

Identifying emotions

Finding Your Words for a Feeling

Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

You may know something feels difficult without knowing its name. Feelings can be mixed, muted, or hard to describe. A word, color, image, or "I do not know yet" can be a useful starting point. There is no correct emotional answer.

Choose a recent, manageable example. Write, draw, or discuss your answers. Skip anything that does not fit; this page is not a diagnostic assessment.

Begin with what you know

Try the event or the direction of the experience: pleasant, unpleasant, mixed, intense, or distant. Body sensations are optional. You can also notice an urge, such as wanting space or wanting someone nearby.

Try language provisionally

Choose a few possible words and check whether they fit: disappointed, lonely, irritated, relieved, or uncertain. "Both sad and relieved" is allowed. A label can change as you understand the experience better.

1. What happened, or what moment are you trying to describe?**2. Which words, image, or comparison comes closest to the feeling?****3. Are there two feelings together, or something that remains unclear?****4. What would you like another person to understand or offer in response?****Clinical use and adaptation**

Adapt for language, literacy, neurodivergence, and cultural differences. Do not infer absent emotion from limited vocabulary or require interoception. Ask permission before offering labels and leave room for the person to reject them.