

Ep. 46 Are Your Emotions Potty Trained: Naming!

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: [00:00:00] Welcome to the podcast. Today, We're Going to talk about what I consider the second most important skill of mental wellness, emotional intelligence. After getting enough sleep, nothing helps our mental wellness more than learning to name, tame and a, our emotions. Did you know that research tells us that EQ is more of a predictor of success than IQ? Learning to identify and manage our emotions helps us increase our awareness of self and others, make better decisions, and have healthier relationships both at work and at home. I often ask my clients and students, are your emotions potty trained?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You may think this is a rather odd question, but trust me, it does get people thinking. I was given this idea of potty training our emotions by a 7th grade boy when I was teaching his class the skill of emotional regulation. After class, he came up to me and he said, I never really thought of myself as an emotional person, but I think what you're saying to us is that managing our emotions is a lot like potty [00:01:00] training. Having absolutely no idea what he was thinking, I said, can you say more to me about that? He said all day long, we drink. We don't usually think of what we are drinking as being good or bad. We just drink. And then eventually we get a physical sensation in our body that says our bladder is full and we go and we pee. What you taught us today is that we move through our day having different emotional reactions to people, events and things. Some of these emotional reactions are small sensations, basically a sip. Others are big reactions that land on our body and need to be peed out or processed in a more intentional way for us to stay aware, gain insight, and be healthy.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Having said it much better than I ever could have, I shook my head and I said, yes, that is exactly what I was teaching you today. So today in the spirit of potty training, yes, creating a more civilized way to regulate our emotions, we begin a two part series on potty training our emotions. I'm joined [00:02:00] today by a regular listener to the podcast who wanted to sit with me and explore this most important skill. Let me welcome our guest, thank her profusely and ask her to introduce herself.

Guest: Hi, I'm so excited to be here. I'm 29 years old and very excited to embark on this emotional journey with you.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What made you want to talk about emotional regulation?

Guest: I'm at the stage in my life where I have a better sense of self and through aging, I feel like I have a better control of emotions than I did when I was younger you get blindsided often by emotions. I feel why am I even feeling like this? Like, I shouldn't be feeling this way. Or I don't want to be feeling this way.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You use the word that we get blindsided by emotions. The technical term is we get flooded. Part of what we're going to do in this episode and the next is really help people to have a very practical go to when we get flooded. We're going to spend today, just with the [00:03:00] foundation of being able to name our emotions and then next week, we're going to look at how do we tame them when we get flooded, and how do we aim them. Aiming means, once we get the information, once we tame them, how do we act on them in a way that is really coherent with our values and who we want to be as a person.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I usually begin by asking people to define mental wellness, but I'm going to change it up for you. I want you to begin by, how do you define emotions?

Guest: Emotions for me, are strongly tied to feeling. Feelings that you get in response to living life, things that are coming your way. And the way that you project them onto your situation.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You can Google the word emotion and come up with 10, 000 different definitions, but I want people to understand that when we react emotionally to something, it's a pretty complex process that our body and mind goes through in a nanosecond. Dr. Dan Siegel, who I often [00:04:00] refer to in this podcast simplifies it and says, emotions evoke motion. What he means is when we feel something, our body reacts, our mind reacts with perceptions, thoughts, memories, and then we put it all together and we act on whatever that emotion actually encourages us to do. But like you said, we can get blindsided or we can get flooded, and we might not have the emotional intelligence to slow this very quick process down, so we act in a way that we don't regret. One of the foundational things I teach when people are trying to up their game of emotional intelligence, is that we really want to manage our emotions and not have them manage us. That is a learned skill. What I want to do is I want to begin with a little pop quiz that you didn't get to study for. I think you're going to do great on this. The first question is true or false. Feelings are facts.

Guest: No, feelings are not facts.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: [00:05:00] Absolutely. I worked in a junior high for 21 years and in adolescence, 12 to 25, our feelings are their most intense. The adolescent brain, as I've said many times on this podcast is going through its maturation process. And one of the unique pieces of being a teenager is emotional intensity. When I worked in the junior high, the kids would argue with me all day long, because they felt their emotions so intensely, they deeply believed they were facts. , Can you think of an example where a feeling isn't a fact?

