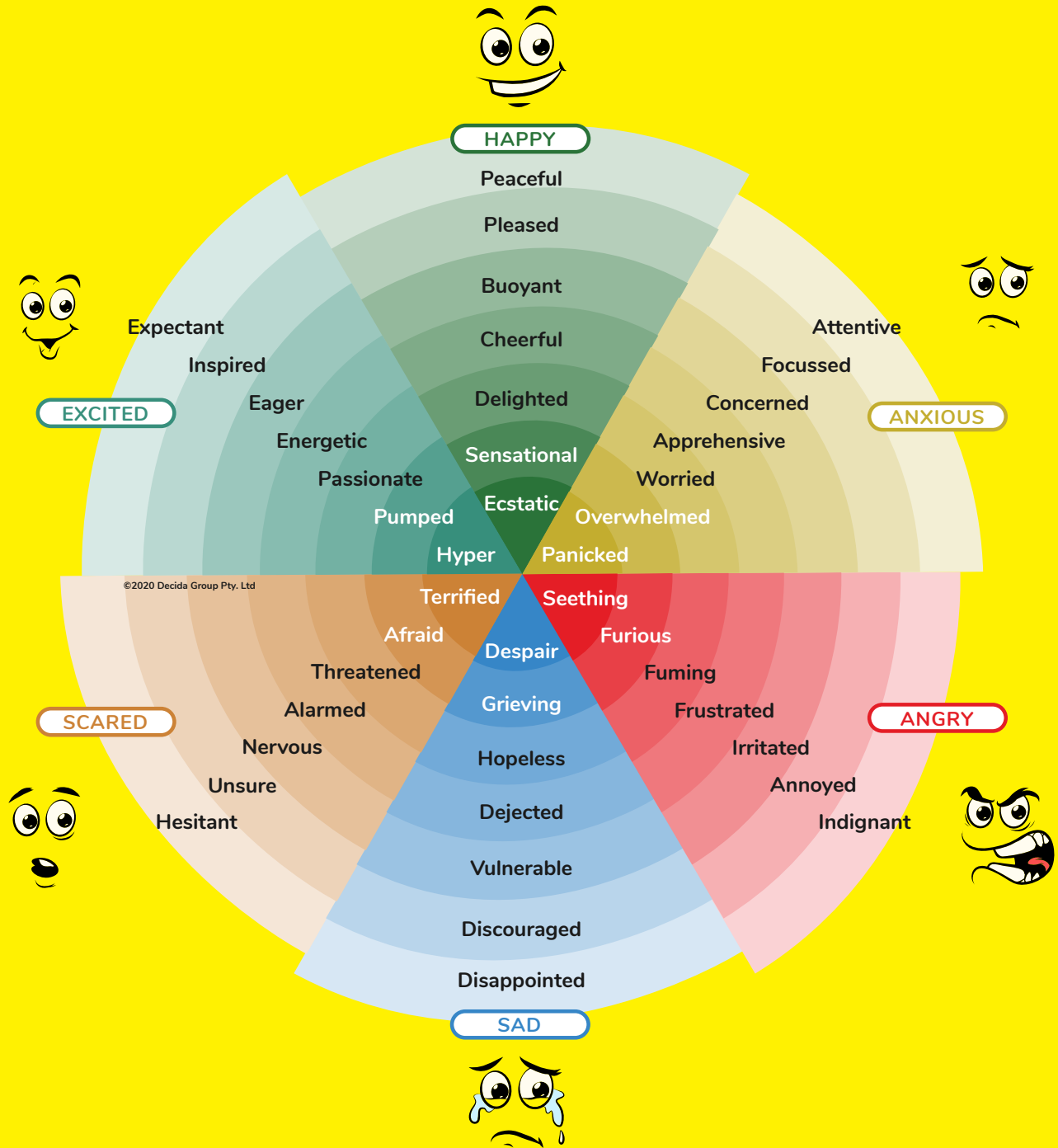


The little book of **BIG** EMOTIONS

a simple guide to understanding and managing emotion



PHIL SLADE





“If it's mentionable,
it's manageable”

- **Fred Rodgers**



The Little Book of Big Emotions

A simple guide to understanding and
managing emotion

Phil Slade



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02

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Let's Start At The Very Beginning

It's a very good place to start

Emotions. They help us survive in a chaotic world, but they can also make life much more complicated than it needs to be. This little book is all about better understanding and managing emotions so we can be more successful at life. So what are emotions?

Well, there is a clue in the word itself...[e][motion]

[Motion] comes from the Latin "motere", which means 'to move' or 'energy in motion'. Roman troops used motere to discuss troop movements. [E] simply implies that motion is away from something. So e-motion is something that moves you away from something (or toward something as the case may be).

[e][motion]

Latin prefix "e—" or "ex—" "out of, from"

latin root: **motere** "to move"

noun

connotes "move away"
(think ex-it)

the action or process of moving or being moved



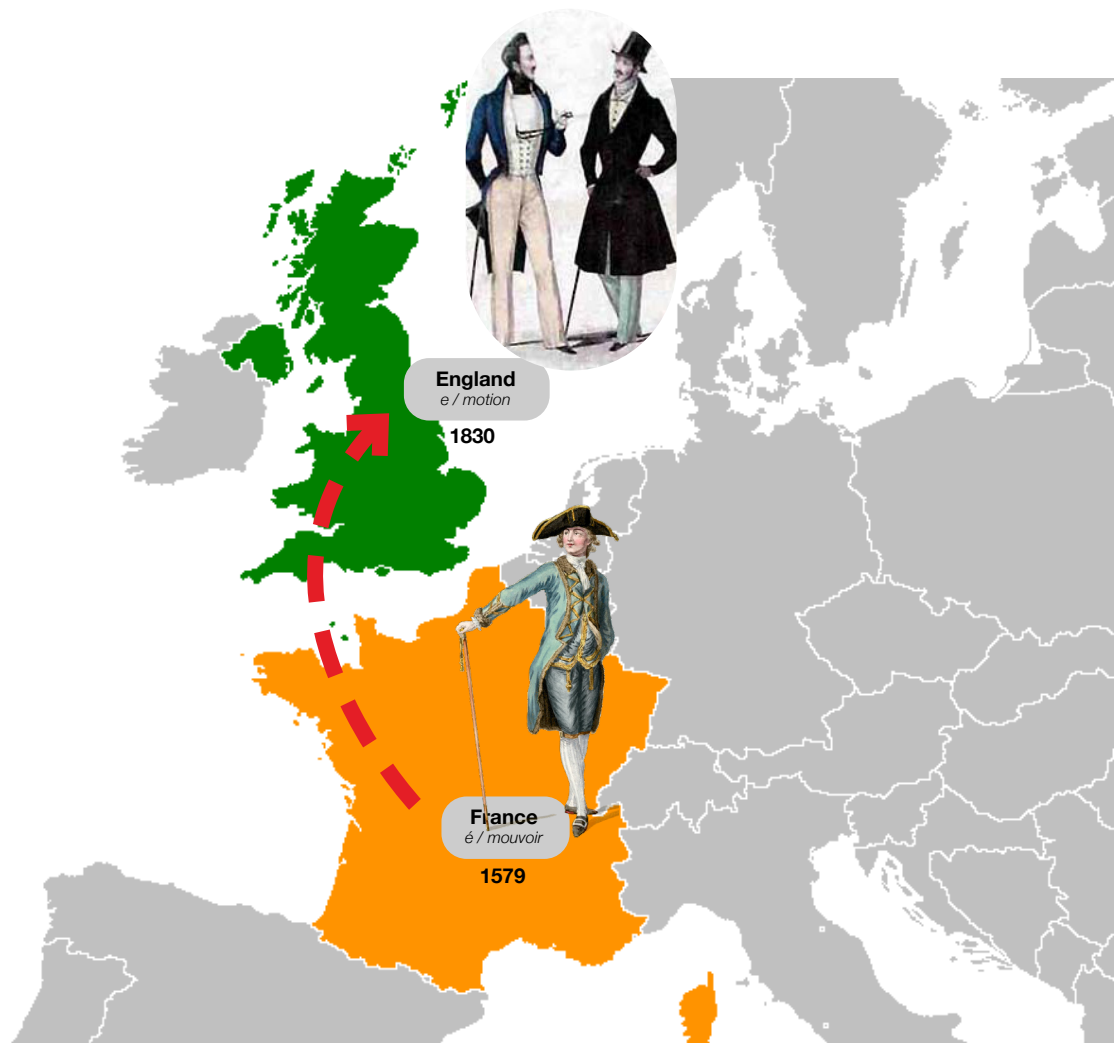
LET'S **MOTERE** OUTA
HERE!

In around 1579, French academics evolved the word 'motere' into **émouvoir**, which was a catch-all phrase to talk about our internal energy states, passion, sentiments and affections (to move, to stir up, to affect, to disturb or to arouse). For the first time in human history scientists had a way to conceptually look at what was going on inside us.

Dieu merci pour le français passionné!

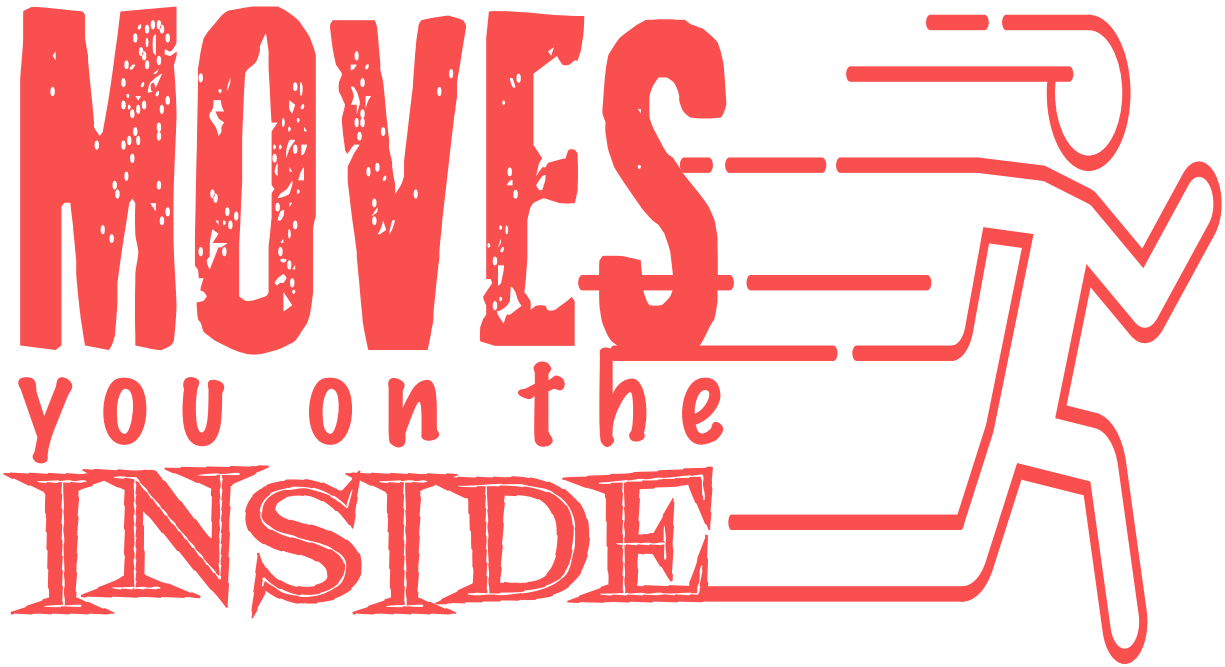
(Translation: Thank goodness for the passionate French!)

This concept didn't really emerge in the slightly less passionate English language as 'emotion' until the 1830's - which wasn't all that long ago, so it's not surprising that we're still trying to figure it all out!

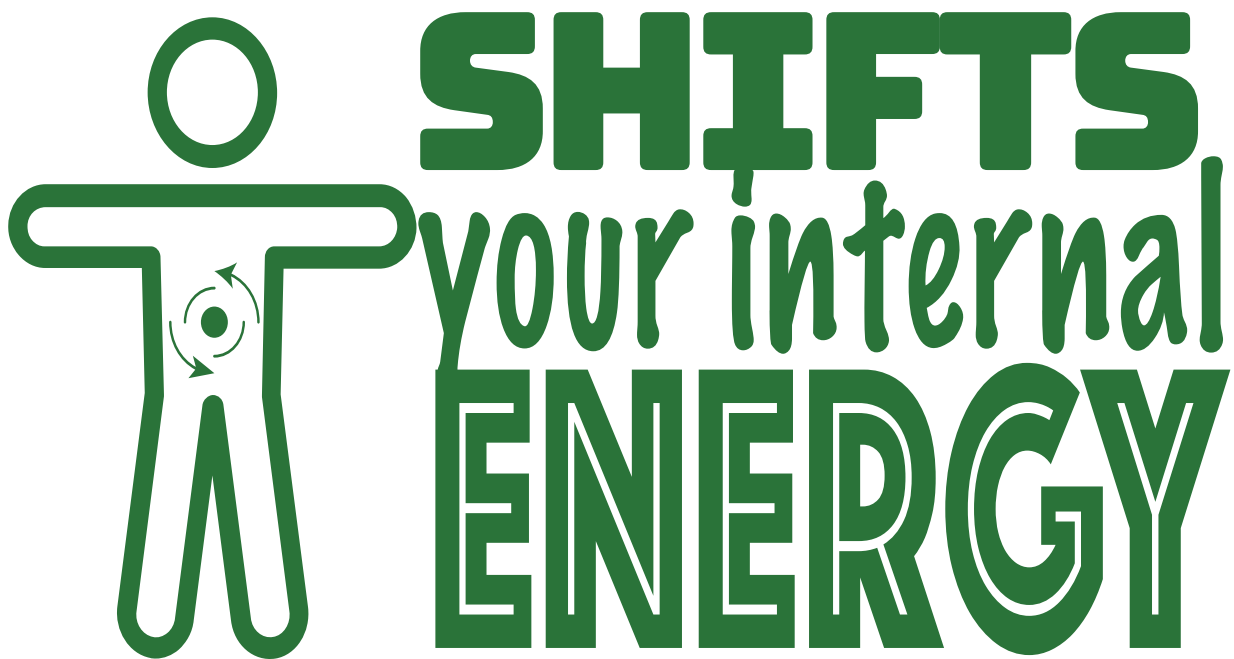


It was 250 years between the word emotion emerging in French and English.

So emotions are anything that...



that...



Is Tiredness An Emotion?

sometimes I simply feel exhausted...



No, tiredness is not an emotion. You do FEEL tired, but it's important to separate tiredness from emotion. Tiredness is more like an amplifier of emotion because you have less energy to inhibit or manage the intensity of your emotions when you are exhausted. The more tired you are, the more likely you are to bounce between more extreme emotions. Sleep is a really, really good thing when it comes to managing your emotions.



So, Why Do We Have Emotions?

wouldn't life be easier without them?

Emotions are actually designed to help us. They are like our very own superpowers that have helped us become the most dominant species on the planet. They help us identify danger, leap to action, give us energy, attract us to others, and help us work together. They are not good or bad, they just are.

The better we can understand and manage these emotion superpowers, the better we will be!

The first step in mastering the superpower of emotions is to be able to label them. Our brain needs words in order to think about things, so let's have a look at how we can do this using the Switch Emotion Wheel™® on the next page.

