verbal representation v’s imagery construction and their relative impact on emotions

Holmes E & Mathews A
"Mental imagery in emotion & emotional disorders” Clinical Psychology Review 2010; 30: 349-62

- associates: action readiness, believability, attitude to self, etc ...
- contact with other semantic knowledge
- little overlap with processing of perceived events
- top down control processes
- select from
- autobiographic & semantic memory knowledge base
- matching
- bottom up sensory cue
- (re-)constructed image of emotional instance
- processing overlaps with perceived events
- direct contact with emotional systems
image/memory/emotion overlap

- sensory experience and/or verbal description
- memories
- emotions
- images
- pictures, sounds, smells, tastes, posture, sensations
- feelings, impulses, needs, descriptions
Good emotional awareness is likely to involve noting all five of these emotion components:

1. Triggering stimulus
2. Symbol or verbal label
3. Body sensation
4. Impulse or action tendency
5. Wish or need

when emotions are ‘over regulated’ we are out of touch with a crucial source of information; we also lack colour & vitality in our relationships & in our enjoyment of life; it’s as if we’re watching our experience from the bank, rather than living it.

when emotions are ‘under regulated’ we too easily lose our footing and get swept away, so we’re likely to be avoidant of emotions or at their mercy; either way emotions no longer serve us, they dominate & damage our relationships & our lives.

the aim, of course, is to be able to wade into the river of our emotional life without losing our footing; emotions then provide crucial information while giving our life colour, richness & meaning.
‘arriving’ at the feelings

- becoming aware of what I’m feeling, both superficially and at deeper levels
- being able to accept, understand & integrate both so-called ‘good’ & so-called ‘bad’ emotions
- becoming skilled at describing verbally what I’m feeling – sensations, emotions & blends of emotions

what emotions am I feeling?

‘leaving’ with the feelings

‘arriving’

what emotions am I feeling?

‘leaving’

does what I’m feeling seem to be adaptive & potentially helpful or is it maladaptive and likely to be unhelpful?

if adaptive then allow the emotion to ‘fuel’ appropriate and constructive action

if maladaptive then work to ‘transform’ the emotion rather than act from it in unhelpful & destructive ways