



Own Your Emotions; Labeling and Communicating Your Feelings Handout

You have a difficult job as a caregiver. This role can stir up many strong feelings. It's important to know how to manage your emotions so that you do not become burnt out.

What's the purpose of emotions?

- Emotions give you important information.
- Emotions act as a signal to take action.

How do you know when you have a problem managing your feelings?

- You have strong reactions. (outbursts, screaming, hostility, unable to calm down)
- You engage in destructive coping behaviors. (over spending, drug use, smoking, alcohol abuse)
- Your relationships are in conflict.
- You shut down your emotions and withdraw.

Name your emotions. Name what you feel so you can use the information it is providing to act. Can you think of a time when you felt one of the emotions below?

Sadness results from a loss or disappointment.

- Physical reaction-Fatigue, pain, emptiness, breathless, dizzy or faint
- Expression-Tearfulness, frowning, slumping posture, sobbing or crying,
- After effects-Low motivation, avoidance, social withdrawal, act helpless, inactivity, not engaging in activities that once brought you joy, giving up, difficulty in remembering happy things, become irritable or grouchy, blaming or criticizing yourself, focusing on sad events, insomnia, appetite changes, a negative outlook

Guilt may result when you are going against what you think is right. Guilt can also occur when you are going against what someone else wants you to do.

- Physical reaction-Get hot or red in the face, shake or tremble, feel like you are suffocating
- Expression-Become restless, nervous, agitated, irritable, secretive, distance yourself
- After effects-You may make excuses, make amends, apologize, seek forgiveness, or make a sacrifice to make up for what you did

Anger is a signal that your needs aren't met or that your boundaries are crossed.



- Physical reaction-Tense muscles, teeth clenched, blood rush to your head, get hot and red in the face, can't think straight
- Expression-Raise your voice or yell, pound as you walk, throw things or hit things, cry
- After effects-Become sarcastic or say or do hurtful things, withdraw from others, find it difficult to focus on anything other than what you are angry about, may shut down or become numb, lose perspective

Shame is a signal that you are rejected or don't think you are as good as others. Shame can occur when you are judged, laughed at or your privacy is exposed.

- Physical reaction-Pain or sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach, blushing
- Expression-Say negative things about yourself, feeling of dread, hiding your face or body, and avoidance of other people
- After effects-Don't feeling worthy of good treatment, don't stick up for yourself, expect or focus on failures or don't risk, or not accomplishing all that you are capable of

Happiness is a signal that something brings you joy. It can occur when you; feel loved, hear good feedback, have fun, or accomplished something.

- Physical reaction-Increased energy, feel lighter, bright glowing face
- Expression-Smiling, laughing, hugging, saying positive things to yourself and others, being talkative, cheerful
- After effect-Acting friendlier to others including strangers, helping others, having a higher tolerance for stress, or a positive outlook for the future.

Communication of your Emotions

- Start by calming down first and get some perspective.
- Describe the current situation in a factual way. Be mindful of not assigning meaning or judgements, but instead, just stick to the facts!
- Express your feeling. Make sure you can name the emotion in a clear, direct manner such as "I feel sad".
- Use "I Messages". Keep communication direct and honest. Focus on your own experiences. For example, "I want" rather than "you should", or "I don't want" instead of "You shouldn't."
- Ask for what you want or need clearly and directly. Assume that others don't know what you want or need. Make requests rather than demands.
- Expressing your feelings does not mean the other person will respond in the way you would like them to. Each person will choose how they decide to respond.