

Week 49: What to Do When Our Feelings Are Lying to Us

My youngest son is a lot like me—he pretty much organizes his life around avoiding physical pain and discomfort. So, when he got pink eye, and the doctor ordered us to put antibiotic drops in his eye, I wondered if we could just lock him in his room for a week until the pink eye resolved on its own. Don't judge me. I only wondered for a minute. Or two.

I was put in charge of the drops, because I can empathize a little better with his hysteria. As he lay on the couch, writhing, eyes clamped shut and screaming, it was clear his feelings were preventing him from receiving a healing balm. The drops were *medicine*—they would be soothing and they would cure him—but his feelings were lying to him, telling him he wouldn't be able to handle the discomfort.

And there was nothing I could do to change his feelings.

Our feelings are important—we need to listen to them, to become intimately familiar with them, to learn their depths. But that doesn't mean they're always honest with us. Sometimes, our feelings *lie*. For instance, anxiety is a sincere and good feeling when you hear footsteps behind you in a dark parking garage. It's a horrible, life-ruining lie when you are walking down the street and scared to death of what everyone thinks of the size of your waist or the size of your wallet.

Many of us have gotten used to listening to the lies our feelings whisper to us, and it's shutting down our lives, because we are missing out on the healing elixir of love and grace and creativity and wonder.

My feelings lie to me every time a new blog post goes live. I get terrified of what people will think. My feelings tell me it's not worth it. They tell me to forget about this whole writing thing. So, as my son rocked to and fro on the couch, I could relate to it. Quietly, I asked him to listen to my whisper and when he had stilled, I asked, "Can you find the place inside of your heart where you can do anything?" One eye peaked open. "Huh?" he asked. So I said it again, "Can you close your eyes and find the still, quiet place inside of you where you know you can do anything?"

He closed his eyes. I watched his face get placid and his chest begin to slowly rise and fall. Then his eyes opened, and he looked at me, and he said, "I'm ready, Daddy."

And I dropped the healing medicine into his eye.

We have a still, quiet place inside of us. I could confidently encourage my son to find his still, quiet center, because as a therapist, I've learned we *all* have it. And when we call upon it, our fears lose their power to limit us, our anger loses its power to devastate us, and our sadness loses its power to devour us. Our feelings lose their control over us.

We trade in our resentment for the quiet whisper of “Go apologize.” We trade in our fear of condemnation for the quiet whisper of “Go create.” We trade in our regrets about the past for the quiet whisper of “Live this. Now.” We trade in our surge of shame for “Be vulnerable, make yourself known.” We trade in years of “You’re a mess, you should be embarrassed,” for the quiet whisper of “You’re a mess, join the club and start to *live*.”

My feelings tell me to scrap a piece of writing like this. My feelings tell me people will think I’m arrogant to speak so boldly. My feelings tell me people will think it’s all a bunch of psychobabble. Or even worse, people won’t care about it at all. But the quiet whisper from the still place says, “Put it out there, your words matter, Kelly, and even if you get it all wrong, you are still worthy.”

The whisper is like a drop of healing medicine.

Our feelings are keeping us captive. Killing our creativity. Stifling our love. Undermining our redemption and the resurrection of our truest self. But what if we all stopped listening to them, and started listening to the still, quiet place inside? I think it would be like a balm. And I think we’d all start to see our lives for what they are.

Life is a gift in terrifying disguise,
and we are here to open it,
until we find the still-quiet place in the center of it,
where fear no longer decides.