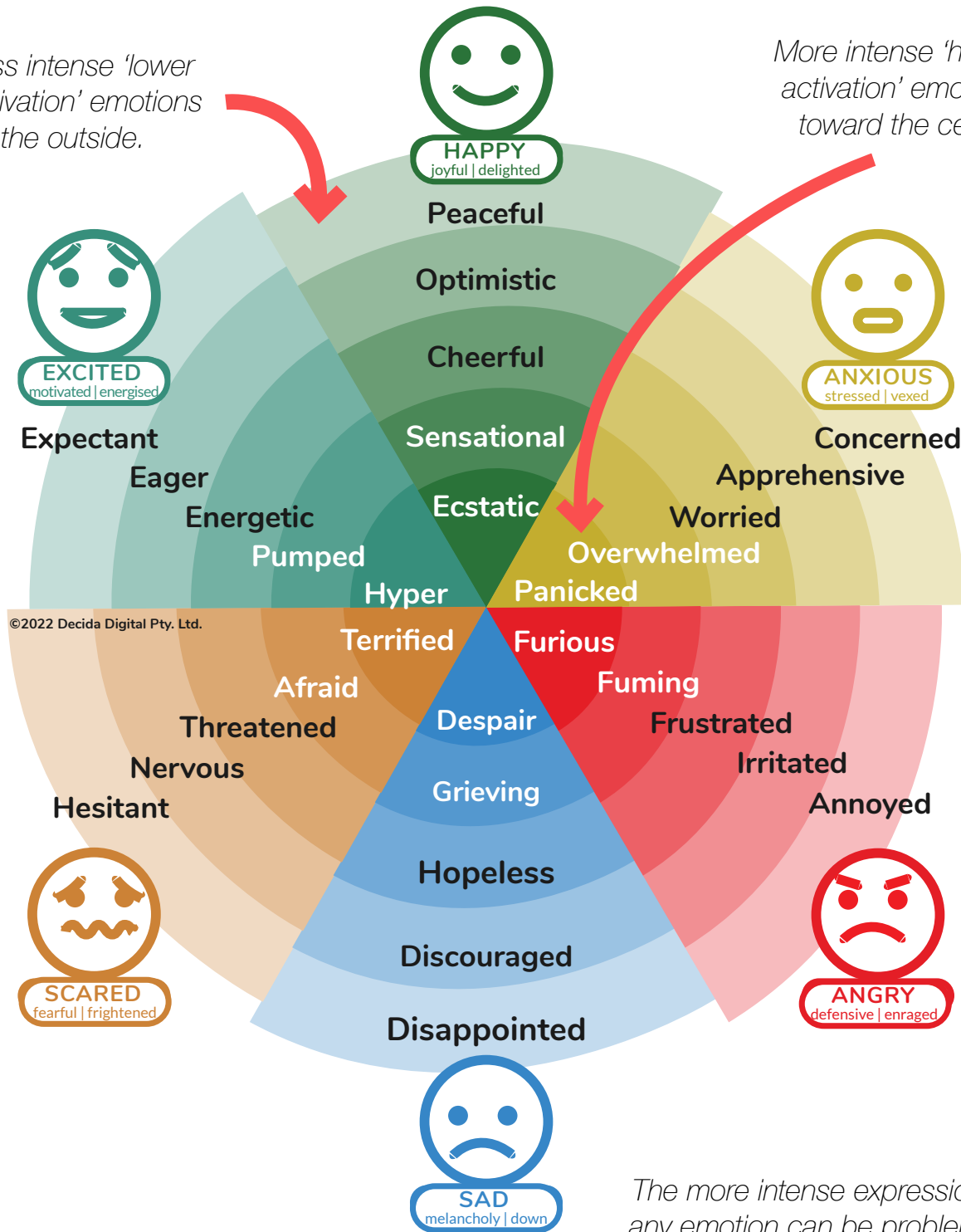


The Switch Emotion Wheel™

a nice way to get your head around things...

Less intense 'lower activation' emotions on the outside.

More intense 'higher activation' emotions toward the centre.



The more intense expressions of any emotion can be problematic. Even extreme happiness (ecstatic) is unhelpful in the wrong context.

The Switch Emotion Wheel™ is helpful, because our brain needs words and language to be able to think about anything. Try thinking about something now that you don't have a word for. It's pretty much impossible! Words are the conceptual vessels that allow us to think.

Saying you're **furious** is one thing, but knowing that it is the most extreme form of anger helps us think about fury in a new way. Language and intensity levels work together to become a conceptual framework that allows us to better understand and manage emotion.

It's also helpful when we have to use words to better communicate with each other about how we are feeling. Saying you're happy is good, but how happy? Being able to say "**peaceful**" is more descriptive and better articulates your emotional state to others.

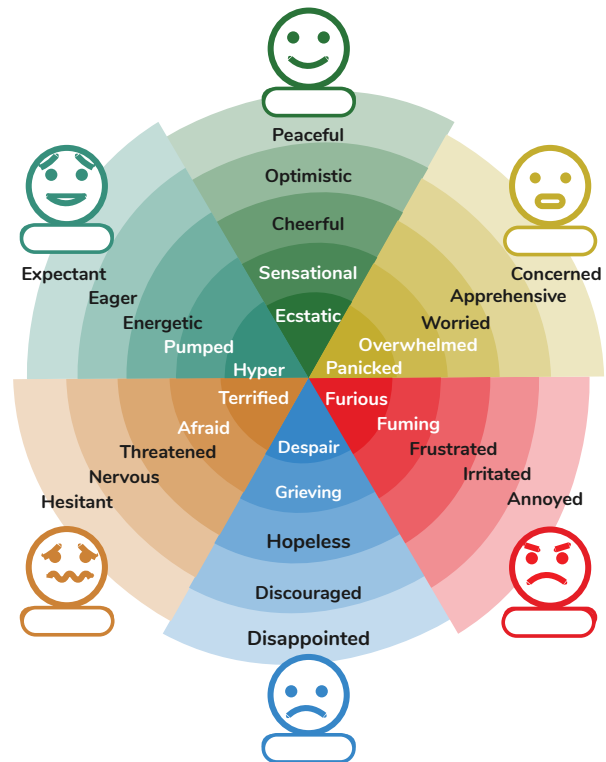
Similarly, **apprehensive** intuitively suggests low level anxiety, **frustrated** medium level anger, and **disappointed** only a little bit sad.

Often when we don't want to get into a big conversation about how we're feeling, we say:

"fine" or "good".

It's kind of code for, "I have no interest in telling you how I feel" or "I have no idea, please don't make me think about it - I've got too much to do". This is learned behaviour from previous experiences of articulating how we are feeling using simplistic high level emotional descriptors (happy, sad, angry, anxious, scared or excited), making people feel like they need to ask further questions as these high level descriptors fail to indicate how intense the emotion is. In the absence of intensity, people assume a more extreme emotion is likely and therefore feel compelled to dig deeper. Therefore, to communicate a feeling without prompting an unwanted inquisition, we need to use words that better articulate feeling and intensity.

For instance, instead of say "I'm angry at that decision", say "I'm irritated that decision doesn't seem to address the core issue". This better conveys your true emotional state, and leaves much less room for inaccurate assumptions of the listener.

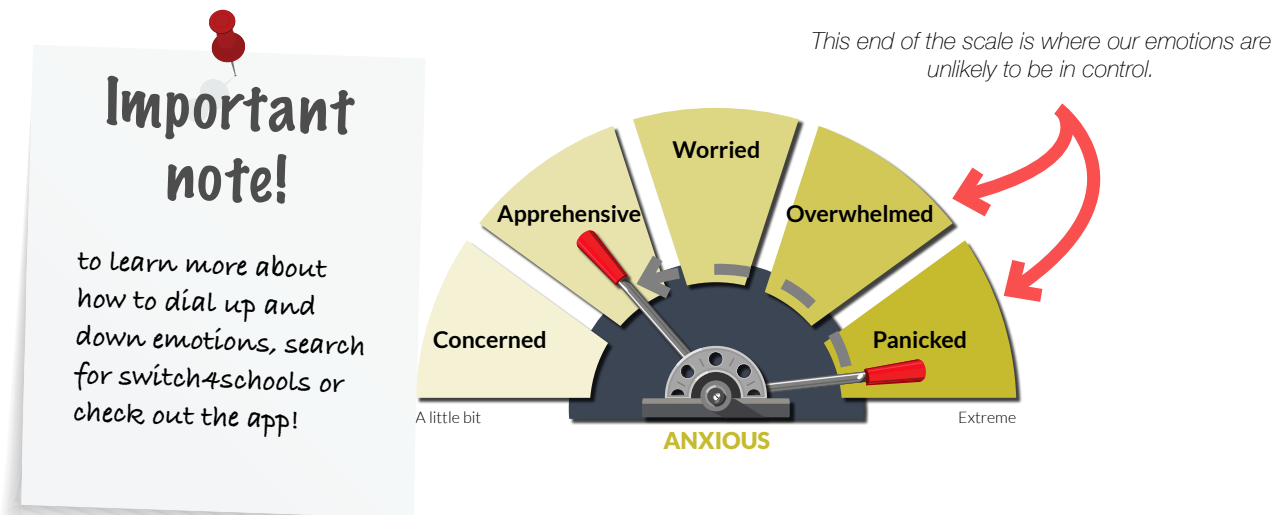


It's also important to note that somewhere in the third level of each emotion (hopeless, irritated, cheerful, worried, energetic and threatened) we seem to lose control of our emotions, and our unconscious emotional drivers take charge of our thoughts and actions. Our rational, conscious brain checks out, and the more intense emotions run the show for a while. This can be helpful when needing to escape from a lion, but not as useful or helpful in navigating today's society.

Dialing It Up and Down

choosing the right intensity for the right context

The other handy thing about the Switch Emotion Wheel™, is that we can start talking about “dialing it up and down”. This helps when managing emotion in ourselves and others, and is the starting point to build empathy with how others are feeling.



We can use the idea of emotional intensity to help us move up and down the scale as necessary. When you experience highly intense emotions it basically shuts down your conscious thinking and you slip into auto pilot. Emotion has flooded your brain and your rational self has checked out. Simply knowing that you can ‘dial it back’ (ie. from panicked to apprehensive) helps acknowledge your emotion, articulate it, and stay in control.

To help others dial it back, choosing a less intense emotion of the same family to feel with them is a key to having empathy and building rapport. For instance, if someone is experiencing anxiety at an intensity level of panic or overwhelm, choose to be consciously concerned with them about the source of their anxiety. They’ll then likely feel safe enough to dial it back to apprehensive, which is an intensity level that is much easier to manage. When we feel like we’ve been heard and understood, our emotions naturally become less intense. The key is being able to identify what emotion they are experiencing, and what it is exactly they are being emotional about (hint: it’s not always what they say it is at first). This is cognitive empathy in action.

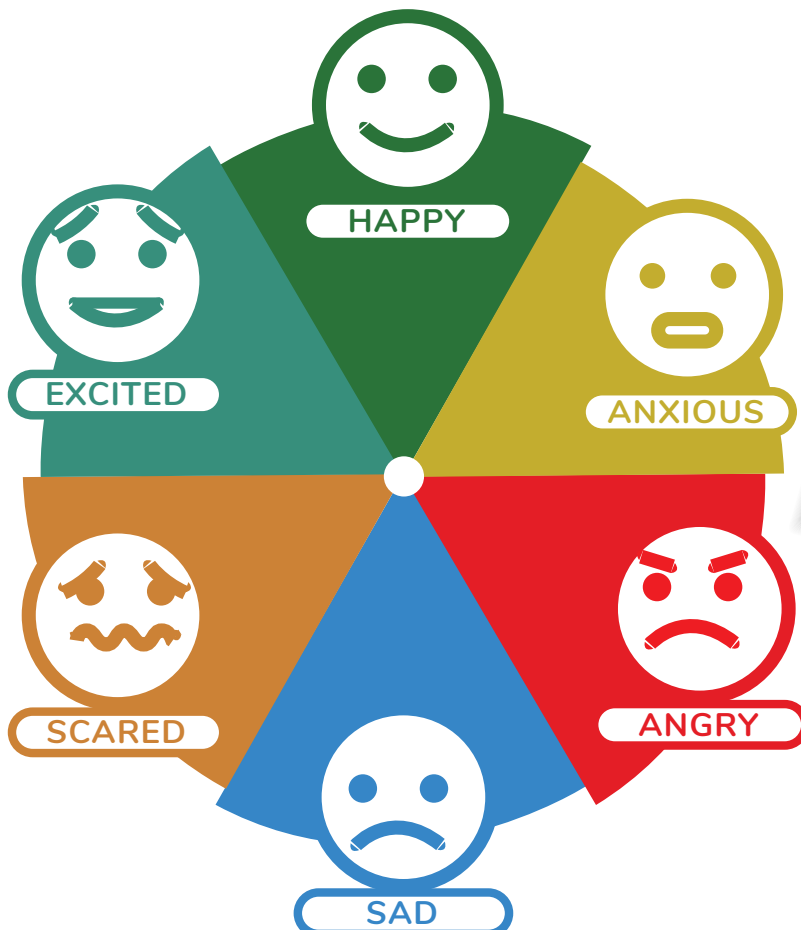
The different levels of Emotion Wheels

four wheels to match different levels of familiarity and maturity

Level One (foundation)

We all have to start somewhere. Level one is best suited for those who are only just learning to use emotional words. These are usually children below the age of 6/7 who are simply trying to identify the things inside them that they can't see, but that impact them greatly. The important things to learn at this level are:

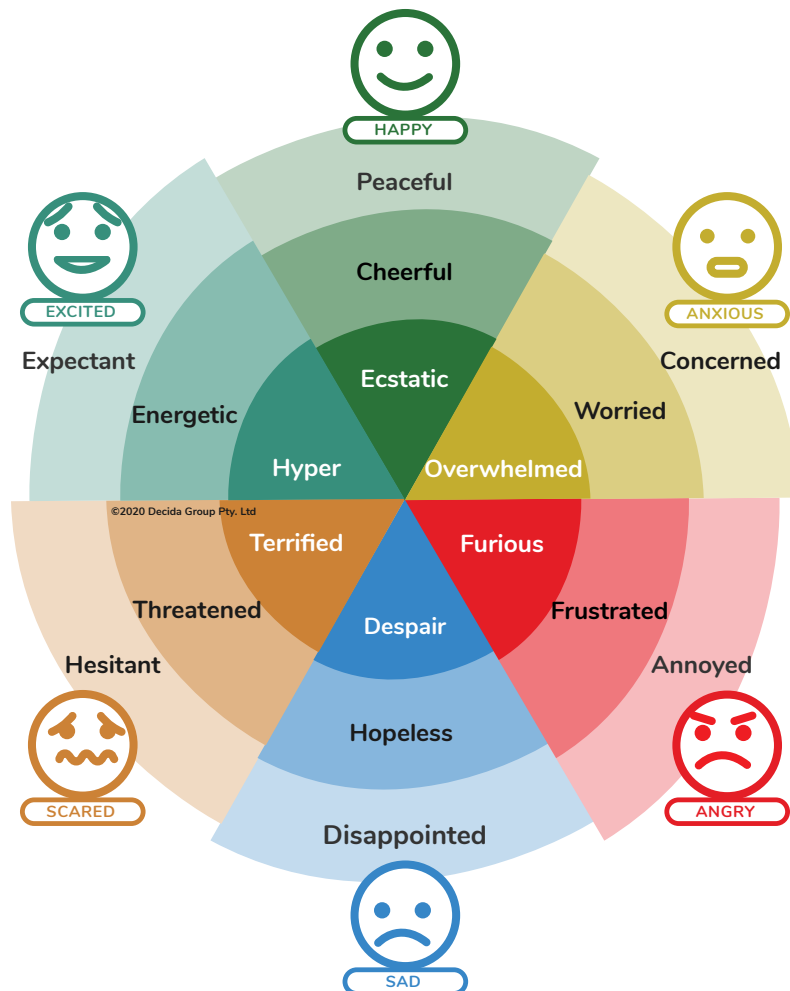
1. What are the six families of emotions.
2. Of the 2 fear buckets, scared is fear of the present, and anxiety is fear of the future.
3. Emotions are not good or bad, they just are, and if we learn to control them they can eventually be our superpower.



