

Ep #177: The Habit of Suppressing, Dismissing, and Fixing your Emotions: What to Do Instead



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With Your Host

Kristi Angevine

[Habits On Purpose](#) with Kristi Angevine

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Have you ever felt like your emotions were just too much? Like no matter how much self awareness you've gained, there are still moments where it's just really hard. Today's episode is for the parts of you that want to be more emotionally aware but still struggle with what that actually feels like and what that actually looks like in real life. We're talking about the messy middle, the ordinary, everyday emotional space between knowing something intellectually and being able to live it out with grace and consistency when it comes to understanding your emotions. So let's dive in.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, I'm your host, Physician, Master Certified Life Coach, and IFS Practitioner, Kristi Angevine. Let's get started.

Hello everyone. This is episode 177 and I want to start off with just a little mid summer check in. If you're listening to this in real time, it is June of 2025. If you're listening to this and it's, you know, 2026 or it's winter, well hello from June of 2025. So you can use this as your midweek, mid month, mid year check in, whatever you'd like. But I'm curious, how is the year going for you? How are you? What's going well? What's not going so well? What would you like to handle differently? I love doing little check ins and I don't just mean, you know, at the end of the year a review or a financial audit or a end of the month or end of the quarter review. I mean check ins to see how am I, how are the people in my life, how are things going. And I like to do these not only over the course of a week or a month or a year, but I like to do them during the day.

So I will just post that to you as well because that's what I'm working on. A few other things I'm working on are. Well, there's two main things as of the release of this episode. The day that you listen to this, we are starting the Befriending Anger course. And at the end I'll tell you a little bit more about that. If you want to join us, you can start. And if you're listening to this and it's a little bit after June 23rd, 5th, then you can still join. We have everything recorded.

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All the resources will be available for you. So if anger is something you find a little tricky and complicated, you can, you know, reach out and let me know if it seems like a good match for you based on the timing. And the other Thing that's really exciting is preview week for Habits on Purpose is coming up and it's starting in about a week and a half or two. And if you're interested in that, you can listen to the end. I'll tell you how to connect with that as well.

Now, one of the central themes in the work that I do in my business and in my life is helping people learn and helping myself practice turning towards emotions instead of away from them. Because in reality, it doesn't always feel really intuitive and it doesn't feel like this calm, meditative moment to turn towards one's emotions. Sometimes turning towards your emotions feels like you are dragging yourself on sandpaper into a storm.

And you know, you might know the idea of, quote, sitting with your emotions or being with your emotions, but when feelings actually come up, that's a whole different story. You might freeze, you might avoid, you might get snippy, you might immediately go into fix it mode. You might resist your feelings, judge your feelings, dismiss your feelings, try to hide your feelings, shame yourself for your feelings. You might do anything other than actually just be present with your feelings. And this is not because there's something wrong with you. It's simply because like most of us, you've never learned what it means to be with an emotion in a supportive way. Nobody's taught you. It's not something that we learned in elementary school.

We are typically taught to suppress, distract, ignore and power through. And we oftentimes label emotions as dramatic or weak or irrational, especially for those of us who are trained in really high intensity fields where you are rewarded for pushing your feelings down and not listening to them. So even if you want to respond differently to your emotions, you just may not know how.

Now, side note here to put in a plug for one of my favorite models is this is where internal family systems gives us something really revolutionary. It's

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not just a feel your feelings approach, but IFS really encourages us to get to know the parts that have learned to shut our feelings down, that the parts of us that explode when emotions come out and the parts of us that really want to numb our emotions. And this may seem a little bit meta, but if you like parts language, you'll understand that there's a complexity there that really does make a lot of this make sense. So let's dive in. I'm going to talk about the habit of pushing away feelings that we don't like.

We all do it and we all do it to some degree or another. And sometimes we do it more in certain seasons of our life than others. I definitely did it more in the past than I do now, but I still reflexively try to fix and change all the painful emotions, the uncomfortable emotions, the difficulty I have in the aftermath of tricky interactions. So as I talk about this, I want you to bring to mind some emotions you have that you don't really love, maybe overwhelm or shame, rejection, dread, agitation, anger, powerlessness, sadness, disappointment, fear. Just bring one to mind.

