

# The Ways to Harmony—Inside and Out

By  
Jay Uhler

Harmony can seem like an impossible dream with all the chaos around us and the fears that can snatch harmony away from us each moment of the day. Since perfection is unattainable as humans, let us consider some humane ways to deal with our human condition.

We will consider three ways to develop internal harmony and then look at how we bring harmony into our external world. Just a quick example: People have told me and I have experienced it myself. **When we let go of internal struggles and create calm in our lives, we tend to clean up any clutter that is in our house, office, and our outer world.**

**To deal with our emotions is one way to bring internal harmony. Either we control our emotions or they control us.** When our emotions run away with us we create chaos around us in the form of broken relationships, broken lives, broken objects. When we direct our emotions in a constructive manner, we build friendships, we build greater intimacy in our closest relationships and we honor the objects around us. **By kindness and respect for people and our environment, we create a better life for all.**

**My belief is that when we manage our fears, our pain, our anger, our affection and our helplessness in a positive way, we have much more joy and pleasure in our lives.**

**The first step** to handling an emotion is to **recognize** it. That may seem ridiculous, but it is amazing how often an emotion comes into a person's awareness, when it is not the core emotion that is controlling them.

For instance, a person may be experiencing anger and think that is the emotion that is driving them. When they look deeper, they discover that it is fear, pain or helplessness.

Anger can be a way to keep people on the defensive if they are afraid that they are vulnerable and that, if they express their pain, those around them will say or do something that adds to their pain.

Helplessness is usually the underlying emotion when someone has a temper tantrum. Frustration is a combination of anger and helplessness.

The problem is that when you express what looks like anger, people either attack or they go away. If under the anger is fear, pain or helplessness and you are attacked or abandoned, that adds to the fear, pain or sense of helplessness.

---

**Jay Uhler** is an Organizational and Clinical Psychologist, a United Methodist Minister, professional speaker, seminar leader and consultant. He assists corporate executives in the U.S. and Europe to resolve conflicts in their organizations. He facilitates resolution of multi-party, multi-racial and multi-gender conflicts. He provides individual, marital, family and sex therapies in North Andover and Braintree, MA. Jay is a cabaret singer and enjoys presenting programs of humor and song. He is the author of the book and unabridged CD, *How to Make Friends With Your Feelings*.<sup>1</sup> Jay can be reached at 978-685-8550

If you express the fear, pain or helplessness in the presence of a caring person, they will respond to comfort you. They will not need to attack or withdraw in order to be safe.

People can also be afraid to express affection or kindness because they fear that their affection will be used against them or if they are kind they will be taken advantage of. Well there is that possibility, however, if we let our fear control us so that we always keep people at a distance, we never find out how kind and affectionate the people in our world can be. The word in the song are “Fools rush in where wise men fear to tread,” then continues, “but wise men never fall in love, so how are they to know?”

It would be a better world if more “fools” existed in the world expressing a positive attitude, kindness, respect and affection to the people they encounter.

**The second step** to having harmony inside and out is to **accept** our feelings. Once we are able to recognize each emotion, we then have a choice to reject it or accept it. When we reject our emotion because we have been taught that it is bad, we are rejecting ourselves and self-rejection is the greatest pain I know.

Another word for self-rejection, self-judgment or directing anger toward ourselves is guilt. Guilt lies telling us that if we have made a mistake or done something wrong, then we are bad. There is no correlation between how good or bad a person is and the amount of guilt they carry. Often, the people who try their hardest to do their best have the most guilt and others who have few scruples and lack integrity don't experience guilt.

Once we have come to recognize the true feeling and give ourselves permission to have it, **the third step** is to **decide what to do with the feeling**. This may mean to let it be there. It may mean to take some form of action. One action is to express the emotion to a mate, a friend, a business associate.

A problem is that we seldom learn in our families, in school or at work the skill to express our emotions in caring ways. We often learn how to express them in offense ways.

**The truth is that the more we can recognize, accept and skillfully express our emotions, the more confidence we have and the more harmony we experience inside.**

**The second truth** is that the more we recognize, accept and skillfully express our selves, the safer other people feel around us. The more authentic we are, the more other people trust us. The more harmony we have inside, the more calm we are and the more harmonious it is for other people to be with us.

I was waiting to be a guest on a TV program. The camera person, whom I had never met, surprised me by saying, “You bring a sense of calm.” As you can imagine, there can be a lot of anxiety all around you on the part of people responsible for the production of the show. When you are confident and know your feelings and how to manage them, it influences your surroundings.

**The third truth** is that **you are safer** when you can recognize, accept and handle your feelings positively. By recognizing your own feeling, you can recognize them in others. **The more clarity you have about yourself, the more accurately you can “read” other people.** The more accurately you assess them, the less likely you are to be used, taken advantage of or hurt by their actions.

For example: it is easier to detect someone who is a “con,” because you are self-aware and therefore can sense that they are not authentic.

By recognizing, accepting and managing your own feelings, you are also safer because you can recognize the true feelings in another person when they do not recognize their true feeling. You can manage what they can't.

For example, if a person is expressing anger, you can recognize that it is fear, pain or helplessness and respond to that once they have blown out their anger or withdrawn into silence because they don't know how to express what they are feeling.

If they appear angry, you don't need to withdraw or attack.

Many years ago a woman friend and I went to morning worship at a church. Something happened there that upset her and she began to attack me as I was driving. She kept attacking me for quite a while. As she was criticizing me, I listened attentively.

