



PRACTICING

A USERS GUIDE TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

8 facts about emotional intelligence (+ activities to practice)

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We live in a time of complexity. Stress is rising. We have incredible technology to communicate, yet people feel isolated and disconnected. This combination makes people more volatile, more impatient, and less able to connect and navigate emotions effectively. This makes it harder to solve the real problems we face individually and collectively.

Why emotional intelligence now?

The emotional challenge is growing – at work and at home, all around the world. Even children are experiencing greater distress. Maybe once-upon-a-time there was little need to actively learn the skills of emotional intelligence. In this world of growing complexity, however, we all need to develop more insight and skill to handle our own and others' emotions effectively. That's where emotional intelligence comes in.

Emotional intelligence means being smarter with feelings. Tuning in lets us use feelings as a source of data to help us take the most effective actions.

Sometimes people get too caught up in emotions and get overwhelmed. Others push emotions away, try not to feel, and miss important signals. Neither extreme is very effective. Emotional intelligence means using emotions and thinking together - it's about balance.

There's a growing body of research showing that the skills of emotional intelligence help people...

- Be and feel healthier
- Make better decisions
- Form stronger relationships
- Achieve more effective results

At Six Seconds we've developed a process for using emotional intelligence; for making it something practical. Our mission is growing the world's emotional intelligence, and our vision is a billion people practicing emotional intelligence. We believe that actively exercising emotional intelligence will help all of us create more peace, prosperity, and a better world. We hope you'll join us!

This booklet includes eight ideas to get started on practicing emotional intelligence, with easy activities to put them into action. Let's start with the 8 facts about emotions.

