



E is for learning about our **EMOTIONAL LIFE**

This resource has been designed by Lyn French, A Space Director, to be used with the emotional learning cards from the set entitled '**A-Z of Emotions**'. Purchase the cards online at www.inivacreativelearning.org

Introduction

The word 'emotion' has its roots in the 12th C French word 'emouvoir' which means 'to stir up'. This makes sense - emotions can be strongly felt and often do shake us up! Having said that, they can also lead to the opposite of 'stirring' or 'shaking'- sometimes emotions feel too much so we cut off from them, convincing ourselves that we don't feel anything at all.

We all need to learn to:

- recognise when we're having an emotional response to something or someone
- be able to name the feeling(s)
- assess whether or not our strength of feeling is appropriate to what's happening
- work out what our emotional hotspots are
- understand the relationship between our emotions, our behaviour and our thinking

These are all important personal skills that we continue to develop throughout life. This worksheet can be used as a starting point for talking about and exploring the subject of emotional life. Questions are included to which you can give general answers or examples from your own life.

In addition to going through this worksheet, you might find it useful to look through the **A to Z of Emotions**. The cards in this boxed set feature images made by artists illustrating different feelings and their opposites. Each card also includes a short description of the emotions highlighted followed by questions to reflect on. This can open up thinking and spark off conversation about the kinds of feelings that come up in the course of our lives.

To start with, it's a good idea to get a sense of what you already know about emotions.

Here are some questions for you:

- *What are some of the most common emotions?*
- *What is your earliest memory of feeling a pleasurable emotion? What is your earliest memory of feeling an uncomfortable emotion? In both instances, what did you feel and what, or who, triggered it? Were you helped to understand it or was it something you went through on your own?*
- *Do you think you're the kind of person to experience a range of emotions or do you see yourself as less emotional?*
- *What do you feel right now, thinking and reflecting on emotions? Does it come as a relief or cause you to feel uncomfortable or self-conscious?*



Why do we need to learn about emotions?

If we don't pause and think about what we're feeling, we may end up acting in ways which damage our self-respect and our relationships. Here are some examples:

Instead of acknowledging when our feelings are hurt, we might get angry and verbally or even physically attack the person who has hurt us or we might take it out on someone else.

We might act tough and convey the message that nothing gets to us. This can leave us isolated, alone and lonely, never able to get close to others.

We could go through life in a daze, never thinking about personal goals or who we want to become. This can result in feeling unfulfilled.

If we never learn to share what's going on for us, when we have strong feelings, we might easily be overwhelmed and turn to self-harm or drugs or alcohol or develop an eating disorder or get panic attacks. It can also lead to domestic violence and more serious acting out behaviour.

If we fail to face up to our own shortcomings and our feelings about this, we act more selfishly and show little understanding of, and compassion for, others. We can lose friends and relationships if we can't feel empathy. We may never learn to forgive ourselves and others - we might get stuck in shame and self-hatred.

If we have our own family, we pass these unhelpful ways of living onto our own children.

Understanding some simple facts makes us feel emotionally stronger and behave with more compassion towards ourselves and others:

We all need to accept that we will be hurt by life: For example, we'll be rejected, overlooked, and criticised - there's no avoiding it. In each instance, we need to be able to contain our feelings so that we don't hurt back. This doesn't mean we should take things lying down. We learn to stand up for ourselves in a constructive way rather than getting too angry or blaming ourselves or feeling that we're no good and deserve to be treated this way. Difficult experiences can be used to learn from. If we can get through them and respect ourselves and others in the process, this builds our emotional strength.

What are some common experiences that lead to hurt feelings?

Life can be unfair: Bad things can and do happen. In some families, and in some of our personal lives, more bad things happen than to others. This is unfair but it's a fact. We can't change it. We can do the best we can in each situation we encounter. We also learn to feel empathy and compassion for others if we know what it feels like to go through something very difficult or if we feel we have more than our fair share of troubles.



What are some examples of bad or painful things that can, and do, happen in life?

Even people who seem to get what they want will have times when they feel life's not so good: None of us can really know what's going on inside someone else. Someone can, for example, look confident and seem popular and wealthy. However, life experiences will happen to them too. Everyone has phases in life when things don't go well.