Guest: Yes. I think the strongest one for me is embarrassment. I am a clumsy person. I publicly embarrass myself all the time tripping and things like that, just being clumsy. I think it's fact that everybody is oh, she should be embarrassed or wow, that's embarrassing or something, but in reality, nobody actually really cares. So that's the strongest for me personally.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's a great example that I want people to really get clear that feelings are [00:06:00] just bodily sensations that are unique to each of us. Some people may trip and not be embarrassed. You trip and you get embarrassed and you have the thought, oops, everyone's watching me. They're very unique to each person. That example that you gave of feeling embarrassed is a perception. It's not just a feeling. Okay, question number two. Which do we do first, feel or think?

Guest: Feel, TN 100%.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes, it's interesting because they're right after each other. The reason I like to punctuate this is that what I was taught in therapy school 40 years ago is a bit out of date. If we change our thoughts, we change our feelings. But what I've learned as a clinician is if we feel our feelings, We clarify our thoughts and then we're empowered to change them. And I'm going to talk more about that. So you're two for two. Another question is true or false, you can control what you feel.

Guest: Wish [00:07:00] there was a middle option. I'm going to say true because I think with practice and therapy and things like that, you can retrain a lot of Behavior, feelings, etc.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Very nuanced. We can't control our emotional reaction, but we can learn, as you just said, to control what we do with that

reaction. That's why in emotional intelligence, we look at name, tame, aiming is learning to control that.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Last question, who are our primary teachers of emotional intelligence?

Guest: It's got to be family, right? How you're brought up.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Primarily your parents and your caretakers and nobody's told them. We learn a lot about how we think and how we process our emotions through how our parents handle us when we are emotional. You did pretty well, actually, you were three for four with that little tricky question thrown in there. I want to ask you, have you ever had [00:08:00] any formal education or training that helped you grow your emotional intelligence?

Guest: I wouldn't say so. Life learned.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I think most of our listeners will also agree that they have not had much training, if any. Every so often I talk with somebody who had some kind of social emotional learning unit in school. The thing about emotions, as you said, you can feel yours are calmer now than when you were in adolescence. When we really need the training as an adolescence, that's also one of the hardest times to try to up our emotional intelligence because our emotions are at their most intense, but it's really a lifelong process. It never really should end. What I hope to do by the end of next week is give people a very practical way of being able to name and tame their emotions.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What we're going to do today is just focus on the name. There's a million different theories out there about how many basic emotions. I use Pia [00:09:00] Melody, and she's an addiction therapist, and she gives us eight basic emotions. The reason I use hers is because my experience is if people don't have a way to regulate or to manage their emotions, then they tend to do things they regret. Some of those things can lead to addiction. She says that there's eight basic emotions. Anger, fear, pain, joy, passion, love, shame, and guilt. What you and I are going to do the rest of the podcast is just have a conversation, a couple minutes on each of these emotions, so our listeners can hear us and hopefully get their wheels turning and start to think about, Oh, how do I experience that emotion? Where on my body, does that emotion land? If we wait till our brain gives us signals about our emotion, we've missed the first cue because our emotional reactions just aren't our thoughts. They're also what is our body doing?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Let's start with the one that everybody loves to hate the most, [00:10:00] and that's anger. Brene Brown has a beautiful book, if people are interested, called *Axis of the Heart*, and it's the best book I've seen on emotions. The way she's grouped them is ingenious. What she says is anger is where we go when we feel wronged. Anger has many different forms. It can be resentment, irritation, frustration, injustice, anywhere from one to ten. And that's an important nuance of emotions they can be low intensity to high intensity.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: When you think about the emotion anger, is that an easy emotion for you to identify or is that a harder emotion?

Guest: For me, I actually think it's a harder emotion to identify because, I think most people would like to think they're not angry people, but I don't often think of myself as an angry person, but I think my anger comes out through irritation or frustration with things. One thing I often find myself doing is I'll say I'm so annoyed by this. That's my way [00:11:00] of downplaying anger. But at the end of the day, it's anger.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That shows a lot of emotional intelligence because for you, the code word is annoyance. For me, it's irritable or frustrated. I don't usually walk around angry, but I do walk around irritated and frustrated. That is my code words. Where in your body do you feel that irritation?

Guest: Definitely chest.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I feel it in my jaw. My jaw tightens and in my head, I'm usually thinking I'm pissed. Is there a thought that you have that often accompanies your anger?

