

Lesson 14 - A Vocabulary of Feelings

There are many ways that human beings receive information, process experience, and express ourselves. In our culture the predominant mode of processing and expression is the intellect. Most people live in their head. They perceive the intellect as the only tool with which to navigate their life. While the thinking mind is an important asset when it comes to making life choices, it is limited in its scope and leaves out vast terrains of guidance from other levels. Holistic coaching draws upon *all* the resources within an individual, including the mind, but not limited to it.

Emotions offer gifts of guidance and important avenues of self-expression. There is no such thing as a "bad emotion." You can assist your client to make healthy choices by helping him to connect more with his feelings so he can become more self-aware and learn from the messages his feelings are communicating. If a client is primarily a thinker, recognizing and utilizing the feeling dimension of his world will empower richer balance.

Self-expression is one of the most important goals of coaching. A client out of touch with her feelings may not have a vocabulary to express herself. When you assist a client to express herself more clearly and honestly, you have given her a tool that will carry her through much of life.

If a client gets lost in his story or wanders off into the corridor of his mind, simply ask, "How do you feel about that?" or "What is the strongest feeling you have about that situation?" or "What do you feel in the deepest part of you?"

If the client can express her feelings to you — especially those she has not expressed to herself or others, she has taken a significant step. If she is not in touch with her feelings or does not have the tools to express them, you can offer a vocabulary from which she can choose.

Below is a list of feelings from which you might draw. Ask your client, "Are you feeling _____ about this, or is it more like _____?" In suggesting a feeling word you are not seeking to push the client in a direction, but simply offering a tool for self-expression.

Feeling words

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Pleasant Feelings

OPEN

HAPPY

ALIVE

GOOD

understanding

Great

playful

calm

confident

Gay

courageous

peaceful

reliable

Joyous

energetic

at ease

easy

Lucky

liberated

comfortable

amazed

fortunate

optimistic

pleased

free

delighted

provocative

encouraged

sympathetic

overjoyed

impulsive

clever

interested

Gleeful

free

surprised

satisfied

thankful

frisky

content

receptive

important

animated

quiet

accepting

Festive

spirited

certain

kind

Ecstatic

thrilled

relaxed

satisfied

wonderful

serene

Glad

free and
easy

	cheerful		bright
	Sunny		blessed
	Merry		reassured
	Elated		
	jubilant		
LOVE	INTERESTED	POSITIVE	STRONG
loving	concerned	eager	impulsive
considerate	Affected	keen	free
affectionate	fascinated	earnest	sure
sensitive	intrigued	intent	certain
tender	absorbed	anxious	rebellious
devoted	inquisitive	inspired	unique
attracted	Nosy	determined	dynamic
passionate	Snoopy	excited	tenacious
admiration	engrossed	enthusiastic	hardy

warm	Curious	bold	secure
touched		brave	
sympathy		daring	
close		challenged	
loved		optimistic	
comforted		re-enforced	
drawn toward		confident	
		hopeful	

Difficult/Unpleasant Feelings

ANGRY	DEPRESSED	CONFUSED	HELPLESS
irritated	Lousy	upset	incapable
enraged	disappointed	doubtful	alone
hostile	discouraged	uncertain	paralyzed

insulting	ashamed	indecisive	fatigued
sore	powerless	perplexed	useless
annoyed	diminished	embarrassed	inferior
upset	Guilty	hesitant	vulnerable
hateful	dissatisfied	shy	empty
unpleasant	miserable	stupefied	forced
offensive	detestable	disillusioned	hesitant
bitter	repugnant	unbelieving	despair
aggressive	despicable	skeptical	frustrated
resentful	disgusting	distrustful	distressed
inflamed	abominable	misgiving	woeful
provoked	Terrible	lost	pathetic
incensed	in despair	unsure	tragic
infuriated	Sulky	uneasy	in a stew
cross	Bad	pessimistic	dominated
worked up	a sense of loss	tense	
boiling			
fuming			

indignant			
INDIFFERENT	AFRAID	HURT	SAD
insensitive	Fearful	crushed	tearful
dull	terrified	tormented	sorrowful
nonchalant	suspicious	deprived	pained
neutral	Anxious	pained	grief
reserved	alarmed	tortured	anguish
weary	Panic	dejected	desolate
bored	nervous	rejected	desperate
preoccupied	Scared	injured	pessimistic
cold	Worried	offended	unhappy
disinterested	frightened	afflicted	lonely
lifeless	Timid	aching	grieved
	Shaky	victimized	mournful
	Restless	heartbroken	dismayed

	doubtful	agonized	
	threatened	appalled	
	cowardly	humiliated	
	quaking	wronged	
	menaced	alienated	
	Wary		

List courtesy of Richard Niolon, PhD
<http://www.psychpage.com/learning/library/assess/feelings.html>

There are a lot of feeling words to choose from! I know a coach who printed a list of feeling words and offers it to her clients, inviting them to choose those words that express their feelings. You can be creative in how you elicit expression of feelings from your clients.

Feelings are a powerful level to work at in coaching because they run deeper than the intellect. (Emotion = E-motion - energy in motion. Where there is energy there is life.) Regardless of how much we think, feelings run our lives more than our thoughts. You usually can't go wrong if you keep directing your client to come back to an honest expression of feelings.

It is also possible to overindulge the feeling level and miss out on the value of reason. Some clients are so wrapped up or even lost in their feelings that they could use a good dose of intellect. You must tune in on each client to assess where she is at and help her find healthy balance. My mentor use to say, "*The mind alone is a tyrant. The heart alone is chaotic. The marriage of the two is mastery.*"

Exercise:

1. List three primary feelings that describe your experience at the moment:

2. List three primary feelings that are or have been undercurrents in your life:

3. Do you navigate your world primarily through your intellect or through your feelings?

4. Are your mind and feelings in a harmonious balance?

If not, how might you create a more harmonious balance?.

Affirm:

**I use my feelings as keys to greater awareness of myself and my life.
I guide my coaching clients to use their feelings
as keys to greater awareness.**

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