Fact 1: Emotions are Part of our Biology

Fact 2: Emotions are Messages

Fact 3: We Feel Multiple Feelings

Fact 4: Emotions Change, Evolve and Combine

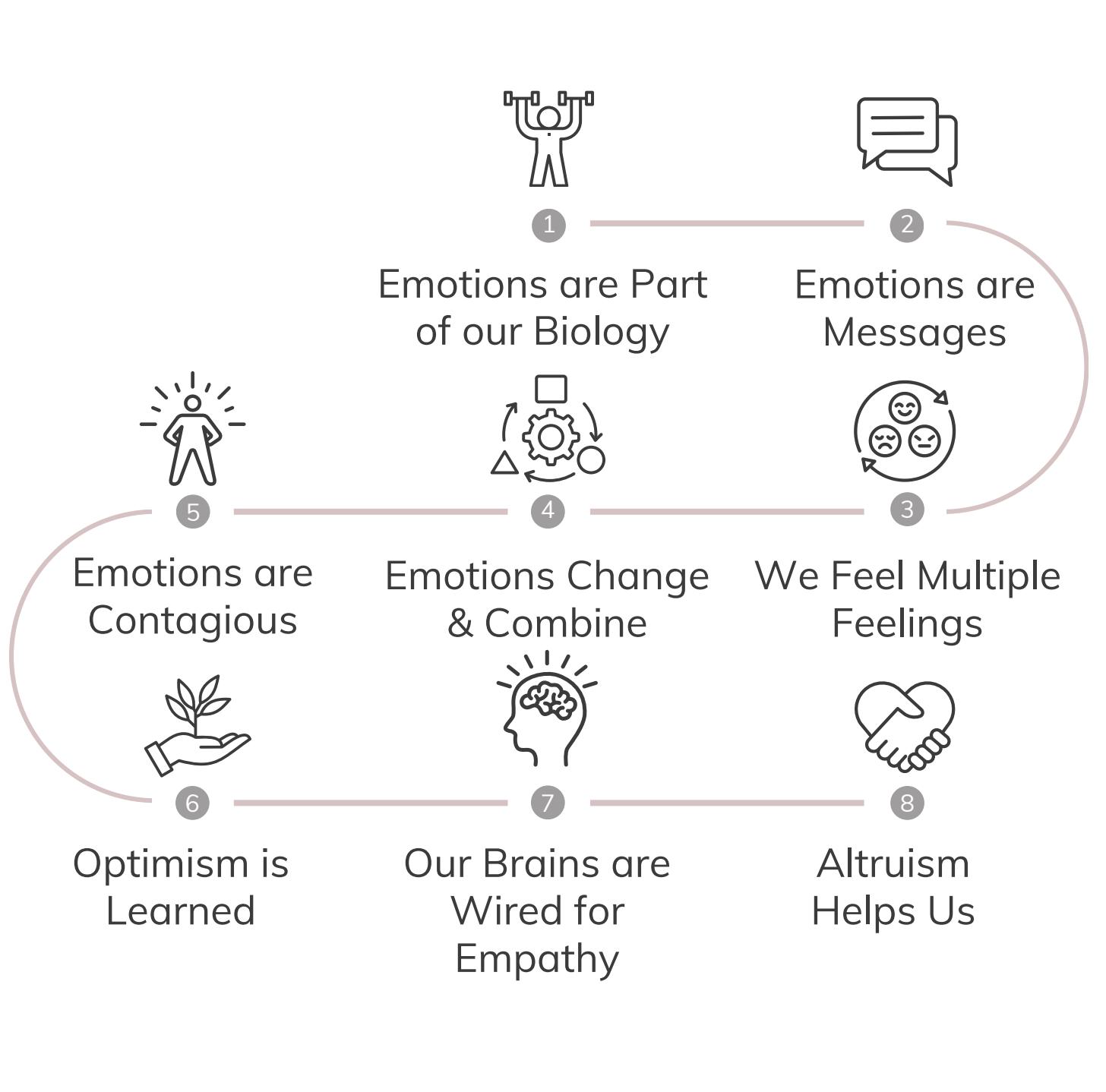
Fact 5: Emotions are Contagious

Fact 6: Optimism is Learned

Fact 7: Our Brains are Wired for Empathy

Fact 8: Altruism Helps Us

8 FACTS TO PRACTICING EQ



01

Emotions are part of our biology

THE MYTH OF LEAVING EMOTIONS OUT OF IT

Emotions are chemicals that are part of the way our brains and bodies work. In our brains, the chemicals of emotion are intermixed with the chemicals of thought. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio wrote,

"Emotions are enmeshed in the neural networks of reason."

While it might be convenient to leave emotions out of it, in fact, our emotions and thoughts are always influencing each other.

They also influence our bodies. Emotions signal the body to prepare for opportunity and threat, regulating such basic functions as heart rate, blood flow, digestion, immunity, muscle response, and even body temperature.

Acting like emotions don't exist is illogical.

What's another option?

Embody Your Emotions:

When you've had years of practice ignoring feelings, it can be challenging to tune into them. Some people find it helpful to notice what's happening in their bodies: Is your jaw tight? Is your back sore? Are your fists clenched? Is your brow furrowed? Physical sensations could be clues to help you notice what you're feeling emotionally.

A few times each day, take a moment and tune in.

Try the **Body-Mind-Heart (BMH)** scan:

1 What are you experiencing physically?
(eg smile, frown, muscles tight or relaxed)

2 What kind of thinking are you doing?
(eg focused, distracted, evaluating, observing)

3 What kind of feelings do you have?
(eg calm, agitated, worried, joyful, bored, excited)

As you practice, you will become more skilled at noticing feelings even when they are small or subtle (and before they turn into something fierce and loud).

BODY-MIND-HEART (BMH) WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to document your experiences with the Body-Mind-Heart scan.

What are you experiencing physically? (eg tension, tight muscles, tingling)

Where are you experiencing feelings in your body? (draw or mark on the figure)



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What kind of feelings do you
have? (eg calm, agitated, worried,
joyful, bored, excited)

What kind of thinking are you
doing? (eg focused, distracted,
evaluating, observing)

02

Emotions are messages

UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF FEELINGS

Let's explore the basics of emotional intelligence: What are emotions, and why do we feel them?

Emotions are messages. They exist because they need to tell you something important. Emotional Intelligence is a set of skills for learning to perceive, understand and use our emotions.

Every feeling* does 2 things:

1. Focus our attention on an opportunity or threat

They ask us a question, "have you thought about this part?"

For example, Joy asks: Are you noticing how great this is? Fear asks: Are you noticing this danger?

2. Energize us to move forward or back

They motivate action to deal with opportunities/threats. Generally either approach or avoid. Joy motivates us to approach, stepping closer to the opportunity. Fear motivates us to avoid, stepping back from the risk (but fear + anger is different! We'll explore how emotions combine in the next section).

Now let's go over the 8 primary emotions and explore how each is trying to help us.

Eight Basic Emotions

Here are short descriptions of the 8 basic emotions as shown in **Plutchik's Emotion Wheel**. See page 12 for the diagram. Each primary emotion has a functional value and a polar opposite. These are based on the physiological reaction each emotion creates:

Joy

Joy helps us to

- notice what's going well
- fuel our energy to move forward and recreate it

Sadness

Sadness helps us to

- notice and cherish what we love
- connect with others
- step back to reflect

Joy is the opposite physiologically of Sadness. Physiology: Connect vs withdraw

Fear

Fear helps us to

- focus on what we want to protect
- move back to avert threats

Anger

Anger helps us to

- notice what is in the way
- energize us to break through obstacles

Fear is the opposite physiologically of Anger. Physiology: Get small and hide vs get big and loud

Anticipation

Anticipation helps us to

- notice what we're looking forward to
- fuel our motivation to prepare, plan, and move toward our goals

Surprise

Surprise helps us to

- notice what is new or unfamiliar
- adapt quickly to new information or experience

Anticipation is the opposite physiologically of Surprise. Physiology: Examine closely vs jump back

