



LISTENING TO FEELINGS: WHAT YOUR EMOTIONS MIGHT BE TELLING YOU

EMOTION: FEAR/ANXIETY

Ways People Describe This Emotion: *Nervous, jittery, “on edge,” scared, anxious, restless, uncomfortable, worried, panicked.*

Information to Look For: *Any sense of impending hurt, pain, threat or danger. Anxious or nervous thoughts; sweating, dry mouth, upset stomach, dizziness, shallow breathing; urge to run away and hide, avoid situations.*

Examples of What the Information May Reveal:

- You fear physical or emotional injury for yourself or others.
- You fear that you are inferior to others and your sense of self-esteem is threatened (examples include fears about your intelligence, talents, physical skill, or outward appearance).

Why This Information Is Important:

- You can now work on better managing your fears, rather than trying to avoid them.
- You can examine the fears you have and see if they are realistic.
- You can face your fears and work on ways to reduce them. Similar to facing a schoolyard bully, facing your fears often leads to greater self-confidence, even if you sustain a bruise or two.

FEELING: ANGER

Ways People Describe This Emotion: *Frustrated, irritated, enraged, mad, “pissed off,” angry, states a desire to break something or hurt someone.*

Information to Look For: *Being blocked from getting what you want—the block can be due to circumstances or specific people.*

Examples of What the Information May Reveal:

- You want success, achievement, or to be the best, but you see someone or something in the way.
- You want a relationship, but it seems like hard work, or you see the other person as creating problems.
- You want to be loved or admired, but others do not appreciate you.
- You want to be able to control circumstances or the reactions of others, but it is impossible to have that much control over situations or people.

Why the Information Is Important:

- You may discover that your anger is less about the other person and more about yourself, your pride, or what you want. Rather than focusing on your anger, you can direct your energies toward making your own life better.
- You may have unrealistic expectations regarding others or yourself. It may be time for you to “get real”—give yourself and others a break from such harsh standards.

FEELING: SADNESS

Ways People Describe This Emotion: *“Let down,” disappointed, devastated, hurt, unhappy, depressed, drained, miserable, downcast, heartbroken.*

Information to Look For: *Losing something or holding the belief that you have lost something or someone important to you.*

Examples of What the Information May Reveal:

- You have lost a person (such as a friend, lover, or partner) in one of the following ways—a move, illness, death, disagreement, estrangement, or the person chooses to be with other people.
- You have lost something other than a person. This may refer to something tangible (e.g., money, job, physical health, leisure time) or something intangible (e.g., a position or role in the family or work, respect from others).

Why the Information Is Important:

- You can begin to work on increasing pleasant or joyful moments in your life to help you heal from a loss.
- You may have the opportunity to see that your worth is more than the objects of loss. For example, your wealth is not a measure of your self-esteem; your physical strength is not equal to your spirit.

FEELING: EMBARRASSMENT

Ways People Describe This Emotion: *Humiliated, vulnerable, “feel like crawling in a hole,” “self-conscious.”*

Information to Look For: *You feel very vulnerable.*

Examples of What the Information May Reveal:

- You are concerned that others can see your imperfections, mistakes, and problems.

Why the Information Is Important:

- You can begin to focus less on imperfection and more on accepting yourself for the person you are.

FEELING TYPE: GUILT

Ways People Describe This Emotion: *Ashamed, “feel bad,” “screwed up,” failed.*

Information to Look For: *You regret something you did.*

Examples of What the Information May Reveal:

- You have hurt others through your own actions.
- You have not done anything wrong, but you or someone else is telling you that you were wrong and you have self-doubts.

Why the Information Is Important:

- You can work on ways to communicate your regret and make a plan for personal change for the better.
- In the case of self-doubt, you can begin to change your inner voice, such that you do not require the approval of others 100 percent of the time.