We are all, however, expected to choose that direction, with some form of public censure resulting if we choose not to. So how are we to know what is right for us personally? Our feelings and emotions will tell us. The logical mind holds no information about our personal needs at all, for our needs are happening in this very instance, not in somebody else's past. The feelings and emotions are the most unique parts of us. They tell us who *we* truly are. When we are in touch with them, we are able to hear our own needs and evaluate them against what we are told we 'should' do.

This makes us self-actualising beings, beyond the manipulations of others. As such we cannot be encouraged by advertising to buy things that we don't need, to vote for people we don't feel good about, or make commitments to people for the wrong reasons. As such we are harder to control and more independent – not something we are encouraged to be, and for good reason. This form of feudal power-over society that we are all still governed by could not stay that way if faced with people who were strong and in their own power. It would have to evolve into a true democracy, which currently it is not.

So how does society disempower us? It feeds us with the beliefs that *our emotions are weak* and should not be listened to. We are taught that we should always be rational and think before we act. When we think, we access all the brainwashing that has gone on for generations and has come down to us through our family patterns. Our true feelings become desensitised, and we are at a loss as to what we can do to meet our needs. *Then they tell us what they want us to do and we do it!*

The chakras in our bodies, according to Hindu thought, and since confirmed by Kirlian photography, are places where the energy field links into our various organs, not unlike switches. During the process of socialisation, these switches are gradually modified to limit our behaviour. One of the first behaviours we are trained out of is voicing our feelings. The throat chakra controls this process, and therefore must be limited to prevent our free expression. As the top two points on the body, the crown chakra and the third eye are internal points; the throat chakra is the point at which our Self meets Other, in the communication process. Without its full functionality, we experience the feelings, but are powerless to express them. So excruciatingly painful is this, both emotionally and physically, that we gradually shut all the points below it, in an attempt to numb it. That is, all except the chakra above it (third eye): essentially the mind process. Successfully gagged and numbed to our own knowing, we are then given either/or options from others with which to make our mental choices. Not that our thinking minds are unimportant to us. Of course they are. They are pinnacles of evolutionary achievement. However, we need all parts of us for different functions. Assessing our Self's need is not the preserve of the intellect.

In order to get back in touch with our sacred feelings once again, and retrieve our wisdom, we must reverse the process. We must first turn away from our heads and towards our feelings, and begin to express ourselves fully. We must get back in touch with what our needs are, in order to grow into healthy people living in an evolving healthy society.

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The minute people sense that we are listening to our feelings, they sense that we are about to take our power back. They will then inevitably try to bring us back into our heads so they can gain control over us again through manipulation.

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How does this happen? The head responds to *reasons*. The minute you respond to others' demands by justifying your needs and actions, you can be persuaded out of it. That was one of the covert ways our parents controlled us as children. It was effective, but no one told us that it was a temporary necessity, applicable only until we were old enough to be independent. Why? Because they too were never told or trained to understand that there would come a time when it would become essential for their soul's journey to stand on their own knowledge; that indeed it would become dangerous not to.

The mind is the preserve of reason. Feelings, on the other hand, *don't need to give any reasons. They just are!* When people ask us why we wish something, it is an invitation to draw out of us reasons that they can then refute. Imagine someone wants you to go out with him or her, and you don't want to. You say "no" and they say "why not?" You say, "I have a headache" (which may or may not be true as we all, from an early age, start making excuses that we believe others might accept, in order to defend ourselves). Immediately, now that you have given a justification, they can come back and say, "Well, have a Panadol and you'll feel better by the time we go." Now you have to come up with another reason. If the other person is persistent, and this goes on for a while, you *will* give in. Sooner or later you will run out of excuses (or justification, or reasons – they are all the same). It become all about who is right and who is wrong, rather than about your needs.

On the other hand, what if you just say at the outset, "I don't feel like it" (which is true) and no more? Feelings require no reason or justification. They just are. You have retained your *power to* and created your own solution to the issue.

As you begin down this road, those who have been able to have power over you up to this point will not be impressed. They will try harder to gain back their control, using what Dr Harriet Lerner calls 'changeback' in her book *The Dance of Anger*. As they feel threatened by your new power, they might start to tell you that you have changed, and they don't much like who you have become. This is an appeal to that frightened child inside of

you that was once dependent on the caregiver for survival. We all have one. It's a 'pleasing the parent' scenario. However, we are no longer dependent children and now we must ask ourselves if it has served our soul well to remain one this long. Then we need to ask what it might be like to continue believing that we are helpless children? What happens to our adult self and personal journey if we choose to tie ourselves to others' wishes out of fear that we can't survive without them? We become that adult child, never to actualise our purpose for being here. Where does that place these others in our lives? Sooner or later we will resent them for the position of control we have invested in them. To grow and self-actualise, we will end back where we started: needing to listen to and honour our own true feelings.

