

How to Express Your Feelings

You might be afraid of making others upset or inconveniencing them if you share your feelings. However, hiding your own feelings can lead to anxiety, depression, discontent, and even physical unhealthiness. It can also cause problems with your personal and professional relationships. Learning to express your feelings will help you become more self-aware, leading to increased mental and physical health.



Part1.

Becoming

Aware of Your

Feelings

1. Accept your feelings



Before you can do anything else, you have to recognize and accept that you are going to have feelings and there is nothing wrong with that. Feelings are not right or wrong, they just exist. When you feel something, do not be angry with yourself. Instead, tell yourself, “I am feeling this way, and that is acceptable.”



2. Recognize how your body is reacting to your feelings



Feelings are driven by emotions, which are controlled by your brain. Take note of your physiological responses when you feel something. For example, you might sweat when you feel scared, your face might become warm when you are embarrassed, and your heart might race when you are angry. Keying into your bodily responses will help you recognize feelings as they come. If you are having difficulty tuning into your body, try physically relaxing your body by sitting in a quiet place and taking deep breaths. Repeat the mantra, “What is this feeling?” to get a sense of the bodily responses associated with each feeling.

3. Learn the vocabulary of feelings



It can be hard to express what you are feeling when you do not have the words to do so. Try looking at “feelings charts,” which can easily be found through an internet search, to understand the range of emotion and to learn words to describe feelings. Try to learn words that make your feelings as specific as possible. For example, instead of saying “good”, which is very general, use words like “joyful”, “fortunate”, “appreciative” or “elated”. Conversely, instead of saying you feel “bad” say you feel “irritated”, “uncertain”, “discouraged” or “rejected.”

4. Ask yourself why you are feeling a certain way



Ask yourself a series of “why” questions to get at the root of what you are feeling. For example, “I feel like I am going to cry. Why? Because I am mad at my boss. Why? Because he offended me. Why? Because he does not respect me”. Keep going with the series of “why” questions until you reach the bottom line of your feelings.

5. Dissect complicated emotions



Often, you feel multiple emotions all at once. It is important to disentangle these emotions from each other so you can process each one on its own. For example, if you have a relative with a long-term illness who passes, you might be saddened by their loss, but also relieved they are no longer in pain. Complicated emotions may arise from feeling both primary and secondary emotions. Primary emotions are the initial response to a situation and secondary emotion is the direct or indirect emotions felt following the primary emotion. For example, if someone breaks up with you, you might initially feel anguished, and then feel as though you are not worthy of love. Decipher your primary and secondary emotions to give yourself a fuller picture of your mental processes



Part 2.

**Expressing
Your Feelings
to Others**

1. Use "I" statements



When expressing your feelings to someone else, “I” statements are powerful because they promote connection and do not make the other person feel at fault. Saying something like, “You make me feel ___” conjures blame and guilt on behalf of the person you are speaking with. Reframe your statement by saying, “I feel ”. “I” statements have three parts: the emotion, the behavior, and the why. When you use the “I” statement, say a compound sentence like this: “I feel angry when you argue with me about my job because it undermines my intelligence.”

2. Initiate a conversation about your feelings with others



Deciding how to bring up a discussion about your feelings with others can be an intimidating task. If you decide to talk with someone about your feelings, always start with positivity by saying nice things about the person and your relationship. Then bring up how you feel using “I” statements, and be as honest as possible. For example, say something like, “I really enjoy spending time with you. You are so important in my life and I want to connect at a deeper level with you. I am a bit nervous about talking about this, but I want to be open with you. I feel...” In a professional setting, start the conversation by being honest, direct, and positive. For example, say something like, “I really appreciate all of the hard work you are doing. Let's talk about how we can help you and the company succeed.” Let the conversation be organic and do not get upset or offended by the person's response.