Level Three (proficient)

This is where we start to learn about the importance of controlling the intensity of emotion. Many adults never get beyond level one, so anyone trying to apply this for the first time should start at level three. The older people are, the quicker they tend to move to level five and seven. The three most important things to note at level three are:

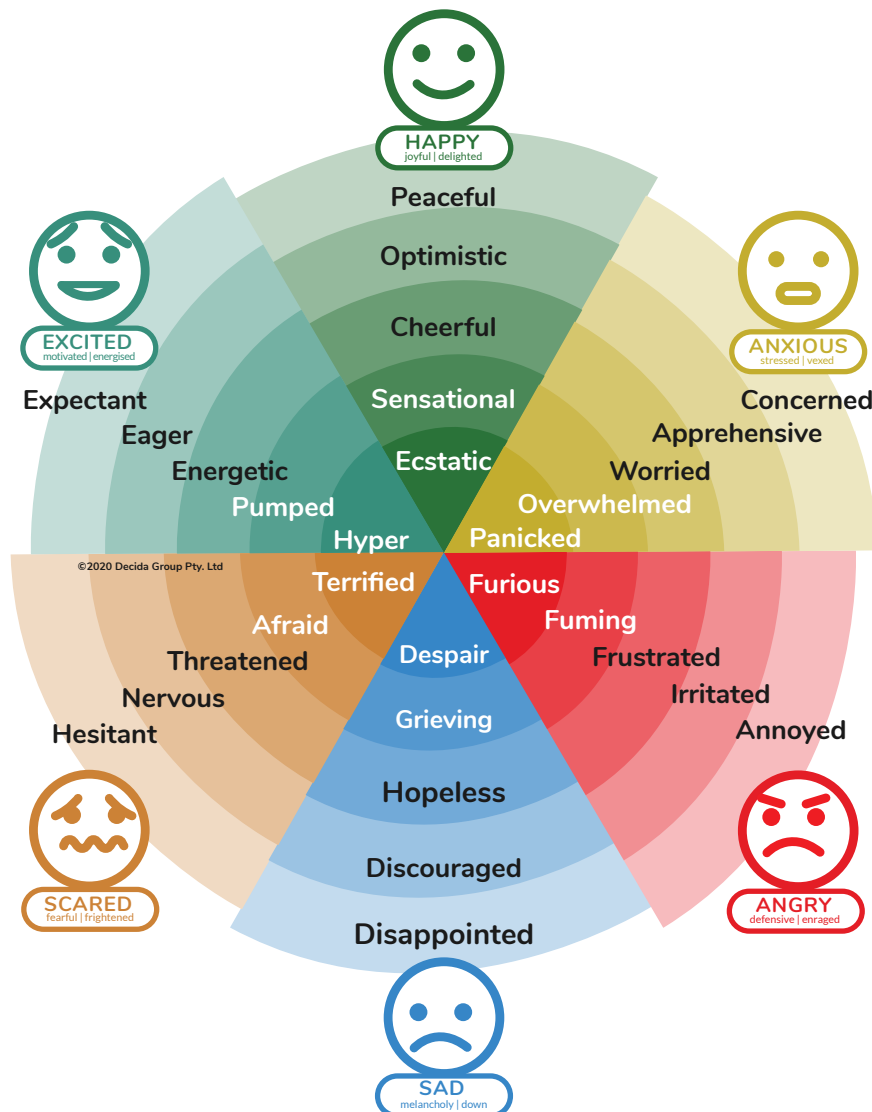
1. We have words to help explain different levels of intensity of each emotion.
2. Words in the centre of the circle are when we are out of control, and we need to know how to dial it back to the outer rim if we want to stay in control of our actions.
3. You can match appropriate intensity to different situations. For example, It's ok to be disappointed you missed out on the food you wanted, but it's not ok to be in despair. It's ok to be worried about an exam coming up if it motivates you to study, which is more appropriate than simply being concerned about it but doing nothing about it.



Level Five (advanced)

Level five is where it really starts to get interesting. Here there are enough words to start to have enough levels to ‘dial it up’ when you need to, and can start to notice the nuances in the escalation of other people’s behaviour. It is also complex enough for you to start to experiment with more advanced applications of emotions, such as cognitive empathy and as a motivation map (both of these concepts are explained later). The three most important things to note at level five are:

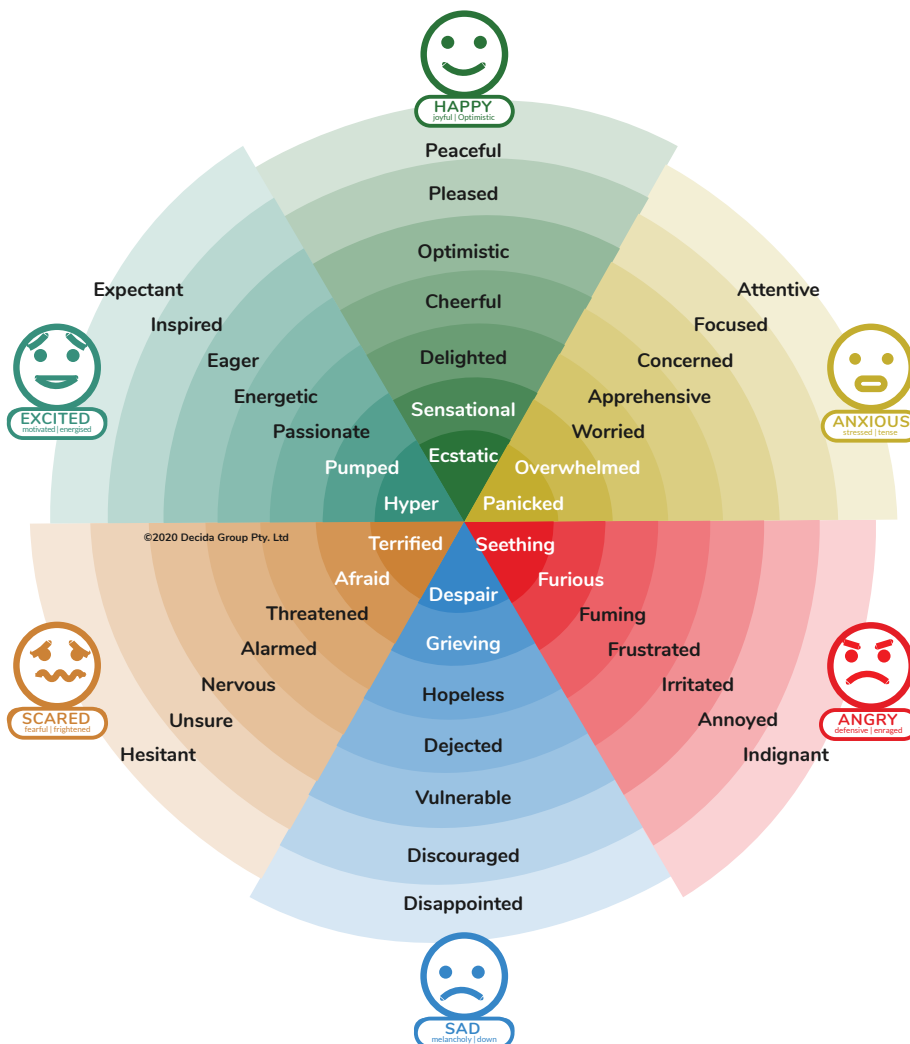
1. There are subtle ways we can dial up the intensity of emotion without losing control.
2. We can feel different emotions at once, and can jump between emotional states quite quickly at times (ie. energetic can quickly turn into frustration, worry into eagerness).
3. You don’t need to be happy all the time, but simply being peaceful is a version of happiness. The pursuit of happiness is actually the pursuit of peace.



Level Seven (mastery)

Now we are using and managing emotion in ourselves and others. You can spend a lifetime mastering emotion at this level. Here you learn the emotions are critical in making decisions, motivating action and building a successful life. The three most important things to note at level seven are:

1. You can feel multiple emotions at once. Happiness and sadness are not opposites, they are related to a sense of wholeness, but it is possible to be grieving and at peace at the same time.
2. There are times (like getting close to a deadline or preparing for a big event) where you can harness high intensity emotion to move yourself and others toward action. Knowing when and how to dial it back so you don't stay there for too long is critical.
3. When you see others in high emotional states, trying to be rational with them will not work. Learning to identify when people have 'lost their mind' by being too aroused, and knowing how to help them dial it up and down at the individual and group level as appropriate is a master skill. There are times when you want groups to feel high intensity in order to drive behaviour, other times when you need to dial the group down so they are more consciously and rationally in control.





For the rest of these pages, the rest of this book,
we will talk through emotion, lift the lid,
have a look.

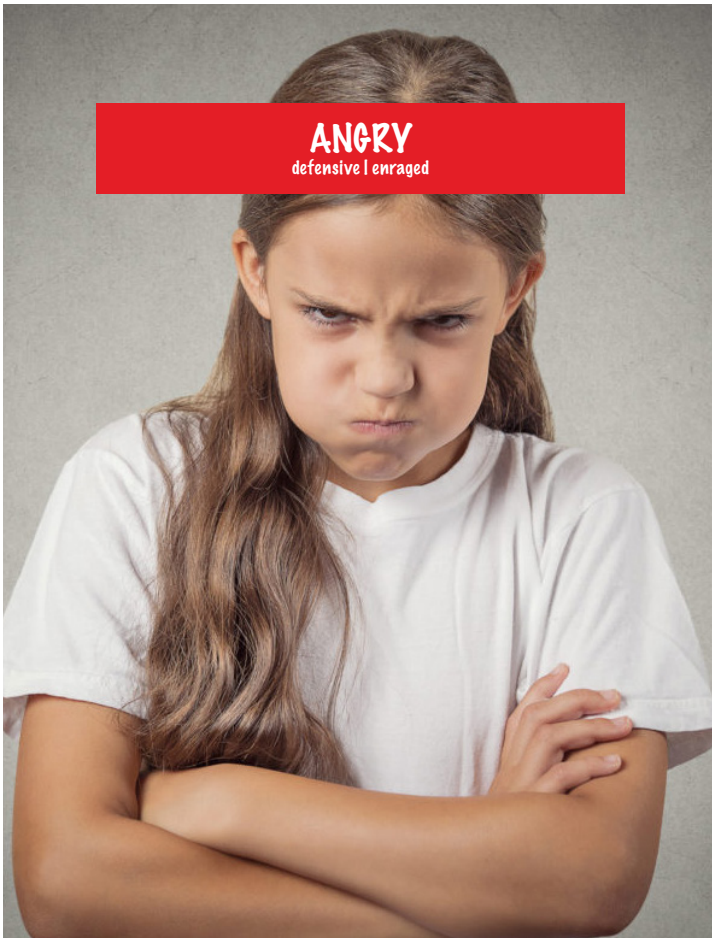
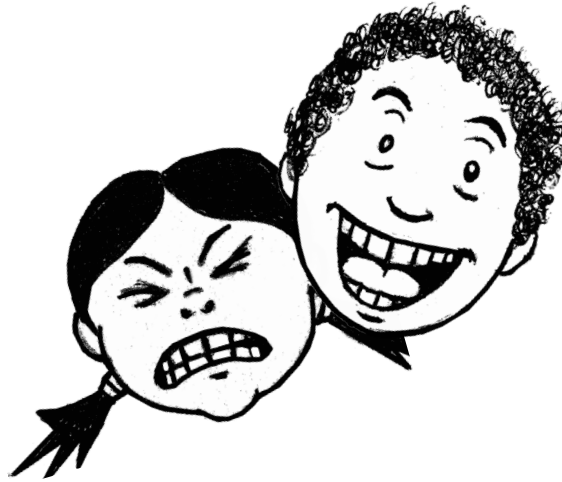
When you find something little that resonates
with you,

take a note, make a mark, take some time to
think it through.

For only when we take time to follow
our curiosity,

do we give ourselves the space to learn, to live,
to see.

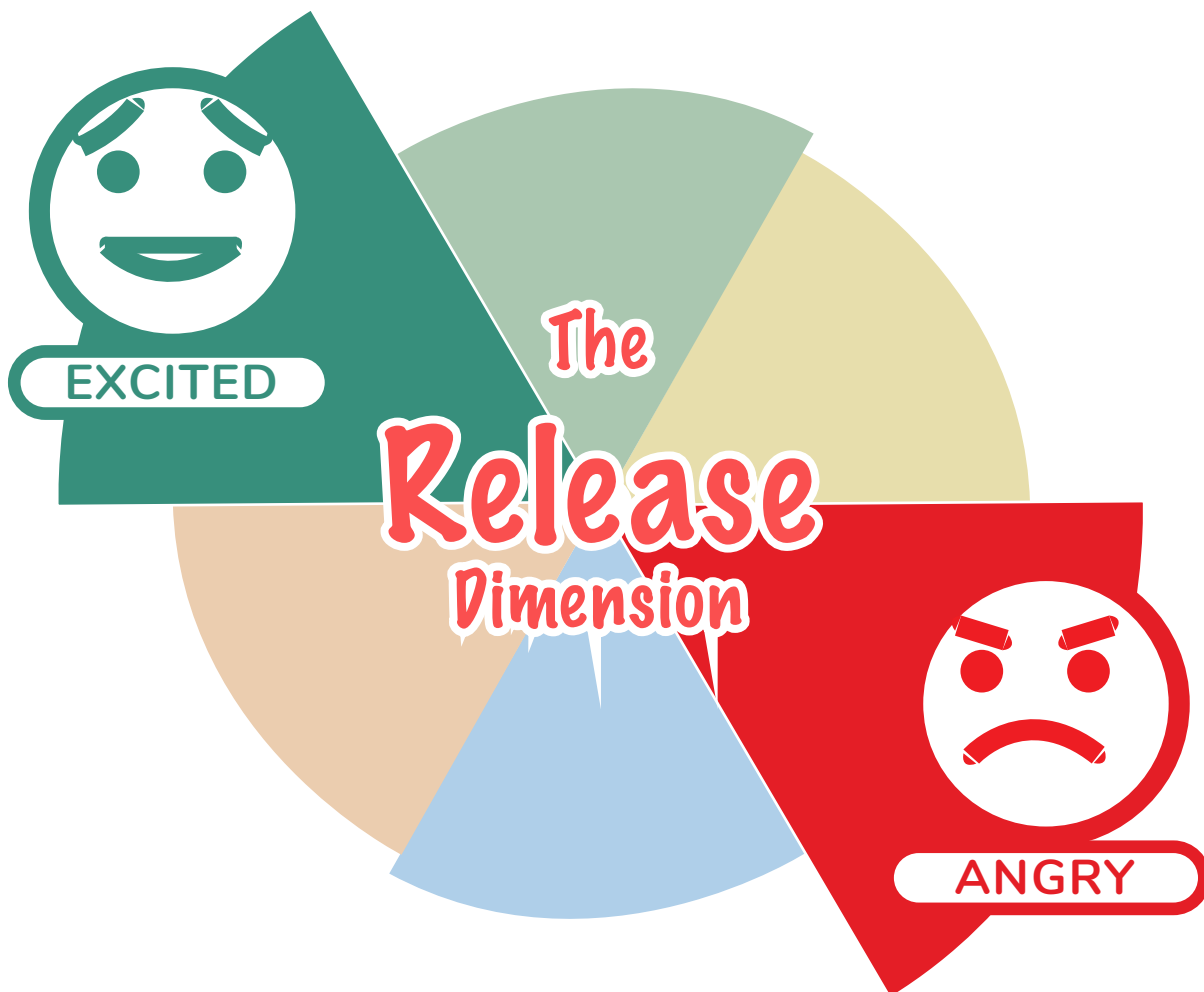




ANGRY
defensive | enraged



EXCITED
motivated | energised



On the Switch Emotion Wheel™, anger and excitement fall on the release dimension because it is how we most often release any emotional energy we have that is built up. Many people can become aggressive with high levels of fear, sadness or anxiety and are often mistaken for being angry. Other people can channel that high emotion into excitement. Neither is good or bad, but choosing how best to let your energy out given the situation can be the difference between success and failure.