Guest: Usually I don't want to be dealing with this.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Anger is one of those emotions that people either love it or they hate it. A lot of that is culturally induced. If you grew up in a family where there's a lot of anger and people blow up, don't resolve it, move on. You might not like it, but you also may be pretty accustomed to it. There's a lot of research that shows women are enculturated to not be angry and [00:12:00] men are given more permission to be angry. Probably all of our listeners have heard that. Anger is not all bad, of course. One of the things that Pia Melody does is she gives us the gift of each emotion. The gift of anger is assertiveness, strength and energy. Sometimes I know when I'm frustrated or pissed or irritated, it's because I'm doing too much. I know that, okay, I have to

stop and I have to be assertive and I have to set a boundary in this situation. Can you think of a time when you allowed yourself to process your anger and realized, Oh, this is really asking me to either be assertive or to put some more energy into this?

Guest: For me, I think it happens a lot when I assume other people are mind readers and know what I want them to do. I feel like I will get annoyed as my word is with people and find things to be annoying when I like expect people will do things that I don't actually say it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: [00:13:00] One of the most helpful pieces of advice I've ever gotten about anger, I got from a class I was taking on Buddhism, and they said that the majority of our anger is when things don't go our way. That's allowed me to actually laugh at myself, of how often I get frustrated or irritated, because why would I think everybody should be doing things my way? I've learned through that one little insight to not take myself so seriously, to laugh at myself. On an earlier podcast, one of the guests talked about he'd go golfing and he gets so mad that he didn't do well. But he only golfs twice a year and that's an unrealistic expectation. What's he getting angry at when he doesn't even really put any effort into golf?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Let's move to the next emotion, another one that people don't like very much, which is fear. Brene Brown sums this up brilliantly. She said, fear is a place we go when there's uncertainty or things are just too much. Right now the [00:14:00] culture is swimming in anxiety because there's a lot of uncertainty. Climate change, the political environment, uncontrolled violence. One of the things I'm really working on is helping people have very concrete skills to live with this uncertainty in a healthy way. To not just, get high and, numb it or detach and not pretend it's there. I think that is a skill for the ages that we're living in. Can you think about when you have fear, which we can express as anxiety, apprehension, being overwhelmed or threatened, how does that land on your body?

Guest: Can we do it in two parts? Because I feel like for me, fear and anxiety and overwhelm are both a little bit separate. Yeah, okay. I'll start with overwhelmed. for me, when I feel overwhelmed, it is what you get for anger. I'm working too much or I'm not taking enough time. I'm not prioritizing things as I correctly should. And I get overwhelmed with [00:15:00] everything and almost feel like I want to shut down and , I'll just do nothing. It leads to anxiety of I should be doing more. I should be working all the time. I need to be , working at 120%. It does lead to anxiety. I do think anxiety is a little bit different than that feeling of fear.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes, it's interesting. I got very overwhelmed when I was caretaking my mother and she got COVID. I can remember sitting there going Oh my God, I am so overwhelmed. I felt frozen. Knew I was flooded and I had no idea what to do. I think that's a nice distinction because often when we get overwhelmed, it's in the family of fear. It's in the family of anxiety, but there's a paralyzation with it. I can go back to that feeling and just feel like my whole brain shut down. I felt like a rock. I wasn't quite sure how to move. But when I feel anxious, I often feel it in the core of my body and I can feel myself not breathing regularly. It almost feels like a vibration. When you have, anxiety or overwhelm, do you have thoughts that [00:16:00] accompany those?

Guest: Anxiety, yes. I've never really had a ton of anxiety, but as I've gotten older, I have more anxiety than I've ever had before. I feel it almost in my whole body and it always stems now for me as an adult out of fear for someone I love. Whether it's my pets, if they're, having issues or a family member, friend, even if it's not medical, if someone's, having a really rough time or sad time, I get a lot of anxiety around people that I love and it makes my whole body feel strange because it's not something that I grew up having.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes. For me, the thought that I have when I'm anxious is I'm going to fix this. I am a grade A super plus fixer and I have spent a lot of my adult life coaching myself to not fix when I'm anxious and I'm still not that good at it to be honest. But when I noticed myself going into fix it mode, which is very annoying if you're one of my children. Then I know oh wait, [00:17:00] I'm anxious. I need to stop. Take a breath. I don't need to fix this. There's, gifts with all these emotions and the gifts of anxiety are preservation, wisdom and protection. It really has a important function, even though we talk about it in our culture, like we don't want it, we don't want it. We want anxiety because it does help us get things done. It does help us protect ourselves and others. We just don't want so much that it moves into overwhelmed and then not being able to function.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Let's move on to pain. I want to say the obvious. We have physical pain and we have emotional pain. What we're talking about is emotional pain. But I've read in quite a few resources that they locate themselves in the same part of our brain. If you tear your ACL or if you have a heartbreaking breakup, your brain registers that pain in the same place. I say that because I think our tendency is [00:18:00] to dismiss emotional pain and to maybe overplay physical pain, where both of them need to be tended to. When we think about pain, on the continuum of low pain to high pain. It can be hurt. It can be sadness. Pain is also isolation. There's a lot of loneliness in our culture.

