

The Rubber Band Ball exercise

This tool is extremely helpful for those who prefer to process emotions externally through speaking or writing. It's one of the best tools I've found to address the complex feelings inherent in overwhelm, anxiety, emotional flooding, or shut down. It meets your emotional needs while still allowing the unconscious mind the space and time to process your Integration.



Emotions are energy in motion. The emotional energy rises in the body and builds until it reaches a peak and then passes through us. If emotions are allowed to be fully felt and expressed they run their natural course and you'll feel a sense of calm and resolution. Because we've been conditioned, from an early age, to control, suppress, ignore, or escape our feelings, they don't often have an opportunity to express themselves fully. This exercise is designed to give those unexpressed feelings the space they need to run their course and, because emotions can be quite intense, this process also provides structure and safety for you to revisit these emotions without feeling overtaken by them.

When you're feeling a combination of different emotions, it is a lot like a rubber band ball made up of different colored rubber bands representing different emotions. These different emotions get tangled up together and leave you feeling flooded, anxious, overwhelmed, or shut down. The solution to this overwhelm is to create order out of the chaos by separating these feelings into piles of like-colored rubber bands and feel each of the feelings one at a time, just as they were meant to be felt. It's remarkable how quickly we can feel relief when we attend to our emotions in this way.

Feelings are complex which is why we have many names for them. In order to simplify the process we'll separate them into four categories for what we might label as uncomfortable emotions; anger, sadness, fear, and remorse, and then four categories for what we might label as pleasant emotions; grateful, happy, secure, and proud.

If you've felt your feelings fully in this exercise, your prefrontal cortex will re-engage and you'll feel calmer and more resolved. You'll also find yourself naturally shifting out of overwhelm and into solution mode. This exercise will also help you identify where your power lies in the situation and your best leverage point to move forward.

You can process out loud to yourself, call a friend and ask them to listen, type on your computer, or write in a journal. Whatever feels most natural to you is going to be most effective. Please reach out for help if you have questions.