Excitement can also be used to reframe high levels of anxiety or scared, a trick commonly used in high performance sports. Instead of being nervous or overwhelmed by an upcoming race, they are eager to get out there, full of anticipation, pumped for the challenge ahead. This redirects the energy toward a more productive mindset, increasing performance and interrupting unhelpful rumination.



Summary



Anger is a very strong, action-oriented emotion that can lead you to doing things that you may later regret.

Physically lashing out at someone in anger can mean that you hurt someone, or say some pretty horrible and hurtful things. You mostly feel anger when someone has hurt you, or gets in the way of you doing something you really want to do.

When does it help?

Anger can help us stand up for ourselves, protect ourselves and those we love, and help get us out of a dangerous situation. Learning how to be angry without flipping into fury, controlling and releasing the energy in a way that keeps your rational brain in control, is so important.

What happens inside my body?



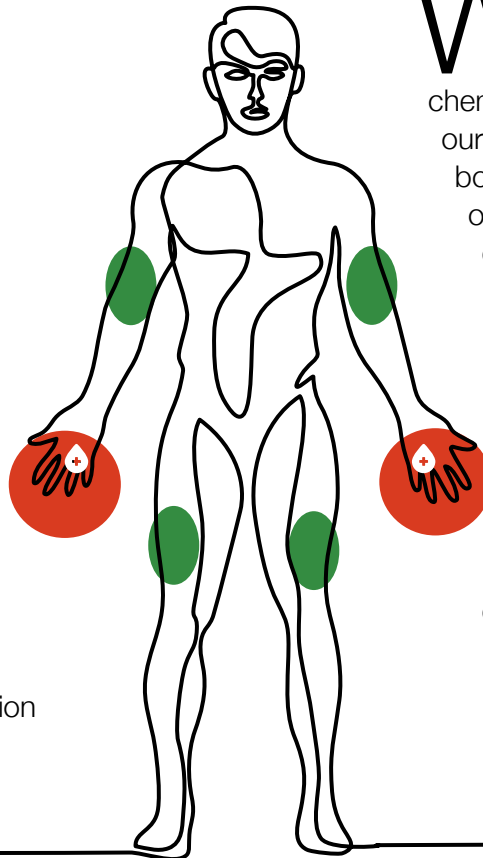
hands

grab a weapon or strike enemy



adrenaline

pulsing energy strong enough for vigorous action



When we start to feel angry, our body directs blood to the hands and the chemical adrenalin is pumped to our arms and legs. This is our body readying ourselves to fend off an attack from an unfriendly, or remove something (or someone) that might be in the way of us getting to safety.

Often when angry, we will clench fists or fold arms in response to the blood and chemicals pulsing through our body.

1

7



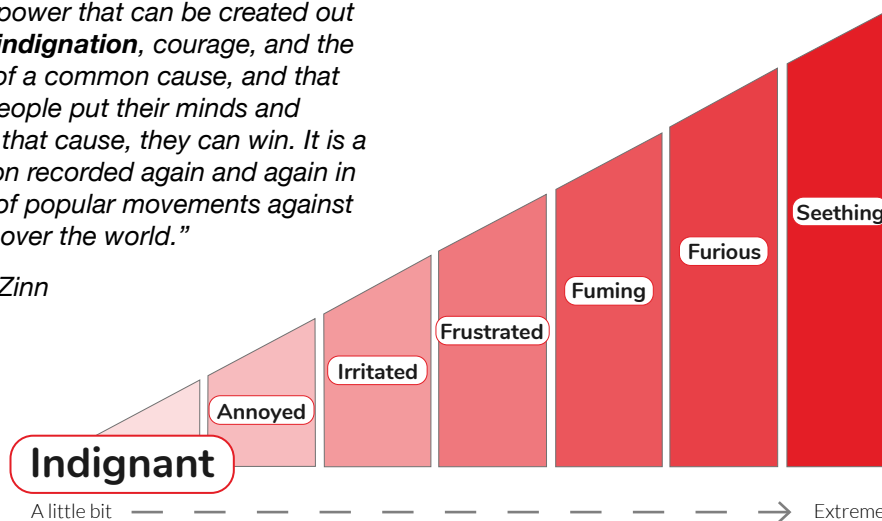
Indignant

in control, but injustice noted



*“There is a power that can be created out of pent-up **indignation**, courage, and the inspiration of a common cause, and that if enough people put their minds and bodies into that cause, they can win. It is a phenomenon recorded again and again in the history of popular movements against injustice all over the world.”*

— Howard Zinn



Indignant describes the lowest arousal of anger below annoyed. It is a light anger usually felt when you lose your dignity, or observe someone else unfairly losing theirs. This unfair treatment is first met with indignance, and if the issue isn't addresses the perceived injustice can escalate quickly to higher levels of anger.

Being indignant results in someone saying, “I’m not sure that’s right” or, “that’s a bit unfair isn’t it?” It is usually shown in the face as a frown and looking directly at the thing or person who is judged to be acting unfairly. Importantly there is always a level of curiosity at this level, wanting to confirm if the unfairness is justified or if there may be a misinterpretation. This is a learning mindset. If one is convinced of a miscarriage of justice, anger will usually escalate to higher arousal levels.



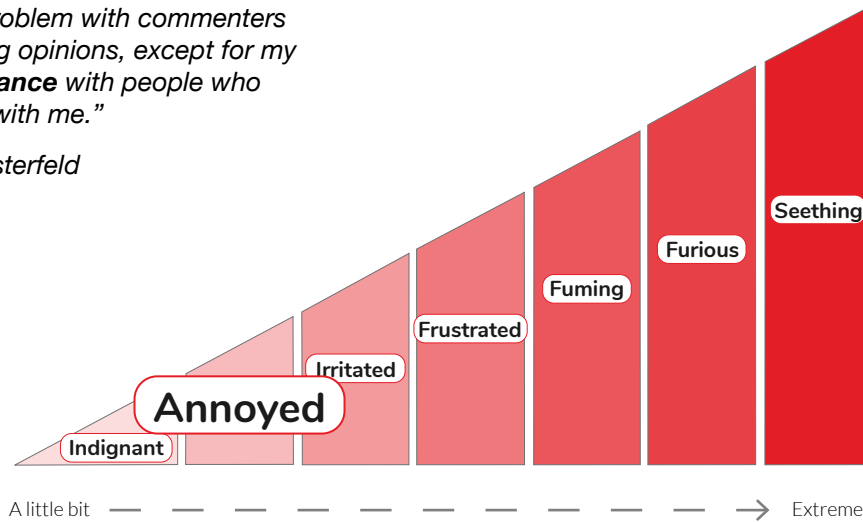
Annoyed

still in control, but distracted by something



*“I have no problem with commenters stating strong opinions, except for my usual **annoyance** with people who don’t agree with me.”*

— Scott Westerfeld



A mild and somewhat tempered version of anger. “I am annoyed at myself / someone else / something for interfering with my expectations”. Being annoyed can quickly turn into irritation or frustration if the thing (or person) you are annoyed at continues. If you are unable to confront or deal with the annoyance, over time it can lead to feelings of resentment.

Annoyance is a fleeting emotion that shouldn’t hang around for too long. Often it doesn’t register on your face or have a huge impact on your daily life. It tends to be an ‘eye rolling’ moment that goes as quickly as it comes. Learning to deal with things that you find annoying in people you love can require developing good negotiation skills.



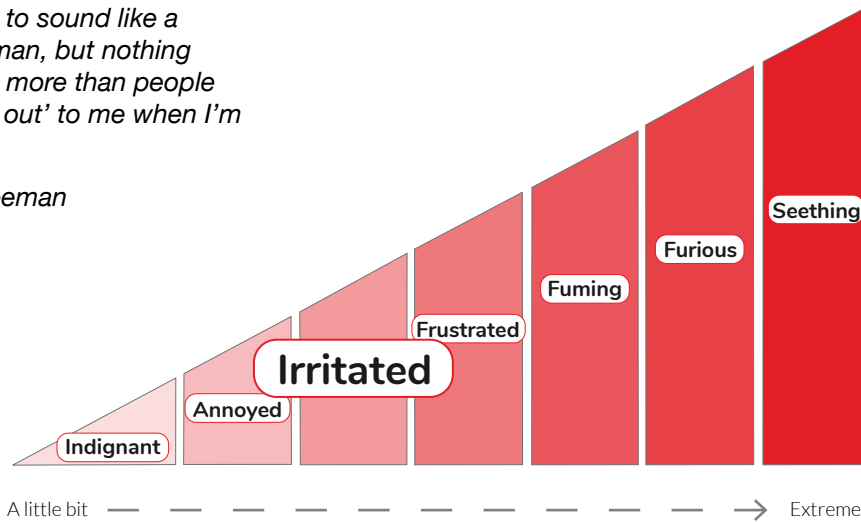
Irritated

in control, but focus is on the irritant



*"I don't want to sound like a grumpy old man, but nothing winds me up more than people saying, 'Chill out' to me when I'm **irritated!**"*

— Martin Freeman



Irritated is a step up from being annoyed, but is still a relatively mild form of anger. When you are irritated you have a strong desire to remove the irritation—it is not something easily ignored. Irritations are a little painful, and the brain interprets pain as a warning signal for something needing to be fixed. If the irritation isn't dealt with, people often get forthright or aggressive in an attempt to resolve the pain.

Constant irritation can make you impatient, and will turn into frustration if it distracts or is a barrier to you achieving something important. Often irritations are met with a stern frown. They are things that are small enough not to lose control over, but are too big to ignore.



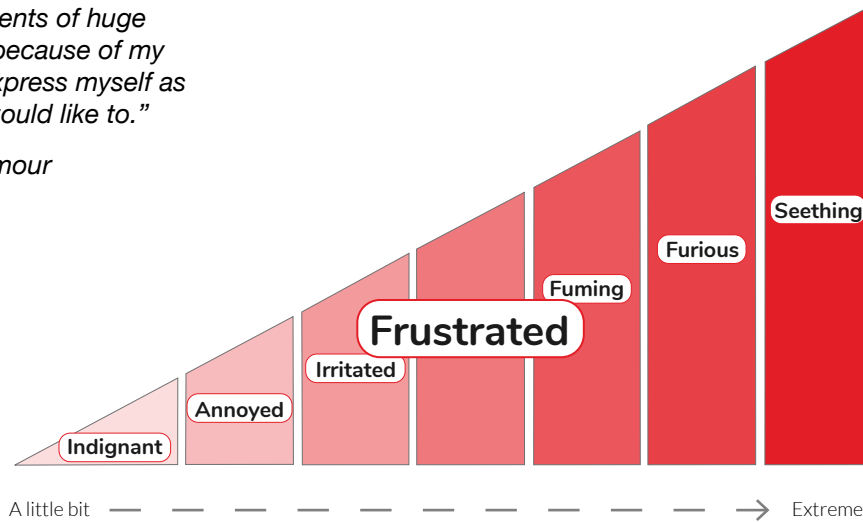
Frustrated

on the edge of losing control



*“I have moments of huge **frustration** because of my inability to express myself as clearly as I would like to.”*

— David Gilmour

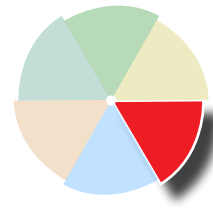


Frustration is where anger can start to boil over into something harder to control. Usually it is triggered when something gets in the way of achieving a specific goal or completing a task. “They couldn’t understand what I was saying, it was getting frustrating”. Frustration is an emotion that is very hard to suppress, and rarely considers future negative impacts of outbursts.

Frustration is a strong emotion that can often lead to lashing out physically or verbally. It can be more explosive if the frustrating ‘thing’ happens close to you achieving your goal, or when you’re desperate to get something (e.g. waiting in line for an hour to get some food, only to have someone push in front of you as you finally get to the counter).



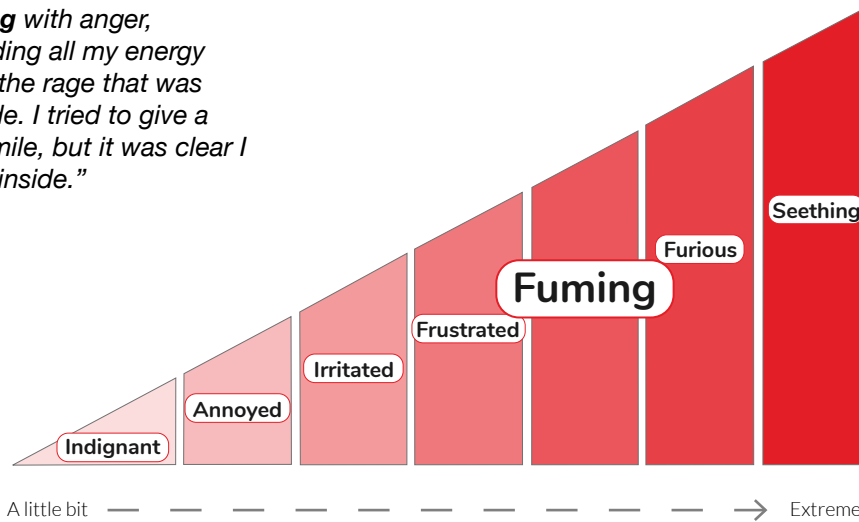
Fuming



losing control, high energy used to keep in check

“I was **fuming** with anger, quietly spending all my energy suppressing the rage that was building inside. I tried to give a reassuring smile, but it was clear I was **fuming** inside.”

— Tim Edals



Fuming is a very strong emotion. It is often triggered by perceived social injustice, people ignoring you, people not keeping their word, forced change, or general disrespect.

It is also strongly related to unforgiveness and revenge.

When you are fuming you stop listening to anyone, get caught in long rants, and hold aggressive postures (like pointing, clenching fists, or shaking your head).

While it can still feel like you are in control when you are fuming, you are not. Your rational brain may be conscious of what you are doing (unlike furious), but awareness will have little to no control over your behaviour. Learning and practicing grace, humility, compassion and forgiveness is critical to controlling this emotion.



