

Managing the Mismatch Between Logic & Emotion

“I *know* this doesn’t make sense, but I still *feel* it.”

When you just *know* how you’re feeling doesn’t match the facts, the emotion is still there for a reason. Not knowing that reason can be disorienting and frustrating to those who value insight and self-awareness, and it may even lead to self-blame as a means of reclaiming a sense of control. Here’s a starter guide on what might be happening, why it’s not actually irrational, and how to begin coping.

Why the mismatch happens

1. The emotion isn’t about the thing it’s directed towards, **it’s about what the thing *symbolizes***. For example, if you feel jealous of someone even though you don’t want what they have (e.g. their partner, job, family), your nervous system might associate that thing with:
 - Safety
 - Belonging
 - Desirability
 - Freedom
 - Power
2. **Different systems are speaking different languages.** The “logical brain” might say “I don’t want that” while the “emotional brain” might say “I’m afraid of being left behind” or “I wish I were chosen like that.” Both are telling the truth from their own point of view.
3. **Emotion often arrives before insight.** Your body and unconscious mind register a *threat, deficiency, or desire* milliseconds before your conscious thoughts catch up. If you’re neurodivergent, that delay between the two might be a bit longer because you’re processing more information, so there’s traffic. The logical part might then try to “override” or argue with the feeling instead of listening to it.

Coping strategies

1. **Validate the feeling** before interpreting it. Try using language like “a part of me feels...” rather than “I am jealous” to create space and reduce shame.
2. **Get curious about the symbolism.** “If I don’t want that, what do I *think* it would give me if I *did*?” For example, if you feel jealous of a friend’s engagement even though you don’t want to get married, perhaps you haven’t felt celebrated, secure, or seen enough recently.
3. **Attend to the unmet need.** Instead of suppressing the emotion, use it as a GPS, pointing toward an unmet need, and then ask “How else can I meet that need in my life, on my terms?”
4. **Practice dual awareness.** You can know something is not grounded in logic and still care for the emotional part (see below). Try naming both at once: “I know that person my partner is spending time with is not a threat for all these reasons, and I can feel how devastating it would be to lose trust in them.”
5. **Use metaphor or visualization.** Imagine the feeling as a child knocking on your door - what are they asking for? Or see it as a smoke signal. It doesn’t mean the thing it points to is on fire, but something underneath it needs attention.
6. **Normalize the experience.** All humans feel this emotion sometimes. Feeling it doesn’t mean you’re dramatic, petty, weak, or insert any other narrative you might have about the emotion, depending on your

relationship to it. Instead, it means you have hopes, wounds, desires, etc. Many people who feel this emotion *disproportionately* have had significant past experiences where it made a lot of sense to feel what they felt (e.g. in the case of jealousy, they have a history of being overlooked, excluded, or had to compete for care). It will make sense to feel this feeling when you zoom out, even if it doesn't in this moment.

But how do I care for my emotional part?

Consider what "irrational" actually means: the emotion doesn't match current circumstances. It contradicts conscious values or goals. It feels outsized, embarrassing, or out of character. That doesn't make it *meaningless*. It usually means the emotion is:

- Tied to a past experience, not just the present
- Reflecting a deep unmet need or wound
- Coming from a younger or more vulnerable part of the self

So the goal isn't to suppress it or argue with it but rather to acknowledge it and figure out what it's trying to tell you.

The steps:

1. **Name and externalize the feeling.** "A part of me is feeling ___ right now." This creates internal space. You are not the feeling; you are the person noticing it.
2. **Ask the part what it's trying to protect or provide.** What are you afraid would happen if you didn't feel this way? What do you wish someone would say to you right now? This kind of reflection shifts the focus from the emotion and negative feelings about the emotion ("meta-emotions") toward what you need.
3. **Offer compassion and context instead of criticism.** "It makes sense you feel this way (insert insight about why from the past here)." This helps the part calm down because it's not being judged. You can't logic your way out of a feeling, but you can soothe it with validation.
4. **Find a way to act on the need, not the impulse.** If the feeling reveals a longing to be desired, schedule a time with someone who makes you feel that way or plan a conversation with the person who doesn't. If it reveals a fear of being left behind, reach out to a friend or journal about your sense of worth. If it reveals exhaustion from hustling for value, give yourself rest or refuse to overwork.
5. **Revisit later with insight.** Once the emotion passes, reflect in order to build trust with yourself. Over time, the emotion becomes less scary and more manageable:
 - Was it tied to a deeper pattern?
 - Was it a younger version of you showing up?
 - What helped ease the feeling? What didn't?

"I know I should be kind to myself, but I just want it to go away." Of course. Can you try caring for the part just enough to understand what it's afraid of? What would it be like to offer comfort with having to agree with it? Is there a version of compassion that doesn't feel like coddling, perhaps something like *protection*, *curiosity*, or *reassurance*?