We often think of loneliness like this destination Oh, they're lonely. They're in Florida. Actually when one is lonely, they're actually in a state of pain. It's an emotional state that they're in. When you think about when you experience pain, where in your body do you feel it?

Guest: Chest area mainly, but for sadness, I do feel it in head and I wouldn't quite say full body, it's a very heavy feeling for me. I just feel heavy and tired everywhere but mainly chest and head.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes. And that heavy and tiredness is something I hear a lot. I feel it almost directly in my heart. I can just feel [00:19:00] my heart ache. In the old days that ache would push me into the anxiety mode of I have to fix this and I've gotten so much better at holding the ache and respecting it because a lot of pain needs to be honored more than it needs to be fixed. When you think about the thoughts that you have when you experience sadness or hurt or pain, what are some thoughts that are common for you?

Guest: That's a hard question, because I feel like with pain, it's very overwhelming for me. It's hard for me to have cognitive thoughts that I remember after the fact. It almost goes to a place of pity, why is this happening? Why me? I would say almost like a panic of , why is this happening?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes. That's a really common experience. Someone has, a really uncomfortable, intense emotion, often pain. And the question is, why is this happening? In reality, one of the things that gets in the way of [00:20:00] regulating our emotions in a healthier way is shifting into cognitions of why is this happening, instead of staying and honoring the emotion. One of my experiences of pain is... I have pain every time I hear about a mass shooting. I remember a few years ago thinking I'm not going to live to be 60 if I don't figure out some kind of process to go through when I hear about these mass shootings because they just drain me. They make me feel hopeless. I don't understand how this is happening. One of the thoughts I have now is that I honor the pain and I just sit. Sometimes I can only sit for 30 seconds. Sometimes I sit for five minutes and I feel the pain and then I think of all the people whose lives are so affected. And I send them a prayer that I'm thinking of you. I wish well for you. I hope you have the strength to get through this. That has helped me not feel so disempowered [00:21:00] in this terrible reality of mass shootings that we go through on a weekly basis. That kind of pain, it can be personal pain. My dog died, which is devastating. Or it can be this thing I saw on the news. It's really disturbing. We have the tendency to want to cut off or numb, but that's not real healthy. Does that make sense?

Guest: I obviously have larger sadness in my life, but on an everyday basis, animals really get to me. And that's something I have a problem with. I was traveling recently and driving a long distance and on the highway, there was a household cat that was run over on the side of the road. I literally had to call my mom. I was like there's a cat on the side of the road that was run over. It's something that I feel a lot of sadness for animals. It comes up often. There's always going to be dead animals on the road. I'm always going to see stray animals outside. That's always been very hard for me.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes. Part of what I hope people get a sense of at the end of these two episodes is what to do in those experiences. You called your mom, and that's a way to process [00:22:00] it. That's a healthy thing to do. The gifts of pain are healing, growth, and awareness. I think of how many people that I've worked with over the years who have had addiction issues and it was really pain that got them into it, but it was also pain that said, I do not want this in my life anymore that allowed them to increase their awareness and then really begin healing. Emotional pain at times is really growth filled and can be very helpful.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Let's look at joy. Brene Brown says, joy is when life is good. We are happy, we're elated, we're hopeful. When you feel joyful, when you feel happy, when you feel elated and hopeful, how do you experience that in your body?

Guest: A lightness, almost the opposite of the first three. I don't even know that I would pinpoint a location because it's always such a light feeling. I can't really say happiness to describe it since that's what the emotion is, but it's very light feeling and carefree. And just feels so good. Yeah, very different than the first three.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yeah, I totally agree. Part of the gifts [00:23:00] of joy is abundance, happiness and gratitude. One of the things people often dismiss is we have it, and sometimes we don't hold it and really feel it as strongly as can be really beneficial for our mental wellness.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How about passion? We're talking about passion for life. Brene Brown says, it's the places we go that are beyond us. Awe, beauty, enthusiasm, desire, zest. When you feel passionate about something, does that feel like for you?

