Lately I’ve been using the term “and, not or” with people. Why? Because we are often led to believe that, in the face of negative emotions, we should somehow force ourselves to feel/think differently. And we put the positive and the negative in two dichotomous camps, as if we should never have mixed emotions about things. We are happy or sad, grateful or envious, feeling confident or feeling insecure. For instance, we are either happy for a friend who found the love of her life, OR jealous of that person because we are still single. We are either happy our spouse is home or annoyed that he left the kitchen a mess. The reality is, however, that we are often both of these things. And this, I must stress, is normal. But people don’t want these negative emotions and, so on top of trying to repress them (we just consumes our energy) we also feel guilty/stupid/abnormal for feeling this way. It’s like layering on upset. But. What if we just simply allowed ourselves to feel both sides of a feeling state in a way that allows for both compassion/acceptance and rational perspective. For instance, I am both delighted that my son is happy and independent at college while also miserable that he no longer needs me and that my role with him has changed. If I can accept both of these positions I can stop fighting with myself about how I should feel. In this “and, not or” space we feel less conflicted and tense. We all have ambivalences about many things in life. An “and, not or” position takes away to need to find resolution to this ambivalence. Next time you experience the ambivalence we all do about life, relationships, yourself, simply tell yourself that you don’t have to choose. You are both so happy for your friend who is getting married AND jealous that you haven’t found a partner yet. And reassure yourself that this is perfectly, perfectly normal!!