OWNING YOUR FEELINGS

TOOLS 2 THRIVE

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 These outdated ideas are harmful, not helpful.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.[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 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.

Sources

[1]https://learnersdictionary.com/3000-words/topic/emotions-vocabulary-english
[2]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
[3]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.

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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
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
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