3. Communicate to others clearly



Communication is critically important to the expression of feelings. Choose a trusted group of loved-ones to share your feelings with. As you are talking, be as clear as possible by using your vocabulary of feelings and “I” statements. If you are sharing how a situation made you feel, clearly describe the situation and the resulting feelings. Your loved ones will listen and validate your feelings. Loved ones can also provide different perspectives on situations that you might not have considered. They can be a valuable sounding board that can help you work through your feelings.



4. Listen to others when they talk to you



Communication is a two-way street, and you must learn to listen while others speak to communicate effectively. As someone is talking to you, give them your undivided attention (put away your devices!), nonverbally respond by nodding your head, and offer feedback to their statements. Feedback can include asking for clarification, such as, “What I heard you say is that you feel...” or reflecting on the speaker’s words by saying something like, “This seems important to you because...”



5. Take deep breaths



Before you react to a situation emotionally, take a deep breath. Deep breathing is scientifically proven to relax you and lower blood pressure. If you breathe before you react, you can clear your head and react responsibly. Practice deep breathing at least three times per week for it to be most effective.

6. Surround yourself with trusted and positive people



As social humans, we tend to match the tone of the situation. If you are with people speaking negatively about others, you might be inclined to join in the negativity. Conversely, if you surround yourself with positivity, you will thrive and feel nurtured. The friends with whom you choose to surround yourself will provide the environment in which you either succeed or do not. If you have a solid group of friends, you will feel more at ease to express your true feelings with them. Choosing the right friends can be a long, trial-and-error process. Choose friends who inspire, support, uplift, and energize you.

7. Seek professional help if you are struggling with expressing your emotion



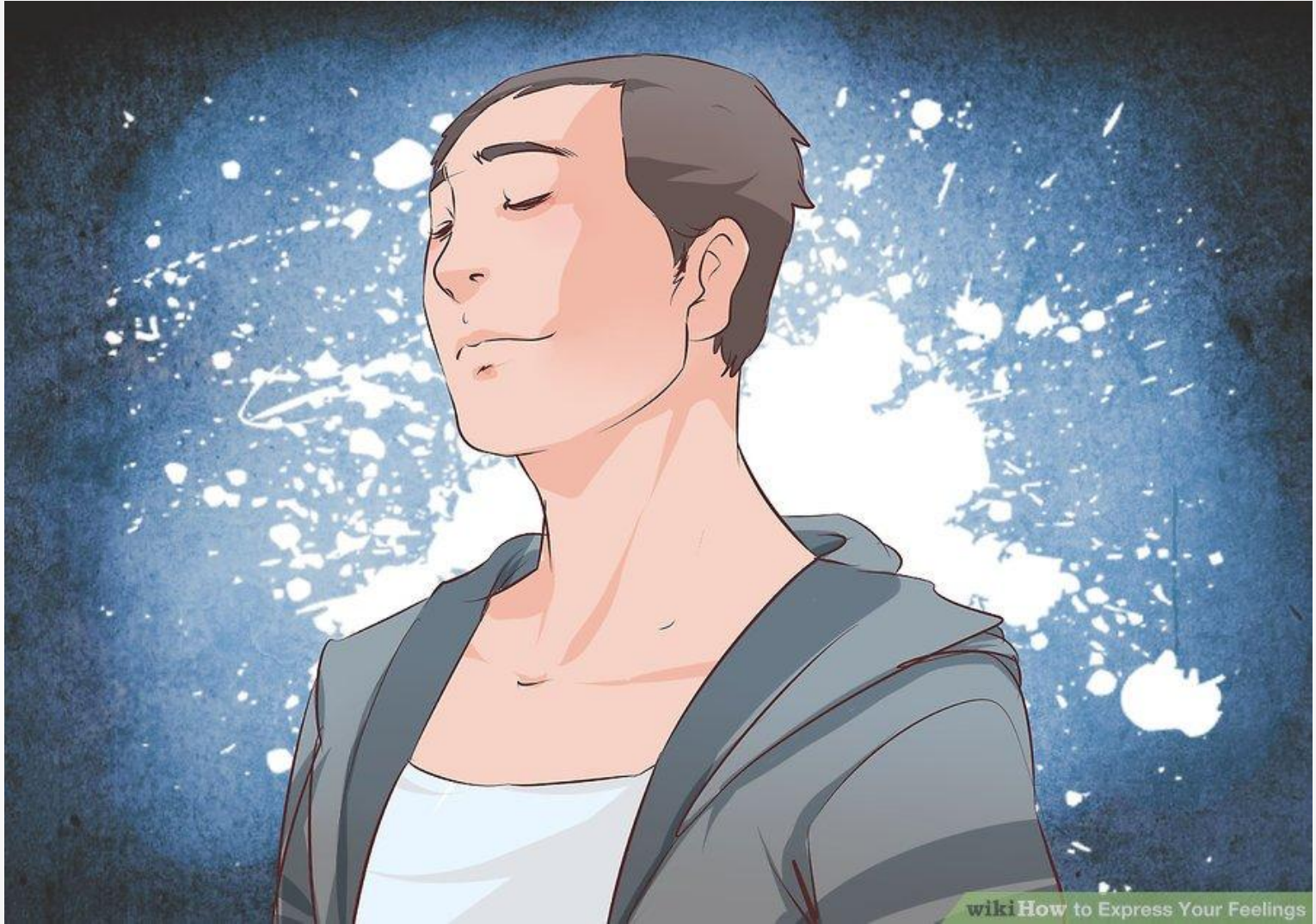
There is nothing wrong with you if you are struggling to express your feelings. You might need to see someone who is trained to talk about feelings and help you express your own. You might need in-person guidance from a professional to not only express your emotions, but also get at the root of why you cannot express your emotions. Turn to therapists, reputable online websites, call lines, and even religious leaders to talk about your feelings.