Trust

Trust helps us to

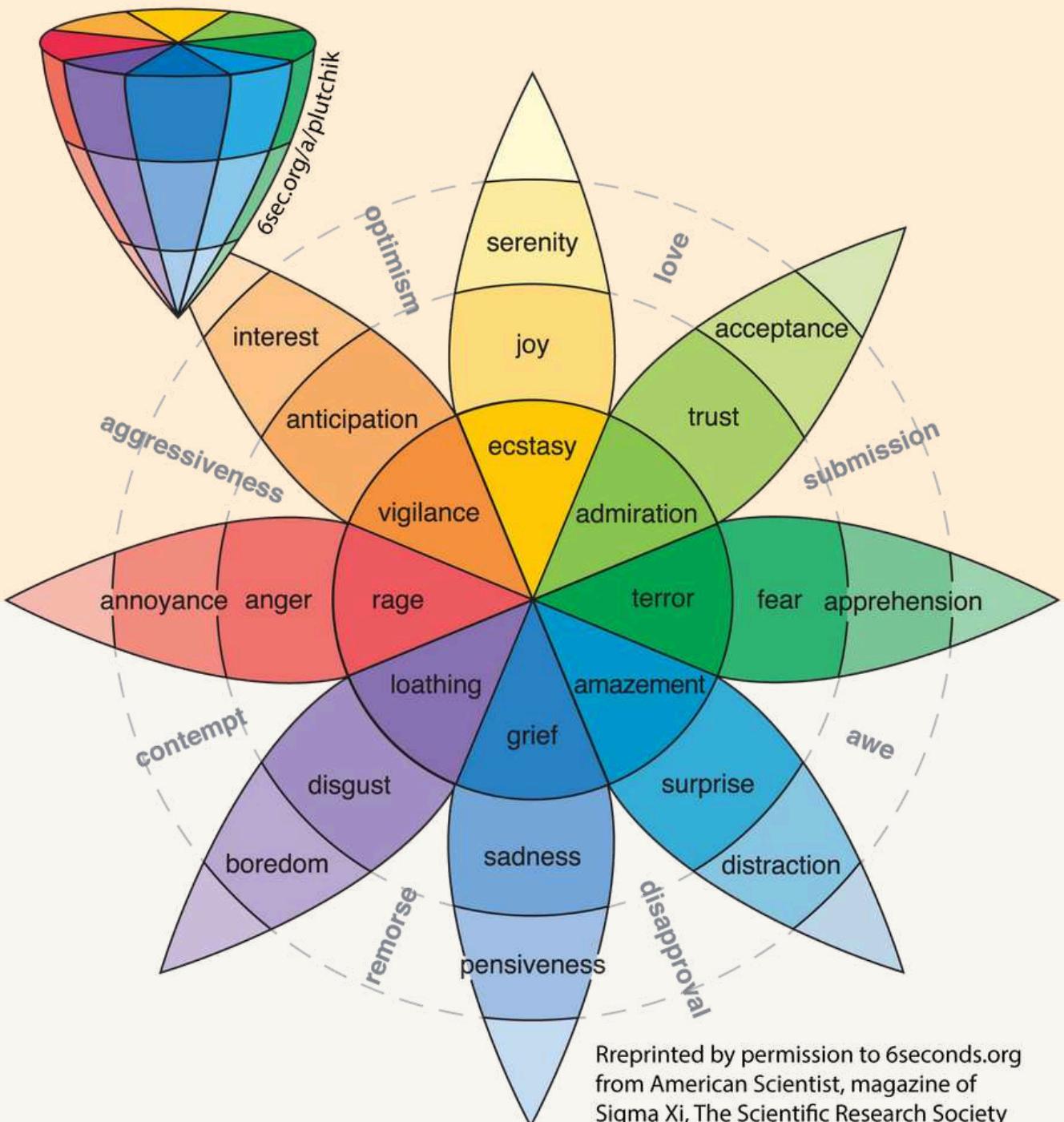
- focus on what is stable, reliable and safe
- act with confidence

Disgust

Disgust helps us to

- set boundaries of what's ok
- reject or move away from what's unhealthy or wrong

Disgust is the opposite physiologically of Trust. Physiology: Reject vs embrace



Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions

Plutchik Wheel: Decode Emotions

Plutchik's wheel of emotion is a colorful and powerful model for exploring emotions. Notice the following:

Colors: The eight emotions are arranged by colors around the wheel.

Intensity: Moving from the center to the outer layers, the colors become less saturated, and the intensity of the emotions lowers.

Relationships: Each emotion has its opposite. The opposite emotions are across from each other in the circle.

