
Handout Feelings

We confuse non-feelings, or interpretations, with feelings. Note the use of “feel” here:

I feel you are being unkind. (interpretation)

= I think you are being unkind. (interpretation)

I don't feel appreciated (thinking about other people's assessment)

= I don't think I'm being appreciated (thinking about other people's assessment)

Contrast this use of “feel” to express feelings here:

I feel lonely = I am lonely.

I feel happy = I am happy.

The word "feel" in the sentences below is not about feeling:

I have a feeling *that you* probably know better.

I feel *as big as a house, like a hero, like an idiot, like* Marilyn Monroe...

I feel *like* I'm talking to the wall (statement about somebody else)

I have a feeling *you* are too perfect.

I feel *inadequate* when I do sports (comparing, judging self and others)

Interpretations camouflaging as feelings (samples):

abused	manipulated
acknowledged	neglected
appreciated	offended
banished	pushed
cared-for	pressured
cornered	punished
cut off	rejected
deceived	respected
desired	shamed
disrespected	threatened
dominated	unappreciated
downgraded	underestimated
excluded	undervalued
exploited	unwanted
harmed	used
hurt	validated
ignored	
interrupted	
intimidated	

Transformation exercise: non-feelings and suitable alternatives

(Tip: Observe how your body reacts. Do you feel it in your chest? gut? Does your pulse race? Are you short of breath? Does it make you laugh or want to frown?...)

I have a feeling that she does not work very effectively.

Alternative:

I feel exploited.

Alternative:

I feel like you never listen to me.

Alternative:

I have the feeling that the passenger in 12A is really showing off.

Alternative:

I have a feeling that he / she is completely out of place.

Alternative:

My own examples for non-feelings:

Alternative:

Alternative:

Feelings according to Rosenberg (examples) →

When our needs are satisfied

AFFECTIONATE	EXCITED	PEACEFUL
compassionate	astonished	calm
friendly	eager	clear-headed
loving	energetic	comfortable
open	enthusiastic	content
hearted	lively	fulfilled
sympathetic	passionate	quiet
tender	surprised	relaxed
warm	vibrant	relieved
ENGAGED	GRATEFUL	satisfied
absorbed	appreciative	serene
alert	moved	still
curious	thankful	trusting
enchanted	touched	REFRESHED
fascinated	INSPIRED	enlivened
interested	amazed	renewed
intrigued	awed	rested
involved	wonder	restored
stimulated	JOYFUL	
HOPEFUL	amused	
expectant	glad	
encouraged	happy	
optimistic	pleased	
CONFIDENT	EXHILARATED	
empowered	blissful	
open	radiant	
proud	thrilled	
safe		
secure		

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When our needs are not satisfied

AFRAID	apathetic	lonely
panicked	bored	miserable
scared	distant	regretful
suspicious	distracted	SAD
terrified	numb	depressed
worried	DISQUIET	disappointed
ANNOYED	alarmed	discouraged
displeased	disturbed	gloomy
frustrated	shocked	hopeless
impatient	turbulent	unhappy
irritated	uncomfortable	TENSE
ANGRY	upset	anxious
furious	EMBARRASSED	distressed
outraged	ashamed	nervous
resentful	guilty	overwhelmed
AVERSION	self-conscious	stressed out
contempt	FATIGUE	VULNERABLE
dislike	exhausted	helpless
hate	sleepy	insecure
hostile	tired	reserved
CONFUSED	worn out	shaky
hesitant	PAIN	YEARNING
lost	agony	jealous
puzzled	grief	longing
DISCONNECTED	heartbroken	nostalgic
alienated	hurt	

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“Neutral” or “mild” feelings are helpful for conflicts at work:

confused	uncertain	torn
ambivalent	positive	amazed
detached	sceptical	curious
convinced	nervous	unpleasant

You can also reformulate feelings:

I'm a bit nervous – instead of “I'm ashamed / embarrassed”

Oh, I think my thoughts are wandering off a bit – instead of “tired, unfocused, bored”

I get a bit tense when I imagine that... – instead of “angry / mad”.

Observing body reactions (somatic markers) is also important and can help formulate first verbal reactions after having a strong feeling:

“I feel pressure in my chest, I have a gut feeling, I wince when I imagine...”

Always check: Is my statement about me?

Instead of making assumptions about others (“You are definitely...”) better ask questions: “How do you feel? / How is it going for you?”