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Acting on our feelings ensures that we are acting from a space of being responsible for meeting our needs, not parenting someone else's.

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If you start taking responsibility for meeting your own needs, you will no longer be open to being manipulated into meeting other people's needs. This occurs because you have started to mature, and will no longer be interested in trade-offs to save this situation the way it has been. You will prefer people who are themselves adults. They too will have to become self-responsible adults to get their needs fulfilled and to stay in relationship with you. Unless they are willing to do the work on themselves that you are doing they won't know how. You cannot and will not want to do it for them. It is possible that they will choose to find someone else with a comparable level of maturity with whom to do the dependency dance. Of course, the best-case scenario is that they will begin to listen to their own feelings by following your example. Not, I emphasise, by doing as you tell them to. There is yet another scenario: that you will become evangelical about your own new skills, placing an

expectation on them to change, as you have, so that you can keep them in your life. This is just as disempowering to you both as the old dance was, and is in fact just a different octave of it. They must listen to themselves, not you. It might feel good to be in charge for a while but it's just the see-saw tipping again.

So you begin to listen to your feelings, and honour them no matter what others say. What will they say?

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Exercise 28

- With your eyes closed and your mind in a centred space, take a few moments to think of the significant others in your life.
- You know these people very well and have watched their power struggle styles over and over.
- How have they have drawn you back into their power-over before?
- What methods are they likely to use this time?
- Have they already started to use these 'changeback' techniques, as you have begun to grow due to your self-growth initiatives?
- How have you responded to that?
- What are the ways in which you attempt to get others to 'toe the line' with you?
- Are you using 'changeback' techniques on anyone in your life at the moment?
- How you are using the other person to meet your needs instead of taking responsibility for them yourself?
- Spend some time with this and then write the outcome of your contemplation in your journal.

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Unlike our thinking, our feelings come in rich bursts. They do not fit nicely into polarities. They do not give us either/or options because we can be feeling them all at once. Feelings are

wholistic, while thoughts can be divided and divisive. We can have all our feelings at once, while thoughts are linear. So how do we know what our needs are? How do we differentiate? Firstly, we must be aware that feelings build in the body over time but release in the *now*. If we have, like most people, been suppressing our emotions from an early age, we will have a huge backlog. This backlog represents needs that may never have been met. Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' discusses how we must meet our immediate survival needs first, before we can progress to any other level of complexity. The needs that are not necessarily involved in our physical survival queue to be dealt with, sometimes for years. They sit awaiting attention in our physical bodies. If that attention never arrives they are the first bastions of disease. Eventually they can become survival needs. Let me give an example. Suppose a deer was thirsty. It makes for the local waterhole only to discover that a lion has arrived there first. The lion is hungry and looking for deer dinner. A chase ensues and the deer's first survival need is not to be eaten. It runs flat out for a few kilometres and does indeed live to tell the tale. What has happened to its thirst? It hasn't gone away because another need took priority. In fact it is very likely to be even thirstier from its run. It must now find another waterhole or go back to the previous one and hope the lion has fed itself. If it does not quench its thirst eventually, it will die from it. We are the same. The survival needs of childhood take precedence, but they are often dependent on other people. Our need for independent self-development never goes away until we begin to honour it. If we do not honour it, depression results, and it can be life-threatening in many ways. Nor can our daily physical survival needs become repressed to serve the needs of others without there being a cost – hence the eventual disease that results from unmet needs. If we don't drink we die. There's no point in the deer altruistically saying, "This lion is hungry, I'll stay." We have all kinds of ongoing needs on all levels that result from being alive, organic beings – and they must be supplied. Although lack of self-love won't kill us immediately, it will eventually.

So before we can be sure what our current needs are, we need to separate them off from the build-up of past unmet needs. It's another dance of internal boundaries. Unmet needs from the past create trauma. So as part of our self-responsibility we must clear the past needs as well as deal to those of the present.