And I want to pose some questions for you to ponder on what would be different if your emotions weren't something that you needed to fix, if they weren't something you needed to analyze in order to understand and therefore make go away. But what if your emotions were like little carrier pigeons that were bringing you critical messages, encoded almost secret information, kind of like spies might pass to one another? Consider if you saw your emotions as precious teachers, repositories of really important information. And so instead of feeling exhausted or depleted or broken when you feel them, you went, oh, this is an indicator of something really important going on.

For me, this big feeling, it's bringing me a message, this small, subtle whisper, it's letting me know I'm picking up on something that I need to pay attention to. What if every feeling was simply saying, hey, down here, it's me. I'm here to let you know something. Will you listen? Now, one of the things that I've learned from researching developmental stages in children and some of the parenting challenges that I've encountered is that many of us, even when we've had the most loving, amazing kind homes, really

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supportive schools, great families, most of us grew up absorbing this vague idea, or sometimes an explicitly stated idea that says emotions are problems, they are not to be trusted. They are better off being hidden or minimized or ignored or dealt with cognitively and fixed fast. You should move on. And frankly, you should sort of starve out your emotions. Maybe like you would starve a fire from oxygen.

Pretty much nobody I know grew up learning to see or relate to emotions as windows into our experience of the world, as signals that there's something important going on. Now, maybe if you, I don't know, grew up with a therapist as a parent, but the rest of us, we didn't. The most of us, we learned that most of our emotions, unless they're the positive ones, like peace and calm and happiness and confidence, we learn to hide and ignore, resist and minimize, or try to fix or think our way out of our emotions. Now, I don't know about you, but one of the things that I love, love love to do is I love to buy too many books. I buy more books before I've read the ones I've had. I borrow too many books from the library. I am routinely late in extending my library borrowing. And connected to this is I get so much joy out of getting a book on hold.

And when I have this book and I know that there's something in there that I want to learn about or that I get to read soon, and I'm honestly, I'm just really excited about it. Well, this is not how I feel about my emotions. But just consider what if, when I felt a big feeling, my reflexive response was similar or even in the same ballpark as I have with library books. So that alongside my big emotion was a sentiment of, there's something important here. I wonder what it is. Maybe I have a comment like, you know what? This feeling is familiar, or this is unfamiliar. Or curiosity like, huh, I wonder how come this is happening for me right now? Or maybe some validation with, you know what? This feels really intense. This feels really hard.

There must be something that's intense and hard going on for me right now. Can you imagine if that was your reflexive response? So imagine for a minute what if your response to all of your feelings was some combination of compassion, a matter of fact neutrality, curiosity, interest, intrigue, or

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maybe even a bit of reverence. Imagine if you felt sorrow or rage, and as soon as you could get your head out of that dust storm of the intense emotions and have a little bit of awareness, your thought was, wow, this is something really precious going on for me. Just ponder for a second what would be different for you. For me, it's the difference between panicking and stomping around and freaking out when I forget something or I've run out of time versus going dang, I need to figure this riddle out. Things have really not gone as planned, so let me see what I can do about it. And it reminds me of that saying out there that there's pain that we're all going to experience. That's inevitable.

If you care, you are going to have grief. If you love someone, you're going to have sorrow. But then, then there's suffering, which relates to the degree of resistance that we have in relation to our painful experiences. Now, I have three comments here as a small side note. First of all, when it comes to giving attention to emotions as an alternative to what we usually do, it might sound like I'm suggesting that you tend to every microscopic little issue or that you become engrossed and Maybe wallow and risk not being able to be functional because each emotion calls on you to pay attention to it and validate it and investigate it, et cetera, et cetera. This is definitely not the case. I'm suggesting that you counter the usual invalidation and dismissal and ignoring with simply noticing, and you counter the usual suppressing with naming. Now, this is important because the implied message when we invalidate or ignore is this thing.

