

How to Feel Bad: The Complete Series

By Ryan Soave

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Welcome to How to Feel Bad (And Love Your Life):

You're Exactly Where You Need to Be

You might be wondering, “Why would I want to learn how to feel bad?” Stick with me—because understanding how to lean into discomfort is one of the biggest secrets to unlocking true peace, joy, and fulfillment.

This email series will walk you through how feeling bad, when done intentionally, can actually be the key to living a life you love.

Why You're Here

- Maybe you've noticed it yourself—something's not quite clicking.
- You're snapping at your partner over small things.
- You're stuck in cycles of procrastination and frustration.
- Or you feel anxious, disconnected, or unfulfilled.

On the surface, things might look fine—maybe even great. But inside, something feels off.

You're not alone in this. Many people feel vulnerable when they first start this work. But that vulnerability is a sign of courage. It means you're ready to grow.

The Problem: Mistaking Discomfort for Threat

Here's the truth: as humans, we often confuse discomfort with danger.

When someone says, “We need to talk,” for example, our brains jump into survival mode—fight, flight, or freeze—even though there's no real threat.

This automatic reaction comes from deeply ingrained beliefs and unresolved emotions. It causes us to act in ways that hurt our relationships, hold us back, and make life harder than it needs to be.

But there's good news: you can learn to interrupt this cycle, handle discomfort with skill, and respond intentionally.

What You'll Get From This Series

Over the next few days, I'll guide you through tools and insights to:

- Understand the hidden beliefs driving your emotions.
- Build emotional resilience to handle life's challenges.
- Interrupt automatic reactions and choose healthier responses.
- Gain clarity and confidence in your relationships and decisions.

A Story to Inspire You

Let me tell you about a client of mine—let's call him Fred.

Fred was wildly successful by society's standards: a thriving business, incredible wealth, and a life many would envy. But he struggled to connect with others. His relationships were strained, and he felt like an imposter in his own life.

Through our work together, Fred uncovered a deeply held belief that his worth was tied to achievement. This belief had served him in business but wrecked his personal life.

As Fred learned to embrace discomfort and challenge these limiting beliefs, his life transformed. While some external circumstances didn't go as planned (his marriage ended), he found peace, purpose, and joy in a way he never thought possible.

This kind of transformation is available to you, too. And you don't have to wait for a crisis to begin.

What's Next

In the next email, we'll explore why you keep reacting the way you do and how your hidden beliefs trigger powerful emotional and behavioral cycles.

For now, take a moment to reflect:

- Where in your life do you feel stuck, defensive, or overwhelmed?
- What emotions feel hardest for you to sit with?

Just noticing these patterns is the first step toward change.

You deserve a life of confidence, connection, and clarity—and you're in the right place to start creating it.

Warmly,

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Why You Keep Reacting This Way

Have you ever found yourself reacting instantly and intensely to something small?

Maybe it was a message from your partner: “We need to talk later.”
And suddenly, your heart races and your mind spirals: “Did I do something wrong? Is this the end of our relationship?”

Or perhaps it’s your boss emailing: “Let’s set aside time to talk tomorrow.”
And immediately, fear takes over: “Am I getting fired? What did I mess up?”

Before you know it, you’re either panicking, demanding immediate answers, or retreating, avoiding the situation entirely.

Why does this happen? Why do neutral words—just pixels on a screen—trigger such a strong emotional reaction?

Today, I’ll help you uncover the hidden cycle behind these reactions: Beliefs to Emotions to Behaviors. Understanding this cycle is the first step to breaking free.

The Hidden Cycle: Why You React Automatically

At the root of nearly every unwanted reaction is a deeply held, limiting belief about yourself, others, or the world.

Let’s break it down:

1. Beliefs: These are the hidden stories you’ve carried from past experiences—like “I’m not good enough” or “People always leave me.”
2. Emotions: When something neutral happens (like receiving an ambiguous text), these beliefs trigger powerful emotions: fear, anxiety, shame, or anger.
3. Behaviors: These emotions drive automatic reactions, like snapping, withdrawing, or over-explaining, instead of responding calmly or thoughtfully.

It’s a self-reinforcing loop, and it happens so fast that it feels like you’re powerless to stop it.