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Exercise 29

- Get comfortable and centred.
- Think about the people in your life right now. Pick one and allow a clear picture of them to formulate in your mind's eye, as if they were standing right in front of you.
- Go back over the last week or so and look at a time that you felt angry with that person.
- Spend a few minutes contemplating that time.
- What was it that you wanted them to take responsibility for?
- What was it that you wanted them to come into your boundary and caretake for you that they wouldn't?
- Maybe you were stepping over their boundaries, wanting to caretake them and they wouldn't permit you to.
- What would it have been like if you had stayed within your own boundaries, taking care of your own needs?
- What if they had done the same?
- How would the quality of your relationship have been then?
- How often do you relate in this way?
- What must change to achieve a more mature way of being?
- How could you do it differently, that would allow both of you to interrelate as more equal adults?
- Write about this in your journal, and if appropriate maybe even discuss it with the person involved and see what new way is possible between you.

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There is an internal guide we have that instantly tells us the answer to questions: the internal *yes* and *no* we feel. The *yes* is felt as a feeling of expansion. In this case there is an all clear to continuing down that road. The *no* is one of a feeling of contraction, often in our guts. This is a failsafe way of knowing that something is going on that needs to be checked out before a decision is made. It will never let us down. It tells us that some part of our emotions or intuitions is unhappy about the choice and that our needs are not being met in some way or another. We must stop and heed this, look deeper and choose a way that *does* meet our needs (finding the *AND*). Or failing that, abort the proposal altogether. What we have been trained to do is override this impulse with our thoughts. “Oh I’m being silly. It will be alright!” No, you are not being silly. You are in fact being wise. When we get a *yes* it feels like an “*Aha! Uhuh!*” experience. Somewhere inside of you, *you just know!*

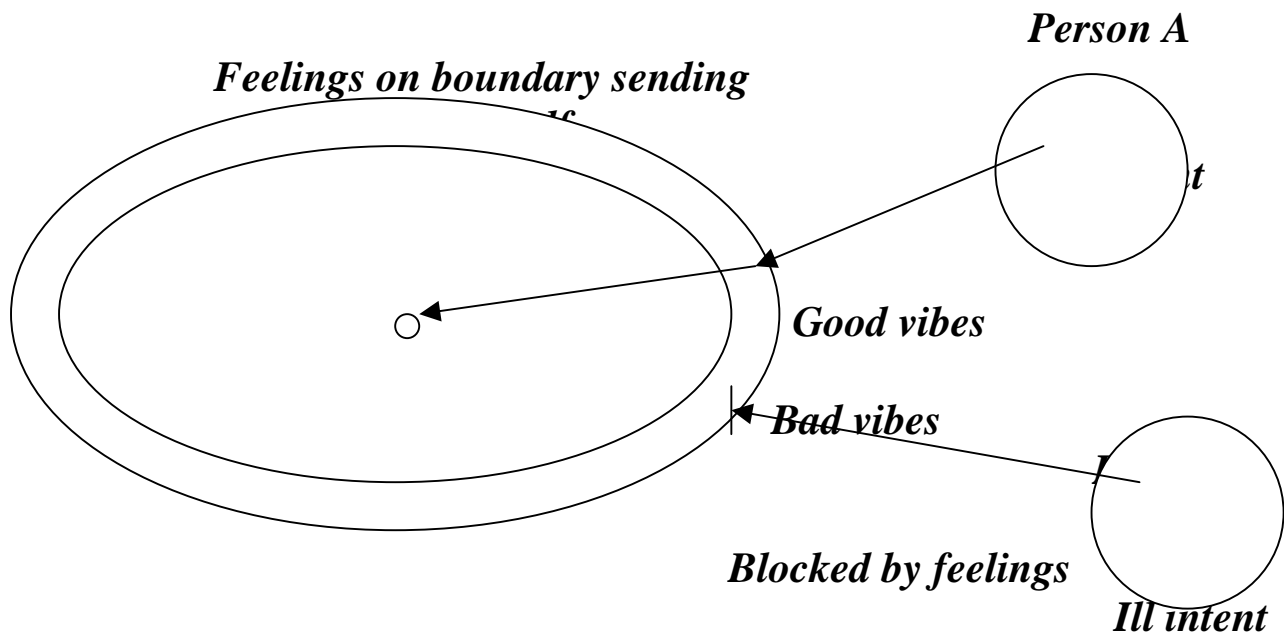
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Exercise 30

- In a state of relaxed centredness, think of something that you are confronted with at the moment that you don’t want to do. What happens to your body?
- Let that go and take a few deep breaths.
- Now think of something that you really would like to do. What happens to your body this time?
- Practice this a few times until you are familiar with your own feeling reactions to situations so that you can begin to use this as your guide in the future. It’s a little different for everybody.