This thing does not matter. This thing, it is not even real. And when this is the message that is infused in your actions towards your own emotions, this breeds a lack of trust in what you feel. Now, secondly, I'm not suggesting that you avoid things and use your emotions as an excuse to just lay around and do nothing. Sometimes when people hear about relating to your emotions differently, they'll have a bit of an all or none idea that says either I suppress my emotions and I move on so I can plow ahead and keep being a productive human being, or if I notice them, that means I'm going to wallow and go belly up and I'm just going to use them as

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excuses and I'm going to do absolutely nothing. It's one extreme or the other extreme. Now, I'm suggesting something in the middle that's not necessarily intuitive or easy, but is so much more effective. And thirdly, I'm also not suggesting that you necessarily believe 100% the narrative that is attached to the emotions that show up.

For example, if I feel anxiety and panic when I look at my to do list and I notice there's a sense of dread and instantly I start catastrophizing about not getting things done. If in that moment I remember, huh, you know what, that Christie lady on habits on purpose, she tells me that there might be something precious and sacred in this emotion. And that must mean that when I'm catastrophizing, I am actually seeing something that's going to happen. This is indicating a real catastrophe and I really need to believe it. That would be over identifying with an emotion and the narrative linked to it, as opposed to stepping back and going, wow, I have anxiety and panic and I'm catastrophizing. And I wonder how come this is here. So what I'm suggesting as a more functional approach is to take note of an emotion and then stay with that emotion long enough so that you can understand not just the first perspective and the first story that comes bubbling up from it, but understand what's behind it. So for catastrophizing, what's the fear that Drives the catastrophic thinking.

If the predicted disaster is actually realistic, well, then great, maybe you make a plan for it. Or if it's not, maybe you recognize that the catastrophizing is stemming from some panic. And maybe it's rooted in a worry that if bad things do happen, that you won't be able to handle it. And that would be a powerful lesson to learn behind the anxiety and fear and catastrophic thinking, not that the belief of the actual catastrophe predicted is real. So I hope that makes sense now. One of the ways I like to think of our emotions and how we can learn to read them and learn from them is similar to when we are learning how to understand, read, and speak a different language. With a foreign language that is something that is different. At first it may sound like gibberish.

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You can't follow, it's just a bunch of unfamiliar noises. You definitely don't know how to read it. You don't know the grammar rules, you don't know the etiquette, you don't know conversational things. You don't know any of it. It's so unfamiliar. And similarly, our emotions, we may not understand them. But similar to learning a different language, where we start small, we pay attention to the basics. When we are not judging and pushing our emotions away, we start to be able to pick out the meaning in the emotions, just like we pick out the meaning and the sounds of a language.

So we start learning, oh, there's meaning that I can translate from this felt experience that doesn't need to be pushed away, but it needs to be welcomed in so I can learn from it. And when you do it over time, you cultivate a habit of relating to yourself very differently. It's relating to yourself with the same type of matter of fact. Gosh, I get to learn this new thing with curiosity and calm or passionate interest that you can have with learning a new topic. I also love using the analogy of opening up a book of music. And if you read music, you'll understand. Like when you, before you could read music, you looked at it and you probably didn't know what you're looking at. And now that you know how to read music, you have a totally different experience before you know about it.

When you open up a book of songs and book of musical notes, you might say, gosh, this is written all wrong. I have no idea what all this stuff is. There's a bunch of circles and lines and curves and I just, I need to change it so that instead of these, like, things that are on these lines it says the music gets louder here and then it gets fast right here. And so you write all over it. You sort of turn the notes and the symbols into words. But then let's just say you do know how to read music. You open up that book and you go to that song and it's actually going to be harder to read the notes because all the ink that's obscuring them, when you first saw it and tried to translate it into something because you didn't understand it. So instead of trying to fix something you don't understand, when you approach your feelings in this different way, it's like, oh, this is a different language.

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And one day I will understand it, just like I can read music now. My emotions, one day I'm going to understand them. And in this way of relating to the world, it enriches your experience and does not detract from it. So again, what if emotions are messengers and they have vital information for you? And what if you could meet them with this sort of validating curiosity, kindness, maybe even reverence, and just welcome them? The benefit of doing this is that you open the door to a richer understanding of yourself. And it's one that calls on you to feel things differently and see emotions as beneficial, not weak. So for now, I want you to think about a couple ordinary everyday experiences that you have in your day or in your week that you really don't like. If you could press that magic button and just make this experience go away, you would do it in a heartbeat. I have them too.