Try exploring the **Plutchik Wheel**:

1 Choose an emotion from the wheel.

2 Consider what is that emotion trying to tell me?

3 Ask yourself: what does that feeling want me to notice or do?

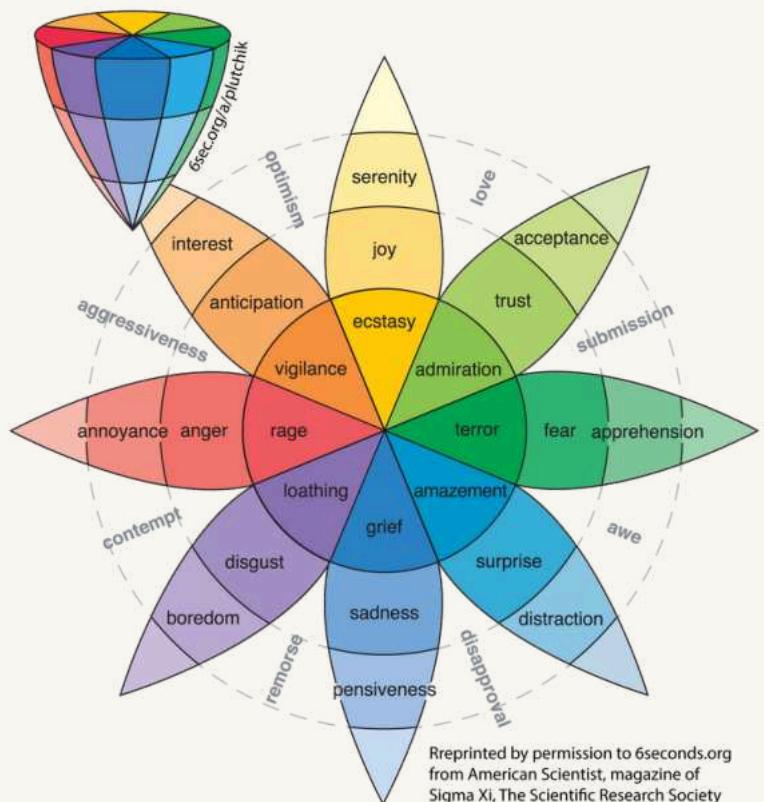
As you practice, you will see interesting relationships and patterns between the emotions of Plutchik's wheel.

PLUTCHIK WHEEL WORKSHEET

Here are the 8 basic emotions as shown in Plutchik's Emotion Wheel.

Choose 1 from the list on the left and ask yourself:

Joy Anger
Sadness Fear
Anticipation
Trust Surprise
Disgust



What is that emotion trying to tell me?

What does that feeling want you to notice or do?

03

We feel multiple feelings

ALWAYS FEELING A LOT

Emotion chemicals are produced throughout our bodies, and primarily in our brains. There is a little “factory” called the hypothalamus that assembles emotion chemicals. They’re made out of little strings of protein called peptides. These chemicals are released, then go coursing through our brains, and through the pituitary gland into our bloodstreams.

Emotions affect every living cell in our bodies.

And, our bodies affect our minds.
Emotions are a kind of two-way

communication system. At any given time, we will have multiple little “bursts” of feeling chemicals running around in our brains and bodies carrying their messages to regulate our systems and to help us cope.

It takes about six seconds for an emotion chemical to travel through the body, deliver its message to a cell, and be recycled (hence the name of our organization!)

On some level, we are always feeling multiple feelings at a time.

Feelings Quilt:

Frequently when people express emotion, they focus on the most obvious or the loudest feeling. For example, in an argument, it's easy to notice that you're angry. There are almost always additional feelings surrounding this one. Maybe you are scared, lonely, loving, hopeful, excited... all at the same time. They don't cancel one another out, they exist together as a paradox, creating a rich (confusing) texture of feeling.

When you are noticing feelings, ask yourself:

What else am I feeling?

Try making a **Feelings Quilt**.

1 In a square of the quilt, fill in color and texture to represent a feeling you have right now.

2 Keep adding more feelings and details to complete your Feelings Quilt

3 Looking at your completed "quilt," consider how the feelings are affecting one another, and affecting you

As you practice, you'll get better at noticing the mix of feelings and, in turn, that will help you understand why you are thinking and acting the way you do.

FEELINGS QUILT WORKSHEET

Fill in color and texture to make a quilt block to represent a feeling you have right now. Look at your completed quilt to see how your feelings are affecting one another, and affecting you.



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Emotions change, evolve and combine

EMBRACING THE COMPLEXITY OF EMOTIONS

Now that you have the basics of emotional intelligence, let's explore more complex ideas that deepen our understanding of how emotions shape our experiences.

Three facts about emotions:

We feel emotions at different intensities

Emotions aren't static; we feel them at varying intensities, from a subtle unease to overwhelming panic.

We have many different words for emotions

The richness of our emotional vocabulary allows us to articulate these nuanced feelings with a wide array of words, each capturing different shades of our emotional landscape.

We feel combinations of emotions

It's common to experience multiple emotions simultaneously, such as feeling both joy and sorrow in a bittersweet moment.

Let's explore these concepts with a few activities.

PRACTICE

Name It to Tame It:

Naming emotions is also a powerful practice that has been found to reduce the intensity of a feeling. (Lieberman et al 2007)

Next time you're in a challenging situation, ask yourself: What am I feeling? And what else am I feeling? Allow yourself to say, "I am feeling... (fill in the blank)."

