

# No More Numbing!

*How to stop numbing your feelings and let go of past hurts*

*By Dr. Monica Vermani, C. Psych, Clinical Psychologist  
& Founder, Start Living Corporate Wellness*

---

*Life is a series of experiences. Some make us feel loved, appreciated, supported, and capable. These we label as good. Those experiences we label as bad fill us with shame, fear, anger, envy or dread, and leave us feeling, defeated, abandoned, unloved, and alone. Rather than process and let go of negative experiences, we often choose instead to distract ourselves and bury our pain. But buried pain has a way of showing up when we least expect it! Let's explore why and how we avoid negative emotions, and how we can put our past hurts to rest and create the life we want.*

---

When life is good, and when we're feeling good, we feel like we're firing on all cylinders. We make good choices for ourselves and manage our relationships and commitments. Most of us can navigate the good times without any trouble. But when the going gets tough, life can quickly devolve into a whole different story.

## **Numbing behaviors**

When we find ourselves in rough waters, experiencing unpleasant emotions, we sometimes seek relief through numbing behaviors. Numbing behaviors come in many forms, from overworking, over-eating, or oversleeping, to over-imbibing in mind-altering substances like alcohol, or drugs, or binging on distractions like pornography, video games, or TV. Some may turn to obsessive shopping, gambling, or socializing to distract and suppress unpleasant feelings when they arise.

## **Avoiding negative emotions**

Emotions —both positive and negative ones — come on strong. Sonnets and love songs endlessly attempt to describe the euphoria of falling in love. People speak of beaming with pride as they watch their child hit a home run or graduate from college. We're all familiar with the flood of positive emotions and sensations we feel when we receive good news, like a promotion, a raise, or a new and exciting opportunity that arises. We've all heard receiving bad news described as 'a

punch to the gut. We've heard of people being 'frozen in fear,' in a frightening situation, or 'burning with rage,' when someone offends them or something doesn't go the way they had hoped. And we're familiar with unkind words of a friend or family member hitting us 'like a ton of bricks.'

Positive and negative emotions hit us, emotionally and physically the moment they show up. These feelings can be powerful and all-encompassing. When the experiences and their accompanying emotions are negative and painful, we often try to avoid sitting with and processing our feelings. Instead, we bury and ignore them. We engage in all manners of self-distraction as a means of avoiding negative emotions.

When we numb our negative emotions, we may think we're taking care of ourselves by keeping the bad feelings at bay. But we are only postponing the processing and clearing, that will need to be done. Eventually, we will begin replaying unprocessed negative experiences in our minds, and catastrophizing events to a point where we spiral into a state of anxiety, and self-doubt. Unprocessed negative experiences lead us into a state of despair and dread.

Numbing may provide temporary relief, but it is neither sustainable, nor does it banish negative experiences. Prolonged numbing can leave us broke, addicted, detached, and

distanced from the people who care about us. We become lost and confused about life, and lose self-connection and self-esteem. This can lead to settling for less in life and limiting our potential for fulfillment and happiness.

### **Emotional debris**

A lifetime of numbing negative feelings and suppressing rather than processing past hurts leaves us with emotional debris. The more emotional debris we carry, the more vulnerable we are. As a clinical psychologist, I work with many patients who struggle with past hurts and negative memories that resurface, especially when they are dealing with a challenge in the present.

I call these painful memories emotional debris, and I link pervasive negative memories that pop up from the past to boulders that come up over a season in a farmer's field. Like farmers who need to remove the boulders that rise to the surface every spring before planting a new crop, we need to engage in the process of clearing up our emotional debris that arise like boulders. When emotions come up, allow them and acknowledge them, as numbing, denying or avoiding what is triggered will keep us stuck. If we don't allow ourselves to process what is coming up naturally for a deeper wellness, it will keep showing up, over and over and get in the way of your progress and happiness.

### **Clearing and healing**

Emotional debris is our unfinished business and unprocessed pain. As long as we hold onto our emotional debris, we are at risk of reliving past hurts. When we neglect to rid ourselves of our emotional debris, it continues to resurface, over and over, especially when we are most vulnerable and stressed.

We need to make way for our growth and happiness. We can begin by deciding to clear our emotional debris. We need to sit with our negative emotions and allow ourselves to acknowledge and feel our feelings fully. We then begin to examine the role we may have played in a past hurt. We need to sit with

uncomfortable emotions, forgive ourselves and others, and see how we have learned and grown from even the most difficult experiences in our lives.

### **Becoming unstuck**

Once we process our pain, we are unstuck. We will still have the memories, but their emotional affect and effect, will no longer be as intense or bothersome. We can begin to appreciate the lessons our negative experiences have taught us. We can acknowledge how far we have come, and how much we have learned and grown. We can choose to put our past hurts where they belong and can no longer hurt us — in the past. When we sit with negative emotions, we create opportunities to heal, clear, process, and evolve. We allow ourselves to begin to create a better future.

As we begin to heal, we start to trust ourselves, to know when we need to bring in extra self-care, or to ask for help from others. As we clear our past hurts, we begin to let go and move into a happier, more fulfilled future.

### **Clearing emotional debris**

*Clearing and clearing the emotional debris of past hurts and negative experiences allows us to make room for a better, more fulfilling life.*

*Here are five steps to clearing past hurts:*

**Decide** to let go of past hurts, rather than hold on and feel stuck and choose to numb your emotions

**Sit** with the negative emotions of your painful memories

**Acknowledge** whatever part you may have played in a past negative situation, and how much you have learned and grown

**Forgive and release** yourself and others for past hurts

**Bring in** self-care, compassion for pains endured and obtain help from others or resources when you need it

**NEW**

Heal your past, deal with your present  
and take control of your future.

**A DEEPER WELLNESS**

**18 LIFE LESSONS • ONLINE**  
With Dr. Monica Vermani, C. Psych.

**START TODAY**



*About the author*

*Dr. Monica Vermani is a Clinical Psychologist specializing in treating trauma, stress and mood & anxiety disorders, and the founder of Start Living Corporate Wellness. She is a well-known speaker and author on mental health and wellness. Her upcoming book, A Deeper Wellness, is scheduled for publication in 2021. <https://www.drmonicavermani.com/>*

*Dr. Vermani has recently launched an exciting online self-help program, A Deeper Wellness, delivering powerful mental-health guidance, life skills, and knowledge that employees can access anywhere, anytime. <https://www.adeeperwellness.com/>*

