

EMOTIONS TAXONOMY

Emotions are complicated for lots of people and, if this is true for you, you are not the only one. They are especially complicated for people going through “whitewater” transitions, or for young people who have not learned to put words to their feelings.

Some people think that men are “poor” with their feelings -- that is, they are poor at recognizing or expressing them. This has not been our case in clinical practice. Some women are weaker in this area than their husbands or male children. We believe that this is more a family of origin issue (that is, the family that you grew up in) than a male-female issue.

Feelings can feel “good” (like happiness) or “bad” (like being afraid) but they are more neutral than this. Feelings connect you with your environment and provide you with understanding and experience. For example, if you were writing your P.Eng. exams it would be important that you felt a bit afraid or anxious (especially if you failed it a couple of times before!).

This taxonomy defines 4 feelings (mad, sad, happy and fear) and I have added a 5th when feelings or experiences conflict and you feel “confused.” This is not really a “pure” feeling since it incorporates other feelings.

MAD	SAD	HAPPY	FEAR	Confused
You know you are mad when you feel:	You know you are sad when you feel:	You know you are happy when you feel:	You know you are afraid when you feel:	You know you are confused when you feel:
riled	bumped out	inspired	anxious	perplexed
ticked off	crushed	cheerful	apprehensive	puzzled
worked up	depressed	content	cautious	baffled
uptight	desperate	delighted	on edge	disorganized
resentful	devastated	ecstatic	fearful	disoriented
perturbed	disappointed	elated	frightened	distracted

MAD	SAD	HAPPY	FEAR	Confused
put out	dissatisfied	energized	hesitant	bewildered
agitated	distressed	excited	horrified	bothered
annoyed	disturbed	fortunate	insecure	crazy
bitter	down	friendly	intimidated	dazed
burned up	blue	fulfilled	jumpy	disturbed
disgusted	gloomy	glad	lonely	frustrated
enraged	glum	good	nervous	helpless
envious	grieved	great	shaky	lost
fed up	hurt	loving	tense	mixed up
frustrated	lonely	motherly	terrified	panicky
furious	low	optimistic	threatened	paralyzed
hostile	painful	overjoyed	timid	stuck
irate	sorry	peaceful	uneasy	stunned
irritated	tired	pleased	unsure	tangled
livid	unloved	proud	worried	trapped
outraged	upset	refreshed	mistrustful	uncertain
seething	alone	relaxed	panicky(ed)	uncomfortable

It is interesting to know that all people do not experience the same thing at the same event. Riding a roller coaster (or going on a date) might feel exciting for some and frightening for others.

Rather than guess that a person feels like you do, it is good to ask.

This is especially true in families or with close friends. We might assume that others feel our feelings without us talking about them.