

All emotions at a glance

Below is a list of common emotions and suggestions on how to deal with them.

Happiness

About the emotion/a typical situation: Happiness is a wonderful feeling that releases energy and that can even be contagious for others. You feel it in situations when something positive happens to you, when you've achieved something, when you win.

Typical thoughts: "It's just great. I love it."

Function of the emotion: Happiness serves as a motivator and amplifier.

Resultant impulse: You're active, motivated, confident and may want to share your experiences/happiness with others.

Opposite types of behavior (that will diminish your happiness): Withdrawal, remaining passive and probably quiet.

Fear

About the emotion/a typical situation: In situations that you experience as threatening or dangerous, you experience fear. Fear is a emotion essential to survival as it makes you cautious. This makes sense from the evolutionary point of view. However, it's not appropriate in every situation (see also chapter 2 "Coping with exam stress").

Typical thoughts: "That would be just awful. I can't do that. That's dangerous."

Function of the emotion: When you become afraid, you try to protect yourself from a threat and counter the threat.

Resultant impulse: You're ready to fight or flee. Or you'll look for help from others.

Opposite types of behavior (that will diminish your fear): Confront the "threatening" situation (without avoiding or attacking) and deal with the feelings the threat generates.

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Anger/rage

About the emotion/a typical situation: Anger is a emotion that releases and mobilizes energy. It tells you that something isn't going the way you want it to, that something or someone is getting in the way of your goals or that someone is violating one of your personal boundaries. Other violations of norms can also trigger anger.

Typical thoughts: "That's outrageous. That is mean/unfair. Nobody should treat me like that."

Function of the emotion: You learn something about your desires, values and goals. You try to bring about a change, to safeguard your boundaries or those of other people.

Resultant impulse: You make clear your boundaries or those of other people and may end up fighting to defend them.

Opposite types of behavior (that will diminish your anger/rage): Take a few deep breaths in and out, relax yourself and your muscles and step away from the situation.

Sadness

About the emotion/a typical situation: You're sad about losing something that was important to you – perhaps a person, a thing or goal, or something you were hoping was going to happen.

Typical thoughts: "That's a shame. That's awful. That's a loss for me."

Function of the emotion: Your sadness can help you process the loss and accept it as part of your life.

Resultant impulse: When you're sad, you feel like withdrawing, want to be alone or be comforted by others.

Opposite types of behavior (that will diminish your sadness): Get active and find ways to occupy yourself.

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Loneliness

About the emotion/a typical situation: Humans are social beings. Contact and bonding with others is an evolutionary necessity for survival. Loneliness will motivate you to make contact with other people and develop social skills. This emotion can frequently occur after a loss.

Typical thoughts: “I’m different. I don’t belong. I lack this or that.”

Function of the emotion: You nurture existing contacts or establish new ones.

Resultant impulse: You try to make contact with others and become despondent when you’re alone.

Opposite types of behavior (that will diminish your loneliness): Find ways to make time by yourself enjoyable.

Shame

About the emotion/a typical situation: If you are worried that you might be excluded from a group on account of a specific behavior or that you might lose respect, you feel shame. Situations in which you are humiliated publicly/in front of others or you make a “mistake” can provoke shame.

Typical thoughts: “That’s embarrassing. I shouldn’t have done that.”

Function of the emotion: Shame helps you follow and adapt to the rules of your group as well as integrate yourself into the group.

Resultant impulse: You feel like crawling into a hole and undoing what has just happened.

Opposite types of behavior (that will diminish shame): Become aware of your strengths and abilities and feel free to be yourself.

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Guilt

About the emotion/a typical situation: If you've done something that is not consistent with your own moral values and norms or those of your group, or if you've broken a rule/law, you feel guilty. You may, for instance, feel guilty if you forgot an important appointment with your best friend.

Typical thoughts: "What I did was wrong."

Function of the emotion: To avoid feelings of guilt, you try to adhere to social and legal laws/norms and, hence, remain integrated in your social group.

Resultant impulse: You would prefer to avoid the situation and withdraw. Or you would like to make amends and apologize.

Opposite types of behavior (that will diminish your feeling of guilt): Sit upright, maintain eye contact, speak in a firm voice and don't withdraw (from the situation). Defend your actions or your opinion. Don't apologize.