



Expanding Your Emotional Vocabulary

It's a great idea to expand the number of words you use to describe your feelings, because identifying an emotion more clearly, more precisely - whether it's low-level or intense - can help you figure out what's going on and why, which often helps you feel a little calmer right away. And it can help you figure out your next best move.

In the Practices Toolbox is a little thesaurus of emotions and feelings that you can download to your phone or tablet e-reader as a quick handy reference, either to work through a particular issue, or just to browse whenever.

You may notice some words occurring in more than one category. You may also find that a word from one category might fit better in another, for you.

Following the principle that all feelings happen for good reason and have a job to do, an emotion you previously thought 'negative' may turn out to be doing something extremely positive. For example, 'rage' may be frightening, dangerous and damaging; but it can also be warrior-like, liberating, and redemptive. 'Pride' may be justifiable cause for celebration, or an unhealthy sense of superiority. So, when spotting a word that looks like it fits your current state, do consider all its possible meanings.

Feelings don't happen one at a time, either; they often arise in multiples, and sometimes in weird, even contradictory combinations. And they don't just switch on and off suddenly; they come and go in 'wave-form' and rise to lower or higher degrees of intensity before they subside again. Browsing your thesaurus can help with identifying multiple feelings happening at once. The clearer the data you have, the better you can formulate good responses. Feel free to convert the words from adjective to noun form, too. Build your own vocabulary. Use what words you like and ignore what you would never use. ...

Words are powerful and give you power. Engaging and being playful with them can do wonders, so have fun with them.

Finally, here are five important points about emotions to remember:

1

Consider how emotions you tend to think of as unpleasant are actually there to help you and allow them in to do their work. There are no inherently good or bad ones; they all bring intelligence and energy that can help you if you can work with them well.

2

Emotions are nuanced. Ideally, they work and flow in and out, up and down, at different levels of intensity. Expanding your vocabulary actually helps with this flow.

3

Emotions don't work in isolation, but in pairs, and groups, and sometimes in bewildering mixtures. This is fine. Depending on context, it can be fine to laugh when you're sad, or feel grateful while still furious.

4

Learning how to channel emotions safely, rather than suppressing or over-expressing them, can help you feel calmer, work better with your feelings, build trust in your emotional intelligence and wisdom, and enjoy less resistance and tension.

5

Engaging with any kind of art or creativity helps with channelling emotions: by easing pressure through escape; as a kind of active meditation; or as a way of expressing feelings. This is true whether you are creating art yourself or enjoying other people's artistic creations.

Art connects us to ourselves and to each other.

Art is life!