

Description of the Emotion Trees

The Thorn Bush

Once you start paying attention to your pain, think about the emotion you feel right before you go for another spin on your favorite ride—maybe it is rooted in fear, anger, shame, or pride. But let's try to be more nuanced in discovering our emotions. Below is a table that reads from left to right, starting with fruit, then branches, and ending with roots.

I have named this table The Thorn Bush in honor of its behavior in nature. The thorn bush produces small, bitter fruit that is not good for eating and often can make you sick. Its branches are brittle and filled with sharp daggers that dig into the flesh of any who dares come near. It has small leaves that provide almost no shade. Its roots are aggressive and sprawling; they are built for survival, not stability or strength. The roots send out suckers, helping it form a colony that doubles every eighteen months. Its roots dominate the first eight inches of soil, allowing it to hoard water and choke out other beneficial plants. It doesn't need good soil because it can live in soil that is rocky and uncared for. This little bush represents our bad habits—the destructive feedback loop of life. Our good habits are represented by the olive tree and can be found at my website: www.sabbaticaltaker.com/feedbackloop.

Let's do a little soul-searching to identify this nasty habit of sarcasm I have. I looked at the thorn bush of emotions to see what I was feeling when I was sarcastic. I see my sarcasm best described as the fruit of **frustration**, from a branch supported by **blocked desire**, nourished by the roots of **anger**. Ouch! I don't like my sarcasm when I see it described this way.

The Thorn Bush of Emotions

The Fruit How We Feel the Emotion	The Branches Why It Forms	The Root Emotion
Resentment, Outrage, Bitterness	Injustice	Anger
Frustration , Irritation, Impatience	Blocked Desire	Anger
Defensiveness, Distrust	Violation of Boundaries	Anger
Anxiety, Worry, Insecurity	Threat of Loss	Fear
Panic, Helplessness, Avoidance	Loss of Control	Fear
Envy, Suspicion, Inferiority	Jealousy (Nested)	Fear
Arrogance, Defensiveness	Insecurity	Pride
Contempt, Dismissiveness, Bitterness	Desire for Superiority	Pride
Perfectionism, Inflexibility	Fear of Weakness	Pride
Humiliation, Self-Loathing, Isolation	Self-Rejection	Shame
Embarrassment, Inadequacy, Insecurity	Fear of Judgment	Shame
Sadness, Despair, Helplessness	Unresolved Grief	Shame

Note: You'll notice that some of the fruit, such as helplessness, can appear in multiple branches because it can grow from different roots.

The Olive Tree

The olive tree grows slow and sure, its roots deep and deliberate, drawing life from dry ground. Its bark is weathered and twisted, but its branches are supple, reaching outward instead of clawing. Where the thorn bush hoards and poisons, the olive tree nourishes and heals. Its fruit yields oil that strengthens the heart, calms inflammation, and sharpens the mind. Its taproot drives so deep it's nearly impossible to kill, anchoring it through drought and storm. The same oil once anointed kings, soothed wounds, and lit lamps through the night. It doesn't fight for space; it blesses the soil it stands in. Its roots don't choke the ground—they steady it. The olive tree is patient, fruitful, and enduring, a living symbol of peace that restores what the thorn bush destroys.

The Olive Tree of Emotions

Expressions (How It Manifests)	Reasons (Why It Grows)	Root Emotion
Contentment, Thankfulness, Delight	Gratitude	JOY
Excitement, Playfulness, Inspiration (shared with Courage)	Celebration	JOY
Awe, Curiosity (shared with Peace)	Wonder	JOY
Affection, Trust, Intimacy (shared with Peace)	Connection	LOVE
Empathy, Care, Sacrifice (overlaps with Kindness)	Compassion	LOVE
Devotion, Faithfulness, Integrity (overlaps with Courage)	Commitment	LOVE
Surrender, Stillness, Groundedness	Acceptance	PEACE
Restfulness, Harmony, Confidence (shared with Courage)	Security	PEACE
Forgiveness (from Kindness), Assurance (rooted in Love)	Reconciliation	PEACE
Gentleness, Patience	Humility	KINDNESS
Service, Encouragement, Forgiveness (shared with Peace)	Generosity	KINDNESS
Mercy, Divine Acceptance (shared with Love's Compassion)	Grace	KINDNESS
Hope, Vision, Confidence (shared with Peace)	Faith	COURAGE
Boldness, Resolve	Determination	COURAGE
Perseverance, Endurance, Inspiration (shared with Joy)	Resilience	COURAGE

Outer-Edge Convergence (Shared Fruits): Confidence · Inspiration · Forgiveness · Empathy · Devotion

These recurring feelings mark the unity of mature emotion—peaceful, purposeful, and relationally whole.