

## **The Four Steps of Expansion:**

The four basic steps of expansion are: observe your feelings, breathe into them, make room for them, and allow them to be there. Sounds simple doesn't it? That's because it is. It's also effortless. However, that does not mean it's easy! Remember the quicksand scenario? Lying back and floating on quicksand is both simple and effortless – yet it's far from easy.

**Step 1: Observe** - Observe the sensations in your body. Take a few seconds to scan yourself from head to toe, noticing any uncomfortable sensations. Pick the one that upsets you the most – lump in your throat, knot in your stomach, etc. and focus on it. Observe the feeling with curiosity.

**Step 2: Breathe** - Breathe into and around the sensation. Begin with a few deep breaths, being sure to empty your lungs completely. Slow, deep breathing is important – it lowers your levels of tension and provides a center of calm within you. “It's like an anchor in the midst of an emotional storm: the anchor won't get rid of the storm, but it will hold you steady until it passes.”

**Step 3: Create Space** - In breathing deeply into and around the sensation, it's as if you're somehow making space within your body. You're expanding rather than tensing. Open up and create a space around this sensation, giving it plenty of room to move. And if it gets bigger, give it even more space.

**Step 4: Allow** - Resist the urge to get rid of the feeling. Allow it to be there, even though it's unpleasant and you don't like it. Let it be. When your mind starts judging and commenting, simply thank it and bring your attention back to observing.

This process is the natural progression from defusion of thoughts. Essentially, it's the same process, only with feelings. In both defusion and expansion, the goal is acceptance not “getting rid of” the thoughts and feelings.

As you practice this technique, one of two things will happen: either your feelings will change or they won't. It doesn't matter either way, because this technique is not about changing your feelings – it's about accepting them. If you have truly dropped the struggle with this feeling, it will have much less impact on you, regardless of whether it changes.