Figuring Out What You're Actually Feeling

Objective

To name emotions more clearly so you can understand yourself better, communicate more easily, and feel less overwhelmed.

What to Know

Most people were never taught how to name emotions clearly. When emotions are vague or confusing, the brain feels more stressed. When emotions are accurately named, the brain calms down, and problems feel easier to handle. Research shows that emotion precision (also called *emotional granularity*) helps:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Improve decision-making
- Improve communication with others
- Increase emotional control

When you name difficult emotions precisely, they feel less overwhelming. Naming your emotions can give you a better sense of self-control, because this simple act creates space between how you feel and how you act. This is a skill that gets better with practice.

What to Do

Bein by thinking about a recent situation where you were upset. Then answer the questions below.

Emotions usually show up in the body first. How did this feeling affect your body?
☐ Tight chest
☐ Heavy stomach
☐ Fast heartbeat
☐ Shaky
☐ Hot or flushed
☐ Tired or numb
☐ Restless
☐ Heavy or slow

☐ Other: _____
☐ Other: _____

Instead of trying to be very specific, think about the category of your emotions. Circle one:

- Anger
- Sadness
- Fear
- Shame
- Joy
- Disgust
- Numb / Shut Down
- Mixed / Unsure

If mixed/unsure, explain: _____

Now choose words that describe your emotions more precisely.

If it's Anger, it might be:

☐ Annoyed
☐ Frustrated
☐ Irritated
☐ Resentful
☐ Hurt
☐ Defensive
☐ Enraged

If it's Sadness, it might be:

☐ Disappointed
☐ Lonely
☐ Grieving
☐ Hopeless
☐ Left out
☐ Discouraged

If it's Fear, it might be:

☐ Nervous
☐ Anxious
☐ On edge
☐ Panicked
☐ Unsafe
☐ Worried

If it's Shame, it might be:

☐ Embarrassed
☐ Guilty
☐ Exposed
☐ Not good enough
☐ Self-conscious

If it's Joy, it might be:

☐ Relieved
☐ Proud
☐ Calm
☐ Hopeful
☐ Excited

If it's Numb, it might be:

☐ Checked out
☐ Disconnected
☐ Empty
☐ Zoned out

Strong emotions can hide other emotions underneath. Answer the following questions.

If your emotions could talk, what would they be trying to tell you?

_____

_____

_____

What might be underneath those feelings? Some examples:

- Anger → hurt
- Numb → overwhelmed
- Anxiety → fear of messing up

_____

_____

_____

Use this formula: **"I feel ___ because ___."**

Example: "I feel frustrated because I don't feel heard."

Your sentence:

_____

_____

After completing the above exercise, check one:
☐ I understand myself better
☐ The feeling feels lighter
☐ I feel calmer
☐ I'm still working on it

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

_____

_____

_____