



Owning Your Feelings

It can be easy to get caught up in your emotions as you're feeling them. Most people don't think about what emotions they are dealing with, but taking the time to really identify what you're feeling can help you to better cope with challenging situations. The following are some tips for success:

Allow yourself to feel. Sometimes there are societal pressures that encourage people to shut down their emotions, often expressed through statements like “Big girls don't cry” or “Man up”. These outdated ideas are harmful, not helpful. Everyone has emotions — they are part of the human experience — and you have every right to feel them.

Don't ignore how you're feeling. When we try to push feelings aside without addressing them, they build in strength and make us more likely to “explode” at some point in the future. It may not always be appropriate to process your emotions at the very moment you are feeling them, but try to do so as soon as you can.

Talk it out. Find someone you trust that you can talk to about how you're feeling. You may find that people are eager to share about similar experiences they've had or times that they have felt the way that you are feeling.

Build your emotional vocabulary. When asked about your feelings, people will usually use words like bad, sad, mad, good or fine. But there are many words that better describe how we feel. Try building your emotional vocabulary by writing down as many “feeling” words as you can think of and a time that you felt that way.

Try journaling. Each night write down at least three feelings you had over the course of the day and what caused them. Just jot a few sentences or bullet points to help you practice being comfortable with identifying and expressing your emotions.

Consider the strength of your feelings. By thinking about how intense your emotions are, you may realize that what you thought you were feeling at first could better be described by another word. For instance, sometimes a person might say they are stressed when what they are really experiencing is something less severe, like annoyance; or alternatively, anger might really be a stronger, deeper feeling like betrayal.

If you are taking steps to be more in touch with your feelings, but are having trouble dealing with them, don't hesitate to seek advice. BHS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150.



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