You can practice now by choosing a specific feeling word from Plutchik's Wheel - or on the expanded emotional vocabulary list on the following pages.

Try **Naming Emotions:**

- 1** Ask yourself: What am I feeling? Don't stop at the loudest emotion.
- 2** Use space on the worksheet to name and identify multiple feelings you are having in the situation.
- 3** Use Plutchik's Wheel or lists of emotion words in this book if you need ideas for emotion words.

As you practice, you'll have an expanded vocabulary and more nuanced expression of your feelings.

NAME IT TO TAME IT WORKSHEET

Practice naming your feelings. Challenge yourself to look more deeply at the feelings underneath your feelings. Fill in the blanks on the worksheet. Need help with emotion words? Use the word list on page 21.

Think of a situation or emotion you are facing:



I'm feeling...

and I'm also feeling...

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I'm feeling...

and I'm also feeling...

I'm feeling...

and I'm also feeling...

I'm feeling...

and I'm also feeling...

EVEN MORE EMOTION WORDS

JOY

Serene
Peaceful
Content
Confident
Pleased
Hopeful
Delighted
Happy
Cheerful
Chuffed
Thrilled
Ecstatic
Exuberant
Wacky
Goofy
Hilarious

SADNESS

Insignificant
Overwhelmed
Withdrawn
Lonely
Disturbed
Gloomy
Down
Discouraged
Defeated
Heartbroken
Miserable
Anguished
Grief-stricken
Devastated
Distraught
Bereft

FEAR

Insecure
Timid
Lost
Astonished
Startled
Unsettled
Hesitant
Troubled
Uncertain
Frightened
Horrified
Anxious
Terrified
Panicked
Petrified
Worried

ANGER

Peeved
Disappointed
Miffed
Annoyed
Irritated
Critical
Hot tempered
Vindictive
Boiling
Fuming
Livid
Infuriated
Outraged
Furious
Explosive
Irritated

ANTICIPATION

Curious
Intrigued
Interest
Hopeful
Vigilant
Expectant
Eager
Excited
Enthusiastic
Anxious
Restless
Nervous
Jittery
Overwhelmed
Elated
Overjoyed

SURPRISE

Taken aback
Startled
Bemused
Distraction
Curious
Amazement
Shocked
Perplexed
Bewildered
Baffled
Astounded
Overwhelmed
Flabbergasted
Dumbfounded
Stunned
Speechless

TRUST

Curious
Open
Acceptance
Reassured
Secure
Comfortable
Confident
Hopeful
Relieved
Believing
Faithful
Loyal
Devoted
Dependable
Admiration
Assured

DISGUST

Dislike
Aversion
Displeasure
Distaste
Repulsion
Irritation
Contempt
Disdain
Revulsion
Abhorrence
Loathing
Nausea
Rejection
Offense
Horror
Avoid

Six Seconds' Feelings Wheel

A Feelings Wheel can be a powerful tool to help us find the right word to capture a feeling. Many people use feelings wheels to inspire, clarify and identify their feelings.

To use the Feelings Wheel, start by looking at the center of the wheel to identify a core emotion that best describes how you're feeling, then move outwards to find more specific emotions that better match your current state; essentially, it helps you pinpoint and understand your emotions by exploring the spectrum of feelings connected to a primary emotion, allowing for deeper self-awareness.

Try the **Feelings Wheel** :

