

OWNING YOUR FEELINGS



It can be easy to get caught up in your emotions as you're feeling them. Most people don't think about what emotions they are dealing with, but taking the time to really identify what you're feeling can help you to better cope with challenging situations.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



Allow yourself to feel. Sometimes there are societal pressures that encourage people to shut down their emotions, often expressed through statements like, "Big girls don't cry," or "Man up." These outdated ideas are harmful, not helpful. Everyone has emotions—they are part of the human experience—and you have every right to feel them, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic status, race, political affiliation or religion.



Don't ignore how you're feeling. Most of us have heard the term "bottling up your feelings" before. When we try to push feelings aside without addressing them, they build strength and make us more likely to "explode" at some point in the future. It may not always be appropriate to process your emotions at the very moment you are feeling them, but try to do so as soon as you can.



Talk it out. Find someone you trust that you can talk to about how you're feeling. You may find that people are eager to share about similar experiences they've had or times that they have felt the way that you are feeling. This can be helpful, but if you're really only interested in having someone listen, it's okay to tell them that.



Build your emotional vocabulary. When asked about our feelings, most people will usually use words like bad, sad, mad, good, or fine. But at the root of "good, bad, sad, mad, or fine" are many words that better describe how we feel. Try building your emotional vocabulary by writing down as many "feeling" words as you can think of and think of a time that you felt that way.



Try journaling. Each night write down at least 3 feelings you had over the course of the day and what caused them. It doesn't need to be a "Dear Diary" kind of thing. Just a few sentences or bullet points to help you practice being comfortable with identifying and expressing your emotions.



Consider the strength of your feelings. By thinking about how intense your emotions are, you may realize that what you thought you were feeling at first could better be described by another word. For instance, sometimes a person might say they are stressed when what they are really experiencing is something less severe like annoyance, alternatively anger might really be a stronger, deeper feeling like betrayal.



See a mental health professional. If you are taking steps to be more in touch with your feelings, but are having trouble dealing with them, mental health providers like counselors and therapists have been trained to help. Some free or low cost options are also available. Your employer might have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that offers a limited number of free counseling sessions, and your Human Resources department can help you access this resource. If you don't have an EAP through work, the leaders of religious organizations like churches, synagogues and mosques often have experience with counseling.

Sources

¹<https://learnersdictionary.com/3000-words/topic/emotions-vocabulary-english>

²Kashdan, T. B., Barrett, L. F., McKnight, P. E. (2015). Unpacking Emotion Differentiation: Transforming Unpleasant Experience by Perceiving Distinctions in Negativity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24(1), 10–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721414550708>

³Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., Reyes, M. R., & Salovey, P. (2012). Enhancing academic performance and social and emotional competence with the RULER feeling words curriculum. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 22, 218–224.

FAST FACTS



The English language has over 3,000 words for emotions.¹



People who are good at being specific about identifying and labeling their emotions are less likely to binge drink, be physically aggressive, or self-injure when distressed.²



When school-aged kids are taught about emotions for 20-30 minutes per week their social behavior and school performance improves.³

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org) TO CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS.



It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

WHAT'S UNDERNEATH?

Taking the time to slow down and identify what we are really experiencing can help us feel better and can improve our communications and relationships with others.

Using the prompts below, think of a specific action (this could be something you did, or something someone else did) or event and fill in the blank to identify what's underneath. The feelings list on this page can help you build your mental collection of feelings. This type of activity takes practice, but once you start doing it you'll find it easier over time.

I FELT BAD WHEN _____

 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS
 REALLY FEELING WAS _____,
 _____, AND _____.

I FELT SAD WHEN _____

 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS
 REALLY FEELING WAS _____,
 _____, AND _____.

I FELT MAD WHEN _____

 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS
 REALLY FEELING WAS _____,
 _____, AND _____.

I FELT GOOD WHEN _____

 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS
 REALLY FEELING WAS _____,
 _____, AND _____.

I FELT HAPPY WHEN _____

 (ACTION OR EVENT). BUT WHAT I WAS
 REALLY FEELING WAS _____,
 _____, AND _____.

