

The Feeling Wheel

Instructions

Please look at the wheel on the next page (Fig. 1). The wheel organizes 72 feelings into a pie chart and categorizes them into these six groups: sad, mad, scared, joyful, powerful, and peaceful.

The wheel can be useful in identifying the specific feelings and emotions you are experiencing at any given moment so that they can be addressed and resolved. For instance, if you experience a generally sad feeling, you can use the outer bands of the wheel to figure out what specific kind of sadness you might feel. For example, maybe what you are experiencing is feeling ignored. Note that the reverse can also happen. For instance, by using the wheel, you may realize that feeling inadequate may be rooted in rejection or fear at a deeper level.

Direct reflection at the moment

You can use the wheel to explore the emotions you are feeling at any given moment during the day. For instance, after a nice conversation with someone, you notice a general feeling of joy. Using the wheel, you may ask yourself, what kind of joy am I experiencing right now? Can this feeling best be described as excitement, creativity, cheerfulness, etc.?

Daily reflection

Take a moment to contemplate and look at the wheel. What did you experience today? Maybe, at some point during the day, you felt guilty. Once you find “guilty” on the middle band of the wheel, you can see that the associated core feeling (nearer the center) is “sad,” and the more specific, nuanced feeling (on the outer band) is “remorseful.”

Long-term reflection

The wheel can also be used to explore deeper and longer-term emotions that may be affecting you. For instance, maybe you have been feeling scared over the last several months since you lost your job. By going to the core feeling “scared” on the inner band of the wheel, you can look at the two outer bands for feelings associated with “scared” to try to unveil the more detailed, nuanced emotions you are experiencing. You might conclude that you are more specifically feeling rejected and insecure. This can be an important insight that can help you take specific actions towards the desired goal.

Figure 1. The Feeling Wheel

