



“When we give ourselves unconditional love, we discover the conditions under which we were unloved.”

Kristen Neff, PhD

# PROCESS BACKDRAFT EMOTIONS

THE “GROWING PAINS” OF HEALING DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, COMPLEX TRAUMA AND MORE

## WHAT ARE BACKDRAFT EMOTIONS?

Refers to the pain – very old repressed pain – that arises when you give yourself kindness and compassion. It can be confusing and unsettling at first, expecting to feel better, only to feel suffering. Backdraft is a key part of growing and is a sign that healing has begun. **Backdraft is proof that you are lifting resistance and processing painful emotions.**



Backdraft is a firefighter term to describe when a fire has used all oxygen, but a window or door is opened, flames rush out as oxygen rushes in. Since most of us have been taught, from a very young age, to abandon our emotional-self by suppressing, avoiding, attempting to numb or escape, or even shame our emotions - we have thereby "suffocated" and "trapped" our emotions within. Thus, it is inevitable to experience old pain like backdraft flames, as you open the door of your heart to the fresh air of acceptance, understanding, reflection, and self-compassion.

Most of us were taught to **RESIST** or deny our emotions, so this is an opportunity to cleanse through old repressed emotions and regain clarity and self-connection. Traumatic experiences can also create repression as it was too much to process at the time. Thus, processing **PAIN**ful emotions allows you to gain freedom from being stuck in **SUFFERING**.

**SUFFERING = PAIN X RESISTANCE**     *Pain is inevitable in life. Suffering is optional.*

**WHAT DOES BACKDRAFT LOOK LIKE?** It can show up as emotional, mental or physical uneasiness in many forms...

**Emotionally:** shame, grief, fear, sadness, etc. **Mentally:** “I am alone,” “I am a failure,” “I’m unworthy,” etc.

**Physically:** body memories, aches, pains **Behaviorally:** triggered reactions stemming from old “stuff,” regrets, reactivity, maladaptive patterns of behavior, etc.

## MORE EXAMPLES OF BACKDRAFT



### TEARS, ANGER, AND MORE

Tears can appear out of nowhere and feel warmer and more deeply cleansing than usual. Anger may get triggered, and you could feel angry at yourself for neglecting your feelings for so long (provide compassion for anger as you have neglected your emotions for a long time, unintentional or not).



### VULNERABILITY AND RETREATING

Self-reflection and self-compassion may feel vulnerable and too open at first, and thus you may feel an overwhelming need to clam-up and retreat into more solitude as you process old emotions. This is okay. Be in tune with yourself, take breaks from backdraft emotions as needed, follow-up with yourself later in the day to embrace your emotions with self-compassion to process. You may even want to schedule an hour a day to allow for backdraft emotions - a time to cry, feel, reflect, journal, or simply do nothing.

## WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT BACKDRAFT EMOTIONS?

- 1 First, LABEL the experience for what it is: "Ah, this is backdraft emotion" in a kind, compassion tone
- 2 VALIDATE that backdraft emotions are human and part of the healing process
- 3 PROVIDE yourself with even more self-compassion and self-care during this sensitive emotional experience
- 4 If you want or need more guidance, UTILIZE practices designed for backdraft and difficult emotions, such as:

Available in CALM NOW section: <https://www.CreatingYourBalance.com/Clients>

Soothing Difficult Emotions Meditation by Dr. Kristin Neff

Process Painful Emotions Journal Practice

13 Steps for Emotional Flashback by Pete Walker

Breathing and Exercises

Inner Bonding and Inner Connecting Journal Practices

## PRACTICING DAILY WORK AND CALMING EXERCISES IS IMPORTANT FOR BACKDRAFT

Rather than waiting until you are feeling backdraft emotions, it is ideal to do DAILY WORK and CALM NOW practices (you may want to choose a CALM NOW practice to use daily) in order to build your ability to soothe difficult emotions and allow for a sense of calm and self-trust, in order to process strong emotions, including backdraft.



### BUILD TRUST IN YOURSELF TO PROCESS THROUGH PAINFUL EMOTIONS

You may realize you do not trust yourself to process emotions because this is like navigating new waters. Yourself needs you more than anyone and no one can process your emotions for you. Even though it is comforting to have others, cleansing emotions is self-care and you may process alone.



### GAIN ABILITY GUIDE YOURSELF THROUGH LOOPING THOUGHTS

If you end up in looping thoughts or over-analyzing in order to escape your feelings, with practice, you will be able to guide yourself back into acceptance and self-compassion. Realize looping and analyzing keep you in your head and are trying to find a solution - which works great for future planning. Yet keeps you stuck if you are ruminating in the past where you are rendered powerless. Regain your power and experience through your pain to cleanse, so may be free from SUFFERING.



### ESTABLISH A MORE GROUNDED SENSE OF CALM OVERALL

Building emotional health and mindful self-compassion skills improves your self-trust and connection. This allows for a calmer nervous system, increased oxytocin levels, and more. Having more moments of calm, rather than stress, naturally unfolds into more moments of calm and an overall more fulfilling life.



### DAILY MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION BUILDS NEUROPLASTICITY

Hundreds of studies show that **mindfulness and compassion practices are among the most powerful agents of brain change known to modern science**. The same way we go to the gym to increase our muscle, we can practice daily mindful self-compassion to build neuroplasticity in ways that allow for more calm and joy, rather than stress and reactivity. <https://self-compassion.org/the-research/>

## IMPORTANT NOTE

If at any point in life, you feel overwhelmed and need further help, plan to make use of your personal support system, especially if you prefer to process difficult feelings with someone next to you. If you feel you are in crisis at anytime, dial 911 or the contact Crisis Response: 602.222.9444 <https://www.crisisnetwork.org/>