I was saying to me self, “That's not me. I don't know where she got that, but it's not me.” The point is that I did not attack her or withdraw. Because I was not getting caught in the drama of her upset, I was not fueling the fire of her anger. She had to generate it all herself and she couldn't keep it going and the fire burned itself out.

She began to cry and released the remainder of her feelings, then we could talk about the situation that had upset her, which wasn't about me.

If it were something I had done, we could clarify the situation and if I had made a mistake by doing something that upset her, I could apologize and it would be heard. When she was caught up in her emotions without clarity, either an explanation or an apology would never have been heard. As it turned out, the result was positive.

#### **How can we recognize our true emotion?**

One way is to **talk to a trusted friend** to help sort it out. Sometime other people can recognize our feelings before we do. There are also **professionals** to help us. Make sure that you select a friend or professional who is comfortable with their own feelings. If they are not, they will deflect your emotions by humor, by changing the subject or by encouraging you to intellectualize, rather than feel you emotions. That will only make you feel more isolated and frustrated.

You can **use your intellect** to help recognize your emotions and it can be useful to discuss ways to manage them, yet the main point is that you must experience an emotion. A woman named Karol Truman wrote a book entitled, “Feelings Buried Alive Never Die.”<sup>2</sup>

Another way to recognize your emotions is to **check your body** because the location of the emotion in your body can give you clues as to what you are truly feeling. Certain emotions locate in specific places in your body.

Another way do discover your emotions if by **meditation**. By quieting your mind, you open the space to feel. This is not easy, because thoughts keep creeping in to distract from feeling, but with effort to focus, meditation can reveal emotions.

**To address your emotions can bring a sense of confidence that comes from self-control.** When you constructively deal with your feelings, you can deal with life situations that you encounter. You can be secure in knowing that you can manage what is going on emotionally and therefore can focus on what is occurring outside of yourself.

When you are struggling with the emotions inside yourself and attempting to cope with what is going on outside of you, it can be overwhelming. When you are confident about managing the inside, you can more calmly deal with the outside world.

**To address your emotions can bring harmony to your life by recognizing the link between blocked emotions and physical illness.** Most illnesses have an emotion or combination of emotions linked to it. When you recognize, accept and skillfully express the emotion, often by releasing it and at other times acting on it, the illness goes away. The major benefit is that you do not have the stress, physical complications and pain of the illness. **Managing your emotions alleviates much physical pain and illness.**

**To address your emotions can bring harmony to your life by recognizing the link between emotions and addictions.** Each addiction has an emotion or emotions that are controlling your life. When you recognize, accept and skillfully manage the emotion, you will not need the addictive behavior as a way to attempt to cope with your present or past life situations. **Managing your emotions alleviates the need for the addiction.**

**Emotions play a part in having harmony in our living and working space.**

I am taking a class with a friend who I met at my church. Her name is Lisa Wessan. She is a Licensed Social Worker. The name of her course is “Declutter Your Heart, Home & Office.”<sup>3</sup> My home is neat and clean, except in the closets and some nooks and crannies, so I decided to take her class. Plus she is a great speaker, seminar leader and I knew it would be helpful and fun. It is.

In the class, **Lisa emphasizes the importance of dealing with emotions because so much of our clutter has emotions attached to it.** We hold onto things that are of no use to us and could benefit someone else if we sold them or gave them away. When we declutter, we need to deal with the feelings attached to the objects and also deal with the emotions of loss that can occur when we move the memory filled object out of our space.

She talks about “releasing” and about “letting go.” There are plenty of emotions involved in letting go. (See my articles about grieving and letting go.)

She also suggests that we have a “Declutter Buddy” who can sit with us while we declutter. One role of the “Declutter Buddy” is to keep us focused when we get distracted.

The other role of the “Declutter Buddy” is let us talk about our feelings and express emotions we have about the things we are sorting and the feelings about the things we decide to let go of.

**Lisa says, “Do you want clutter? Or, do you want FREEDOM?”** Great questions!

My question is: Do you want FREEDOM **and** do you want HARMONY?

**The final benefit that comes from recognizing, accepting and skillfully expressing our feelings is that we have harmonious relationships.** That does not mean relationships free from conflict, but it means that the internal and external conflicts are dealt with harmoniously. If we want harmony in our lives, we will learn the skills of expressing ourselves in caring ways and we will approach ourselves and others with an attitude of respect. This can bring harmony to our families and to the world.

The following thoughts are written by an unknown author. That man or woman used the word, “peace.” It begins, “Peace in my heart.” I am replacing the word peace with the word Harmony.

**Harmony in my heart  
brings harmony to the family,  
Harmony in the family brings harmony  
to the community,  
Harmony in the community brings  
harmony to the Nation,  
Harmony in the Nation brings harmony  
to the World...  
Let there be harmony on Earth,  
and let it begin with ME!**

<sup>1</sup>For additional information on managing your emotions, go to:

Uhler, J. 1993. *How to Make Friends With Your Feelings*. Boston: Ambassador Press International. (Unbridged CD read by the author, 2005.)

<sup>2</sup>Truman, K. 1991. *Feelings Buried Alive Never Die....* Las Vegas, Nevada: Olympus Distributing

<sup>3</sup>Wessan, Lisa. “Declutter Your Heart, Home & Office.” Web site: [www.MirthMaven.com](http://www.MirthMaven.com)  
The website has a list of locations for her seminars and more contact information.

(Copyright © Jay Uhler, 2008)  
(May be copied as is when used to benefit someone)