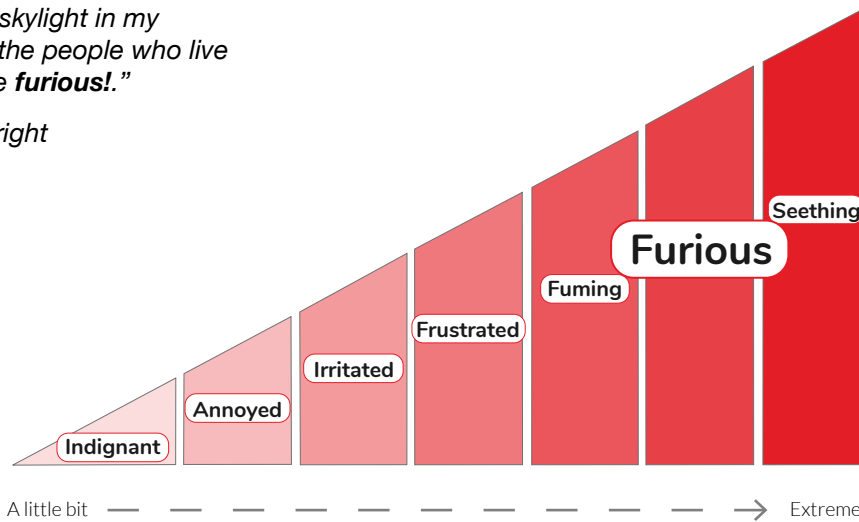
Furious

no control, prone to irrational outbursts



*"I installed a skylight in my apartment... the people who live above me are **furious!**"*

— Steven Wright



Fury is an extremely strong expression of anger. People often lose control of their thoughts, actions or words when they are consumed with fury. People become furious when something about their core identity feels threatened. People who commit violent crimes often report ‘losing their mind’ in fits of rage, unable to even remember what they did or why they did it.

Your rational brain slips into a semi-conscious state as your entire body becomes engulfed in fury, with the impact of your uncontrolled behaviour often leading to deep remorse after you’ve calmed down. Work on dialing back your anger to annoyed when you can feel fury starting to creep up.



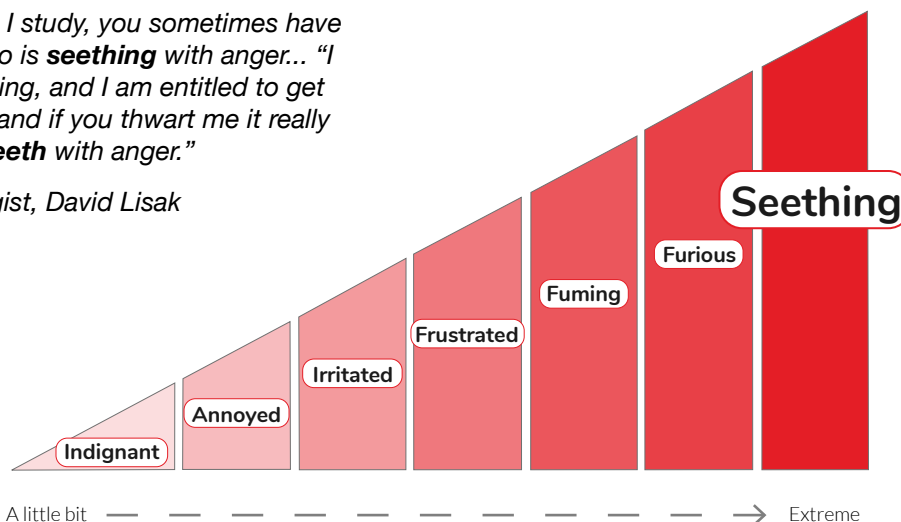
Seething



completely out of control, prone to psychological harm

“In the cases I study, you sometimes have someone who is **seething** with anger... “I want something, and I am entitled to get what I want, and if you thwart me it really makes **me seeth** with anger.”

— Psychologist, David Lisak



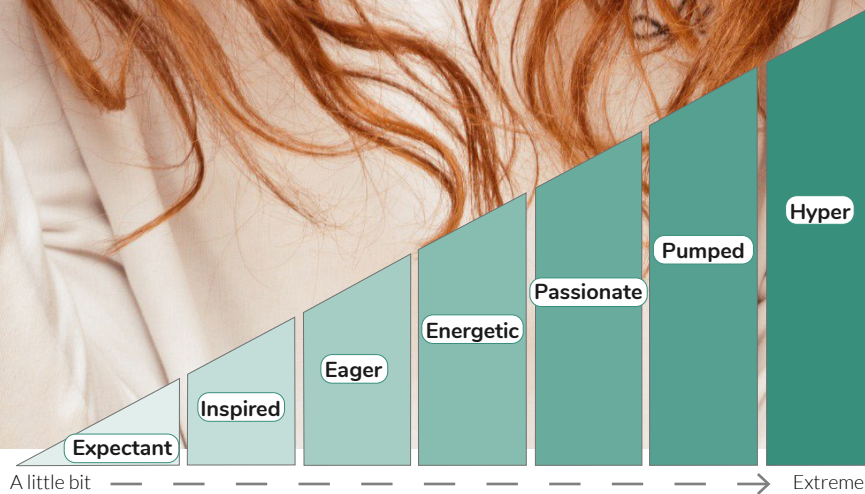
This is ‘white hot’ anger. Often people ‘spit’ words through clenched teeth, giving rise to the seething sound of hissing. However, most times people hide this anger away, cutting others off, disregarding them, or acting in passive aggressive ways.

Seething is an extreme expression of anger and one should refrain from speaking or acting out in this state. However, you also need to make sure you deal with the anger, and find ways to expel it so that it doesn’t percolate. Holding on to seething anger will lead to psychological pain, and will hurt you much more than the person your are seething over. While you may be able to put the seething anger out of you mind to focus on a specific task or goal, it will be in the background draining energy as you try to keep it suppressed. Being gracious, quick to forgive, and holding things lightly is a much better way to manage this level of anger.



EXCITED

motivated | energised





Summary



Excitement, like anger, is how we often release energy. It's a series of emotions that usually result from something in the future that amuses or interests you. You can feel excited about going on a holiday, falling in love, or seeing the sequel to a great movie. Excitement is related to happiness, but happiness is directed toward something happening in the present, whereas excitement is all about the anticipation of a future event.

When does it help?

Excitement boosts motivation levels so we can be prepared. It also can be a helpful way to reframe anxiety — instead of being stressed about your upcoming event, you can think about being full of anticipation and excitement. This subtle mindset change can refocus your energy and increase performance (rather than the decrease we see with high anxiety).

What happens inside my body?



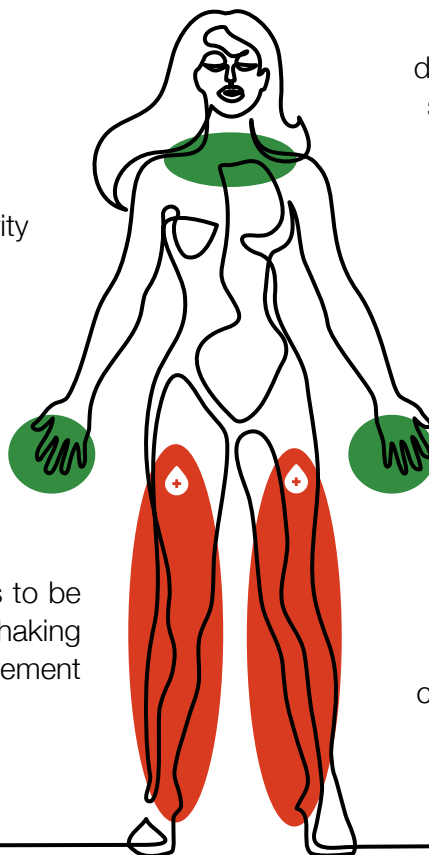
large skeletal muscles

easier for prolonged activity



adrenaline

'energy' that often needs to be burnt off by jumping, shaking or thrill seeking (achievement satisfaction)



The heart will be racing and you may find yourself naturally jumping up and down, clapping vigorously, or even screaming in delight in an attempt to release the energy excitement brings.

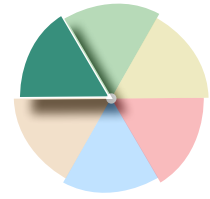
Blood pumps to all your 'action' muscles, allowing you to do activities (like dancing) for a long time. It can also stimulate creative and pleasurable thoughts about the future. Too much excitement can interrupt your sleep in similar ways to anxiety, so learning some ways to calm your mind before going to sleep can be good.

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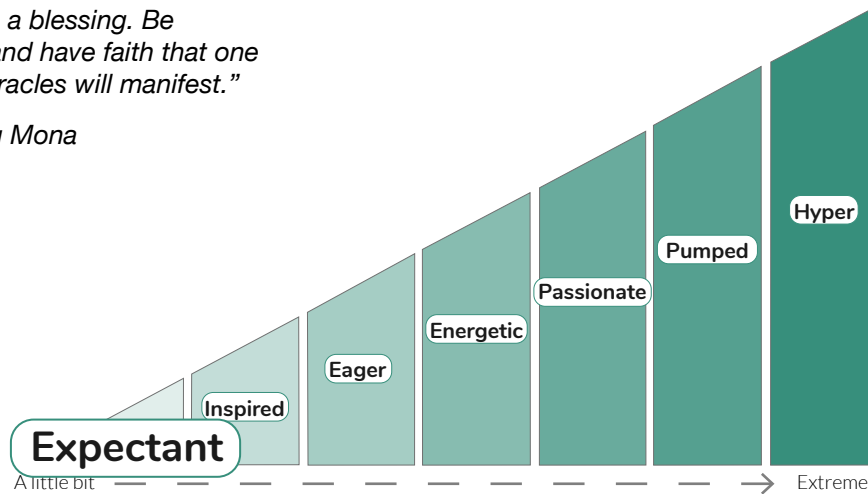
Expectant

in control, feeling good about the future



*“Each day is a blessing. Be **expectant** and have faith that one day, your miracles will manifest.”*

— Gift Gugu Mona



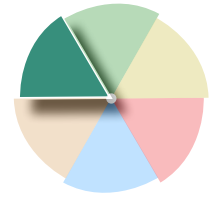
Being expectant is one of the most enjoyable emotions as it creates energy and joy through low levels of excitement. It is often articulated as “looking forward to” something - like a holiday, a party, or a new year. People who are expressing excitement via expectant feelings tend to be active and feel ‘lighter’, which is expressed through raised eyebrows and a slight smile.

Joy is often articulated as a mix of low levels of happiness and low levels of excitement. Learning what being expectant feels like, and then accessing that feeling whenever you need it, can be useful if needing to shift out of an anxious or sad state.



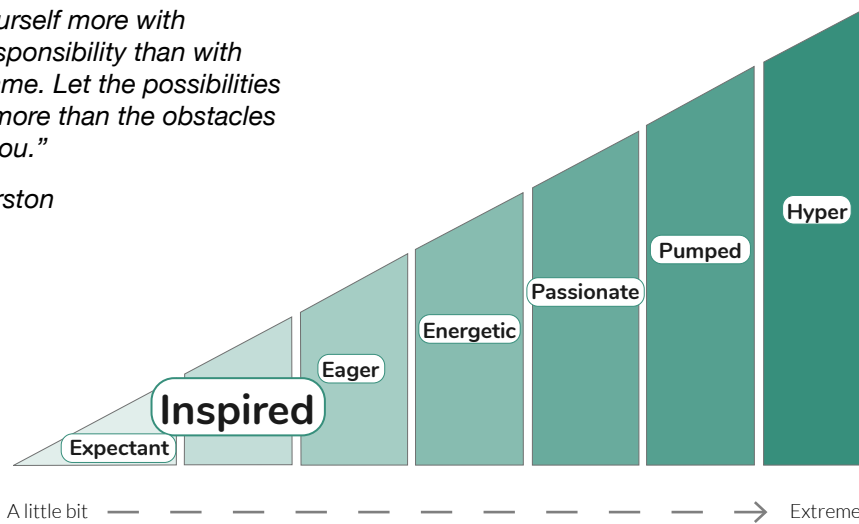
Inspired

starting to move toward desired goal



*“Concern yourself more with accepting responsibility than with assigning blame. Let the possibilities **inspire** you more than the obstacles discourage you.”*

— Ralph Marston



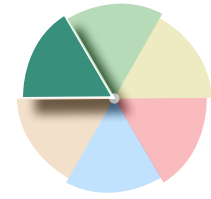
Inspired is greater than expectant, and it is often mixed with a sense of wonder and enhanced possibility.

Inspiration can come through beauty, symmetry, another person’s words or actions, or even the realisation that you can solve a problem. Feeling inspired is mostly associated with creating a better future.

Inspiration has long been used as a tool for motivation, partly because it is a strong enough emotion to nudge action, without draining too much energy. This means that someone who is inspired by something can remain on task for an extended period of time without getting mentally exhausted. This can become extremely powerful when mixed with other low arousal emotions such as focused (anxiety).



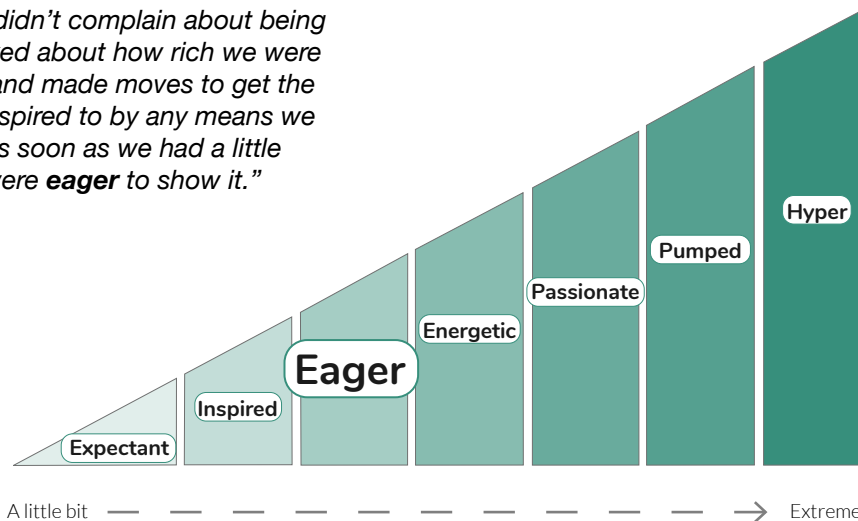
Eager



still in control, keen to experience a good outcome

*“As kids we didn’t complain about being poor; we talked about how rich we were going to be and made moves to get the lifestyle we aspired to by any means we could. And as soon as we had a little money, we were **eager** to show it.”*

— Jay Z

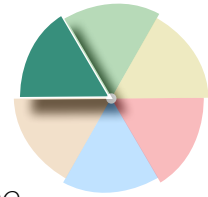


Eager is more intense than expectant, but falls a little short of the higher arousal state of energetic. People who are eager will often clap or rub their hands to release energy, or ‘bob’ up and down on their toes. Eagerness is often experienced when an event that you’ve been looking forward to is about to happen, or you are impatient and desire to get to a destination or complete a task sooner than later. It is a great way to focus energy toward an action.

Saying you’re ‘eager’ (which leads to action and enthusiasm) can be an easy way of reframing worry or panic (which can undermine performance and sleep) or impatience (which can lead to frustration and anger). Learning how to feel and trigger eagerness is one of the superpowers of high performers.



