



Conscious Communication

Feelings

"Heart has its reason which reason knows not."
- Blaise Pascal

How could we live without feelings? They are the physical, mental and psychological feedback system that tell us we are hungry or full, hot or cold, tickled or in pain, doubtful or believing, happy or sad, frustrated or scared. Feelings are the essence of life and living.

There are three kinds of feelings: physical, mental and emotional.

1. Physical: hunger and thirst, hot and cold, fatigue, various pains and pleasures, tastes, sights, smells and sounds, etc.
2. Mental: curious, interested, confused, doubtful, amused, stressed, confident, etc.
3. Emotional: varying degrees of sad, glad, mad and scared.

In most situations our emotions can provide us with insight into what is happening, or what we want to be happening. This is particularly true when we are involved in negotiating a conflict. For example, if I become frustrated or angry it is an indication that I am not getting what I want.

Underneath the anger is disappointment that my needs are not getting met, while the frustration is about not knowing how to get them met.

Expressing emotion is not always welcome, and even in situations where it is, many of us have difficulty expressing how we feel. Sometimes we get feelings and thoughts mixed up.

We use the word "feel," followed by a thought: "I feel that it's unfair," or "I feel we should keep trying." In these statements there is no indication as to what we are actually feeling. Are we angry, sad, scared or all three when we evaluate a situation as "unfair?" Do we feel mad, hopeful, concerned or some combination of these emotions when we express our thoughts about what we should do?

We might use words that say more about what we think about ourselves than about what we are actually feeling: "I feel stupid," or "I feel inadequate."

We might use words that express what we think others are doing or not doing to us, rather than what we feel: "I feel manipulated," or "I feel ignored."

If we can separate feelings from evaluations and thoughts, our feelings can offer us insights into the inner world of likes and dislikes, wants and needs, both within ourselves and others. In an ideal situation we can directly express our own feelings, hear about the feelings of others, and use this information to assist us in our communication. However, in some contexts, it is not acceptable to express emotions directly. Often this is true in work-related settings. When this is the case it can be helpful to be aware of feelings, but to substitute neutral words or ideas such as:

"Are you reacting to, concerned about..., uncomfortable with...?"

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Here is a partial list of variations on sad, glad, mad, and scared:

Sad		Glad		Mad	Scared		Sometimes we may want to avoid using feeling words. In which case try to imagine the emotion the other person might be feeling while using one of the following phrases:
agony	dissatisfied	amused	nurtured	aggravated	afraid	tense	
blue	joyless	appreciative	peaceful	angry	alarmed	terrified	
dejected	low	bright	playful	annoyed	anxious	timid	
depressed	melancholy	calm	pleased	antagonistic	appalled	unconfident	
despair	miserable	cheerful	proud	bitter	apprehensive	uptight	
disappointed	morose	comforted	relieved	cross	concerned	worried	
distraught	mournful	confident	satisfied	disgusted	defensive		
distressed		content	thrilled	displeased	distrustful		
down		delight/ful	tickled	dissatisfied	dread		
downhearted		ecstatic	touched	enraged	doubtful		
heartbroken		elated	warm	exasperated	fearful		
hopeless		encouraged	wonderful	frustrated	frightened		
regretful		enlivened		fuming	have qualms		
sorrowful		enthusiastic		furios	hesitant		
tearful		euphoric		hostile	inhibited		
unhappy		excited		incensed	insecure		
unsatisfied		exhilarated		indignant	nervous		
unfulfilled		grateful		infuriated	scared stiff		
discontented		happy		irate	self-conscious		
disheartened		high		irritated	shocked		
dismal		hopeful		pissed/off	startled		
dispirited		inspired		rage	stunned		
displeased		joy/ful		resentful	surprised		

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