Part 3.

**Expressing Your
Emotions Privately**

1.Meditate



Meditation is a powerful tool that can help you focus your energy and calm yourself down when you are feeling stressed or anxious. To begin meditating, find a quiet and comfortable place to sit. Start by taking a normal breath, then take a deep breath by slowly inhaling through your nose and allowing your chest rise as your lungs fill. Then slowly exhale through your mouth. As you are breathing, think about each feeling, where it came from, and how you want to respond to it.



2. Write your feelings down



Get in the habit of writing your feelings down on paper or in your phone. Putting your feelings into a tangible form will help you organize and clarify your feelings. Journaling has been shown to drastically reduce stress, strengthen the immune system, and increase overall well-being. Try to set aside just 20 minutes per day to journal. Don't worry about grammar or punctuation. Write quickly to block out any unnecessary thoughts. This is your own personal journal so do not be afraid if it is incoherent or illegible. First, try writing about a good experience to anchor your thoughts, and then move on to how that experience made you feel. Try to describe your feelings in terms of colors, weather, or music. For example, if you felt happy today, describe what color or what kind of weather your happiness would be.



3. Engage in exercise



For the days that seem unbearable and are filled with excessive anger, stress, and anxiety you need to find a release for those feelings. You cannot keep them bottled up inside because that will only lead to heightened negative feelings and even depression or physical problems. Other ways to release your feelings are to do yoga, give yourself gentle face massages, and engaging in activities you enjoy.



4. Treat yourself.



When feeling positive feelings such as excitement, happiness, contentment, and joyfulness, keep up the momentum and treat yourself by going shopping, indulging in a dessert, or going out with friends. By using positive reinforcement to reward yourself for these good feelings, your brain begins to associate that when you feel good on the inside, good things happen externally, too. In this way, you may be able to condition yourself to think positively.



5. Visualize different options of expressing your feelings in a given situation



The way you express your feelings is a choice that only you can make. You can respond negatively or positively to each situation you are presented with, and visualizing all possible responses can be helpful to sort through your true feelings about a given situation. For example, your close friend is leaving town and you recognize that you are upset and sad about her leaving. You could choose to avoid her or pick fights with her to minimize the pain to yourself, or you could choose to spend as much time with her as possible.