**Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?**  
**Chapter Four: Dealing with Emotions**

Although the fully human person does stay in touch with her emotions this does not mean that every emotion at every moment is reported. The fully human person realizes that emotions must be in balance with all of life, therefore, emotions are balanced and integrated with intellect and will. **We must never allow our emotions to control our decisions.**

We must realize that:

1. Almost all of the pains and pleasures of life are deeply involved with our emotions.
2. Most human conduct is the result of emotional forces (even though we would like to believe that we are acting as purely intellectual individuals).
3. Most interpersonal conflicts result from emotional stresses, and most interpersonal encounters are achieved through some kind of emotional communion.

So it becomes clear that how you handle your emotions will either “make or break” you for life.

The basic way that the human works is to treat emotions in the following pattern: awareness, reporting, and integration. Imagine you are in a discussion that is very important to you and for which you have strong feelings. As the conversation continues you feel yourself getting more stressed and irritated. So what should you do?

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<th>Healthy</th>
<th>Unhealthy</th>
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<td><strong>1. Be aware of your emotions.</strong> Take a few steps back and focus on what you are feeling. Do you have feelings of fear, embarrassment, superiority, etc.?</td>
<td><strong>1. Ignore your emotional reaction.</strong> Just deny that you are feeling anything. Keep telling yourself you are in control and anything that seems like emotions is nothing at all.</td>
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<td><strong>2. Admit your emotion.</strong> Turn your full awareness to the emotion so you can identify it. Gauge its strength and power.</td>
<td><strong>Keep denying your emotions.</strong> Tell everyone that you are not feeling anything. The more you deny them the less distracting they can be to you.</td>
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<td><strong>3. Investigate your emotion.</strong> How did this emotion get here? You may not be able to trace it in its entirety, yet you may come to realize something about yourself you previously did not know.</td>
<td><strong>3. Keep combing through your mind for rebuttal materials.</strong> Its win-lose so keep looking for the right words, bright lines, etc. Focus on how you can outsmart the other person and not on being honest with yourself.</td>
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<td><strong>4. Report your emotion.</strong> There is no judgment at this time, only the facts. “I am really getting worked up over this discussion. We better take a break.” There is no blame or accusations. Only a statement of your feelings.</td>
<td><strong>4. If you should blow your cool completely and become incoherent, blame in on the other person.</strong> For example, “It is impossible to discuss anything with you. You are just too damned arrogant!” The last sentence makes it even better because you show the other his/her personality defect!</td>
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<td><strong>5. Integrate your emotion.</strong> Now that you have analyzed your emotion, allow your mind to make a judgment about how you should act. For example, “What if we drop this for now and talk later when I am more focused and calm?”</td>
<td><strong>5. Since you haven’t even admitted to having an emotion you do not have to even try and learn from your experience.</strong> The emotions are repressed and will act up so be sure to take some time off and a couple of aspirins! Remember, the other person was unreasonable!</td>
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Reflections on “Estrangement” and “Encounter”

Even though we may be reluctant to tell another about our self, we do desire to have such a connection with the other. Yet if we are not understood by those we need and want to love us, then the communication becomes a nervous and uncomfortable activity. Often in this confusion there is a lack of genuine understanding. When one feels understood, one usually feels loved.

Estrangement comes from feeling that no one understands or loves me. In the end, I will be in some type of mental solitary confinement. You can count on this; those who are loved and understood will grow as persons, while those who are not understood or loved will certainly feel alone, estranged, and often trapped in a solitary confinement!

What is there to share? For many of us there are the secrets of our lives, the thoughts that are ours, the dreams that are ours, etc. No one has had these feelings and thoughts but me.

Of course, a strong self-esteem, and a strong sense of one’s self-image will enhance the possibility of sharing these truths with another. But it is a “catch-22” because one only gains a strong self-esteem by stepping out into the unknown, but one’s self-esteem and self-image are week at a young age, and untested. Consequently, the very thing needed to strengthen the self-image and esteem, is the very thing that one finds hard to do without a strong sense of self. It is a risk we must take to break out!!

There are many reasons why I do not share, but one is my fear that my confidant will become angry and/or apathetic. So I am reluctant to share my feelings, especially if I fear that they are going to be ridiculed or mocked.

The fact is that most of us have had both good and bad experiences in our sharing of our secrets and our lives. We have had those moments when we have been ignored, not heard, or misunderstood by another, and this resulted in our being hurt and slipping into emotional solitude. On the other hand, we have had those moments when we have been heard and understood. Those times are precious in our lives because we experienced communion with the other. It is liberating and makes us feel alive!!

These moments of communion and deep sharing are the moments that allow us to know ourselves. Only in such a sharing do we come to know the fullness of our own life. (This is a part of the central mystery of our faith as Christians – that is, we do not do this life alone, but in community! An individual Christian is an oxymoron!)

Caution: We need to remember that this process is never over. We are becoming a new person every day, and that means we need to continue to share who we are, and continue to risk revealing our self to others, those we can trust and who love us. Sometimes in this continual revelation of one to the other we find we cannot do it so easily anymore. What originally attracted us now seems to work against genuine communion. Remember, genuine communication is work, to expect anything less is not realistic, nor mature.

The Solution: We need to continue on a deeper and more costly level. We need to reveal more to one another. We need to take even greater risks with one another. We need to risk change, even change of who we think we are. Why? Because what we have to share now is an even greater part of whom each
of us is! We are opening ourselves up at deeper levels. That is why the risk is greater, but more rewarding in the end. We now know even greater depths of one another.