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Helping People Build Better Relationships

EMOTIONS 101

Across cultures, psychologists have identified just a few basic emotions that human beings seem to have. Recent neuroscience studies suggest that we may have as few as four core emotions: **anger, sadness, fear, and happiness**. Our capacity for language allows us to express incredible emotional subtleties, to communicate different versions of these basic themes that vary greatly in their intensity. Below is a list of the four basic emotions and some of their common variations.

HAPPY

Confident	Secure	Giddy	Glad	Inspired	Fulfilled	Refreshed
Proud	Ecstatic	Amused	Hopeful	Amazed	Relaxed	Touched
Loving	Pleased	Delighted	Joyful	Peaceful	Relieved	Grateful
Safe	Elated	Optimistic	Exhilarated	Comfortable	Enlivened	Moved

SAD

Down	Depressed	Hurt	In Pain	Ashamed	Discouraged
Dejected	Gloomy	Heartbroken	Devastated	Unimportant	Guilty
Despondent	Melancholy	Lonely	Regretful	Unloved	Miserable
Low	Unhappy	Isolated	Disheartened	Despairing	Grieving

ANGRY/DISGUSTED

Annoyed	Frustrated	Enraged	Outraged	Repulsed	Crabby
Aggravated	Irritated	Furious	Resentful	Hate	Cranky
Displeased	Irked	Ticked Off	Irate	Dislike	Horrorified
Exasperated	Impatient	Incensed	Appalled	Contempt	Mad

AFRAID/SURPRISED

Apprehensive	Foreboding	Unsafe	Suspicious	Edgy	Stressed Out	Shaky
Tentative	Frightened	Petrified	Worried	Fidgety	Freaked Out	Fragile
Panicked	Terrified	Mistrustful	Nervous	Frazzled	Leery	Guarded
Dread	Wary	Scared	Jittery	Restless	Insecure	Startled

Psychologists further group emotions into two basic categories—**vulnerable** emotions and **reactive** emotions. Both types of emotions are valid and important. Vulnerable emotions express our joy, sadness, or fear in an unguarded way that draws the other person in to empathize with us and understand us. Reactive emotions come after vulnerable emotions and push others away, creating safety for us against the person or situation we perceive as a threat. Anger is very typically a reactive emotion.

For example, if someone ignores us, we might reactively become angry with them and punish them with our criticism or coldness. If we dig deeper, however, before the anger, we might become aware of being hurt, sad, or feeling unimportant or uncared for. Because those feelings are so vulnerable, we rarely openly share them with our loved ones—which tends to keep us from being able to reach for the closeness and safety we really need.