

Inner Sage Leadership Group

“Judgments are the most expensive way to think.”

Dr. Joan Flora



I grew up in a tense household where conflict was avoided. When conflict surfaced, it was intense.

As a leader, I followed the conflict playbook I had been taught: explain, justify, defend. It projected competence, but that strategy left me depleted.

Over four decades in education, as a teacher, literacy specialist, school leader, and now an Ed.D. and ICF-credentialed PCC coach, I began to see a different pattern.

Conflict wasn't the problem. Getting emotionally hooked was.

Through Inner Sage Leadership Group, I help leaders navigate conflict without getting hooked. Listening is not a personality trait; it's a nervous-system skill that develops over time.

Hard conversations don't have to drain us. They can build capacity, creativity, and contribution.

Her most requested workshops include:

1. [Raising the Quality of Conflict](#)
2. [The Empathy & Attunement Studio](#)
3. [Boundaries That Build Trust](#)
4. Resolving Emotional Reactivity, returning Fall 2026
5. The Art of Emotional Wisdom, returning Winter 2027

Learn more and contact Joan at www.InnerSageCoach.com or [Linkedin](#)

Body Intelligence

Temperature

/Heat

Hot
Flushed
Warm
Cool/Cold/Icy
Cold Hands & Feet
Chills
Sweaty

Cardiovascular

Pounding
Heart racing
Rush
Energetic
Vitality
Fluttery

Pain &

Tenderness

Tender
Sensitive
Bruised
Achy
Sore
Raw
Gnawing in the belly
Stomach knots
Queasy

Head/Cognition

Dizzy / Spinner
Scattered / Spacey
Urgency
Flood of thoughts

Nerve/

Electrical

Tingling
Electric
Prickly
Needling
Twitchy
Radiating
Buzzy
Itchy

Breath

Breathless
Suffocating
Dry Throat
Dry mouth
Tight Chest
Congested

Movement

Shaky
Trembling
Wobbly
Jittery
Restless
Shivers

Density

Heavy
Dense
Thick
Contracted
Constricted
Constriction
Clenched
Knotted
Tense
Stiff
Blocked
Closed
Shrinking
Cramped

Disconnection

Empty
Hollow
Disconnected
Numb
Weak
Drained

Expansion

Calm
Relaxed
Smooth
Open
Expansive
Spacious
Airy
Alive

Emotions & Feelings

● High Energy + Low pleasant Angry, Anxious, Apprehensive, Concerned, Enraged, Frightened, Frustrated, Fuming, Furious, Irritated, Jittery*, Livid, Nervous, Outraged, Overwhelmed, Panicked, Tense*, Troubled, Uneasy, Worried <i>What boundary or value feels crossed? What need is signaling for attention?</i>	● High Energy + High Pleasant Blissful, Cheerful, Ecstatic, Elated, Energized*, Engaged, Enthusiastic, Excited, Exhilarated, Festive, Happy, Hopeful, Hyper*, Inspired, Joyful, Lively*, Moved, Pleasant, Playful, Pleased, Surprised, Thrilled, Upbeat* <i>What momentum can be honored or celebrated?</i>
● Low Energy + Low pleasant Bored*, Depressed, Desolate, Despairing, Despondent, Disappointed, Discouraged, Disheartened, Distressed, Down, Drained*, Exhausted*, Fatigued*, Glum, Lonely, Miserable, Morose, Sad, Spent*, Sullen, Tired* <i>What comfort, connection, or restoration is needed?</i>	● Low Energy + High Pleasant At Ease*, Balanced, Calm*, Carefree, Comfortable, Content, Cozy*, Easygoing*, Fulfilled, Grateful, Loving, Peaceful, Relaxed*, Restful*, Satisfied, Secure, Serene, Sleepy*, Thoughtful, Touched, Tranquil* <i>As I move through this ease, what is surfacing?</i>

*Felt states within the body

Adapted from Marshall Rosenberg's "Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life. Mood Meter adapted from Marc Brackett's Mood Meter

Emotions signal whether our needs are being met. Ease (pleasant) often means alignment. Activation (unpleasant) often means something important needs attention.

There are approximately 2,000 English words that describe emotions.

- About 1,400 (70%) describe unpleasant emotions.
- About 300 (15%) describe pleasant emotions.
- The remaining 300 (15%) describe neutral emotions.

-Marc Brackett, Permission to Feel (2019)

Universal Needs

“At the heart of every behavior is the desire to meet a precious need.”