An Example in Action

Let’s revisit the message: “We need to talk later.”

- Belief: “I’m not good enough” or “Relationships never work out for me.”
- Emotion: Fear, anxiety, or dread.
- Behavior: Panic-texting, avoiding the conversation, or overthinking until you feel sick.

The event itself—neutral words on a screen— isn’t the problem. It’s the meaning your mind creates based on old, unresolved beliefs.

Here’s the thing: These beliefs likely served a purpose in the past, protecting you from real pain or rejection. But now, they’re keeping you stuck in patterns that no longer serve you.

The Power of Awareness

The good news? You can interrupt this cycle.

The first step is awareness:

- Start noticing your emotional reactions.
- Ask yourself: “What belief might be driving this?”
- Reflect on whether your reaction is about the present moment—or an echo of the past.

This awareness creates the space for change.

What’s Next

In the next email, we’ll dive deeper into how neutral events become emotional triggers. You’ll see how unconscious beliefs turn simple situations into emotionally charged storms—and learn how to start rewriting the story.

For now, take a moment to reflect:

Can you think of a recent situation where you overreacted to something small?

What belief or story might have been fueling that reaction?

Just noticing these patterns is a powerful step toward breaking free.

You’re not alone in this, and I’m here to guide you every step of the way.

Warmly,

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Why Neutral Events Feel Threatening (And How to Stop the Cycle)

In our last email, we uncovered how your beliefs drive emotions and behaviors in automatic cycles. Today, let's go one step further and explore how neutral events become emotionally charged and trigger these patterns.

The Truth About Events: They're Neutral

Here's the thing: events themselves are neutral. They aren't inherently good or bad—they just are.

Take this example:

A sports team wins a championship. Fans of the winning team see it as the best day ever, while fans of the losing team might feel devastated.

The event didn't change—it's the meaning we bring to it that shapes our experience.

And here's where it gets tricky: often, the meaning we assign to events isn't intentional. It's shaped by your past experiences, unresolved emotions, and deeply ingrained beliefs.

How Beliefs Shape Meaning

When something happens, your mind automatically interprets it through the lens of your beliefs:

- If you've experienced rejection, a neutral text from your spouse might feel like a threat to your relationship.
- If you've faced criticism at work, an ambiguous email from your boss might seem like a signal you've failed.

These beliefs act like seeds buried deep in your mind. When a neutral event "waters" a belief, it grows into an emotional response—fear, anxiety, anger, or shame—which then drives your behavior.

The Cycle in Action

Let's break it down using a simple scenario:

Event: Your spouse sends a text: "We need to talk later."

- Belief/Story: "Something's wrong. They're upset with me. Maybe they're about to leave."
- Emotion: Fear, anxiety, or dread.
- Behavior: You panic-text back, withdraw emotionally, or spend the day consumed with worry.

The message itself is neutral—just words on a screen. But your mind assigns meaning based on your past, creating a cascade of emotions and reactions.

Breaking the Cycle

So, how do you stop this self-reinforcing loop?

The first step is awareness:

- Recognize the difference between the neutral event and the meaning your mind creates.
- Ask yourself: “Is my reaction about this situation, or is it tied to unresolved feelings from the past?”

For example, when your boss emails, “Let’s talk tomorrow,” pause and ask: “Am I reacting to this email, or am I reliving a past experience where I felt criticized or insecure?”

By separating past beliefs from present reality, you create space to respond intentionally instead of reacting automatically.

What’s Next

In the next email, I’ll teach you a simple yet powerful framework: Stop, Look, Choose. This process will help you pause in the moment, observe what’s really happening, and choose a response aligned with your values—not your fears.

You’re taking courageous steps toward greater emotional clarity and freedom. Keep going, you’ve got this!

Warmly,

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Stop Reacting Automatically (And Start Choosing Mindfully)

In our last email, we explored how neutral events can become emotionally charged because of past beliefs and emotional patterns. Today, I want to introduce a simple yet powerful framework to help you interrupt these automatic reactions and start responding intentionally.

We call it: Stop, Look, Choose.

Step 1: STOP

When you feel triggered, your first task is to pause and interrupt the automatic cycle.

