

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# How to Identify and Manage Emotions

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*This informational text explores the benefits of emotional awareness and shares tips for managing emotions. As you read, take notes on the benefits of practicing emotional awareness.*

[1] What would you think if you saw a teenager or an adult cry and scream when they didn't get their way? You would probably find this behavior strange and childlike. Teenagers and adults are supposed to have a better handle on their emotions than children do. Children tend to immediately express their emotional reactions in an overt<sup>1</sup> and sometimes dramatic way. For example, it is normal for children to cry or complain when they are told they have to eat their vegetables before getting to eat dessert. But as you get older you tend to grow out of crying and complaining when you don't get everything that you want. Adults may act like children at times, but this behavior is usually viewed as bizarre and immature.



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Eventually, children begin to learn more appropriate methods to express their excitement and disappointment. This happens in a few different ways and for a few different reasons. As we grow up, we begin to recognize that the way we express our feelings has an impact on other people. If we scream and cry in school in front of our classmates, we begin to learn that this makes our teachers angry and makes our classmates uncomfortable or nervous around us.

When the people around us have a negative or positive response to the way we express our feelings, we learn from those experiences. If the responses to our emotions are positive, we learn that this is a comfortable environment to share feelings and that we have communicated our feelings in an appropriate way. If the responses to our emotions are negative, we learn to behave differently by expressing our emotions less intensely; we attempt to convey our feelings in a different way, or we choose to manage our emotions privately. We also learn over time that we need to behave and express ourselves differently in different settings. For example, we behave and express ourselves differently in a class or a house of worship than we would when hanging out with friends.

1. **Overt (adjective):** done or shown openly; plainly or readily apparent, not secret or hidden

## Emotional awareness

Emotional awareness is a skill that impacts the way we think about ourselves, as well as how others perceive us. There are many different emotions you can experience from day to day and even hour to hour. Once you are familiar with your emotions, you will be better at identifying when you are feeling them. We are better equipped to navigate our friendships and other relationships, successes, disappointments, conflicts with others, and much more, when we understand our feelings. This awareness has the potential to affect multiple areas of our lives — our time with family, in the classroom, at a job and time spent with friends.

- [5] Emotional awareness is like a muscle. The more you practice using it, the stronger it will get. One way we can improve our emotional awareness is by getting into the habit of noticing how you feel at different points throughout the day. Designate a couple of times a day to check in with yourself about how you are feeling. Did you just get a grade back from a test? Did you just finish catching up with a friend? Have you been busy working on multiple assignments all day? Are you rushing to get to work? How do these, and your own personal experiences throughout the day, make you feel? You can write some of the feelings you notice into a notebook or your phone or simply think them over. Most importantly, carve out some time to notice how you feel.

Noticing emotions in others (and how this makes you feel) can make you a more careful observer. In the normal course of events, we notice and gauge<sup>2</sup> other people's feelings all the time. Not only that, whenever we read a story or watch a show or a movie, we notice things about how the characters are feeling (and maybe even how the story/show/movie is making us feel). So much of this happens without us really thinking about it. But if you take some time to notice these feelings and put them into words it will make you more aware of others and yourself.

Here are some tips for managing your own emotions:

### ***Identify the feeling***

What are you experiencing? Can you name it? If not, can you describe it? Getting familiar with your emotions will help you understand what you are feeling and help you decide how to handle it and communicate it to others.

### ***Acceptance***

Some people find it very unpleasant when they experience certain feelings; like anger or sadness. And sometimes those people try to avoid even letting themselves be aware of these unpleasant emotions. But, acknowledging and accepting that you feel an undesirable emotion will not make it stronger or more intense. It's important to know that the more we avoid our emotions, the more intense they can become. This often leads to situations when our emotions overwhelm us and we have difficulty managing them. Or at other times, the emotion might express itself in other indirect ways. In any case, it is almost always better to let yourself be aware of how and what you are feeling.

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2. **Guage (verb):** estimate or determine the magnitude, amount, or volume of

### ***Express the feeling***

- [10] A few healthy ways to express your feelings include: writing about your experience, this is sometimes called “journaling;” talk about your experience with someone you feel comfortable with; you can cry if you need to, this can feel like an emotional release when you are alone or with someone you trust; or any other activity that allows you to let out your feelings — as long as it is not harmful to you or anyone else.

### ***Use a healthy strategy to take care of yourself***

Find an activity that helps you feel better in the moment. This could involve deep breathing, talking to someone you trust for support, taking a nap or a shower, exercising, reading, or going for a walk. Find what works best for you when you are feeling upset. But be aware that what works for you might be different than what works for your friends or peers.

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: What is the central idea of the text?
  - A. Emotional awareness, which can be learned and practiced, can help people navigate multiple areas of life.
  - B. Babies learn to manage emotions, and as they grow, they use the same skills in new situations.
  - C. Emotional awareness involves learning to accept positive emotions and reject negative ones.
  - D. Because learning to manage emotions is so difficult, it is best left to adults.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "As we grow up we begin to recognize that the way we express our feelings has an impact on other people." (Paragraph 2)
  - B. "There are many different emotions you can experience from day to day and even hour to hour." (Paragraph 4)
  - C. "We are better equipped to navigate our friendships and other relationships, successes, disappointments, conflicts with others, and much more, when we understand our feelings." (Paragraph 4)
  - D. "It's important to know that the more we avoid our emotions, the more intense they can become. This often leads to situations when our emotions overwhelm us and we have difficulty managing them." (Paragraph 9)
  
3. Why does the author compare emotional awareness to a muscle?
  - A. One cannot acknowledge any weaknesses when building strong emotional awareness and strong muscles.
  - B. Developing habits of noticing one's own feelings can make emotional awareness stronger.
  - C. It is something that some people have and other people don't have.
  - D. Good diet and sleep can help make it stronger.
  
4. How does paragraph 5 contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
  - A. It suggests that the ability to manage emotions is genetic; some people are better at it than others.
  - B. It suggests that scientists don't know a lot about emotions, so managing them helps battle the unknown.
  - C. It emphasizes how varied and complicated emotions can be and shows the importance of identifying them.
  - D. It shows strong evidence supporting the history of certain emotions and why some people seem to feel them so intensely.

5. How does the author develop the idea that emotional awareness can be learned and practiced? Use details from the text to support your answer.

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