Dr. Marshall Rosenberg

Physical Well-Being: Air · Exercise · Food · Movement · Nature · Rest · Safety
Sensuality · Shelter · Sleep · Sunlight · Touch · Water

Autonomy: Agency · Choice · Choosing/planning one's dreams, goals, values · Freedom
Honesty · Impact · Independence · Self-Determination · Self-expression · Space ·
Spontaneity

Relating: Acceptance · Affection · Appreciation · Belonging · Being seen/heard
Closeness · Communication · Community · Compassion · Companionship · Connection
Consideration · Contribution · Cooperation · Empathy · Feedback · Inclusion
Interdependence · Intimacy · Love · Mutuality · Participation · Respect · Sexuality ·
Shared reality · Sharing · Support · Transparency · Trust · Understanding

Self-Connection: Authenticity · Awareness · Celebration · Clarity · Competence ·
Consciousness · Creativity · Growth · Integrity · Meaning · Mourning · Presence
Purpose · Self-acceptance · Self-expression · Self-realization · Self-respect · Spirituality

Joy of Life: Adventure · Beauty · Comfort · Diversity · Ease · Hope · Humor · Inspiration
Joy · Play · Well-being

Connection with the World: Challenge · Clarity · Coherence · Consistency · Exploration
Flexibility · Harmony · Learning · Meaning · Order/predictability · Peace · Stability
Stimulation · Understanding

Empathy Guess Prompts:

- “Was the need for _____ met for you?” / “Did that experience give you _____?”
- “Do you feel _____ because you (need, value, what’s important) _____?”
- “Sounds like you’re wanting _____ (guess a need). Is that right?”

Adapted from Marshall Rosenberg’s “Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life. Compiled and formatted by Dr. Joan Flora.

Assessment: Emotional Reactivity Emotional reactivity rarely comes only from “the moment” itself. It is often shaped by stress, overwhelm, unmet needs, nervous system activation, and relational dynamics we may not fully notice.

Reactivity is usually protective. It can signal that important needs, values, boundaries, or capacities are under strain. This reflection is designed to help you notice the conditions that increase your reactivity so you can respond with greater awareness, steadiness, and choice.

Rate each statement:

- 1 = Rarely true
- 2 = Sometimes true
- 3 = Often true

I notice my emotional reactivity increases when...

1. ... someone expresses anger, resentment, hostility, or intense frustration.
2. ... I’m feeling tired, discouraged, or emotionally depleted.
3. ... I’m lonely, disconnected, or feeling unseen.
4. ... I’m disappointed, emotionally off-balance, or having a hard emotional day.
5. ... I’m feeling pressure from urgent demands, interruptions, or competing expectations.
6. ... I’m feeling rushed or overwhelmed.
7. ... I’ve procrastinated on something important and feel mounting pressure.
8. ... I’m facing urgent deadlines or competing priorities.
9. ... I’m driving and someone behaves unpredictably or aggressively in traffic.
10. ... I break something, bump into something, or hurt myself unexpectedly.
11. ... Technology glitches, freezes, or malfunctions.
12. ... I’m startled, interrupted, or pulled suddenly off-task.
13. ... someone’s words or actions strongly conflict with my values or sense of integrity.
14. ... I feel judged, misunderstood, or dismissed for what matters deeply to me.
15. ... another person’s perspective or choices feel threatening to my sense of identity or belonging.
16. ... I feel pressure to defend, justify, or protect what I believe is important.
17. ... I don’t have enough information to know what’s happening or what’s expected of me.
18. ... plans change suddenly or situations feel unpredictable.
19. ... I feel uncertain about how to move forward or make an effective decision.
20. ... I feel unable to influence, control, or meaningfully affect what is happening around me.

Tallying:

Emotional Conditions (Add items 1–4) » _____

Pressure & Productivity Conditions (Add items 5–8) » _____

Automatic / Fast-Reaction Conditions (Add items 9–12) » _____

Identity & Values Conditions (Add items 13–16) » _____

Uncertainty & Constraints Conditions (Add items 17–20) » _____

6

Solo Reflection (10 minutes)

Our feelings are valuable messengers. They tell us whether our needs are being met or unmet. Your responses may help you recognize the conditions under which those messages are most difficult or most important to hear. Purpose: self-awareness.

1. **What seems to contribute most to my reactivity?** *Look at your highest-scoring items.*
 - What conditions or themes show up most often?
 - What do these situations have in common?
 - What needs, values, or vulnerabilities might be asking for attention?
2. **How do I pause?** *A pause usually creates room for choice.*
 - What helps me pause: breath, movement, silence, stepping away?
 - How does my body signal it's time to stop a conversation or communication?
3. **How do I support myself when I'm activated?** *Self-attunement invites emotional steadiness.*
 - How do I typically speak to myself during stress?
 - What helps me feel supported, grounded, or understood?
 - What message would help me return to center?
4. **What happens after I'm activated?** *Strong emotions often trigger familiar habits.*
 - What do I typically do when strong feelings arise?
 - Which responses help me move toward what matters?
 - What small practice could support a more intentional response?

Partner Reflection (10 minutes each)--Joan will provide prompts