Guest: I think it's very close to happiness. I get a lot of passion from work. I get very excited and joyful from feeling like I've done a good job or when I have a

new project that I'm working on. That emotion I tie pretty strongly to my career and to my work life.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes. I do too. I also, I tie it a lot to my children. I try to not be passionate about their success, but I'm passionately interested in who they [00:24:00] are and their life. They're adults now. And that often puts me in awe of these two people that I helped raise. I always said, don't know my children so they're always surprising me. That's a really fun part. I feel I have a lot of mental space for that. The same thing with this podcast, I feel passionate about it. When I'm passionate about something, I really have the superpower of concentration and flow and throwing myself in it. I think is just an awesome feeling. Hours can pass and I'm just completely absorbed. I love that feeling.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How about love? Brené says love is places we go when our heart is open. The continuum of, other words for love is, affection, tenderness, compassion, warmth. How does love land on your body? How do you know, oh, that's love?

Guest: For me, I think it's also in my chest but unlike anger and sadness like we were talking about before which is a very heavy or tight chest feeling, for me love warms my heart and it [00:25:00] just feels very light in my chest.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: The gifts of love are connection, life, and spirituality. That mutuality that is so important for mental wellness. We know that when people have really good relationships, it really helps cultivate their mental wellness.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: The last two emotions I'm going to put together, shame and guilt. Shame is I'm bad. Guilt is I've done something bad. A couple months ago I went to Costco and I threw a pair of pants in the cart and then I put paper towels over. I didn't pay for the pants and I got home, there they were. I felt guilty. I had stolen from Costco. I did take them back. They were shocked. Shame is I'm terrible at foreign languages and my daughter in law speaks many of them and I'm always mispronouncing her relatives names and she corrected me a couple months ago and I didn't feel guilty. I didn't feel embarrassed. I [00:26:00] felt shame. It was like I am bad that I cannot do this. when I feel shame, it's just like a curtain goes down my whole body. You initially talked in your opening example about embarrassment. I think one of the healthy things is that we realize that I am bad is an overreaction. I am not bad because I can't pronounce names. I should feel guilty. Same thing if you trip. It's an overreaction to feel embarrassed. It really should just be, oh, I'm regretful that I

tripped. We like to separate those out because those are really hard emotions. Can you say where those land on your body?

Guest: For me, shame, especially when it's embarrassment, it feels very whole body, to be honest. It's just an uncomfy feeling. It's just so uncomfortable for me. I will feel it everywhere. To the point of cripplingness. But guilt, I feel that's more like a heart situation. I don't really feel that In My whole body. That's more of a like heart and head situation for [00:27:00] me.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Shame is one of those things where it does often make us feel really humble and it also contains us. So shame isn't always bad that, often people don't do things. because they don't want to feel shamed. It also makes us feel connected to our humanity. There's a lot of conversation right now about narcissism. One of the key things about narcissists is they don't have shame and they often see themselves above everyone else. They're not connected to humanity. As uncomfortable as shame can be, it's important to be able to know and identify it in our bodies and to really look at, oh, is there a gift inside of this? Brene Brown looks at both shame and guilt, it's the places we go when we fall short. Both shame and guilt hold a mirror up to us when we do fall short. That is never very comfortable, no matter how old we are. That's one of the most important reasons, I think, for people to up their emotional intelligence. [00:28:00] Because if people can't process and have a way to move through shame and guilt, they'll keep doing wrong things to avoid those feelings. Let's do the last emotion, which is guilt. Guilt is I've done something wrong. Guilt can also be called regret. It can be when we feel contrite, it can be, when we feel remorseful for something. Can you think about a time that you felt guilty about something and how your body experienced it?

Guest: Yeah, I think for me it often ties to sadness guilt does, and I feel it in Mostly my chest and it feels very heavy and tight, similar to anger. An example is I really have a strong need for like quality time in relationships. For myself and I also expect it from other people. Throughout my life, there's been different times where I felt I don't spend enough time with people that I love, my family, my friends, and [00:29:00] even if that's not what they expect I get a lot of guilt. So a strong example would be with my dad. He passed away about six years ago. When I was younger, I lived across the country from him, so I wouldn't go home for holidays, and retroactively, I have a lot of guilt around that, that I should have spent more time at home. I carry that forward through future relationships. I always feel guilty that I need to spend more time with people.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That really demonstrates one of the gifts of guilt is that guilt helps us clarify our values. It's very clarifying. In that situation, you