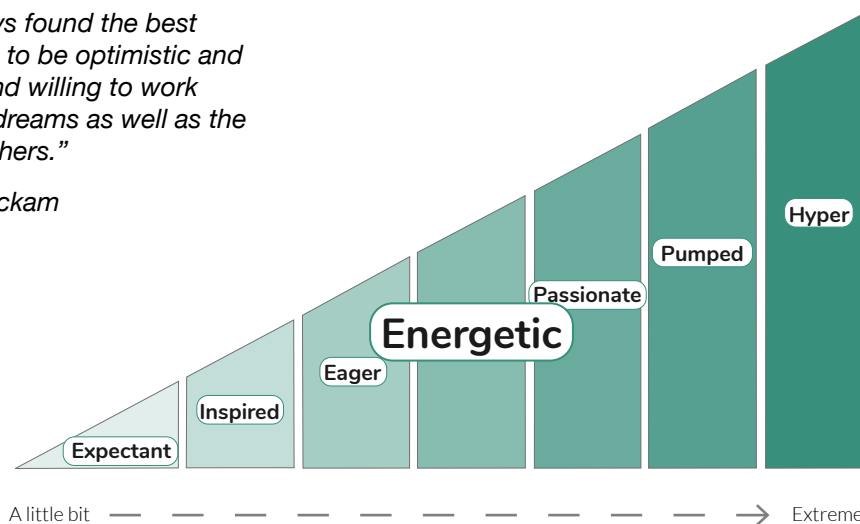
Energetic



the tipping point of ceding control to your automatic ape

*"I have always found the best way to live is to be optimistic and **energetic** and willing to work hard for my dreams as well as the dreams of others."*

— Homer Hickam



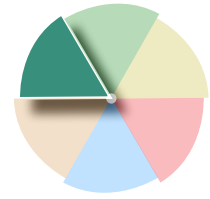
Feeling energetic is more than simply being eager to do something—it is a high energy state that readies the body for imminent action. It is a proactive state that causes people to move quicker, or focus intently on what they are energetic about (often ignoring other inconsequential things). An energetic person has a happy but intense look, and speech patterns tend to be faster, louder, and more expressive.

Energetic is a highly contagious emotion as long as others are also energised by the same activity. If not, then people seeing your energetic state can view you as disturbing the peace or creating extra work. This is no reason not to be energetic, but be mindful of the impact on others and general politics of social environments where possible.



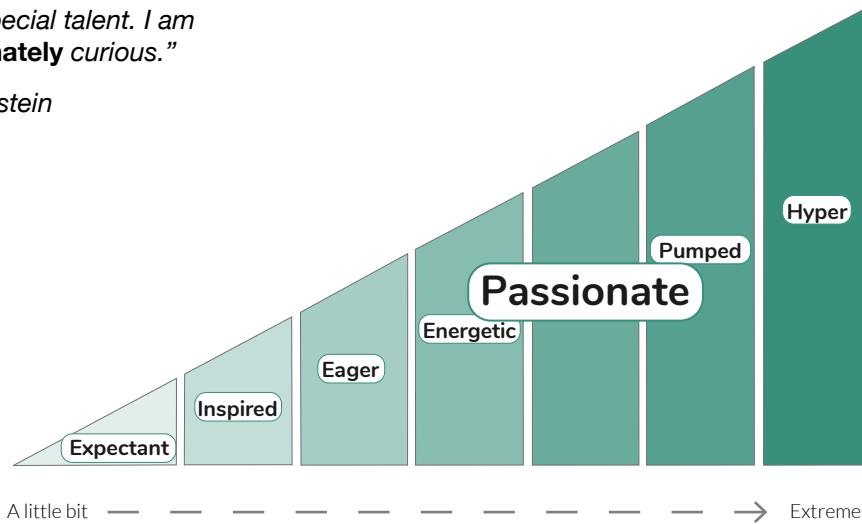
Passionate

in flow, unaware of all of your surroundings



“I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious.”

— Albert Einstein

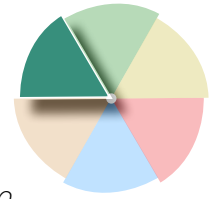


When you are passionate, you are excited almost to the point of being out of control. Often confused with fury (anger) due to its high intensity, passionate people can easily slip into frustration if someone, or something, is a blocker to achieving their passion. Other people are often attracted to passionate people because this level of energy can be contagious, temporarily lifting mood.

There is an element of passion that is not welcomed by others. As the arousal level suggests, people full of passion are not always in control of their actions, and can be blind to things that may hamper their future success. Others can see passion as simply over-opinionated or pushy. It is important to feel passionate about things at times (like if you are on stage performing, competing in sport, or arguing a political point), but knowing how to quickly dial it down and increase awareness is important so you don't exhaust yourself or the people around you.



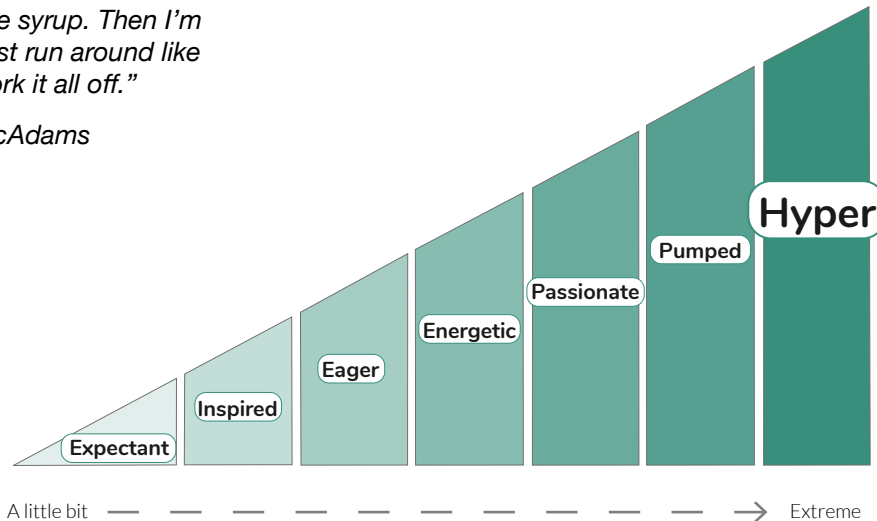
Hyper



completely out of control, no ability to keep enthusiasm

"I drink maple syrup. Then I'm hyper so I just run around like crazy and work it all off."

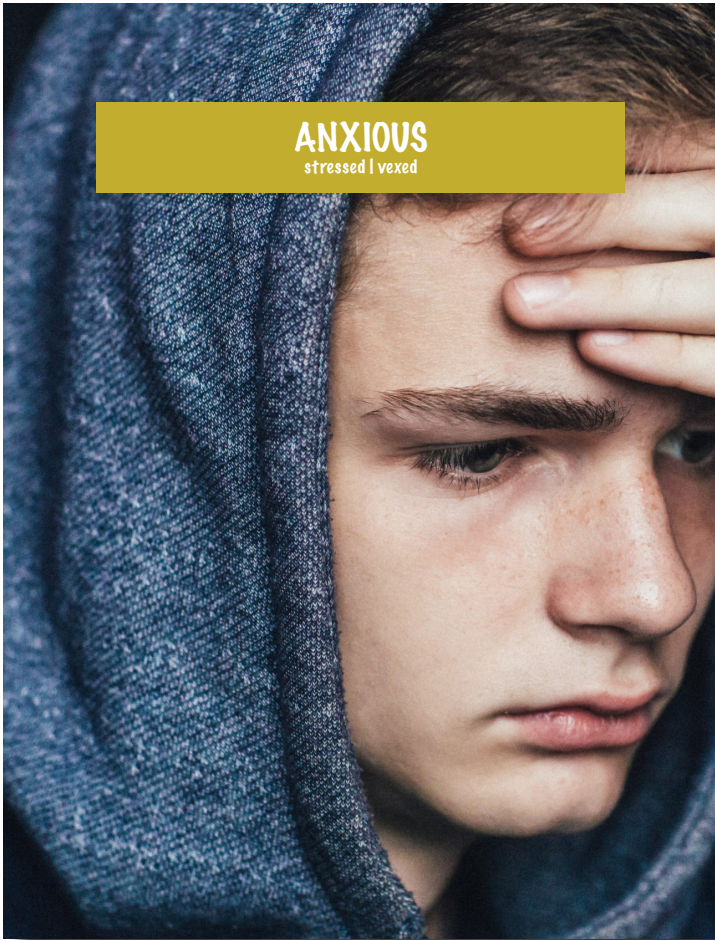
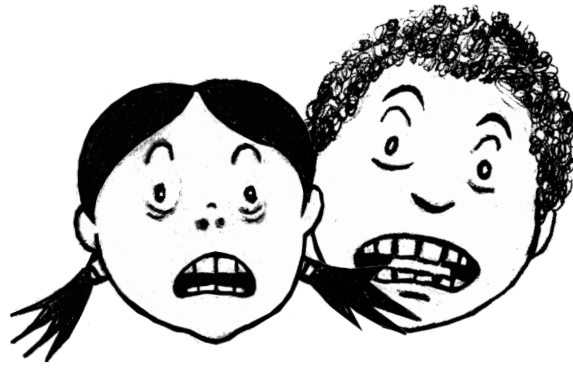
— Rachel McAdams



Hyper (also called hyperactivity) is the most energetic and extreme expression of excitement and tends to be a result of an overabundance of internal energy that needs to be released. In a hyper state, people are loud, distractable and highly active. They can be socially disruptive and chaotic, and rarely focus on a particular outcome. Hyper can easily turn to anger if others try to mute or suppress the disruptive behaviour.

Being hyped for long periods of time is unlikely to result in good outcomes. When in a hyper state you lose rational control and you can have a significant negative impact on those around you without realising it. Learning to breathe, focus, and redirect energy toward more controlled expressions (like playing sport) can be a good way to keep energy high, without going over the top.

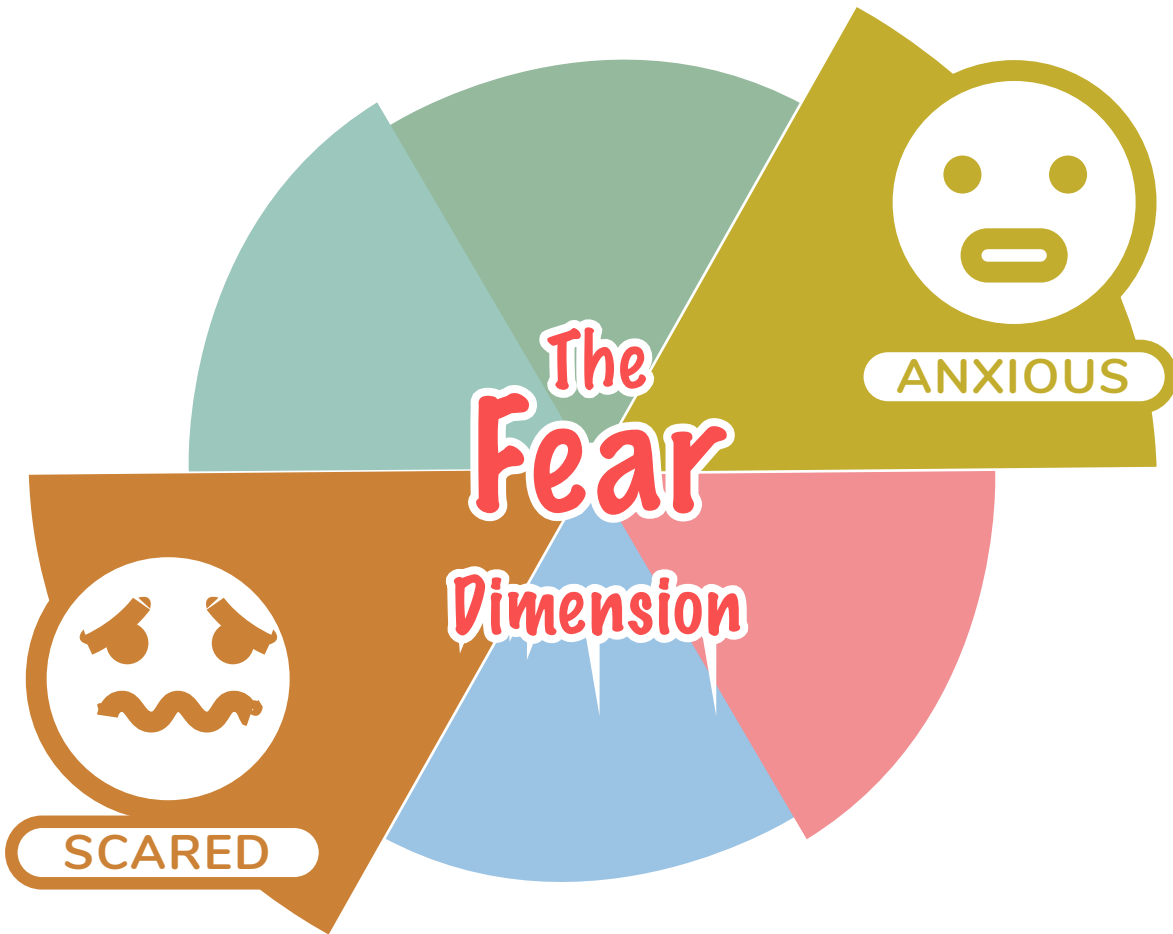




ANXIOUS
stressed | vexed



SCARED
fearful | frightened



Feeling anxious and feeling scared are both fear based emotions. The difference is that feeling scared is equated with fear of something in the present, and feeling anxious is fear of something in the future. The reason that we split them into two is because they inspire different reactions in the body, and you do different things to manage them.

Both, however, are closely linked to our instinctive survival reactions, the five f's. The freeze, flop, friend, fight or flight reactions are immediate, automatic and instinctive responses to inescapable threat - even if that threat is only in our mind. Being able to understand and control these responses help us to determine how threatening something really is, and make better sense of our experiences.

ANXIOUS

stressed | vexed

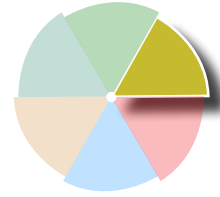


A little bit ————— → Extreme



ANXIOUS
stressed | vexed

Summary



Anxiety is a stress response to something negative or dangerous that we think might happen in the future. It differs from scared which tends to be felt in response to something dangerous in the present. Anxiety can impact our breathing and our ability to sleep. Ruminating and constantly visualising potential future negative events can actually help make them happen, further fueling anxiety.

When does it help?

Anxiety can help us remain vigilant to potential threats and help direct attention to important things. Being anxious about school grades can help us focus on studying. Being anxious about health can help us exercise or eat a better diet. Only be anxious about the things you can control, and don't fall into the trap of over-vigilance.

The Switch4Schools app has some handy hints for sleeping and calming the mind.

What happens inside my body?