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Diagram 14: *Boundary Riders.*



In a way, our feelings are like *boundary riders* on the edge of our aura. The messages they send to the Self reveal to us what our needs are at each moment, within the environment we find ourselves. They travel around the periphery of our awareness contacting the outside world and sending back information relating to our needs in this situation. They also take into account pre-existing unmet needs. For instance, if you are already tired and are being offered a brand new job for twice the pay but with twice the work, your existing tiredness will be a factor that the boundary riders of your feelings will draw your attention to. You will have to ignore them and suppress them to accept that job against their advice. If you find yourself attracted to someone with the same tendencies as your father that caused you trauma as a child, your feelings will tell you – unless you bury them deep inside in order to have this person provide the father role for you, in which case you will find yourself being re-traumatized in exactly the way you were as a child.

The truth is that most of us at the beginning of our journey of self-discovery are so unaware of our feelings that we don't know what to look for. When I ask clients what they feel, they immediately go into a dialogue about what's happened to them and what they think about that. "Oh I'm fine really. The job's

good but the children are a difficulty when I get home. They won't eat their tea." And so on. So how do we know what feelings really are? We feel them in our body. Try it. You can think many thoughts but while you are doing so you are not in touch with your body unless those thoughts are directed *towards* the feeling in the body. Feelings contain a reciprocal *bodily reaction*. But as most people have been actively trained to *not* feel, initially we just think. And we have been taught that feelings and thoughts are the same thing. In fact many psychological schools state outright that feelings are byproducts of thinking. Looking at it physiologically, we know that emotions create chemical reactions. As we believe in the supremacy our thoughts, it has been easy to tie these reactions to the thinking process. At least, it appears that way, without the understanding of the way suppression of needs works to create repeating patterns. Our emotions yell louder and louder to get the needs met. Once the need is met, the chemical process reverses. Changing the thought (without meeting the need) does not. So, thoughts and feelings are very different, with very different functions, and it's easy to see once you begin to look more deeply at them.

Once this is pointed out to people, and they have been directed towards the sensations in their bodies, they move out of pure thinking into an in between state of *thinking they feel*. They have indeed begun to at least think about what their emotions might be doing. It's still not feeling, but it's a step towards it by beginning the process of focusing the mind away from what others want, onto our own personal set of messages from inside. After a while of practicing and refocusing, once we have retrained ourselves somewhat, we have the *experience of feelings in our body*. Then you're on your way. The experience of really feeling is a form of ecstasy. Life comes alive, drug-free. Instead of being black and white it's now living colour. But you have to stay committed to non-suppression of your feelings and emotions under all circumstances. That doesn't mean we dump them onto others. It's not an excuse for acting out. Your feelings are yours and don't have anything to do with

other people. Feelings and emotions are a feedback mechanism. They are not to be used for power-over. While expression of feelings is important, it's also important to take responsibility for what and how you say things. Others are not responsible for how you feel. The actions you take when you listen to your feelings will inevitably impact on others and as such will define your boundaries, and provide others with the opportunity for growth if they choose. You are not responsible for what emotions other people have around your actions either. That will depend on what issues are brought up in them. You may choose to leave someone. That does not automatically mean they will be hurt by that, although some part of us likes to believe they are so dependent on us that they would be hurt. That's one of our subpersonalities. They could in fact feel relieved if they had also been feeling the need for the relationship to end, but not been strong enough to make the move. They could be sad, angry, or elated. That's up to them. You will care for and about them, but you cannot, must not, be responsible for their reactions. It is not your right. It denies them life lessons. This is why so many people who spend time assuming what others' needs are get it wrong. It's what I call getting inside someone else's skin (boundaries). I have often had to tell people to get back in their own skin, and allow me the privilege of making my own decisions and taking care of my own life. You will need to do that to. But you will need to take responsibility for staying in your own skin as well.

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Expressed emotions are healing you. Suppressed ones are killing you.

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So let's recap. We are **born feeling first** and then our thinking gets put before our feelings. Those who train us to **think** then encourage us to **shut down** our feelings. Now we have to go the **opposite way** to rejuvenate the emotions so that the mind and emotions can eventually co-operate with the body. To do this we

must learn to feel, then act, then think about it afterwards so you can communicate to others, instead of think and therefore don't act.

