

FEELING WHAT WE FEEL

emotions in the body



Feelings are one of the primary ways that we interact with the world around us, yet many of us don't pause and unravel how these feelings impact us. Yes, being sad can make us cry, and being happy brings a smile to our face, but research suggests that our feelings can go beyond those responses and manifest themselves in physical locations within our bodies.

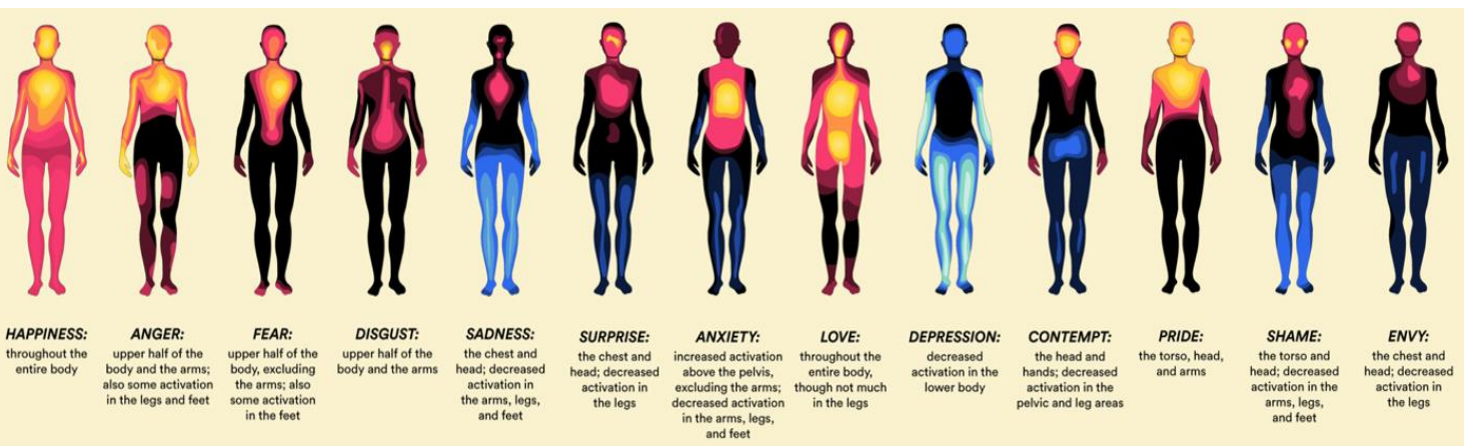
MAPPING EMOTIONS ON THE BODY

You've likely heard of the Emotion Wheel by Dr. Robert Plutchik, which can help you categorize emotions to better understand what you're feeling. Emotional body mapping is another approach that can help us identify our feelings.

Most of us can recall times when we've felt physical sensations associated with particular emotions. Your chest feels tight when you are anxious about a presentation, your jaw is stiff after an argument, or you have butterflies in your stomach when you're excited about an upcoming event.

The body stores emotion in different areas, and body mapping shows how different emotions activate (or don't activate) various parts of the body. The result is similar to a heat map where warmer colours identify increased activity and cooler colours show decreased activity.

Below is a summary of where emotions typically present themselves within our bodies. Emotional body mapping isn't a one-size-fits-all tool, however. You may find that emotions manifest themselves differently in your body, so experiment with the technique to find what works for you.



WHAT IF I CAN'T FIND MY Emotions?

Sometimes our feelings are so subtle that it takes time to find the words to describe them. To physically feel out an emotion and name it, you'll need to slow down. Try a mindful body scan to ground your body and pinpoint what you're feeling and where.

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Take note of your surroundings and look for comforting shapes or objects.
2. Close your eyes and feel the support of the chair or floor beneath you. Take a few deep, long breaths and bring attention to your body.
3. Notice your feet. Rub them against a surface and connect to how that feels. Do you feel any sensations, tension or discomfort? Try to relax them and take a few breaths.
4. Repeat the process by focusing on each area of your body - legs, back, stomach, neck, jaw, head, etc. End with awareness of your entire body taking a few final breaths and open your eyes.

Sources: <https://greatist.com/connect/emotional-body-maps-infographic#infographic> | <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1321664111> | Images by Unsplash