

# 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 These outdated ideas are harmful, not helpful.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  
 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