

Lesson 12

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

Pleasant Feelings

OPEN

understanding
confident
reliable
easy
amazed
free
sympathetic
interested
satisfied
receptive
accepting
kind

HAPPY

great
gay
joyous
lucky
fortunate
delighted
overjoyed
gleeful
thankful
important
festive
ecstatic
satisfied
glad
cheerful
sunny
merry
elated
Jubilant

ALIVE

playful
courageous
energetic
liberated
optimistic
provocative
impulsive
free
frisky
animated
spirited
thrilled
wonderful

GOOD

calm
peaceful
at ease
comfortable
pleased
encouraged
clever
surprised
content
quiet
certain
relaxed
serene
free and easy
bright
blessed
reassured

LOVE

loving
 considerate
 affectionate
 sensitive
 tender
 devoted
 attracted
 passionate
 admiration
 warm
 touched
 sympathy
 close
 loved
 comforted
 drawn toward

INTERESTED

concerned
 Affected
 fascinated
 intrigued
 absorbed
 inquisitive
 Nosy
 Snoopy
 engrossed
 Curious

POSITIVE

eager
 keen
 earnest
 intent
 anxious
 inspired
 determined
 excited
 enthusiastic
 bold
 brave
 daring
 challenged
 optimistic
 re-enforced
 confident
 hopeful

STRONG

impulsive
 free
 sure
 certain
 rebellious
 unique
 dynamic
 tenacious
 hardy
 secure

Difficult/Unpleasant Feelings**ANGRY**

irritated
 enraged
 hostile
 insulting
 sore
 annoyed
 upset
 hateful
 unpleasant
 offensive
 bitter
 aggressive

DEPRESSED

Lousy
 disappointed
 discouraged
 ashamed
 powerless
 diminished
 Guilty
 dissatisfied
 miserable
 detestable
 repugnant
 despicable

CONFUSED

upset
 doubtful
 uncertain
 indecisive
 perplexed
 embarrassed
 hesitant
 shy
 stupefied
 disillusioned
 unbelieving
 skeptical

HELPLESS

incapable
 alone
 paralyzed
 fatigued
 useless
 inferior
 vulnerable
 empty
 forced
 hesitant
 despair
 frustrated

resentful
inflamed
provoked
incensed
infuriated
cross
worked up
boiling
fuming
indignant

disgusting
abominable
Terrible
in despair
Sulky
Bad
a sense of loss

distrustful
misgiving
lost
unsure
uneasy
pessimistic
tense

distressed
woeful
pathetic
tragic
in a stew
dominated

INDIFFERENT

insensitive
dull
nonchalant
neutral
reserved
weary
bored
preoccupied
cold
disinterested
lifeless

AFRAID

Fearful
Terrified
suspicious
Anxious
Alarmed
Panic
Nervous
Scared
Worried
frightened
Timid
Shaky
Restless
doubtful
threatened
cowardly
Quaking
Menaced
Wary

HURT

crushed
tormented
deprived
pained
tortured
dejected
rejected
injured
offended
afflicted
aching
victimized
heartbroken
agonized
appalled
humiliated
wronged
alienated

SAD

tearful
sorrowful
pained
grief
anguish
desolate
desperate
pessimistic
unhappy
lonely
grieved
mournful
dismayed

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.**