We will make mistakes and bad choices: Any of us can fail at our studies, friendships, relationships and jobs. We always have a role to play. Being emotionally mature and responsible means that we can face up to our part when things go wrong. We don't take too much, or too little, responsibility. Instead, we allow ourselves to feel our emotions, we take time to understand what happened and we think about what we can do next to get things in a better place and learn from the experience.

Give an example of a bad choice. What feelings could this choice stir up? What can be learned from it?

We can use our mind: Most of us take it for granted that we have a mind. We think thoughts, problem solve, dream at night and perhaps have daydreams too. However, we can make the choice to use our mind to influence how we feel and to improve our relationships with others. This requires us to become aware of our self-talk. We all 'talk' to ourselves giving ourselves feedback and commenting on our lives. If you're saying to yourself, *'I don't talk to myself!'* - that's it - that's your self-talk in action. Our self-talk is influenced by our past experiences and by how we feel about ourselves. If our self-talk says, for example, *'I'm not going to take this - I'm fighting back'* we could endlessly be in conflict with others. Our self-esteem and our relationships improve if we learn to pause, step back, become aware of our self-talk and challenge it.

Give an example of a negative thought about yourself or your life. Change it to something more balanced.

We can change our self-talk Our self-talk can sound as if it is giving us the facts. We could say to ourselves, for example, *'It's unfair - I don't have what I want and I'll never get anywhere. I'm not going to try - there's no point!'* . Most of us have lots of negative automatic thoughts called 'NATS' for short. NATS seem like facts but they're not - we all need to work on changing them into positive automatic thoughts - PATS - which are more balanced. For example, the first reaction to something new and perhaps a little daunting can be *'I'm not going to try - there's no point!'* This can be changed to *'No, on second thought, it's worth a try - at least then I'll know I've given it my best'*.

Shared emotions

We all have the same basic emotions. Our emotions are either pleasurable or uncomfortable,

Here are some examples: We can feel Happy / Joyful / Excited as well as

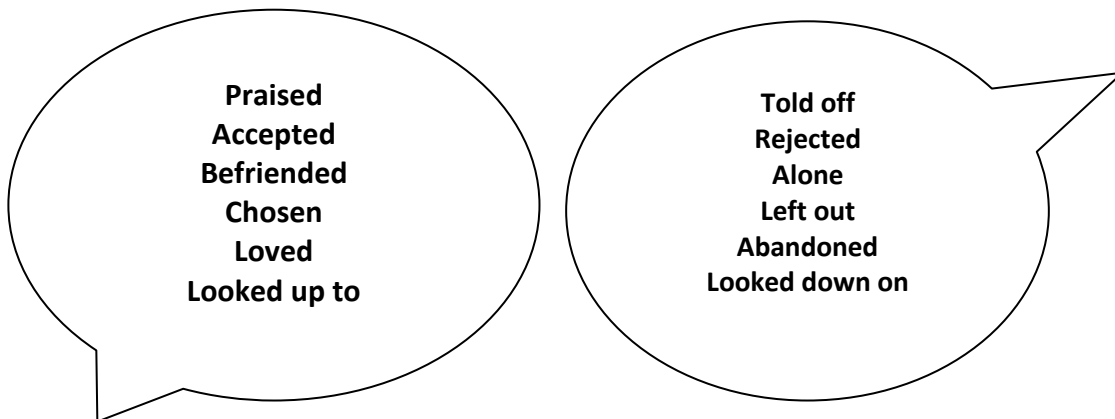


Interestingly, in the English language, there are fewer emotions describing pleasurable experiences and more which describe uncomfortable ones. We also use descriptions of feeling states or mental states to convey how we feel.

