# 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 These outdated ideas are harmful, not helpful.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.

# FAST FACTS



The English language has over 3,000 words for emotions.<sup>1</sup>



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.<sup>2</sup>



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

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, VISIT 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.



"https://learnersdictionary.com/3000-words/topic/emotions-vocabulary-english" "kashdan, 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 "Brackett, 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.



# 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 REALLY FEELING WAS	WAS
, AND	_•

I FELT SAD WHEN						
(ACTION	OR EVEN	T). BUT	WHAT	I WAS	,	
REALLY	<b>FEELING</b>	WAS			,	
	. 41	ID				

I FELT MAD WHEN					
•	OR EVEN	,	WHAT	I WAS	
REALLY	FEELING	WAS			
, AND					

I FELT GO	OOD WHE	N		
	OR EVEN	WAC	WHAT	
		ID		

# (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

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

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 Engrossed Curious Surprised

#### Joyful

Cheerful Festive Lighthearted Upbeat Glad Merry Elated Delighted Jubilant Hopeful Tickled 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

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 Bused 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