

# Words for Feelings

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My body knows something before I do.  
The way it shuts down.  
Its tightness, its hurt.  
It is saying something that I cannot.

My body is a canvas  
for what has never had, or,  
has lost the right to speak.  
A wrenching gut; head in a vice;  
the press of a broken heart.  
Images without words.  
A silenced prison and silencing prison guard.  
Swallowing suffering, hardening down.  
And the soul quietly starves in the darkness.

Who gives us words for feelings?  
'I'm sad;' 'I hurt;' 'I'm cross.'  
Body and feelings are sentenced early:  
'Don't feel, just get on with it.'  
'Don't cry, pull yourself together.'  
'You just need a clip round the ear.'

Until the day of liberation!  
Symptoms become a voice for exchanges with others,  
For listening; being listened to,  
'I' in relation to body.  
Body can give up its role as mediator without a union card  
And find a voice at last.

Words come tumbling out  
Smoulder, stab, ache, burn, cut, steam, boil, creep, pull, fester, snag;  
Each one a bridge to dialogue, self to self, self to other.  
A story, my story, unfolds.  
Soldiering on without feeling; placation trap; perfect control or perfect mess.  
If I must, then I won't.

A friendly CAT gives us words for feelings  
And actions:  
Noticing, stopping, recording, revising, trying something new.  
'I say 'hello' to 'symptoms'. 'I know you are there.' 'I am here for you.'  
'What do you need?'  
Compassionate curiosity leans into the pause and, body and I, no longer  
imprisoned, find courage to be in places never before dared.  
The gut undenches, the breath eases.  
The heart can find strength in the broken places.