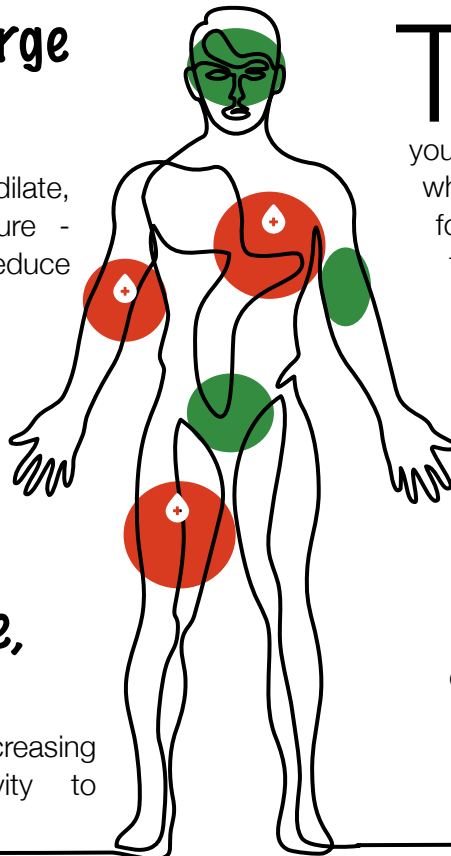
heart, large muscles

large muscles and heart dilate, increasing blood pressure - 'overcooked' organs reduce performance



adrenaline, noradrenaline, cortisol

(stress hormones) increasing vigilance and sensitivity to environmental changes



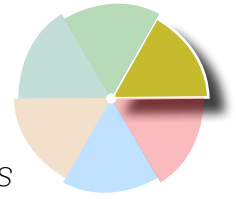
The stress hormones in your stomach can feel like 'butterflies', or even make you start to feel sick. This can be why anxious people eat comfort food or start to eat less, because they are trying to make their stomach feel good. As blood is directed away from your hands and feet, they can become clammy and sweaty. Your heart starts racing as it pumps blood to arms and leg muscles, often tiring them out due to over-stimulation and making you feel like you have no energy.



ANXIOUS
stressed | vexed

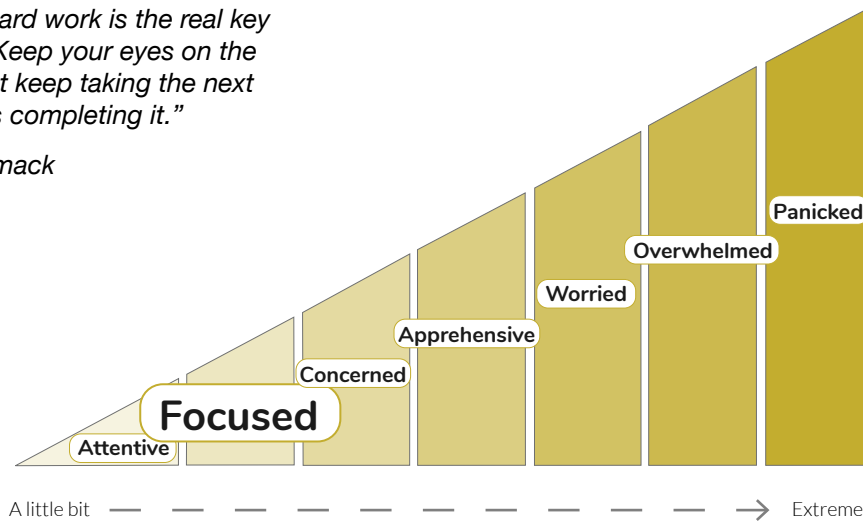
Focused

working on avoiding potential negative future outcomes



“Focused, hard work is the real key to success. Keep your eyes on the goal, and just keep taking the next step towards completing it.”

— John Carmack

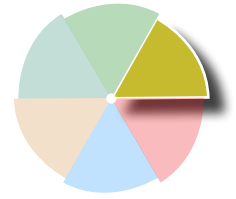


Once something changes from being a possible problem, to a probable problem, we move from attentive to focused. Here is when we direct our attention to fix something in order to avoid a future problem. It deserves your focused attention and if you start to lose control of the situation you start to feel apprehensive.

Being in this state of focus can sometimes be referred to as being ‘in flow’. There is enough stress to motivate you to lose yourself in what you are doing, without the task draining too much of your energy. When ‘in flow’, people often report losing track of time, and being able to work non-stop for very long periods of time. In the workplace, keeping people in this light state of anxiety can dramatically improve productivity and even morale. People in this state often feel like their work is meaningful, and report high levels of satisfaction when a job is complete.



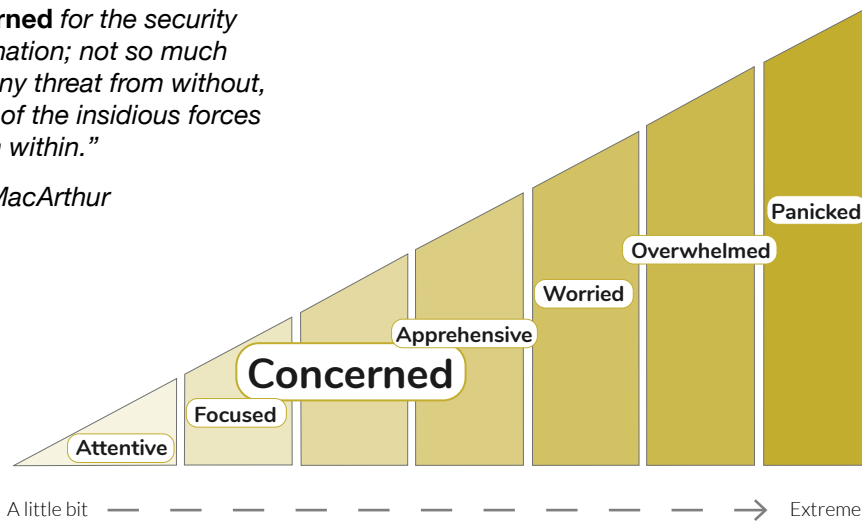
Concerned



starting to second guess actions and thoughts

*"I am **concerned** for the security of our great nation; not so much because of any threat from without, but because of the insidious forces working from within."*

— Douglas MacArthur



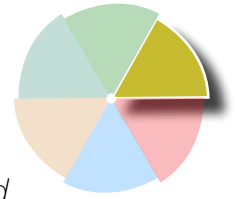
When things or issues start to feel out of control or uncertain, you can feel concerned. It helps focus your unconscious mind to either monitor or solve problems while you are doing other things. A lot of concern tends to revolve around health, finances (resources) or relationships.

The act of being concerned means examining something in the present that could have a negative outcome in the future. You are concerned with things in your immediate control. If you are focusing on something that may only happen in the future you are more likely to be worried rather than simply concerned.



ANXIOUS
stressed | vexed

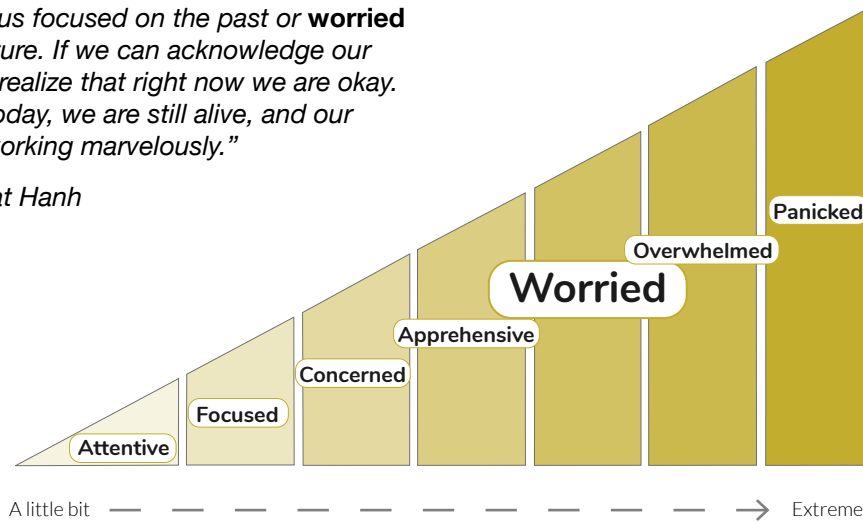
Worried



a future problem must be resolved, capturing the mind

*“Fear keeps us focused on the past or **worried** about the future. If we can acknowledge our fear, we can realize that right now we are okay. Right now, today, we are still alive, and our bodies are working marvelously.”*

— Thich Nhat Hanh



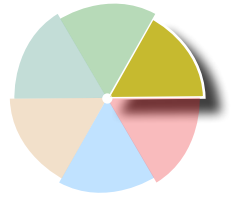
Worry is what you feel about a future event that you feel you have little or no control over. It has a relatively high energy state so the body will often move around (like pacing up and down) in order to release energy and stimulate thought. It is not healthy to remain worried, as it tends to concern things out of our control or imaginary future states.

Don't worry, be happy. The popular song written by Bobby McFerrin holds a lot of truth.

Even 2000 years ago it was written in the Bible, “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”. Most of the time and energy spent worrying is simply wasted energy. It's good to have a plan and make yourself more resilient to future issues, but don't let worry run the show. Direct your energy into things that will positively impact today.



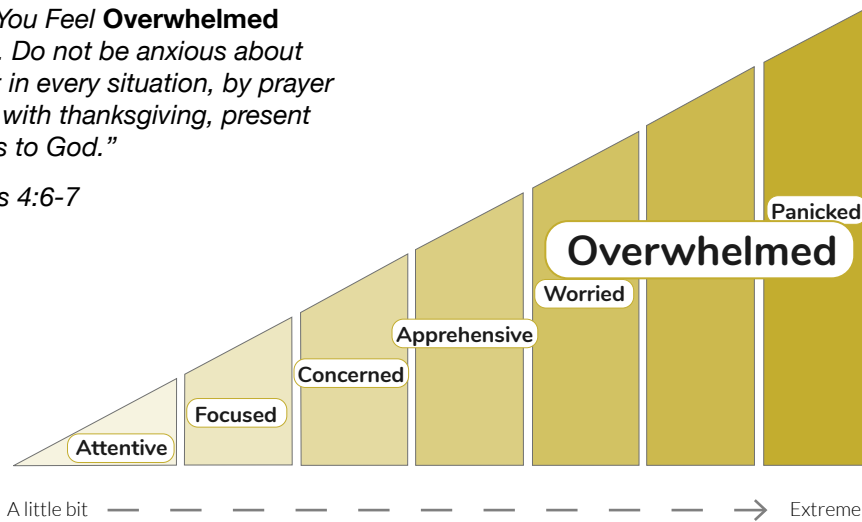
Overwhelmed



*lost control of all rational thought,
desperately seeking exit*

**“Pray When You Feel Overwhelmed
And Anxious. Do not be anxious about
anything, but in every situation, by prayer
and petition, with thanksgiving, present
your requests to God.”**

— *Philippians 4:6-7*



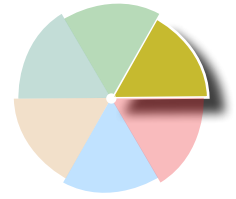
When anxiety gets out of control we become confused and overwhelmed. People in this expression of anxiety often need to seek external help to manage their anxiety and get back in control of their thoughts and actions. Overwhelmed is characterised by deep frowning, scattered and irrational speech, an inability to engage in certain social situations, insomnia and an inability to quieten the mind.

People can be triggered into overwhelm and panic by projecting negative memories onto future scenarios, or even fear of being judged, failing, or looking unintelligent. Overwhelm and panic reduces performance and makes difficult situations worse. Learning to dial it back to concern is critical in it’s management.



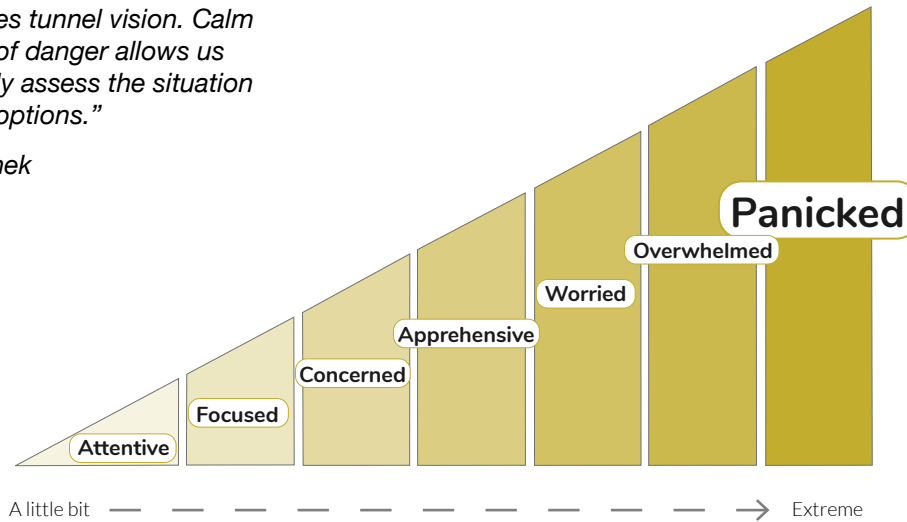
Panicked

*completely out of control,
actions and thoughts erratic and irrational*



“Panic causes tunnel vision. Calm acceptance of danger allows us to more easily assess the situation and see the options.”

— Simon Sinek



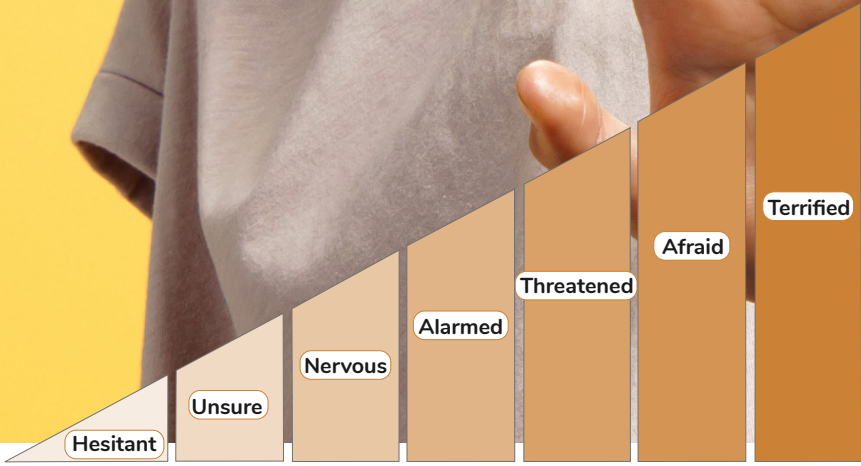
When anxiety reaches it’s highest level, we panic. Panic is a high energy expression of anxiety, and is often triggered by significant fear of a future or current event over which you have no control. The body becomes confused, paralysed with anxiety and starts to shut down in order to remain safe. Panic short-circuits rational thought and directs all energy toward your limbs and body movement to escape a threat.

The family of anxious emotions are important for us to guide our attention. However, overwhelm and panic are seldom useful - although sometimes last minute panic about a looming deadline can inspire us to action! Focus on things you can control, and never let your imagination consume you with thoughts about future events or scenarios out of your control. Reframing anxiety for excitement is a useful way of redirecting energy.



SCARED

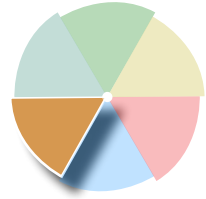
fearful | frightened



A little bit ————— → Extreme



Summary



Scared is a very strong fear based emotion that you feel whenever there is a threat (real or imagined) that you think will put you in danger. This danger could be either physical or psychological pain or harm. You can be scared of things (e.g. spiders, needles, or darkness) or of people who act in ways that trigger hurtful memories or put you in harm's way (e.g. conflict or aggression).

When does it help?

Have you heard of the fight, flight or freeze response? This is the instinct of what we are likely to do to help us survive when faced with danger. It is fear that helps drive this behaviour. Fear helps us be courageous in the face of danger, but our fears can also be debilitating if we don't control them.

What happens inside my body?