POSITIVE FEELINGS

Admiration

Adoration
 Affection
 Appreciation
 Delight
 Fondness
 Pleasure
 Regard
 Amazement

Affectionate

Caring
 Friendly
 Loving
 Sympathetic
 Warm
 Doting
 Tender
 Attached
 Compassionate

Confident

Bold
 Courageous
 Positive
 Fearless
 Optimistic
 Encouraged
 Powerful
 Proud
 Trusting
 Secure
 Brave
 Empowered

Excited

Enthusiastic
 Delighted
 Amazed
 Passionate
 Aroused
 Alert
 Astonished
 Dazzled
 Energetic
 Awakened
 Eager
 Charged

Exhilarated

Blissful
 Ecstatic
 Elated
 Enthralled
 Exuberant
 Radiant
 Rapturous
 Thrilled

Gratitude

Thankful
 Grateful
 Moved
 Touched
 Appreciative
 Recognized
 Indebtedness

Included

Engaged
 Understood
 Appreciated
 Accepted
 Acknowledged
 Affirmed
 Recognized
 Welcomed
 Connected
 Supported
 Heard
 Respected
 Involved

Intrigued

Absorbed
 Fascinated
 Interested
 Charmed
 Entertained
 Captivated
 Engaged
 Engrossed
 Curious
 Surprised

Joyful

Cheerful
 Festive
 Lighthearted
 Upbeat
 Glad
 Merry
 Elated
 Delighted
 Jubilant
 Hopeful
 Ticked
 Pleased

Peaceful

Calm
 Quiet
 Trusting
 Fulfilled
 Steady
 Collected
 Composed
 Comfortable
 Centered
 Content
 Relieved
 Mellow
 Level
 Restful
 Still
 At ease
 Satisfied
 Relaxed
 Clear
 Reassured

Refreshed

Stimulated
 Replenished
 Exhilarated
 Reinvigorated
 Revived
 Enlivened
 Restored
 Liberated
 Lively
 Passionate
 Vibrant
 Rested

NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Afraid

Nervous
 Dread
 Frightened
 Cowardly
 Terrified
 Alarmed
 Panicked
 Suspicious
 Worried
 Apprehensive

Agitated

Bothered
 Uncomfortable
 Uneasy
 Frenzied
 Irritable
 Offended
 Disturbed
 Troubled
 Unsettled
 Unnerved
 Restless
 Upset

Angry

Furious
 Livid
 Irate
 Resentful
 Hateful
 Hostile
 Aggressive
 Worked up
 Provoked
 Outraged
 Defensive

Anxious

Shaky
 Distraught
 Edgy
 Fidgety
 Frazzled
 Irritable
 Jittery
 Overwhelmed
 Restless
 Preoccupied
 Flustered

Confusion

Lost
 Disoriented
 Puzzled
 Chaotic
 Uncertain
 Stuck
 Indecisive
 Foggy
 Dazed
 Baffled
 Flustered
 Perturbed
 Perplexed
 Hesitant
 Immobilized
 Ambivalent
 Torn

Disconnected

Lonely
 Isolated
 Bored
 Distant
 Removed
 Detached
 Separate
 Broken
 Aloof
 Numb
 Withdrawn
 Rejected
 Out-of-place
 Indifferent
 Misunderstood
 Abandoned
 Alienated

Disgust

Appalled
 Horrified
 Disturbed
 Repugnant
 Contempt
 Spiteful
 Animosity
 Hostile
 Bitter

Embarrassment

Awkward
 Self-conscious
 Silly
 Mortified
 Humiliated
 Flustered
 Chagrined
 Ashamed
 Put down
 Guilty
 Disgraced

Envy

Jealous
 Competitive
 Covetous
 Resentful
 Longing
 Insecure
 Inadequate
 Yearning

Helpless

Paralyzed
 Weak
 Defenseless
 Powerless
 Invalid
 Abandoned
 Alone
 Incapable
 Useless
 Inferior
 Vulnerable
 Empty
 Distressed

Pain

Remorseful
 Regretful
 Disappointed
 Guilty
 Grief
 Miserable
 Agony
 Anguish
 Bruised
 Crushed

Sadness

Heartbroken
 Disappointed
 Hopeless
 Regretful
 Depressed
 Pessimistic
 Melancholy
 Sorrowful
 Heavy-hearted
 Low
 Gloomy
 Miserable

Stress

Overwhelmed
 Frazzled
 Uneasy
 Cranky
 Distraught
 Dissatisfied
 Weighed down
 Overworked
 Anxious
 Shocked
 Frustrated

Tired

Bored
 Fatigued
 Exhausted
 Uninterested
 Worn out
 Fed up
 Drained
 Weary
 Burned out
 Lethargic
 Sleepy
 Depleted

Vulnerable

Insecure
 Exposed
 Unguarded
 Sensitive
 Unsafe
 Inferior
 Weak
 Judged
 Inadequate