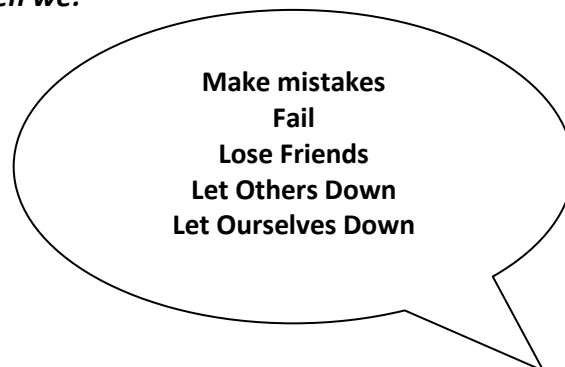
Here some examples of this: We can feel Proud / Hopeful / Optimistic / Fulfilled as well as Disgusted / Humiliated / Ashamed / Hopeless / Depressed / Disappointed

Using the emotions listed above, go through the different experiences listed in the speech bubbles below and describe what feelings could be stirred up by each. You can name as many feelings as you want. Feel free to include ones which might not be on the above lists.

What do we feel if we're:



What do we feel when we:



Now select a few of your examples and describe your self-talk.



For example, if you are praised, do you get embarrassed and tell yourself something like: *'I'm not that good - I did well just this once. It must have been luck!'* Or if you've made a mistake or failed, does your self-talk go something like this: *'It's unfair - no one helped me!' or 'I knew I was no good - this proves it!'* In all these instances, the self-talk needs to be challenged and changed so it is more balanced.

Family & cultural perspectives

Families and cultures have different views on emotions. In some, being able to keep emotions to oneself is seen as desirable and a strength. In others, being open and honest about emotions is admired. It's probably best if we aim for somewhere in between: we don't want to bury our emotions and never show them. Neither is it helpful to 'over-emote' or 'over-share'.

Describe your family's perspectives on emotions.

Do you think boys/ men and girls/women feel equally comfortable showing and talking about emotions? If not, why not? Does this need to be changed?

Shared reactions

As well as sharing the same basic emotions, people can have a similar response to things that happen. For example, if we are in a new situation with people we don't know, it's likely we'll feel a little nervous but probably curious as well. How nervous we are will depend on what our past experiences of being new have been like. If new situations have turned out to be enjoyable, we'll probably feel quite confident. However if they've been uncomfortable and awkward, we might feel less sure of our self.

What new situations might trigger anxiety? What else could make people anxious?

Emotional hot spots

Although we may share common responses to life circumstances, there are times when we'll feel things more or less strongly than others. We all have what's called 'emotional hot spots'. For example, we could have a close relationship with our father all through childhood. If our father leaves the family and cuts off all contact, then it's likely we will be sensitive to any perceived rejection. If someone doesn't respond to a text or a message, our emotional hot spot could be touched and we might have a reaction way out of proportion to events. Without being fully aware of it, we could feel we're been rejected and, as happened with our father, we imagine we'll never hear from this friend again. If we know what our hot spots are, we stand a better chance of recognising why we're having a strong feeling and we don't act on it.

What are some other examples of emotional hot spots?

CONCLUSION



This worksheet has provided an introduction to why emotions are important and how to begin to think about them. To continue to build your understanding of emotions, you can go through other worksheets. Some popular ones are:

- A is for Anger
- A is for Adolescent Anger
- A is Assertive vs Aggressive Behaviour
- A is for Anxiety
- F is for feelings we have in Families

You can also look through the different sets of emotional learning cards which all include art work by living artists. The cards show us how having feelings is a normal part of life - no feeling is 'bad' or 'wrong'. It's what we do with our feelings, and what we can learn from them, that counts. In addition to the A-Z of Emotions, the sets include the following:

- *What do you feel?*
- *Who are you? Where are you going?*
- *How do we live well with others?*
- *What do relationships mean to you?*



A-Z of Feelings

Common feelings or experiences we all have include the following:

| | | |
|-----------|----------|--|
| ANGRY | AGITATED | AVOIDING <i>uncomfortable feelings</i> |
| ACCPETING | ALONE | ADMIRE |

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| ANXIOUS | ASSERTIVE | AWKWARD |
| ABANDONED | APPRECIATED | APPRECIATIVE |
| Feeling APART | BEWILDERED | BEMUSED |
| BETRAYED | BELITTLED | BEAUTIFUL |
| A SENSE OF BELONGING | BORED | BAD INSIDE |
| CROSS | CONFUSED | CONCERNED |

