

# SUPPLEMENTAL CONTENT

## NOTICING EMOTIONS

### “The Guest House”

When we quiet our minds, we may become aware of emotions we had not noticed before. We can be quick to judge those emotions, and sometimes we try to change them. This exercise is designed to build on the content in Week 2: Noticing Thoughts by encouraging students to observe their emotions and to accept them with self-compassion.

Materials:

- Copies of “The Guest House,” by Jellaludin Rumi
- Paper
- Pens and pencils
- Internet access, computer, and speakers (optional)

First, read together “The Guest House” by Jellaludin Rumi. You can print copies of the poem, or ask students to search for the poem online using their phones. You might want to give students time to read the poem silently before you read it aloud with the group.

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

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The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

—Jellaludin Rumi, “The Guest House,” translation by Coleman Barks

Next, ask students to share their insights about the poem. You may use the following questions to guide your conversation.

- What phrases or images in this poem stand out to you?
- The title of the poem is “The Guest House.” Who are the “guests” in the poem? In what ways are these emotions like guests?
- Rumi is personifying emotions; he writes as if each emotion is a person. Choose one of the emotions from the poem—“joy,” “depression,” “meanness,” and so on. Draw or write about how this emotion might look and how it might behave if it were a person, a cartoon character, or a new kid at school.
- How do you treat guests in your home, school, or church? How might you treat your emotions like guests?
- Is welcoming your emotions uncomfortable or freeing for you? Explain your answer.

If you think your students would benefit from a more concrete presentation of how emotions live in our minds, you might consider introducing *Inside Out* (2015). The animated film follows 11-year-old Riley as she moves to a new state. Riley’s emotions, which are presented as characters, compete for control of her thoughts as she processes the change in her life. While the film is appropriate for children ages nine and older, it addresses complex ideas also suitable for adults.

If some of your students have seen the movie, encourage them to outline the basic plot for students who have not seen it. Then, invite students to watch this short clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SORKRRyqhQ>. This video introduces the five emotion characters—Joy, Sadness, Fear, Disgust, and Anger. After students have watched the video, you can use these questions to begin a discussion.

- Compare the video clip to Rumi’s poem. How is *Inside Out* similar to the “The Guest House”? In what ways is it different?
- In this video clip, which emotion is unwelcome? Why do you think this emotion is unwelcome?

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The next clip will allow students to deepen their discussion about sadness: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISaHt3ps1dM&list=RDISaHt3ps1dM&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISaHt3ps1dM&list=RDISaHt3ps1dM&start_radio=1)

Once students have watched this video, you might discuss the questions that follow.

- In this video clip, what happens that changes the way we see Sadness? Why is sadness important? (Fear keeps us safe. Anger ensures fairness. What role does sadness play?)
- In your own mind, what emotions are most present? What emotions do you wish would go away? Why do you dislike these emotions?
- What makes each of these emotions important? What value does each emotion have?

As you conclude the discussion, help students connect the material to the rest of the content in Week 2. Remind students that emotions, like thoughts, come and go. Each emotion plays an important role, but no single emotion defines us. Encourage students to identify and make room for the emotions that arise during the awareness meditation.