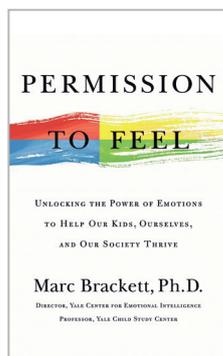


**PERMISSION TO FEEL**

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF EMOTIONS TO HELP OUR KIDS, OURSELVES  
AND OUR SOCIETY THRIVE.



## THE BOOK



**Permission to Feel**  
Unlocking The Power of Emotions to Help  
Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society

by Marc Brackett



## INTRODUCTION

Marc Brackett is on a mission. As Founding Director of the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence, he has seen how low mental wellbeing is in children and adults alike and has set out to do all he can to help.

With his book *Permission to Feel*, Brackett packs years of experience in the field as well as a true passion for helping people into a readable guide to improve mental wellbeing. His simple but startlingly effective RULER method shows readers how to understand your emotions and to have them work for you rather than against you.

By Recognising, Understanding, Labelling, Expressing and Regulating emotions, you will be on the road to a healthier emotional life and greater wellbeing at school, work, and home. And by helping your kids to learn the RULER system, you are setting them up for future success and happiness.

Rigorously researched and rich with personal anecdotes and relatable stories, *Permission to Feel* is as readable as it is educational.



## 5 BEST QUOTES

**“The core skill of Understanding is the search for the underlying theme or possible cause that fuels the emotion. We’re not asking questions and listening to answers just to provide a sympathetic ear. As we listen, we’re looking for a meaning that goes deeper than the words being said.”**

**“Labeling emotions accurately increases self-awareness and helps us to communicate emotions effectively, reducing misunderstanding in social interactions.”**

**“Emotion regulation is not about not feeling. Neither is it exerting tight control over what we feel. And it’s not about banishing negative emotions and feeling only positive ones. Rather, emotion regulation starts with giving ourselves and others the permission to own our feelings—all of them.”**

**“First, our emotional state determines where we direct our attention, what we remember, and what we learn. Second is decision making: when we’re in the grip of any strong emotion—such as anger or sadness, but also elation or joy—we perceive the world differently, and the choices we make at that moment are influenced,”**

**“It’s possible to distract ourselves to such a degree that we avoid dealing with anything difficult—even when our lives would be improved by facing reality and doing something about it.”**



7 BIG IDEAS

## 1. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

While IQ (intelligence quotient) has long been touted as a way to measure a person's intellectual intelligence, EQ (emotional quotient) has more recently gained a strong foothold in psychological circles. Emotional intelligence is the way that you handle and deal with emotions in yourself and others. The concept is gaining a foothold as more important in many ways than intellectual intelligence. Those with higher emotional intelligence are not only better at dealing with people and are more well liked, they also tend to be happier and have a higher level of wellbeing than those with lower emotional intelligence.

The RULER system in *Permission to Feel* is essentially a way to learn to improve your emotional intelligence.

## 2. EMOTION SCIENCE

It is easy to be an 'emotion judge'. Being an 'emotion scientist' is far more challenging.

In his book, Brackett explains that being an emotion judge is far more common and tends to be an automatic response. It means seeing an emotion in yourself or another and deeming it either good or bad. Of course emotions are far more complex than this and need more than a black and white view. Being an emotion scientist means trying to understand emotions and why they occur as well as not making value judgments as to their worthiness.

For example, if a teenager yells at an emotion judge, that judge will deem them angry and badly behaved and react based on this assumption. However, an emotion scientist will seek to understand the reasons behind the outburst, to dig deeper and counter the true, underlying emotions. The anger may come from stress, fear, or disappointment. Dealing with these emotions rather than the surface level anger will reap long term benefits.

## 3. RECOGNISE

The first letter in RULER stands for recognise. Without being able to recognise an emotion, there is no way to deal with it. To help recognise emotions, Brackett advises using the Mood Meter, a hugely useful tool created by a psychologist to allocate emotions a place on a grid.