Here's why:

Imagine trying to heal while still on the battlefield—it's nearly impossible. To respond intentionally, you need to step out of the emotional overwhelm, even for a moment.

Use these Reactive Stops in the moment:

Breathe deeply: Inhale through your nose, then exhale slowly through pursed lips. Let the exhale be longer than the inhale to calm your nervous system.

- Change your physical state: Take a quick walk or simply step out of the room.
- Ground yourself: Notice five things you can see, four you can touch, three you can hear, two you can smell, and one you can taste.
- Pause communication: Avoid replying to triggering messages immediately—give yourself time to process.

You can also build Proactive Stops into your daily routine to increase emotional resilience over time:

- Practice mindfulness or meditation daily.
- Move your body—exercise helps regulate emotions.
- Journal regularly to process your feelings and thoughts.

Stopping creates the space you need to shift from reacting to responding.

Step 2: LOOK

Once you've paused, take a moment to observe your emotions, beliefs, and the situation clearly.

Ask yourself:

- What emotions am I feeling right now?
- What story or belief is driving this reaction?
- Is this situation truly threatening—or am I reacting from old patterns?

For example, if your boss sends a message saying, “We need to talk tomorrow,” your initial reaction might be fear or dread. Pausing to look allows you to see that the message, in reality, is neutral—it’s your past experiences or beliefs about inadequacy that are creating the emotional storm.

Step 3: CHOOSE

Now that you’ve paused and observed, you’re ready to choose a new response that aligns with your values and the person you want to be.

When we react automatically, it often feels like there’s only one option. But when you pause and look, you’ll see there are multiple ways to respond.

For example:

- Spouse Scenario: Instead of panicking and demanding answers, you might calmly reply, “Sure, is everything okay? Looking forward to talking later.”
- Boss Scenario: Instead of assuming the worst, you might reassure yourself, “There’s no definitive negative meaning here,” and prepare calmly for the conversation.
- Partner Scenario: Instead of seeking constant reassurance, you might wait patiently and trust that the conversation will be meaningful.

Choosing differently can feel risky at first because it challenges ingrained behaviors—but this discomfort is a sign of growth.

Your Practice for Today

Try this simple exercise:

1. Think of a recent situation where you reacted automatically.
2. Write down:
 - What triggered you.
 - Your immediate reaction.
 - A new response you could have chosen.
3. Reflect: What would it feel like to choose intentionally next time?

What’s Next

In the next email, "Predicting Emotional Weather: Your Daily Inventory," you’ll learn how to anticipate emotional triggers before they happen. This practice will help you prepare for life’s challenges, so you’re ready to respond with clarity and confidence.

You're building powerful skills to navigate life's storms with resilience—and I'm excited to guide you further.

Warmly,

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Predict Your Emotional Storms (and Navigate Life Confidently)

Wow—you've made it to the final email in the "How to Feel Bad" series! Before we dive into today's practice, I want to take a moment to celebrate the work you've done.

Over the past few emails, we've explored:
How limiting beliefs shape your emotions and reactions.
Why neutral events trigger strong emotional responses.
Practical frameworks like Stop, Look, Choose to interrupt unwanted patterns.

You've already learned so much about yourself, and by simply engaging with this series, you've taken incredible steps toward greater awareness, emotional resilience, and fulfillment.

To wrap up this series, I'm sharing a daily practice that will help you proactively navigate your emotional landscape and prepare for life's challenges. And as a thank-you for completing the series, I'll send you a bonus email with even more tools to take this work further—so stay tuned!

Your Emotional Weather Map

Today's practice is called your Emotional Weather Map. This simple yet powerful tool helps you anticipate emotional triggers and prepare for whatever life brings.

Imagine you're about to leave the house for the day. You'd check the weather forecast, right? Knowing whether to bring an umbrella or wear sunscreen helps you prepare for the conditions ahead.

Your emotional life works the same way. Each day brings its own mix of tasks, interactions, and challenges that can influence your mood and reactions. By proactively mapping your emotional "weather," you can respond intentionally rather than react automatically.

How to Create Your Emotional Weather Map

This practice takes just 5-10 minutes and will transform how you approach your day.

