

Emotional Layers Letter

Our feelings tend to come in layers. Anger is the protective emotion to deal with an underlying hurt, for example. Often we need to express the painful emotions and get them moving before we find the warmer feelings underneath.

Focus on a person you have some anger or resentment against. Start writing your honest thoughts and feelings, following the prompts below and expressing yourself freely. Don't try to be nice or reasonable. Don't think too much. Don't analyze and explain. Just let it all out, especially the thoughts and feelings that are embarrassing.

It does not have to make sense; it can contradict itself. That's okay; feelings are messy and illogical. The goal is to be honest and express even the "forbidden" things: your resentments, anger, disappointments, self-pity, hatred, fears.

For example: "I hate it, Mom, when you act like such a victim!" "I'm scared, Dad, that I'll always just be taking care of your feelings." "I resent you because always look so miserable!" "I'm afraid to love you."

No one has to read this—this is for you to get in touch with the full range of mixed feelings you have about a person, and work towards the more tender and caring feelings.

Give yourself time to work with each section. Add on extra sentences if more thoughts come. And you can go back in fill in earlier sections if you find those feelings coming up. The goal is to empty yourself.

Keep going until you discover the love and appreciation. Don't stop until then!

1. Anger & Blame

- I don't like it when you—
- I'm so mad that you—
- I hate it when you—
- I'm fed up with you—
- I'm tired of you—
- I resent you—

2. Hurt & Sadness

- It hurt me when you—
- I felt sad when you—
- I feel hurt that you—
- I feel awful because you—
- I am disappointed that you—
- This reminds of past pain, when—

3. Fear & Insecurity

- I'm afraid that—

- I get scared when—
- I am worried that—
- I'm afraid that I—

4. Regret & Responsibility

- I feel bad that I—
- I feel bad that you—
- I'm sorry for—
- I didn't mean to—
- I may be to blame for—
- Please forgive me for—

5. Requests & Wants

- All I ever wanted was for us to—
- I want you to—
- I want(ed)—
- I deserve to—

6. Intentions & Hopes

- I want to—
- I promise that I—
- I hope that we—
- I hope that you—
- Let's try—

7. Appreciation & Forgiveness

- I appreciate you for—
- I love when you—
- Thank you for—
- Now I understand about—
- I forgive you for—
- I love you for—

Adapted from "The Emotional Map," by Barbara DeAngelis, Ph.D., and "The Letter Technique," by John Gray, Ph.D.