So I want you to think about a couple really common emotions that you don't enjoy. Whether it's frustration or overwhelm, dread, self loathing, anxiety, insecurity. And let's take this different approach and see what might actually be different. So I'm going to take the emotion of anxiety and the feeling of insecurity and I'm just going to give you a real life example and then talk you through what would be different if I approached it the way I'm suggesting you approach it. So anxiety and insecurity, they come up for me very often, particularly around social events with people I don't know, or at my kids pickup and drop off. And honestly, when I think about it, it's usually pick up more than drop off because in those situations I'm waiting around sometimes I might not be feeling super social. And I will oftentimes have a part of me that starts looking around feeling like everybody else has friends, everybody else feels like they belong. I will see all the Bad parking jobs and illegal parking jobs and bad drivers.

And what I consider is like, you know, not very nice human etiquette with crossing the street and interacting and. And then I'll see people who are looking happy. And sometimes if I've just got so much melancholy, I will feel like I can't relate and I will have this sense of anxiety and self consciousness and I feel like I don't belong. I feel like I've gone back to

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middle school. I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do. I really don't want to talk to anybody. I want my kid to hurry up so I can leave.

And I don't like it. So in general, when I step back and reflect, my go to habit is to try to look at the bright side. You know what? Like, it's beautiful weather. So what I don't feel like I belong. You know what? This is just residue from middle school and insecurity and just, of course it's showing up. I'm tired. But you know what? It's really beautiful. I should be grateful.

Or my other go to is to distract myself and avoid feeling that way and kind of just involute. And when I do this, it's kind of like having a bit of a death grip on my psyche. And I will basically just try to insulate myself from whatever I'm feeling, even though it's not going away. And then I feel so much relief when my kid shows up and we can just scurry out of there. But what has shifted massively for me is when I approach these feelings with a sense of compassion, it sounds like this, Whoa. It is hard to feel insecure and self conscious. This does not feel good. This is really tricky right now.

And when I do that, that little bit of validation helps me sort of drop my resistance and just acknowledge that it's just not easy for me today. And when I approach this emotion with a sense of curiosity, it sounds like, wow, I wonder what's sort of encoded in this emotion for me. If there's a message, what is it? If this is a secret undercover operative who's trying to pass on an encoded message to me, what is it? And I almost think about, you know, if I was going to be reading the braille of my emotion, what would it be? And when I'm asking questions like this, like, what's going on? What could I learn? I become much more receptive. I'm not fighting off the feeling. I'm not completely fused with it. And when I Do that. I usually notice that the feeling itself isn't so bad because now it's not just 100% the feeling of insecurity and self consciousness there, which doesn't feel great, but it's not horrible. But alongside of it, what makes it easier is there's a sense that hey, this is real, this matters, and I'm curious why it's here.

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And then when I can go on and say, you know what, what could this be about? Then I notice that sometimes, sometimes it's just about. It's about the past and it's playing out and reenacting in the moment. And there's really nothing going on in this moment for me. It's just there's other stuff kind of surfacing in my psyche. Other times it's an indicator that a part of me really wants to belong. And that part is really big right there. And that part shows up when I'm tired or when I have interpersonal stressors or I get behind or other things are happening in my life. And it will just happen to play itself out at pickup.

It will happen to play itself out in social situations. Other times I'll notice the insecurity is really big. But right underneath that insecurity is some sort of anger or sadness. And school pickup is just a very convenient time for me to get irritated and then cover up my irritation or my anger with this very common, almost reflexive feeling of insecurity. So just notice that with something as simple as going to a social event or my kiddo's pickup, I can have an emotion. And I don't really know exactly what's causing it until I get curious and I get open. So pick an emotion or an experience that you don't like and let me walk you through how you can relate to it differently and how you can learn from it. So first, whatever the emotion is, when does it commonly happen for you? When did it last happen? Bring that to mind now.

You can do this now. Especially if you can invoke this emotion and feel it or the next time it spontaneously emerges. I want you to try this. Notice that emotion, name it, acknowledge that it's present. It sounds like I feel something. This feels like dread, this feels like anger, this feels like blank, blank, blank. Then remind yourself this emotion is present for a good reason. And then see if you can get a bit curious.