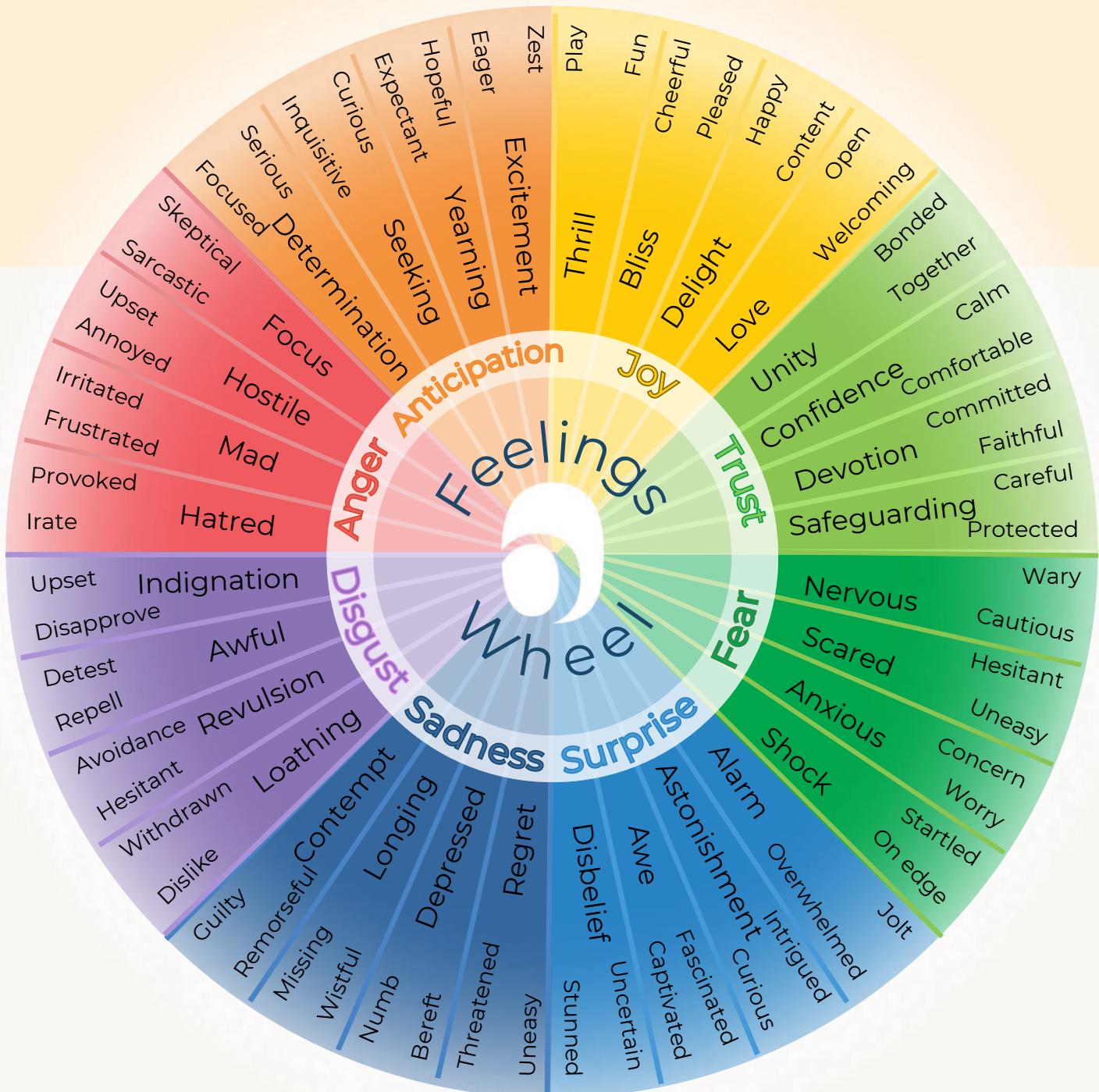
- 1** Write a feeling word from the center of the wheel that is close to your feeling.

- 2** Get more specific with your feeling by choosing words closer to the edge. If you can't find the right feeling word, write down feeling words that you are not feeling.

- 3** Once you have identified your feeling, say it out to yourself. Then sit with the feeling and recognize the thoughts and sensations in your body with that feeling.

As you practice, you'll become more fluent with identifying your feelings and can begin to notice patterns. When do these feelings come up for you?

SIX SECONDS FEELINGS WHEEL



FEELINGS WHEEL

WORKSHEET

I'm feeling...

More specifically...



Stuck here? Search...



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the thoughts you are thinking, or
Journaling exercises to practice
below your response below:

Mixing Emotions

Emotions can sometimes feel confusing, arbitrary and, scary. One of the best ways to get more skilled with them is to learn what they mean and how they combine.

When we're in complex situations (life), we have a complex mix of feelings. They don't "cancel out," they layer up. We all struggle sometimes to make sense of complex feelings.

Even though we have many feelings at once, we can decode them into some basic components, each with a specific meaning.

In the graphic on pg. 26 the feelings on the left are stronger, eg "nostalgic" has more joy... and "melancholy" has more sadness.

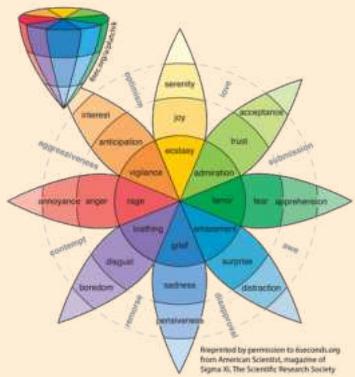
Try **Mixing Emotions:**



2 Choose a feeling on the left of the chart on pg XX, follow it to a new feeling in the middle, and try to reverse engineer the feeling.

As you practice, you'll challenge yourself to develop a more complex understanding of feelings, getting to know how they combine and blend.