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| COURAGEOUS | COWARDLY | CERTAIN |
| CORNERED | COMMITTED | CONFIDENT |
| CRITICISED | CRUELLY TREATED | CRUEL TO OTHERS |
| CRITICAL | CALM | COULDN'T CARE LESS |
| DEPRESSED | DOWN | DEFLATED |

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| DOUBTFUL | DELIGHTED | DISCONNECTED |
| DISCOURAGED | DESKILLED | DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS |
| DISAPPOINTED | DE-MOTIVATED | DISEMPOWERED |
| EXCITED | ENERGETIC | ENVIIOUS |
| EMBARASSED | FORGOTTEN | FORGIVEN |



| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| FRUSTRATED | FORGIVING | FULFILLED |
| FEARUFL | A FAILURE | A FRAUD |
| GRUMPY | GREEDY | GRATEFUL |
| GUILTY | GOING NOWHERE | GUARDED |
| Feeling GOSSIPED about | GOSSIPING about others | HURTING OTHERS |
| | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| HATEFUL | HOPEFUL | HURTING INSIDE |
| FEELING HATED | HELD BACK | HOLDING BACK |
| HARSHLY JUDGED | HEARTLESS | HEAVY HEARTED |
| HAPPY | HORRIFIED | HASSLED |
| IRRITATED | FEELING IGNORANT | INSPIRED |
| INSIGHTFUL | IGNORED | ISOLATED |

| | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | | |
| JOYFUL | JUDGED | JEALOUS |
| KIND HEARTED | KNOWLEDGEABLE | NOT KNOWING |
| LOVED | LEFT OUT | LOYAL |
| LONELY | LOST | LOVING FEELINGS |
| LAUGHED AT | MISSING OUT | MISSED |
| MYSTIFIED | MAGNIFICENT | MOTIVATED |



| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| | | |
| MIXED UP | MADE TO FEEL NO GOOD | MELANCHOLY |
| MISJUDGED | MISUNDERSTOOD | MISERABLE |
| NERVOUS | NOTICED | NURTURED |
| NEVER able to achieve | NO good | NEGLECTED |
| Having NEGATIVE THOUGHTS | FEELING LIKE A NOBODY | NEEDY |
| Feeling like | OPTIMISTIC | OVERLOOKED |



| | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| an OUTSIDER | | |
| OUTRAGED | ON TRACK | ON OUR OWN |
| OVERWHELMED | <i>an</i> OUTSIDER | PEOPLE PLEASER |
| PULLED <i>in different directions</i> | PUNISHED | PURPOSEFUL |
| PUNISHING | PEACEFUL | PRESSURED |
| PUSHY | PROVOCATIVE | PURPOSELESS |

| | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| | | |
| QUESTIONING our worth- <i>Am I liked? Do I like myself?</i> | QUARRELSOME | QUIET |
| RESENTFUL | REJECTED | RESTRICTED |
| REMORSEFUL | RESPONSIBLE | REGRETFUL |
| REPLACED | GETTING INTO ROWS | RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS |
| SUCCESSFUL | SEEING <i>things from other people's perspectives</i> | SAD |

| | | |
|------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| | | |
| SIBLING TROUBLES | SORROWFUL | SPECIAL |
| STRESSED | SYMPATHETIC | SUCCESSFUL |
| SELF-CONSCIOUS | SELF OBSESSED | SELF LOATHING |
| TREATED UNFAIRLY | TRUSTING | TRUSTWORTHY |
| UNTRUSTWORTHY | UNCERTAIN | UNPOPULAR |
| UNATTRACTIVE | UGLY | UNABLE TO MANAGE |

| | | |
|------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| | | |
| UNLUCKY | UNINTERESTING | UNDER SIZED & self-conscious |
| UNHAPPY | UNHEARD | UNGRATEFUL |
| UNLOVEABLE | UNLIKEABLE | UNMANAGABLE |
| UNDERSTOOD | UNINTELLIGENT | UNIQUE |
| VULNERABLE | VALUED | VAGUE |
| | | |

| | | |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| WORTHY | WORRIED | WOBBLY |
| WITTY | WISE | WILD |
| WITHOUT LOVE | eXCLUDED | eXCITED |
| YEARNING for love & attention | Saying ' YES ' to positive thinking | Full Of ZEST & Energy |