

Pathwork on
Distinction Between Feelings and Emotions

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 111 *Soul Substance – Coping with Demands* distinguishes between **feelings** (objective, related to real self and truth) and **emotions** (subjective, related to images, etc.). I find the distinction quite helpful – but we are warned not to get too hung up on labels. Rather, understand the essence of this concept.

44 QUESTION: I should like to hear your differentiation between feelings and emotions.

ANSWER: There is a difference between the two. One way of describing the difference would be that a feeling is deeper-rooted and more permanent. By this I do not wish to imply that feelings do not change. I do not mean that feelings are permanent in time, but they are so in quality, in consistency, in character, in being. A feeling may truly change faster than an emotion, and yet it is permanent in essence. This is very difficult to explain; in order to understand, you would have to perceive what I mean with your own inner faculties. An emotion is more superficial, even though it may be retained longer in the soul substance. An emotion comes from superficial conditions in the soul. Reactions and responses that are based on superimposed modes of coping with life, not originating from the real person, are emotions. The real self sends forth feelings. Hence, a feeling is something much more substantial. This cannot be evaluated by the apparent worth of the feeling or emotion. You may have an unpleasant feeling, yet it is based on truth, on reality. An emotion is based on a subjective inner condition.

45 Here is an example: Let us suppose you sense a detrimental, negative quality in someone else, or in yourself. If this quality is true, you are dealing with a feeling, even if highly unpleasant. In another case you may have the same perception; however, you do not sense the negative quality because, instead of merely observing what is, you become frightened, suspicious, guilty, and resentful; because some image or pseudo-solution is at work. You have, again, a correct perception, in this instance though of an emotion. When you do not push the feeling aside, you will come to see that you have a valid intuition, be it about yourself, or about someone else. When you do not push the emotion aside -- and you should never push aside an emotion, a feeling, or anything else, for that matter -- you will come to recognize factors within yourself that cause you to be subjective, distorted, and out of touch. In short, you will see all the blocks in you that prohibit feelings and intuition. A feeling always reacts to reality, however temporary this particular reality may be, as it exists now.

46 Let us now examine a favorable emotion. Gratified vanity, greed, or pride may produce a pleasant emotion. Or, to go a step further, a situation, even if truly perceived, but utilized subjectively, produces an emotion and not a feeling. Feelings are based on objectivity, emotions on subjectivity. In both instances, they may be pleasant or unpleasant. The language is often confused. One speaks of emotional maturity or emotional involvement, of expressing one's emotions

when feelings too, are meant. But the words do not matter that much as long as you understand the essence.

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QUESTION: Am I correct in understanding that anything can be either feeling or emotion? Fear, for instance?

ANSWER: Yes. That is right. But, my friends, my advice is: Do not try to label it. Labeling is always a dangerous procedure. With it you somehow close a door to further understanding. Try rather to deal with the feeling, or emotion, as it comes up. Try to understand it, to see whether or not it is based on objective factors, or on personal, colored, and subjective notions.