FEELINGS AREN'T FAILURES.

8 emotion myths, kinder perspectives, and one useful next step.

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Think of emotions as dashboard lights: they invite a closer look, but do not tell the whole story. Read one card at a time and choose a prompt to explore.

01 If I name the feeling, I'll make it bigger.

Putting feelings into words can help you understand them and may ease distress. It does not guarantee instant relief. Try a simple label; if looking inward feels overwhelming, pause and notice your surroundings. [1, 3]

REFLECT What word comes closest to what I feel?

02 A strong feeling tells me exactly what is true.

A feeling is real; the conclusion attached to it may need checking. Feeling rejected after an unanswered text does not establish why the person has not replied. Notice the feeling, then look at the evidence. [2]

REFLECT What do I know, and what am I assuming?

03 If I were making progress, I'd stay calm.

Progress can look like noticing sooner, taking a pause, asking for help, or making a repair after a hard moment. A difficult day does not erase what you have learned. Coping is a practice, not a perfect streak. [3]

REFLECT What did I handle even a little differently this time?

04 Accepting a feeling means approving of what happened.

Acknowledging an emotion means recognizing that it is here. It does not require approving of mistreatment, forgiving someone, or staying in an unsafe situation. You can make room for a feeling and still protect yourself. [4, 5]

REFLECT What feeling needs acknowledgment, and what boundary needs attention?

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A little more room to respond.

You do not need to change every feeling. Start with one belief that makes a hard moment harder, then practice a more balanced response.

05 Getting support means telling the whole story.

You can choose a trustworthy person, set limits, and ask for specific support. Try: 'I'm having a rough day. Could you listen for a few minutes?' You get to decide which personal details you share and with whom. [3]

REFLECT What support would feel useful and safe today?

06 A coping skill should make the feeling disappear.

A helpful skill may create enough space to choose your next action, even while the feeling remains. A pause, a short walk, or a problem-solving step can be useful without making you feel completely calm. [5]

REFLECT What would help me respond with care, even if I still feel upset?

07 Mixed feelings mean something is wrong with me.

You can feel relief and sadness about the same change. You might also feel hopeful and afraid. One feeling does not have to cancel another. Try describing both feelings without forcing a single answer. [6]

REFLECT Can I describe what I feel using 'and' instead of 'but'?

08 An uncomfortable feeling means I'm failing.

Feeling sad, angry, or anxious is not a character flaw. Judging yourself adds another struggle. Try a kinder response: 'This is difficult. What care or useful action do I need right now?' Feelings and actions are different. [4, 5]

REFLECT What would I say to someone I care about in this situation?

A reminder: A feeling can be present while you choose a caring next step.

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From feeling to next step

Use a manageable, everyday situation. Write on the page or type in the boxes. Skip any prompt that feels overwhelming; you can return to it with support.

1 What happened?

Describe what you observed, without guessing intentions.

2 What am I noticing?

Name a feeling and, if helpful, a body signal. "Unsure" is okay.

3 What thought or urge came with it?

For example: "They do not care" or "I want to send another text."

4 What else deserves attention?

Check facts, needs, and safety. Which myth could I reframe?

5 What is one caring next step?

Choose a small action that fits your needs, values, and safety.

Pause if needed: Look around and name three things you can see. You do not have to force yourself to revisit a painful experience. [3, 5]

References & skill foundations

Numbered sources support the ideas above. The wording and practice activity are original.

[1] Lieberman, M. D., Inagaki, T. K., Tabibnia, G., & Crockett, M. J. (2011). Subjective responses to emotional stimuli during labeling, reappraisal, and distraction. Emotion, 11(3), 468-480. doi:10.1037/a0023503

[2] Centre for Clinical Interventions. (n.d.). Emotional reasoning. Government of Western Australia. CCI information sheets.

[3] VA National Center for PTSD. (n.d.). Coping with traumatic stress reactions. ptsd.va.gov: coping guidance.

[4] Ford, B. Q., Lam, P., John, O. P., & Mauss, I. B. (2018). The psychological health benefits of accepting negative emotions and thoughts: Laboratory, diary, and longitudinal evidence. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 115(6), 1075-1092. doi:10.1037/pspp0000157

[5] Centre for Clinical Interventions. (n.d.). Facing your feelings (Modules 1-4). Government of Western Australia. CCI distress tolerance resources.

[6] Larsen, J. T., McGraw, A. P., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2001). Can people feel happy and sad at the same time? Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81(4), 684-696. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.81.4.684.

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