were at a period in your life where you're launching. You're getting ready in young adulthood to do your own thing. And that was really your values. But then you had this unfortunate loss that clarified, Oh, the people who I love the most should get the most of my time. Of course we don't want you crippled by the guilt, but instead to acknowledge Oh, this guilt comes at a really hard earned price [00:30:00] where it clarified your values and probably will in a way be a direction for your values for the rest of your life. One of the gifts of guilt is regret. One of the conversations I have a lot with adolescents and people in college is they don't want to have regret. We do have that belief in our culture, no regrets. FOMO. Yeah, FOMO. The reality is in every world religion, there is a spiritual practice of regrets. That the power of regrets isn't to beat ourselves over the head, isn't to go to bed and never get out again because we misstepped or made a mistake, but it actually helps contain us and to help us be grounded in our values. This is what's important to me when I go against my values, I feel guilty, which is actually super healthy. I've worked with people who went against their values and didn't feel guilty, which tells you that they really didn't have strong values or [00:31:00] did terrible things and didn't have a sense of shame. That is a human that hasn't been formed in a healthy way. Shame and guilt aren't easy to feel, but if we decide, and it's an intentional decision, nobody ups their emotional intelligence by accident. It just doesn't happen. It's like math. Nobody learns math by accident. You have to decide, I want to be a person to up my emotional intelligence and people don't have to have A plus emotional intelligence. B is great. B will help them in every aspect of their life, but they have to be able to do what we just did on the podcast today. And that is recognize these eight basic feelings in whatever form they convey themselves to them in their everyday life. And recognize them not just by what's going on in your head, which is an American favorite, but recognize them also with where they're at in your body, because what [00:32:00] we're going to talk about next week is the taming and the aiming. Are you up for it?

Guest: I'm looking forward to it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Great. This was fun.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Here are my Inner Challenge insights.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number one.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: It was only in 1990, that two researchers coined the phrase, emotional intelligence. It wasn't that we didn't have emotions prior to that time, but there wasn't much emphasis on understanding them. Here we are in the midst of a great transition where emotions are recognized, studied,

and now considered an essential part of human intelligence. For most of us, we've had no education about this vital part of ourself and our relationships. Think of your emotions like technology, something to learn that is challenging, but also helpful if used wisely. I just wish we had a support system for all of us to learn emotional intelligence that was as good as Apple Care.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number two.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: If you're a doubter about the value of emotional [00:33:00] intelligence, I doubt you hung in or finished this podcast. But if you have, and you find yourself rolling your eyes or saying MJ, I'm just the kind of person who lets my emotions blow or stuffs them or thinks if people didn't do this or that, I wouldn't feel so intense. I would encourage you to remember the wisdom of my seventh grade student: potty training our emotions helps us avoid a lot of crap.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number three.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Parenting is hard work. Kids today are given lots of room to have their emotions. You might say, isn't that great, MJ! Well, it is, and it isn't. Here's a dynamic. I see often in my office, a well-meaning parent does not want to squash their child's emotions. But in the process of allowing their child to express their emotions the parent becomes emotionally overwhelmed. Now, instead of one person being emotionally flooded, two people are. This happens at all ages. Check out [00:34:00] episode 14, where a mom of an adult daughter discusses this exact dilemma. The job of a parent is to help our children name tame and aim their emotions in a healthy way. If the parent does not know how to do this, there will be lots of yelling, shaming and fleeing the room. Some of the best work I've done as a therapist is with brave parents who come in and say, can you help me stop screaming when my child loses it? Absolutely. I say. You're gonna love this.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number four.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: The basic emotions are: anger, fear, pain, joy, passion, love, guilt and shame. Don't make this learning difficult. Next time you feel a lot? Just name it. I feel pissed. I feel afraid. I feel hurt. I'm so happy. Oh, I love this child of mine. I'm so embarrassed. I feel guilty. Research tells us that naming [00:35:00] our emotions, I feel blank. Gives us immediate relief. Stepping into your truth is how we begin to regulate our emotions. But it is not at all where we end. And that's where we're going to pick up next week.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number five.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I have had a great career. I've worked with wonderful people, loved creating Inner Challenge. But the skill I am most proud of is next week's podcast. It's a super easy method for naming, taming and aiming our emotions. It took seven different methods in 25 years, but I finally created a way to teach my clients, my students, and to be honest myself, a way to move through emotions that is free, easy and based on science. Trust me, even though it's based on science, it's really easy to remember and you'll be able to do it anywhere. I invite you to tune into my next podcast. Before you do make sure to look at the show notes of [00:36:00] this episode you'll see the one pager that gives a visual summary not only for this episode but the next episode. They're great!

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Thanks for listening. As you go through your week, take on the Inner Challenge of naming your emotions.