MIXING EMOTIONS



	ANGER	ANTICIPATION	JOY	TRUST	FEAR	SURPRISE	SADNESS	DISGUST
ANGER	rage	focus	zeal	defiance	defensiveness	outrage	betrayal	hatred
ANTICIPATION	resolve	eagerness	excitement	optimism	alertness	curiosity	foreboding	skepticism
JOY	passion	thrill	bliss	love	hope	delight	nostalgia	discernment
TRUST	conviction	faith	unity	loyalty	safeguarding	adaptability	reassurance	integrity
FEAR	defensiveness	vigilance	protective	nervous	terror	shock	vulnerability	revulsion
SURPRISE	aggression	facination	wonder	flexibility	alarm	amazment	disbelief	recoil
SADNESS	anguish	yearning	melancholy	cosolation	helplessness	regret	despair	contempt
DISGUST	indignant	cynical	ironic	aversion	horror	repulsion	loathing	revulsion

MIXING EMOTIONS

WORKSHEET

Using Plutchik's wheel of emotion, practice identifying emotions and their combinations. You may add your own colors and names for emotions that are not on the chart.

color

I'm feeling

a combination of

colors



color

I'm feeling

colors

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color

I'm feeling

a combination of

colors

color

I'm feeling

colors

color

I'm feeling

colors

05

Emotions are Contagious

EMOTIONS ARE PART OF OUR SURVIVAL SYSTEM

As social creatures, our emotions serve the purpose of signaling others in our “pack” about risks and opportunities. Emotions form a nearly-instant communication channel. We read emotions from others, for example by watching faces or hearing tone of voice, and then we use that data. We don’t have to be aware this is happening. It’s an automatic process.

What makes someone more powerful as an “emotional transmitter?” Those with high status and positional authority seem to have a greater emotional influence, as do people with whom we have stronger ties.

So, in addition to affecting our own thoughts and actions, our emotions are affecting the people around us. Especially those that most look up to us and care about us.

Let’s dive into what it looks like to practice emotional intelligence.

”

*We are not thinking machines that feel,
we are feeling machines that think.”*

-Antonio Damasio

Emotions help us make informed decisions

Research says emotions improve our decision making abilities (Damasio, 1994). When faced with a challenging or confusing situation, ask yourself the following questions:

- **What am I feeling?**
- **What options do I have?**
- **What do I truly want?**

These questions help us tune into emotional data, Combine that with our cognitive ability to explore options, and then choose the right

option based on our values, and it's a powerful tool.

These questions are based on the Six Seconds Model of Emotional Intelligence™, a framework for learning and practicing emotional intelligence. In the Six Seconds Model, there are 3 pursuits shown on the next page:

SIX SECONDS MODEL of EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE™

Know Yourself

To become more aware (noticing what you do)

- Ask yourself: What am I feeling?



Choose Yourself

To be more intentional (doing what you mean)

- Ask yourself: What options do I have?

Give Yourself

To be more purposeful (take action for a reason)

- Ask yourself: What do I truly want?

123KCG Questions

When faced with a challenging or confusing situation, it can be hard to sort through the complexity. How do know what to do? How do you make sense of the different stake-holders? How do you prioritize the options? This is one of the best tools for using emotional intelligence. Ask yourself the following questions.

Try **123KCG**

1 Ask yourself: What am I feeling?

2 Ask yourself: What options do I have?

3 Ask yourself: What do I truly want?

To learn more about the Six Seconds and KCG model, click [here](#).

For specific tips on practicing optimism to see more options in any given situation, keep on reading to the next section.

123KCG QUESTIONS WORKSHEET

Think of a situation or problem you are facing:

What am I feeling?



What options do I have?

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What do I truly want?

06

Optimism is learned

OPTIMISM MEANS LOOKING FOR OPTIONS

Sometimes people describe others as, “an optimist” or “a pessimist” as if those are fixed traits. Yet research shows that optimism is actually a skill that is learned. Most likely, people are born with some predisposition to use optimism or pessimism more, and then they learn from that starting point.

Another myth is that optimism is the same as “positive thinking,” and it is based on ignoring problems. Real optimism requires us to confront reality with the conviction that we can find solutions.

When we’re caught in pessimism, it feels as if there are no options. While sometimes it’s reasonable and useful to be sad and scared, and even helpless or desperate, we’re not likely to solve a problem if we stay in that state. The secret to optimism is to allow ourselves to feel those feelings that clarify the problem... and then to create new options for finding solutions.

When you’re feeling stuck, add the word, yet, as in: “I can’t do this, **yet**

Problem-Solution

Sometimes people avoid considering an optimistic perspective because it seems unrealistic. One solution is to fully acknowledge the seriousness of a problem, and then to consider alternatives.

Try **Problem-Solution:**

- 1** State a problem, and all the reasons it's impossible to solve or will never get better.
- 2** Write a solution that would be possible for someone with a lot of skills and experience.
- 3** Imagine 5-10 more ways to improve or solve the problem, even if they're unrealistic
- 4** Notice which ideas on both sides (problem & solution) are fantastical.
- 5** Identify one of the ideas from the solution-side that could help, even if just a little.

Practicing this process will help you exercise optimism and strengthen your growth mindset. In time, you'll find it easier to simultaneously acknowledge the seriousness of problems and create solutions

PROBLEM-SOLUTION WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to move from your growth mindset:

1 Problem:



Obstacles:
better

than

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Get real! Draw a line down the page. On the left side, draw a box for the problem. Circle any
Solutions that are possible.

