



"When we give ourselves unconditional love, we discover the conditions under which we were unloved."

Kristen Neff, PhD

PROCESS BACKDRAFT EMOTIONS

BE WILLING TO ACCEPT "GROWING PAINS" OF TRANSFORMATION (BACKDRAFT EMOTIONS)

WHAT ARE BACKDRAFT EMOTIONS?

Refers to the pain – very old repressed pain – that arises when you give yourself kindness and compassion. It can be confusing and unsettling at first, expecting to feel better, only to feel suffering. Backdraft is a key part of growing and is a sign that healing has begun. **Backdraft is proof that you are lifting resistance and processing painful emotions.**



Backdraft is a firefighter term to describe when a fire has used all oxygen, but a window or door is opened, flames rush out as oxygen rushes in. Since most of us have been taught, from a very young age, to abandon our emotional-self by suppressing, avoiding, attempting to numb or escape, or even shame our emotions - we have thereby "suffocated" and "trapped" our emotions within. Thus, it is inevitable to experience old pain like backdraft flames, as you open the door of your heart to the fresh air of acceptance, understanding, reflection, and self-compassion.

SUFFERING = PAIN X RESISTANCE *Pain is inevitable in life. Suffering is optional.*

WHAT DOES BACKDRAFT LOOK LIKE? It can show up as emotional, mental or physical uneasiness in many forms...

Emotionally: shame, grief, fear, sadness, etc. **Mentally:** "I am alone," "I am a failure," "I'm unworthy," etc.

Physically: body memories, aches, pains **Behaviorally:** triggered reactions stemming from old "stuff," regrets, reactivity, maladaptive patterns of behavior, etc.

MORE EXAMPLES OF BACKDRAFT



TEARS, ANGER, AND MORE

Tears can appear out of nowhere and feel warmer and more deeply cleansing than usual. Anger may get triggered, and you could feel angry at yourself for neglecting your feelings for so long (provide compassion for anger as you have neglected your emotions for a long time, unintentional or not).



VULNERABILITY AND RETREATING

Self-reflection and self-compassion may feel vulnerable and too open at first, and thus you may feel an overwhelming need to clam-up and retreat into more solitude as you process old emotions. Be in tune with yourself, take breaks from backdraft emotions as needed, follow-up with yourself later in the day to embrace your emotions with self-compassion to process. You may even want to schedule an hour a day to allow for backdraft emotions - a time to cry, feel, reflect, journal, meditate, practice grounding exercises, etc. Utilize **CALM NOW** practices as you wish: <https://www.CreatingYourBalance.com/Clients>

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT BACKDRAFT EMOTIONS? Consider using any or all of the following:

- 1 First, label the experience for what it is: "Ah, this is backdraft emotion" in a kind, compassion tone
- 2 Validate that backdraft emotions are human and part of the healing process
- 3 Utilize CALM NOW practices and meditations as you wish: <https://www.CreatingYourBalance.com/Clients>

Specific practices to use during emotional overwhelm, emotional flashback and backdraft emotions, include:

Soothing Difficult Emotions Meditation by Dr. Kristin Neff

Process Painful Emotions Journal Practice

13 Steps for Emotional Flashback by Pete Walker

Breathing Exercises

Grounding Exercises

Inner Bonding and Inner Connecting Journal Practices

PRACTICING DAILY WORK AND CALMING EXERCISES IS IMPORTANT

Rather than waiting until you are feeling backdraft emotions, it is ideal to do DAILY WORK and CALM NOW practices (you may want to choose a CALM NOW practice to use daily) in order to build your ability to soothe difficult emotions and allow for a sense of calm and self-trust, in order to process strong emotions, including backdraft emotions.



BUILD TRUST IN YOURSELF TO PROCESS THROUGH PAINFUL EMOTIONS

You may realize you do not trust yourself to process emotions because this is like navigating new waters. Yourself needs you more than anyone. And no one can compassionately process your emotions for you.



GAIN ABILITY GUIDE YOURSELF THROUGH LOOPING THOUGHTS

If you end up in looping thoughts or over-analyzing in order to escape your feelings, with practice, you will be able to guide yourself back into acceptance and self-compassion. Experience through your pain. Embrace, rather than abandon your emotional-self.



ESTABLISH A MORE GROUNDED SENSE OF CALM OVERALL

Since building emotional health skills, mindfulness skills, meditation and other calming practices balance your nervous system, increase oxytocin levels, and more, they can help carry you more calmly through your day. Having more moments of calm, rather than stress, allows for deeper healing as well.



DAILY MEDITATION BUILDS NEUROPLASTICITY

Strengthen your ability to allow for calm. "Scientific studies show that when we meditate we are in effect changing the shape of our brain by flexing the muscle of attention... the same way we go to the gym and do repetitions to increase our muscle, we practice meditation daily to focus the mind and change its neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the ability of the brain to change its structure." <https://mindfulnesspresence.net/mindfulness-meditation-neuroplasticity/>

IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTE

If at any point in life, you feel overwhelmed and need further help, make use of your personal support system to get what you need. If you feel you are in crisis, dial 911 or the contact the Crisis Response: <https://www.crisisnetwork.org/>