The place of the mind is for the study and communication of ideas out in the world: to store information for later discussion. But it does not tell us about our needs. In the process of suppression of the emotions, a layering effect occurs. We start in the joy of our feelings of aliveness as a baby. As we suppress who we are (our Self) to ameliorate others, we feel the grief of that loss. As the suppression continues, we feel fearful for ourselves at the loss of that Self. After that, we become angry with those who have taken it from us, and self-recrimination also results as we direct some of that anger at our selves. We are now becoming victims as the loss of our emotions has disempowered us. At this point the feelings are too strong and uncomfortable to continue to experience, so we move up into the head, where we are encouraged to go, to avoid the powerlessness of feeling things. As children we could do nothing about any of it. We were truly powerless by nature of our developmental stage. Frustration is the beginning of feelings turning into thoughts. It is suppressed anger. As our anger becomes even more suppressed we experience irritation. The more we journey away from the heart and its anger, into the head and its reasoning, our irritation transmutes into confusion which is no longer a feeling but actually a conflict between two thoughts. "Should I do this or should I do that?" After that we rationalise away our confusion and do what is expected of us, believing that it is for our own good (which we are constantly being told). That's it. No more feelings. Life is rationalised away and we become a creature of the system. We think therefore we are. Until the crisis hits!

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Layers of Shut Down Emotions

Head

Rational
Confusion
Irritation
Frustration

Heart
Anger
Fear
Sadness
Joy

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Each emotion has a specific message for us that relates to a psychological need in the same way that sensations relate to physical needs. When we suppress those psychological needs rather than meeting them, they eventually turn physical in the form of illness. Much work has been done around the correlation between suppressed emotions and various diseases but still it is not widely accepted, except in New Age circles. Our society is still so caught up in the medical model of disease, which relates only to the physical. Things are changing but it a slow process and there is still a long way to go. Proponents of the esoteric aspect of disease such as Louise Hay have long seen correlations between anger, inflammatory diseases and cancer. Sadness has been symbolically associated with the heart and its diseases. It is clear to me that nervous disorders are often fear-related. So little is known about the function of our emotions from a scientific point of view that they are almost never taken into consideration when cures are developed. There is of course, less money in emotions than in selling drugs to control symptoms. But our emotions never go away. The fact that we ignore them largely does not stop them from constantly sending their messages to us, trying to alert us to the needs we have on the subtle levels. If we do not listen to them and act on the information they are trying to send us, they too become polarised. They *either* explode *or* implode. One is openly destructive to us, and the other is openly destructive to others. I

say *openly* because ultimately both are destructive to all we connect with. One thing is for sure: they never disappear.

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Emotion	Message	Cause	Remedy
Anger (Mad)	Need must be met	Boundary violation from self or other	Take responsibility for meeting <i>your</i> needs.
Grief (Sad)	Let go of the past	Someone or something is leaving your life and you must adjust to that absence.	Allow sadness to flow until finished and ready to move on.
Joy (Glad)	You are going in the appropriate direction.	Whatever choices you have made are appropriate and resulting in harmony.	Keep doing it until it changes and you get a different emotional message.
Fear (Afraid)	About to grow	You are in touch with the unknown, and have an opportunity to grow and learn	You must do the thing that you fear and be prepared to accept and learn from the consequences.

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Exercise 30

- Close your eyes and relax a little.
- Think about your feet.
- Shift your consciousness to your head.
- Shift your focus to your hands.
- Now to your heart.

- While you were shifting to other parts, what happened to your feet?
- While you were unaware of what they were doing because you were not present with them, they did not go away – neither do your feelings and emotions.

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*Your responsibility is to use your emotions in such a way that they are not turned in on yourself and damaging to your body. It is also your responsibility to observe appropriate boundaries and not beat up on others with your emotions. Playing the blame game makes matters worse. You are further disempowered by it. It is, however, your **choice!** And you must take the consequences that follow.*

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An example of what I have written in the box above is my responsibility to you, the reader. I have written this book with good intent. I have no control over what it brings up in you or what you choose to do with that. My intention is to provide the benefit of the years that I have worked on myself and with others, in the hope that you will find value for yourselves in the journey. I do this to the best of my ability. Hopefully this will give you some tools to work with in the unique circumstances of your own life. This ultimately may lead you to being able to take greater responsibility for meeting your own needs and having your life benefit accordingly. However, I *cannot be responsible* for the decisions you make, as I am not in your life. I am not you. Therefore I do not know what is best for you under your particular circumstances. What readers do with what I write is up to them. I care, but it is not my responsibility to meet your needs. Only you can do that, and your own unique feelings can show you how.