5

Choose a possible Solution and try to imagine what would happen if you did it. How could it help (even just a
little) What small step can you take to implement the solution?

07

Our brains are wired for empathy

MIRROR NEURONS AS A NEUROBIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR EMPATHY

Just as emotions serve as a feedback loop inside us, they form a feedback loop between us. Earlier we talked about emotional contagion. One reason this happens is a system of brain cells called Mirror Neurons. Your brain has cells that cause your arm muscles to move; alongside those cells are Mirror Neurons that fire when you see someone else's arm move.

Humans have Mirror Neurons in numerous brain areas in addition to the motor (movement) functions, and we have Mirror Neurons connected to our brains' emotional centers. It means that

noticing and responding to others' emotions is central to our brain's architecture. Researchers have theorised that mirror neurons allow understanding of the meaning of another's actions, and constitute the neural basis of imitation learning and empathy (Iacoboni, 2007).

We are wired to connect.

Empathic Respect:

Many of us have grown our brains for learning and processing factual data. We spent years learning to focus on the data we need to analyze for school or work – which means we've become skilled at ignoring other data, such as emotional data about relationships. From our culture and this experience, many of us are highly focused on "being right." In relationships, it could be that's not the most important criteria.

Try **Empathic Respect:**

1 Think about the other person and making a concerted effort to consider their views

2 Think about what you can value and learn from the other person.

3 Notice even the small ways you might be holding yourself above others, and rather than choosing to stand as equals

As you practice, you'll begin to see that other people's perspectives are meaningful and important – you'll learn from them. When others feel your respect, they may open up to you, and you'll be able to build empathy together.

EMPATHIC RESPECT WORKSHEET

Try this challenging exercise to practice empathic respect for the other person. It can help you feel more connected and less judgmental.

Consider the other person's perspective. Ask yourself:

- What beliefs do they hold about themselves?
- What beliefs do they hold about their family?
- What contributions does the other person make?



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What is something you respect about the other person? What can you learn from them?

08

Altruism helps us

SMALL ACTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR ALL

There's a fascinating paradox of selfless giving: We get a lot in return. So maybe it's not actually selfless... maybe it's part of the way our brains are wired to work well with others. A variety of research has studied this phenomenon, including findings that bosses who are kind to employees earn more respect (Lazear, 2012).

Studies on altruism also show that helping others triggers the release of feel-good chemicals in our brain, like dopamine and oxytocin, which boost happiness and strengthen social bonds.

Beyond the immediate emotional benefits, acts of generosity can ripple outward, creating a sense of shared

purpose and trust in relationships. When we give our time, attention, or resources to others, we reinforce the idea that we're all part of something bigger than ourselves. This not only supports the well-being of those we help but also enhances our own sense of meaning and connection.

Altruism doesn't have to be grand gestures or life-changing sacrifices. Often, the smallest acts—like listening attentively, sharing a kind word, or offering help without expecting anything in return—can make a profound difference. And over time, these choices to give and support can transform our relationships, our teams, and even our communities.

”

Remember, there's no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end.”

-Scott Adams

You've probably heard the idea, "don't sweat the small stuff." Yet when we're stressed, it's very hard to see what's actually important.

With so many demands on our time and resources, it's easy to get overwhelmed by all the competing needs. Sometimes this pushes people to withdraw, others to become martyrs. In the face of so much demand, others just become short-term focused and seek instant gratification. All these might be motivated by a desire to feel better...

but in time, any of these options leave us more emotionally fragile. More isolated. More lost. On the other hand, when we can find ways to live purposefully, we feel better now, and in the long-term. Researchers find being aware of your own acts of kindness and the things you are grateful for can increase feelings of happiness, optimism, and satisfaction (Kerr SL, 2014).

PRACTICE

Five Year Flashback

When you're feeling uncertain, ask yourself:
What will create the most value for all of us?

Try **Five Year Flashback**:

1 Looking back on this moment from five years in the future. What are the options your future-self can see? Who will be changed by this action?

2 Use the worksheet to answer the questions for multiple options you are considering.

3 When you add the consequences for other people, you add weight to your options. What choices you make do affect others. How can you make more good in the world?

By practicing this reflection, you'll build the muscle of taking perspective. You'll find that you're better able to recognize "the small stuff" and let it go. This will give you space to focus your energy and attention on what's most important to you – and to our shared future.

FIVE YEAR FLASHBACK WORKSHEET

Imagine you are looking back at your life to yourself today. What are the options your future-self can see? Which one do you choose to contribute to something that still matters in five years?

Option 1

How am I and others changed?



Option 1 Unlock the full version of Practicing EQ ebook [here](#)

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Option 3

How am I and others changed?

Option 4

How am I and others changed?

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Six Seconds is the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence assessments, training, certification, and coaching.

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