Step 1: Gratitude

Step 1: Gratitude

Write down five things you're grateful for, including at least one challenge. For example, "I'm grateful for a supportive friend," or "I'm grateful for my health."

Why? Gratitude fosters acceptance of both the good and the challenging, preparing you to face reality with clarity and confidence.

Step 2: Plans for the Day

Briefly list the main events or tasks planned for the day. For example: "Morning workout," "Get kids ready for school," "Dinner with a challenging client."

For each, ask yourself:

- What might feel challenging?
- How do I want to show up during these moments?

This step helps you anticipate potential emotional "storms" and prepare to navigate them.

Step 3: Check Your Current Weather

Take a moment to notice how you're feeling right now. Write it down.

Are you anxious? Excited? Overwhelmed? Calm?

Naming your current emotional state helps you understand what you're bringing into the day and how it might affect your responses.

Step 4: Watch For/Strive For

Identify:

- Watch For: Emotional states or reactions you want to be mindful of today. (i.e. Anxiety, frustration, impatience)
- Strive For: Emotional states or behaviors you want to practice instead. (i.e. Courage, calmness, patience)

This step is like packing for the weather. If rain is forecast, you bring a raincoat. Similarly, knowing your emotional triggers helps you prepare to handle them with intention.

Why This Practice Works

Your Emotional Weather Map allows you to predict and prepare for the “currents” that might push you off course.

Think of this like steering a boat toward an island (your values). Without awareness of emotional currents, you might drift off course, wondering why you can’t reach your destination. But by identifying those currents in advance, you can make adjustments and stay aligned with your goals.

Your Challenge

Take 5-10 minutes today to create your Emotional Weather Map:

1. Write down five things you’re grateful for.
2. Outline your key events for the day and any challenges they might bring.
3. Name your current emotional state.
4. Identify what to “watch for” and what to “strive for.”

Notice how this practice helps you feel more prepared for the day ahead.

What’s Next?

This email concludes the main portion of the "How to Feel Bad" series, but your journey doesn’t stop here!

As a thank-you for completing the series, I’ll send you a bonus email with even more tools to deepen your emotional resilience. In this bonus email, you’ll discover:

- A set of proactive practices to strengthen your emotional capacity over time.
- Reactive strategies to regulate emotions in the moment.

Keep an eye on your inbox—it’s coming your way soon!

A Final Thought

You’ve come so far already, and I want to take a moment to acknowledge your courage and commitment. Leaning into discomfort, exploring your emotional patterns, and learning how to respond rather than react takes dedication and bravery.

You now have the tools and insights to navigate life’s challenges with greater clarity, confidence, and intention.

Thank-you for trusting me to guide you through this process. I’m so excited for what’s ahead for you—and I can’t wait to share the bonus email with you soon.

Warmly,

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You Made It!

Your Bonus Tools for Emotional Resilience

Congratulations on completing the "How to Feel Bad" email series! I'm so proud of the work you've done to get here.

This journey hasn't been easy—it takes courage to lean into discomfort and explore the patterns holding you back. But you've shown up for yourself, and that's something to celebrate.

As a thank-you for your commitment, I'm sharing a bonus set of tools to help you continue building emotional resilience and empower you to navigate life's challenges with confidence.

Proactive and Reactive Tools: What's the Difference?

Proactive Tools: Practices you build into your daily and weekly routines to strengthen emotional capacity over time. Think of these as your emotional “gym.”

Reactive Tools: Strategies you use in the moment when emotions feel overwhelming. These tools help you pause, regulate, and respond intentionally.

When used together, these tools create a holistic emotional toolkit, allowing you to thrive in any situation.

Proactive Tools: Build Resilience Daily and Weekly

Daily Practices (1-3 short tools)

Integrate small, manageable proactive tools into your daily routine. These practices don't need to take more than 10-15 minutes, but their impact builds over time. Examples include:

- **Physical:** A 5-10 minute walk, stretching, or light exercise.
- **Mindfulness:** A brief meditation, yoga nidra, or 2 minutes of focused breathwork.
- **Journaling:** Write down your thoughts, emotions, or intentions for the day.
- **Emotional Weather Map:** Use this practice to reflect on your gratitude, emotional state, and anticipated challenges for the day.

