

Clarifying Emotions

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts? Heart? Body? None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



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■ PURPOSE / EFFECTS

Many people find it hard to know what they are feeling. This practice is a simple, effective way to learn to know which emotions you are experiencing. Because the technique encourages you to notice the body sensations associated with the emotion, it will build up a deep familiarity with your emotional states.

■ METHOD

Summary

Scan your body and label and emotions that you notice.

Long Version

1. Settle into a comfortable meditation posture.
2. Breathing normally, bring your attention to your emotions. Notice if you are feeling any emotions, no matter how faintly.

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3. Once you detect an emotion, see if you can label which emotion it is. Here is a short, partial list of some of the possibilities:

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joy | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest | <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness | <input type="checkbox"/> Shame | <input type="checkbox"/> Pride |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear | <input type="checkbox"/> Love | <input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassment | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt |

4. Try to stay simple and basic with these emotional labels. It is OK to guess, if you are not sure which exact emotion you are feeling.

5. Once you feel you know which emotion you are feeling, label it mentally. Keep making the label every 5 seconds or so, and then feeling the emotion in your body. So for example, if you are feeling sadness, you would label it like this “Sadness... Sadness... Sadness” in a gentle, matter-of-fact way every few seconds. With each label, you feel with your body the sensations of that emotion.

6. If you notice more than one emotion happening at the same time, you can either just focus on one, or you can “stack” the labels. So for example, if you were feeling both joy and love, you could label them as “Joy and Love.” And so on.

7. Continue labeling the emotions for as long as you wish.

HISTORY

Meditating on emotions is a traditional part of Vipassana practice in Buddhism. It is, for example, one of the four main techniques covered in the Vissudhimagga (The Path to Purity), an important Buddhist text. The version presented here is a summary of a practice given by American Buddhist teacher Shinzen Young.

NOTES

Do not get caught up in every nuance of differences in labeling the emotions. For example, in common English, there is a big difference between anxiety and terror. However, for the purposes of this exercise, they are both simply labeled as “Fear.” The point of the practice is not to get perfectly accurate labels, but rather to get a handle on what emotions are currently occurring for you, and how they express in the body. This practice should be repeated daily for at least 10 minutes over the course of at least a month to really gain the benefit.