

Talking about your emotions.

Relevant to: Depression:  Anxiety:  Irritability/Anger:  General emotional control: 

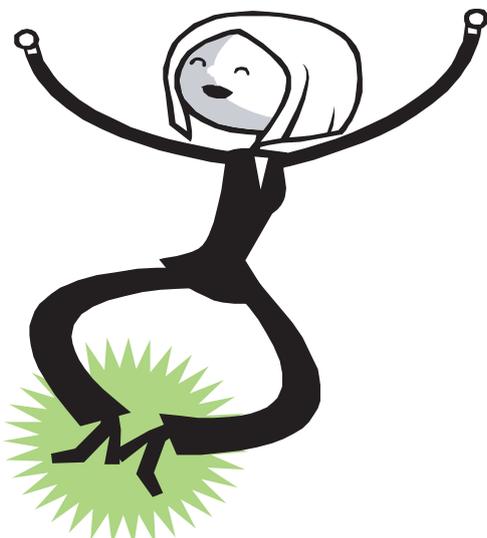
It is important to be able to talk about your emotions. Why? Partly because it can be fun, and also because people can then help each other deal with them. If you can't talk about your emotions you aren't likely to get much help in dealing with them.

Step One: know the language

The first thing to know is what emotions are out there. Before you read the list below you might like to take a moment out to name all the emotions you can think of. Here are some of the more important ones:

- Love, and hate.
- Jealousy, and possessiveness.
- Sadness, and happiness.
- Lethargic, and energetic.
- Mania (unrealistic happiness and excitement).
- Boredom, and excitement.
- Frustration, and a sense of achievement.
- Worry, and relaxation.
- Shyness, and feeling sociable.
- Panic, and feeling in control.
- Anger.
- Irritability, and tolerant/accepting.

All of those are important emotions for many people, although there are one or two that some people won't be familiar with.



So what use is such a list?

The first thing you can do is learn to talk to yourself about your emotions. Not quite as strange as it sounds, this really means identifying what emotion you are feeling at any particular time. For many people this is a big step forward; a lot of us can only identify whether we are feeling 'good' or 'bad'. It's worth learning to identify your emotions more clearly though, because then you can talk to others about them if you want to. If all you can say is "I'm feeling bad" there is not much anyone can say to help. If on the other hand you say "I'm feeling really jealous" then whoever you're talking to might have a couple of good tips to help.

How do you talk to others about your emotions?

The main thing is not to be too 'heavy' about it, even if it feels heavy to you. Research shows, for example, that if you say to your friend "I'm so fed up I wonder what is the point of going on" then your friend will probably run a mile. If on the other hand you say "I was so fed up yesterday I had to take the dog out for a five thousand mile walk" your friend will probably laugh and ask you what you were fed up about. Which is just what you're after; you can then have a good talk. It still doesn't need to be heavy to be useful. There is an old saying: "You don't have to be solemn to be serious".

But as well as talking about your emotions when you need to, it's good to talk about them just for fun. What could be more interesting than talking about what your brain is up to, after all? And the great thing is that no matter how strange or odd you think your emotions are, there will be plenty of others having just the same experience. So get used to talking about emotions just for the sheer interest of it.

One tip: choose who to talk to about your emotions. There's nothing worse than opening up to someone who just doesn't seem to know what you are talking about! Try several different people; there are always one or two who see things the same as you, and have maybe had the same experiences as you. If this is something you're not used to doing, you'll be surprised.

What to do when others talk to you about their emotions

The main thing is to accept what the other person says without telling them they shouldn't feel like that. So, when your friend says that she bumped into her ex husband and he spent fifteen minutes telling her all about his new partner, so she felt upset and angry, then which of the following is the more helpful thing to say:

1. There's no point in feeling upset – it's over now.
2. Yes, I'd feel that way too!

The second one, certainly. It immediately gets a bond between you so you can then carry on and discuss what's the best thing to do when you feel that way. Which is where the really useful talk happens.

In-session discussion.

What would you say to a friend who comes to you and says ...

- ... s/he is really worried because their partner has just got a new (attractive) assistant and her jealousy is causing a lot of arguments.
- ... s/he's not happy with their partner anymore.
- ... s/he can't see the point in getting up in the morning.
- ... s/he is struggling to control their temper when their children misbehave.

What would the best thing to do be if you had no friends or family to talk to and were feeling low?

What would be the best way for a man to talk about his emotions to his macho friends?

Out of session project.

1. Practise identifying your emotions – putting names to them.
2. Practise talking to others about your emotions – in a non-heavy way, maybe just for fun. Try out different people.
3. Practise listening to others about their emotions if you get the chance – usually agreeing you'd feel the same in whatever situation they're describing.

Mythbuster:

Men shouldn't talk about their emotions. Not True.

It's perfectly fine to talk about emotions if you want to - it is just important how you phrase your problems.

Note: The group leader may ask you to discuss how you will do this project.