Weekly Practices (One from Each Category)

For deeper growth, creating balance and nurturing all aspects of your well-being, select one practice from each of the following categories to include in your weekly routine:

- **Physical:** A longer workout, yoga class, or outdoor activity like hiking.

- Social: Spend intentional time connecting with loved ones, join a community group, or volunteer.
- Spiritual: Engage in prayer, attend a spiritual service, or reflect through gratitude journaling.
- Psychological: Schedule therapy, a coaching session, or spend time journaling to explore deeper emotions and patterns.

Reactive Tools: Regulate in the Moment

Reactive tools are designed to help you in the heat of the moment when emotions feel overwhelming. Here are some simple, effective techniques:

- Breathwork: Use the physiological sigh (two quick inhales through your nose, followed by a long exhale through your mouth) to calm your nervous system.
- Grounding Techniques: Anchor yourself in the present by noticing 5 things you see (4 you can touch, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, and 1 you taste).
- Physical Movement: Step outside, take a quick walk, or stretch to reset your body and mind.
- Journaling: Write down what you're feeling to process your emotions.
- Reach Out: Call a trusted friend or mentor for support and perspective.
- Revisit Your Emotional Weather Map: Reflect on your plans, emotional state, and what you set out to "watch for" and "strive for."

How to Build Your Personalized Plan

To make these tools work for you, it's important to create a plan tailored to your life. Here's how:

1. Choose 1-3 Daily Practices: Select simple, short practices you can commit to.
2. Pick Weekly Practices from Each Category: Choose one physical, social, spiritual, and psychological practice to incorporate weekly.
3. Experiment with Reactive Tools: Try out different tools in the moment to see what works best for you.
4. Write Down Your Plan: Keep your personalized plan somewhere visible, like your phone, so you can refer to it easily.

The Power of Small Steps

Building emotional resilience doesn't require massive changes overnight. It's the small, consistent steps you take each day and week that create long-term transformation.

By integrating proactive and reactive tools into your life, you'll notice a shift in how you respond to discomfort, stress, and challenges. Over time, you'll feel more grounded, confident, and aligned with your values.

What's Next?

This bonus email marks the conclusion of the "How to Feel Bad" series, but your journey doesn't stop here. Here are a few ways to keep growing:

1. Download the Entire Series- Done!

This PDF is here for you to visit anytime.

2. Stay Connected

Look out for future emails with additional insights, tools, and encouragement. And, follow me on Instagram—@ryan.soave—for regular tips and reflections.

3. Take the Next Step

If you're ready to dive deeper, I'd love to help you create a personalized plan tailored to your unique goals.

[Book a 30 Minute Consultation](#)

[Book a 60 Minute Consultation](#)

A Final Thought

You've already taken incredible steps by completing this series. Leaning into discomfort, exploring your emotional patterns, and learning how to respond intentionally is profound work.

Remember, emotional growth isn't about perfection—it's about showing up, taking small steps, and giving yourself grace along the way.

You already have everything you need within you to navigate life's challenges with clarity, peace, and confidence. These tools are here to support you every step of the way.

Thank you for trusting me to guide you through this process. I'm so excited for what's ahead for you.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in a cursive script that reads "Ryan".

Meet Ryan Soave



Ryan Soave, LMHC is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and certified trauma therapist with over 15 years of experience in trauma and addiction recovery. His clinical work is informed by personal recovery, which led him to pursue a Master's in Mental Health Counseling and dedicate his life to helping others heal.

As Chief Clinical Officer at Guardian Recovery Network, Ryan integrates evidence-based and experiential modalities including EMDR, Somatic Experiencing, yoga, breathwork, and meditation into transformative treatment programs. His holistic approach has impacted thousands of individuals on their path to lasting wellness.

A sought-after speaker, Ryan has led workshops and presented at national conferences and corporate institutions such as LinkedIn and Bank of America. His work resonates with individuals in crisis and high performers alike, offering a grounded path to clarity, resilience, and fulfillment.

Rooted in the belief that the past does not define the future, Ryan helps clients reconnect with their true selves and find meaning beyond survival. Outside of his professional life, he enjoys fly fishing, time in nature, and the love of his wife and children who continually remind him of life's deeper lessons.

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