

# 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 These outdated ideas are harmful, not helpful.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

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

<sup>2</sup>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>

<sup>3</sup>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.

## 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](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  
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  
Horried  
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