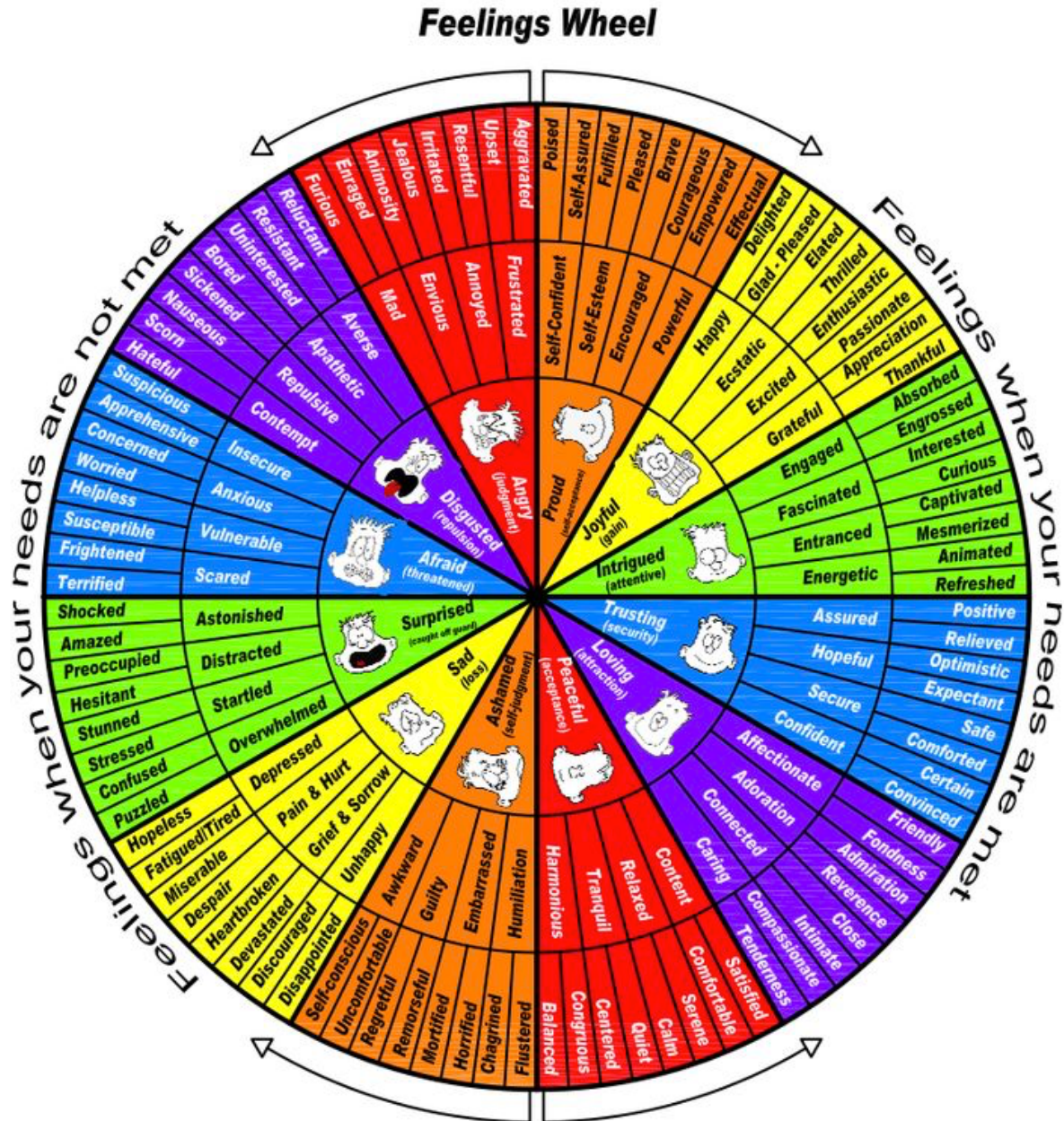




Introduction to Emotion



Based on Nonviolent Communication by Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D. May be duplicated for personal use and for teaching Nonviolent Communication. Graphics and organization of feelings and needs wheels by Bret Stein. artisanti@hotmail.com Revised 1/1/11

Feelings are internal emotions. Words mistaken for emotions, but that are actually thoughts in the form of evaluations and judgments of others, are any words that follow "I feel like ..." or "I feel that ..." or "I feel as if ..." or "I feel you ...", such as:

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|----------|-------------|
| Abandoned | Attacked | Abused | Betrayed | Blamed | Bullied | Cheated |
| Coerced | Criticized | Dismissed | Disrespected | Excluded | Ignored | Intimidated |
| Insulted | Let Down | Manipulated | Misunderstood | Neglected | Put down | Rejected |
| Unappreciated | Unloved | Unheard | Unwanted | Used | Violated | Wronged |



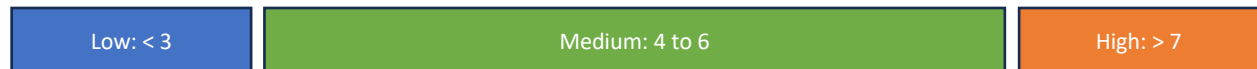
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Definitions

- **Affect:** Encompasses three distinct feeling states that are differentiated by time: temperament, mood, and emotion.
- **Temperament:** The basic foundation of personality—usually assumed to be biologically determined and present early in life.
- **Mood:** A disposition to respond emotionally in a particular way that may last for hours, days, or even weeks, perhaps at a low level and without the person knowing what prompted the state. Moods differ from emotions in lacking an object.
- **Emotion:** A complex reaction pattern by which an individual attempts to deal with a personally significant matter or event. The specific quality of the emotion is determined by the specific significance of the event.

Emotional Thermometer

Emotions can feel like they come out of nowhere. What starts as a physical sensation like hunger or tiredness can grow into something bigger—like a blackout rage. By understanding what an emotion feels like at its earliest stages, you can learn to respond before it gets out of control.



Low intensity emotions are difficult to identify. Use **Mindfulness skills** to help recognize the early signs of emotions.

Medium intensity emotions are easier to identify but can bring us trouble if we react to them blindly. Use **Emotion Regulation skills** to keep yourself from becoming overwhelmed.

High intensity emotions are overwhelming, and it is too difficult to regulate them. Your autonomic nervous system will kick in—just like it would do if you encountered a threat. Use **Distress Tolerance skills** to engage your parasympathetic nervous system and exit the danger zone.



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Purpose of Emotions

Emotions guide our lives in a million ways. Whether we're inclined to hide and avoid or ponder and express them, most of us don't realize the extent to which they are driving our thoughts and behavior. Our emotions can offer us clues into who we are as well as how we've been affected by our history. Many of our actions are initiated by emotion, which leads to the natural question of which emotions are being surfaced and why. Which of these emotions are adaptive and maladaptive? Which may be triggered by the present but rooted in our past?

Primary emotions are our first emotional reaction. They're often followed by a more defended secondary emotion. Sometimes, we are only consciously aware of the secondary emotion: the anger that covers up feeling hurt, the embarrassment overpowering our sadness, or the anxiety masking a deeper fear.

Primary emotions give us a glimpse into our needs and can be either adaptive reactions to the moment or maladaptive reactions based on schemas from our past. Maladaptive primary emotions may be sparked by current events, but they're tied to a way we felt early in our lives. For example, if we were seen or treated like we were unintelligent or incapable in our family, being called "stupid" or related to as if we're incompetent in the current day can trigger us to feel deeply pained or ashamed. However, before we can acknowledge this pain or shame, we're swept up in a secondary emotion like anger, resentment, or defensiveness.

Emotions based on past schemas are not an accurate reflection of who we really are, and when we fail to identify these emotions, we may feel stuck living in their shadows. The ironic comfort of their familiarity can even cause us to distort ourselves and others or provoke reactions and scenarios that recreate the emotional climate to which we're accustomed. We may relate to others based on these old feelings rather than what's really going on or what we really want.

If we can get to the underlying emotion from an old schema, we can feel the feelings, gain insight into the need underlying the emotion, and take actions to get the need met. We can do this by asking a partner or someone close to us to meet our need or, if necessary, by soothing ourselves. We can take our side by challenging our critical self-attacks and, thereby, offering ourselves compassion and love. We can be more willing to feel our sadness, anger, or the deeper primary emotions that make us feel more connected to ourselves. We can feel our feelings rather than suppressing them and allowing them to silently dictate our lives.

When we live in harmony with our emotions, we become more in touch with who we are. We gain insight into the real core emotions that are causing our reactions, and we can be the one at the wheel, choosing our actions. Feeling is an adaptive mechanism to give us critical information. By focusing on emotion with compassion and curiosity, we can discover who we are and what we want.