

MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

Name What You Feel

The ability to effectively manage and deal with our emotions is an important skill that supports our emotional wellness and ultimately our overall mental well-being. The first step in developing this skill is *naming our emotions*. Simply being able to label or define what you are feeling can lessen the intensity of the emotion and calm our reactive response so we can see, think, and problem-solve more effectively.

It sounds simple enough, but most people need to teach themselves how to do it well. We tend to lump feelings together as “good” or “bad”, and many of us can struggle to identify exactly what we are feeling. When it comes to effectively dealing with emotions, specificity is essential. Being able to accurately name what you feel will help you determine what to do with the feeling.

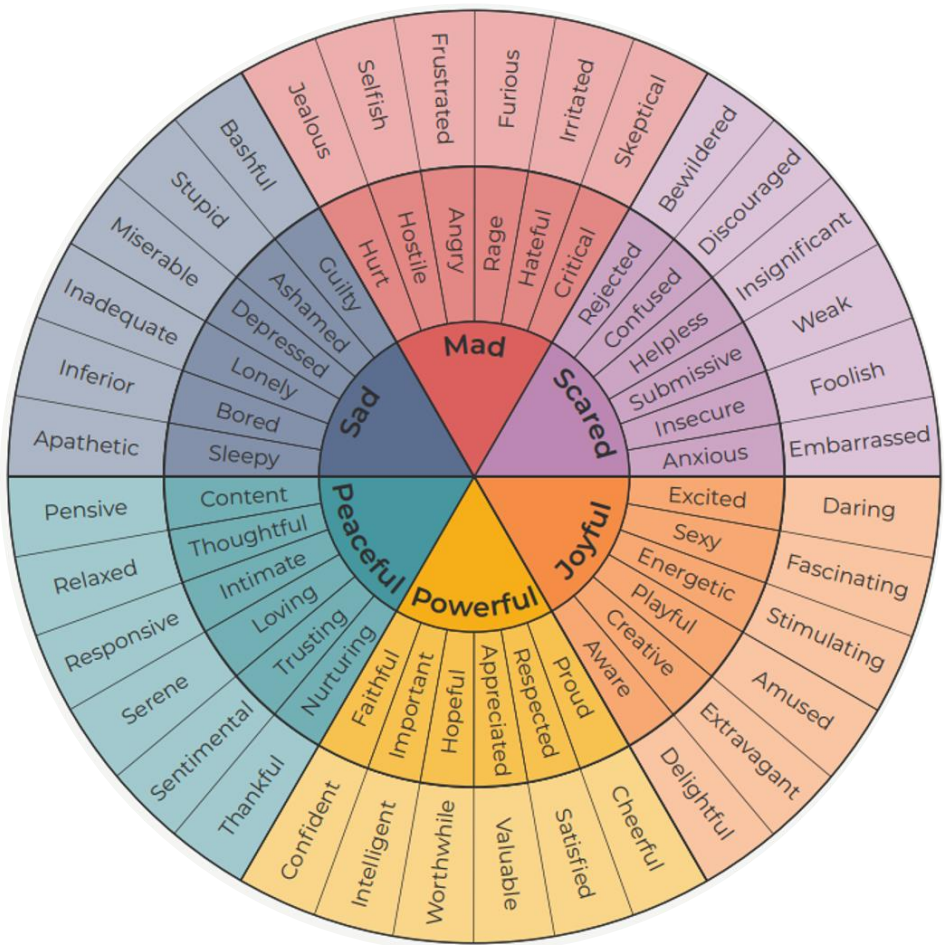
So, how do you do it?

Broaden Your Emotional Vocabulary

At times, the most obvious label for how we feel isn't the most accurate. When you experience a strong emotion, take a moment to consider what to call it. Then dive deeper to come up with two more words to describe the feeling. Expanding your vocabulary can help you better define your emotions more accurately and perhaps unearth a deeper emotion buried beneath a more obvious one.

A feeling wheel can be a helpful resource when trying to better define our emotions. Start by identifying what you're feeling based on the broader inner categories. Then move outward to narrow down the emotion.

Practice naming your emotions – both positive and negative – to improve your ability to accurately identify what you feel. You can even post the feeling wheel on your fridge or in your workspace, so you can do it throughout the day.



Write it Out

Research has demonstrated a meaningful link between writing and dealing with our emotions. The process of writing allows us to gain a new perspective on our emotions and understand them and their implications more clearly. The purpose is not to direct your thoughts in any specific way but to encourage you to reflect.

While you can complete this writing exercise every day, it's especially helpful when you're dealing with intense emotions that you're having difficulty with, or when going through a challenging time.



- Set aside 20 minutes, and find a quiet space where you can work undisturbed.
- Using a notebook or computer, write about your emotional experiences from the past day, week, or month.
- Write freely. Don't be concerned with perfect sentences or how it sounds. Go where your mind takes you when you think about how you're feeling.
- At the end of your time, set your written thoughts aside. You may not feel like you've accomplished anything, but the simple act of writing about your feelings is a step towards better understanding what they are and where they come from.

Once you understand what you're feeling, you can move forward with addressing why you feel that way and what you need to do to address it. Naming your emotions removes some of the initial intensity and allows you to see things more rationally. If it stems from an interaction with another person, it also sets the stage for forgiveness and resolution.

Here are a few important reminders when it comes to dealing with your emotions.



Accept your emotions.

Sometimes our feelings aren't pleasant, but it does little good to fight them or ignore them. Whatever you are feeling, do your best to accept it without judgment. Owning your feelings can help determine the best way to manage them and allows you to move forward.



Allow your emotions to motivate you.

Once you know what you're feeling and why, use that insight to guide your actions. Emotions can be a sign of things that we care about. We react to something emotionally because it matters to us. The awareness we gain when we label and understand our emotions allows us to run the emotion rather than the other way around.



Make labeling your emotions a habit.

The more you do it, the easier it becomes! Practice naming your emotions by periodically checking in with yourself. Take time to notice how you feel. Consider a writing exercise or perhaps log your moods in an app like Shine.

Sources hbr.org/2016/11/3-ways-to-better-understand-your-emotions
salvationarmy.ca/ontario/files/2020/07/Issue-3-Handout_The-Feeling-Wheel.pdf
 Images from Freepik.com