Any question that comes to your mind from pure curiosity is fine, but here's some examples. How come this is here? What's it alerting me to? What's the story that goes along with this feeling, is there a need? Is there a concern? Is there a memory? Is this painful? Is there an impulse that comes with this? Do I have an urge to run or yell or shut down? If this

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feeling could come to the proverbial podium and speak freely at the mic, what would it tell me then? In that moment, I want you to literally be thinking these things to yourself. If something feels hard, just validate it and say, this feels hard because something is hard for me right now. And when you say right now, I feel blank. And it's here for a good reason. So let's just learn something. And when you go through this, you will bring in curiosity or compassion or space or perspective. And you might even bring in some humor or playfulness.

And that makes this original feeling less awful, because right alongside the feeling is another emotion, a caring presence that's happening from the inside of you. And a question I love to ask myself when I have a big feeling that I really don't like this present is is this about something going on here and now, or is this some sort of relic? Is it residue from a previous experience that's cropping up now just because it's opportunistic to show up? Or is it about the now? Because sometimes emotions show up in circumstances similar to when they usually show up or similar to when they initially formed, even if they are only tangentially relevant. So, let's recap. Most of us learned that emotions are to be dismissed or fixed or hidden or suppressed. And the truth is, they are neutral experiences we have in our body that bring us important information. And when we know how to see and relate to them without trying to fix them or resist them, we can learn from them. And then they're not so difficult. Now, as we wrap up, I want to encourage you to think about your most annoying feelings in this different way.

You can literally start that this morning, this afternoon, this evening, this week, anytime now. If you're like most of us, one emotion that really feels complicated is the emotion of anger. And if you feel like anger is a struggle for you, I also want to encourage you to join me in the Befriending Anger course. Now, this course starts tonight. If you're already signed up for it, you don't have to listen any further. If you're listening live as of June 25, 2025, this course is here for you to address the common difficulties that many of us have with the emotion of anger. Now, with anger, the cost of

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habitually dismissing or trying to fix or invalidating it or suppressing it basically disconnects you from your emotions. And with anger it just builds up inside.

It either turns into resent or it explodes out at the most inopportune times. And usually it comes along with a huge bolus of exhaustion, guilt, shame and burnout. So one of the reasons I created the Befriending Anger course is we need a place to actually practice being with hard emotions. Not just read about and get theory or journal about being with heart emotions. But we need a place to build capacity in real time and in befriending anger, that's what you get to do. So this is a two week course where you're going to learn why anger arises, what it is and what it isn't, some of the cultural and systemic messages that make it hard to trust or anger. We're going to go over how to recognize the wisdom baked into your anger and then you're going to leave with concrete steps that will help you pause, check in and respond instead of being reactionary. And you'll learn how to speak for your anger, not from it.

Then how to do repairs, set boundaries, or just breathe again without being so braced for this emotion. So this course, it's not just theory, it's practical. We're going to do meditations and exercises and workshops, not just didactics. There's a private podcast. The live sessions are recorded so you can review them later. And if you want to learn more, go to habitsonpurpose.com/anger. We get rolling this evening June 25th, but the doors are still going to be open for enrollment for the next couple of days. If you want to join late and if now is not the moment for you, but you want a no pressure way to explore this type of work, come join me in the Habits on Purpose preview week. This is coming up July 7th through 13th.

It's free. It is a real look inside the Habits on Purpose for Physicians small group coaching experience and you can join me at habitsonpurpose.com/preview. I hope you have a beautiful rest of your week and thanks for joining me on the podcast.

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If this episode resonated and it's hard to be with the things you feel, I just want to remind you there's nothing wrong with you. It might not be intuitive to approach things differently, but you can learn something different. And you can practice being with your feelings and not have to do it alone. Because doing hard things is one thing, but doing hard things and feeling all alone is another. And you don't need to do that. So I'm going to encourage you to take one small step.

Either join Befriending Anger at habitsonpurpose.com/anger or sign up for Preview week, or do both. Preview Week is free. It goes July 7th through 13th of 2025 and is the perfect way to explore what it's like to get support in real time with tools that actually work. Thanks for being here. Talk to you later.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit HabitsOnPurpose.com. Tune in next week for another episode.