

How to Feel Again: 7 Ways to Break Out of Being Numb

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Editor's Note

If you or a loved one is affected by addiction, the following post could be triggering. You can contact [SAMHSA](#)'s hotline at 1-800-662-4357.

Full admission, I am still learning this one myself. How to feel again. It's terrifying. Seriously, how do you feel when you've had to go numb just to survive? How do you feel when you've been taught that, when you do feel, bad things happen?

In your mind, you trust, you lose. You cry, you lose. You fall apart, and everyone loses. You cannot. You will not. You do not. Instead, you harden. You go on. You can't feel. You can't afford to.

But, yes, yes you can. And you will, in time. You are not alone. There is a net. There is a light. You deserve to feel. Not the bad, but the good. Sorry, they're a package deal.

Ultimately, it is how you will get through — feeling. Not over, under, around, but through. And that is where you live. You. The real you. In a place deep inside, with your feelings. Be gentle.

But, then, get ready. We're going on a prison break.

It has taken me over a year to really actually feel again. I thought, at one point, that I was doing it. But my self-preservation mechanism is a crafty little one who likes to change things as we go. She's very adaptive, which is why it has also taken me so long to get to this point in my life, helping others. Her way of

preservation has been to dodge and roll. Thus, until recently, to keep on, I have tucked chin and just moved, literally and figuratively. There was no time to feel. Or at least, that's what I kept telling myself. If I lost it, all would be lost. I was alone. If I fell apart, there was no one to catch me.

There is some truth to this need for a hardened resiliency for a lot of us, who must pay bills, keep a family together, etc. We cannot fall apart, really, until certain things are in place. I respect that because that was me. And it still is me. I cannot go bury myself, wallow and work it out how I might have in my younger years. I am not even drinking anymore, which is a thing for me.

I was never an alcoholic, but I saw how I could be, and, especially now, my temptation is to drown. In some ways, that was my only way actually to feel during some of my harder times before. It was the only way to quiet my self-preservation gal and allow the tears to flow. But now I don't even have that. So, what have I done? What do I do? And why the heck would I even want to?

Last question first: if we don't feel, we don't deal. Simple as that. We'll never move on or overcome. Because it just sits there, underneath the hard core of concrete that you've poured, waiting to sprout and crack the rock, then eventually seep its way up, and maybe not even in the best of ways — through anger, pain, bitterness, fear and resentment.

But how do we feel again, when maybe we don't even want to?

One step at a time.

Here are a few things that might "help." (Yes, it's gonna hurt, but, just remember, it *will* get better.)

1. Movies.

Especially ones you used to love. Those that evoked your first feelings of love, longing, sadness, hope. I tried this for a while, and it didn't work until I was ready and I hit the right ones. Up until then, the romantic movies I used to love were full of crap. But keep digging, keep trying. You'll find the one.

2. Music.

The songs you used to listen to, falling in love, in heartbreak, in heartache. The songs you used to dream with. For me, this was especially painful. Songs, for me, are very attached to eras in my life and people. So, I avoid [the ones that hurt](#). But hurt is a feeling. Feel through it, then find the ones that remind you of the good before the hurt. Use that as a reminder of what will come once the clouds clear.

3. Places.

Epic places. Water. Trees. Beauty. Something that moves you. I love nature, but for you, it could be skyscrapers. Something that evokes the wonder you've once felt. Remember.

4. Take a drive.

My tip is to choose a destination fairly easy to get to but a length away, and a distance from too much familiarity. That way, you'll have plenty of time to think and feel without having to focus too much on the driving. Listen to music, if you like. But no drowning out what pops up in your head. That's beside the point. The feelings brought up by the drive are the point in this one.

5. Animals.

They bring out the best in us and can, if allowed, help bring out our feelings. Even in my worst of numb times, my pups and horses were the only ones who

could almost bring me to a tear. But, sometimes, this connection can backfire. For me, my animals are my children, so there is a guilt attached to caring for them that makes me harden even further when I believe that I'm not doing as good of a job as I should be (even if the belief is false). It can be complicated, but it can also definitely be the key.

6. Talking to someone.

I *highly* recommend therapy or counseling, even if it is just so that you can hear yourself talk it out to someone. If you have a friend or a loved one whom you trust, or find a willing stranger to listen, it **can be very beneficial**. But be careful here. It is all too easy to rant or even just tell rather than actually begin to tap in. And it can get sticky involving people who hopefully, ultimately, want the best for you, but are all too willing to give you their advice. This sharing can be a trap that helps you avoid finding your own feelings (especially when others are involved); thus, in essence, just make sure the conversation comes back to you and getting through your experience.

7. Writing or art.

I highly highly highly recommend finding a creative outlet to find yourself and your feelings. I truly feel that through these unedited, unrepressed avenues, we can tap into our innermost selves and find what we didn't even know we were looking for. The trick is to not edit or stop yourself and to allow. You may be thinking, I don't paint. Yes, you do, if it sounds like fun. Who cares what you paint. Just do it. The same goes for writing, making music, sculpting or anything else that sounds like a release.

Bottom line is that you open yourself up to the possibility of feeling again. That is enough to begin with. In time, these seemingly insurmountable steps will

become easier and get better. Don't worry, you'll get there. And you're not alone.