

CHANGES MODULE 8: What are feelings?



Feelings are complicated to define - they are a combination of emotions, thoughts and physical sensations. Everyone will experience a range of feelings at different levels of intensity, and they can be conscious or unconscious.

You may find that instead of your feelings fading or changing over time, you have one repeated feeling that drowns out all the rest (such as continually feeling sad or angry). If your feelings are impacting on your relationships or everyday activities, then they may be becoming a problem for you.

Here are some tools that may help with understanding your feelings better:

- a) **Name your feelings** (e.g. happy, sad, jealous etc): This can be a hard skill to learn, but noticing and naming all of our feelings gives us the opportunity to take a step back and decide whether they are causing a problem.
For example: You feel angry because a friend hasn't replied to a text you sent yesterday. But maybe your friend's phone is broken, maybe they're unwell? They might not be ignoring you on purpose.
- b) **Think about the intensity of your feeling:** are you irritated, angry or livid? This can help you understand if the intensity of your feeling makes sense in response to the situation.
- c) **Recognise that feelings may not be facts:** Feelings are powerful so it makes sense to want to believe them. But feelings come from your way of interpreting the situation you're in and they are not always true. They can be influenced by factors like your previous experiences, your thought patterns and your self-esteem.
- d) **Imagine you're talking to a friend:** Many of us are much kinder to others than we are to ourselves. Try to be kind to yourself by thinking of what you would say to a friend who was feeling like this and try to apply this to yourself.
- e) **Ground yourself:** Grounding techniques or mindfulness can be helpful in managing overwhelming feelings by helping move your focus away from them and into your environment or body. Different techniques work for different people so try some out to see what works for you.

f) **Notice changes / track patterns:**
Sometimes you might feel so overwhelmed by a feeling that you can't remember ever feeling any different. Try to notice the times when the feeling lessens so that when you're struggling, you can remind yourself that the feeling isn't permanent. Some people write notes to remind them of times they have felt more positive or track moments when they have felt particularly negative. Tracking can help you prepare for sudden changes.

g) **Recognise when you need support:**
If your feelings are constantly overwhelming, unsafe or are seriously affecting your daily life then it's important that you speak to someone about them, whether this is a family member, friend or health professional. Give yourself credit for having already made this step by being here.

Discussion options:

What feelings have you experienced today?

How do you recognise when your feelings are overwhelming?

Are there some feelings that you find more acceptable than others?

Further reading/media

- Name your feelings with the Feelings Wheel: <http://www.feelingswheel.com>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/great-kids-great-parents/201603/what-are-feelings>
- <https://www.wikihow.com/Deal-With-Your-Feelings>
- Grounding: The "5 Senses" tool invites you to look about and slowly notice 5 things you can see. Then find 4 things that you can *touch*. Listen for 3 different things that you can *hear*. Identify 2 things you can *smell* and focus on 1 thing that you can *taste*.
<https://medium.com/invisible-illness/how-to-use-the-5-senses-method-for-anxiety-fd4795696b3e>