The grid is split into quadrants, with each being allocated a colour; red, yellow, blue, and green. Red and blue, to the left of the grid, respectively represent less pleasant emotions, while yellow and green on the right are for pleasant emotions. The top colours on the grid, red and yellow, represent higher energy levels and blue and green demonstrate lower energy levels.



## 7 BIG IDEAS

By assessing where an emotion lies on the grid, you can see what emotional spectrum it falls into. For instance being angry is unpleasant and high energy, putting it in the red zone, while feeling content is pleasant and low energy, making it green.

#### 4. UNDERSTAND

Emotions are far more complex than we often assume. In order to deal with them properly it is vital to understand them.

To return to our angry teenager, they may have yelled because they failed a test that day. If they worked hard and felt that they deserved to pass then they will be feeling disappointment. If they feel they were ill treated by the teacher they may be feeling anger. If they didn't study they may be feeling shame.

All of these are strong emotions that may well manifest as anger in the moment. Without understanding emotions and their underlying causes, it is hopeless to try to navigate them.

#### 5. LABEL

It is incredible how naming something can give you power over it. Brackett cites an experiment where arachnophobic participants were split into two groups. Both groups were put in a room with a caged spider, the first group were asked to use emotion words to describe how they were feeling while the second group used emotional neutral words. The result was that the first group had more success in facing their fear of spiders and approaching the cage.

Simply labelling the emotion you are experiencing gives you power and insight into dealing with it.

#### 6. EXPRESS

Expressing emotions means letting people know how you feel and why. It is vital to be able to express how you are feeling, otherwise you can never alter or deal with situations that are emotionally difficult for you. Of course this does not mean having free reign to tell people exactly how you are feeling all the time. Proper expression also takes discretion. All the same, simply making your feelings known is a major step in creating a more sustainable work/family environment.



## 7 BIG IDEAS

## 7. REGULATE

The final step in the RULER system is perhaps the most difficult. Emotions are visceral and don't always stem from logic but it is still important to learn to regulate them. This does not mean suppressing your emotions but learning when and how to use them to your benefit. If you are watching a sad movie it is fine to have a cry, not so useful though in front of a class of 10 year olds.

Having learned to recognise, understand, and label your emotions will make it easier to regulate them. Using the Mood Meter will also help. If you can identify the colour you need to be in for the specific task then you can aim for that emotional spectrum.

Internal triggers like mindfulness meditation or a 'meta-moment', which is a short pause to think about how you are feeling, can help regulate your emotions.

External stimuli can also be helpful. For example, play some energetic music when you need to be upbeat and creative but more mellow music for more reflective tasks. Learning external and internal methods to regulate your emotions is the best way to sculpt your emotion to your surroundings.

**3 ACTION STEPS****1. BECOME AN 'EMOTION SCIENTIST'**

Rather than being an 'emotion judge' when it comes to the emotions you or others are feeling, you need to become an 'emotional scientist', analysing and exploring emotions. In this way you can dig beneath surface appearances to discover the true nature of emotions and their causes.

**2. LEARN THE RULER SYSTEM.**

The RULER system is to Recognise, Understand, Label, Express, and Regulate emotions. By learning each facet of this system you can start to make your emotions work for you.

**3. BRING THESE SKILLS WHEREVER YOU GO**

At school, work, or home make sure that you use your emotional intelligence and implement the RULER system. Share it with others and make all your environments more emotionally stable and productive.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

The key takeaway of Permission to Feel is that the more people work on their emotional intelligence, the better the world will be. By understanding emotional intelligence and working to improve it in yourself, you are taking steps to a better life.

Being an 'emotion scientist' and not an 'emotions judge' is the best way to manage emotions in ourselves and others and to enhance emotional intelligence. Take the time to understand emotions rather than judging them and reacting combatively.

A shared understanding of emotions and how to regulate them will lead to a happier and more productive school, home, or workplace. Taking the time to learn and practice these skills will make life better for you, your family, and peers.



**want more?**

**visit** [thehopefullinstitute.com](http://thehopefullinstitute.com)  
**email** [hello@thehopefullinstitute.com](mailto:hello@thehopefullinstitute.com)  
**call** +61 2 9943 0350