Attention is magnetically focused on the threat

large skeletal muscles

making it easier to flee

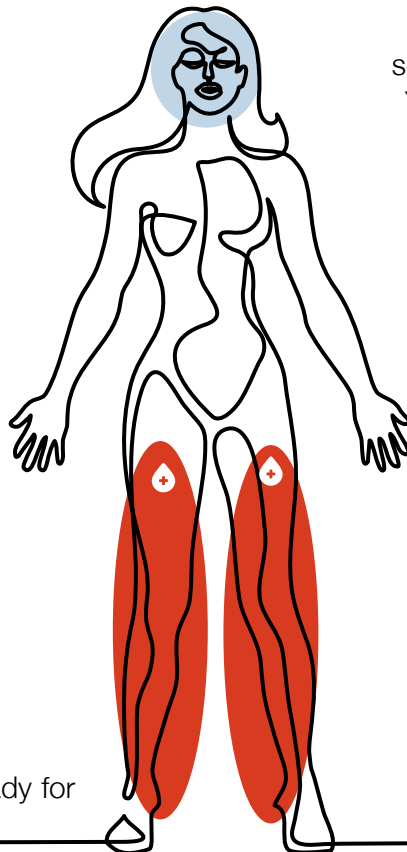
face

blood drains from face, feeling of blood running cold, playing dead



adrenaline

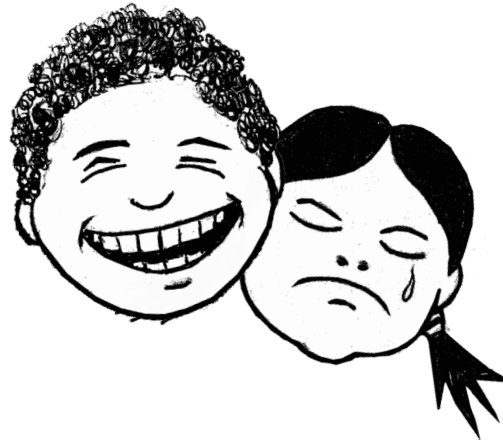
general alert, edgy and ready for action

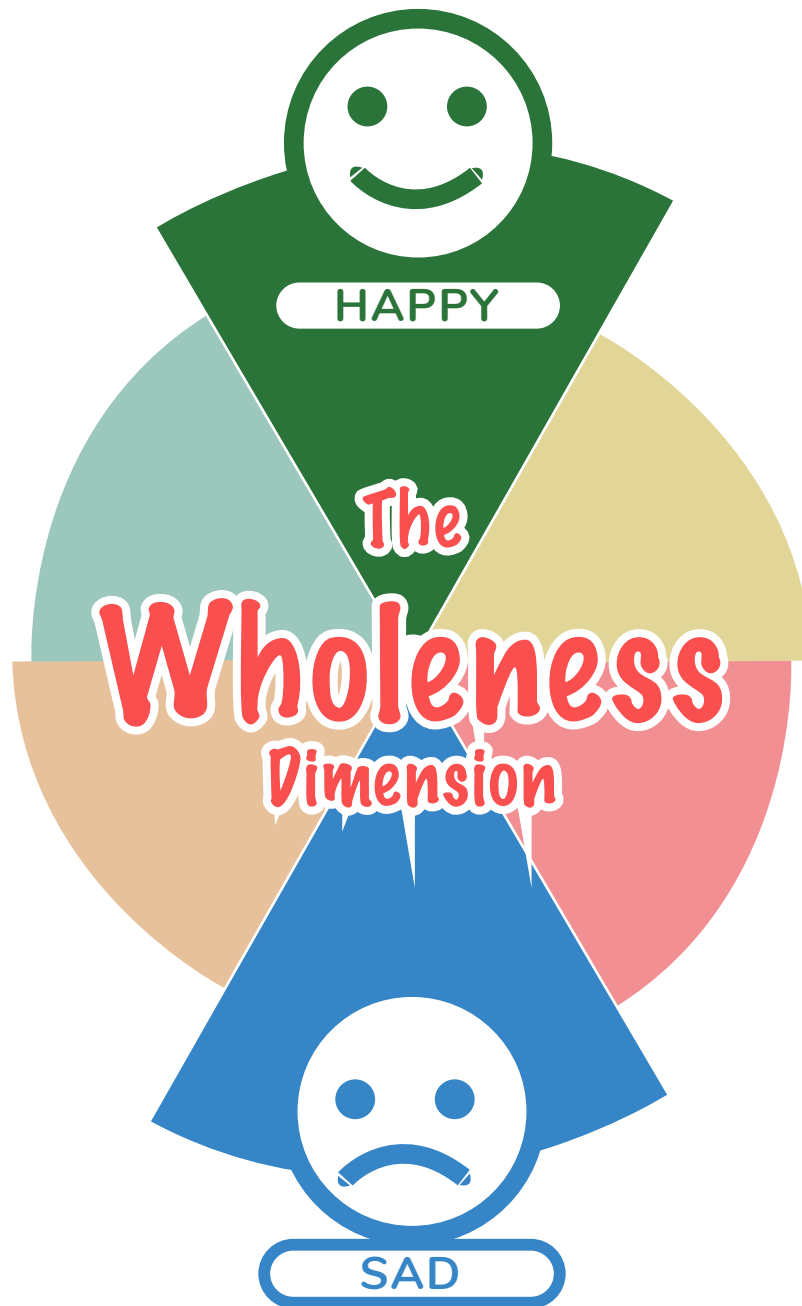


You will be looking for threats, so your eyes and mouth open wide, and your senses seem to all focus on any threat. Your leg muscles get lots of blood ready for movement, and can often start shaking with excess energy if we stay still.

Blood also drains from the face and hands which is a way to signal to predators that we might be dead, causing them to chase others who look more 'alive'. Often people will hide behind their hands to protect their face and vital organs from being attacked.







We call this final dimension the wholeness dimension, because it is the reconciliation of these two families of emotion that give us a sense of wholeness. It is important to note that these are not opposites, but rather two colours that when combined indicate how 'complete' you perceive yourself to be. It is possible to be in grief, and at peace at the same time, discouraged and optimistic.

Sadness is simply our neurological response to loss. Our ability to deal with loss with low arousal versions of sadness (disappointed), and maintain a positive mindset holding low levels of happiness (peaceful) will point us to a long and fulfilling existence.

HAPPY

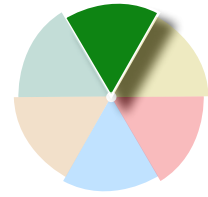
motivated | energised



A little bit ————— → Extreme



Summary



Happiness is the emotion we all like the most. It indicates we are calm and safe, which then allows us to feel things like love and connectedness. Happiness is not an emotion we can, or should, always be in, but finding ways to induce happiness can be very useful. Laughing for no reason can be a great way to inspire happiness in yourself and those around you.

When does it help?

Happiness is the body's way of regulating other strong emotions. This is why people often laugh after they've been scared at a sudden loud noise. Happiness also mitigates for extreme anxiety or sadness, but be careful - sometimes we need to feel the other emotions, and trying to make others happy when they are sad, anxious or angry can be uncaring and unempathetic.

What happens inside my body?

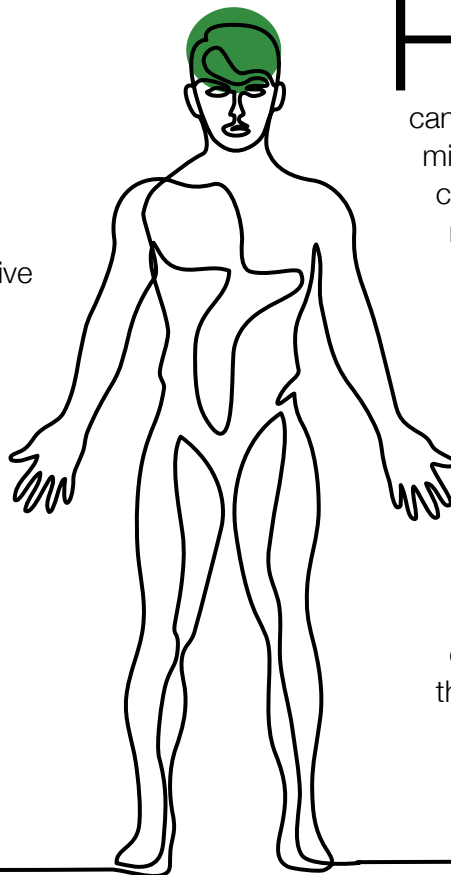


Chemical inhibitors

Neurally inhibiting negative or anxious thoughts

Dopamine

The 'happy' drug - recovery mechanism from heightened arousal (think of laughing after being scared, or escaping danger)



Happiness is largely a reaction that happens in the brain and face. When happy, you can smile or laugh, and when mixed with a little excitement, can also result in clapping. You might see this after an amazing performance where people will stand, cheer and clap. Happiness produces an overall sense of lightness and peace, and can release **dopamine** in your brain to reinforce that something is good. When you are happy, all your worries seem to fade away, due to the chemical inhibitors that are also released.

1



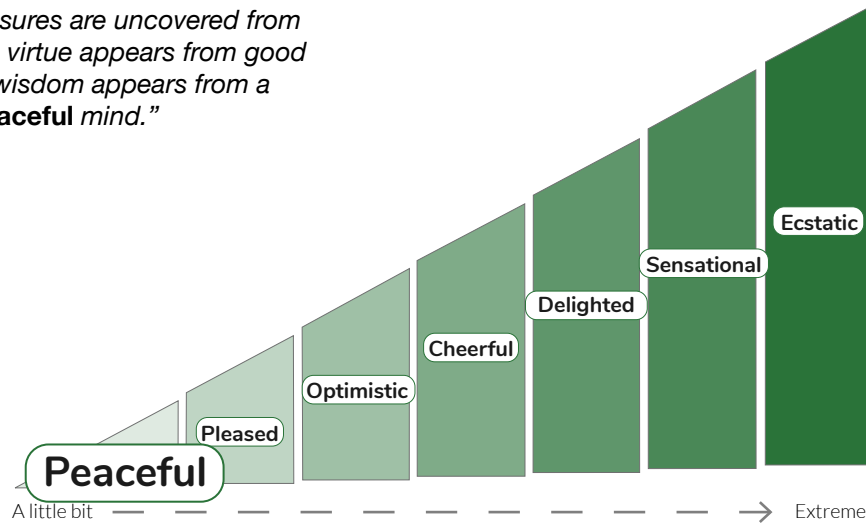
Peaceful



in control, conscious, and in the state of mind that most people desire

*“Just as treasures are uncovered from the earth, so virtue appears from good deeds, and wisdom appears from a pure and **peaceful** mind.”*

— Buddah



The most restful form of happiness, peaceful, is the state that allows us the most control over our thoughts and actions. In a peaceful state, the brain is feeling safe, secure, confident and content with the present moment. When peaceful, all the muscles in the forehead and jaw relax, a soft smile emerges, and eyes are not fully open (there is no need to take in all environmental information).

This state is also the one experienced when people are working on something they love doing, simply because they want to do it (not because of an impending deadline or external expectations). When feeling peaceful, time can seem to fly past, as our internal time monitoring system is less active.



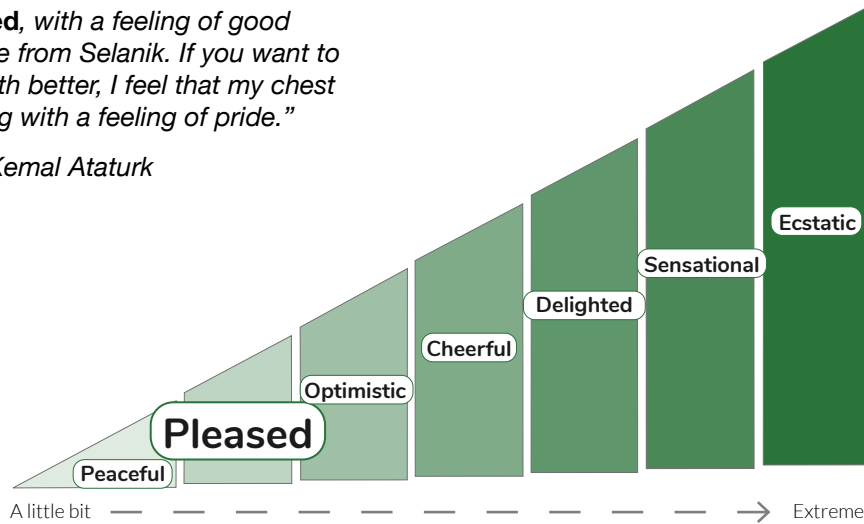
Pleased



in control, but joyous from an unexpected outcome

*"I am **pleased**, with a feeling of good fortune, to be from Selanik. If you want to know the truth better, I feel that my chest is overflowing with a feeling of pride."*

— Mustafa Kemal Ataturk



Pleased sits between the very low arousal of peaceful, and the slightly more intense happiness of optimistic. When we are pleased it is usually a level of happiness with a nice situation or a favourable outcome. The results haven't necessarily exceeded your expectations, but you are pleased with the result. In this way, it is possible pleased can often be tinged with a hint of disappointment.

Pleased to meet you. Pleased to have achieved what we have achieved. Pleased that we are feeling better. When we are pleased we hold a small sense of hopefulness, and feel good about what we have achieved, or the situation we find ourselves in. The brain isn't necessarily pumping dopamine (the feel good drug) into our system, but we are aware that things could be worse. In this way being pleased is akin to being grateful or thankful.



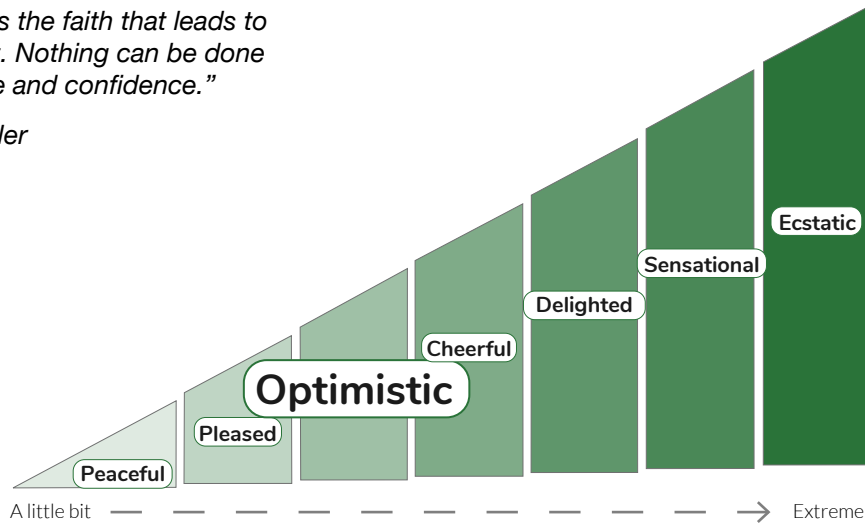
Optimistic

in control and motivated about the future



“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”

— Helen Keller



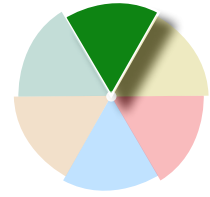
A slightly more energetic form of happiness than peaceful, optimism is all about hope and positive expectations of future events. When optimistic, people will often speak up more in group setting, and feel eager to ‘get stuck into things’ so they can reach the future state quicker and maximise the positive outcomes. Optimism can turn into irritation or frustration if someone seems to be undermining action with unrealistic negativity or worry.

Moving between optimistic, cheerful and peaceful is often an effective way to navigate many life situations where proactive energy is needed. Learning to find these emotional states and resist the temptation to move into an aggressive or fear emotion, helps us keep in control and be less reactive.



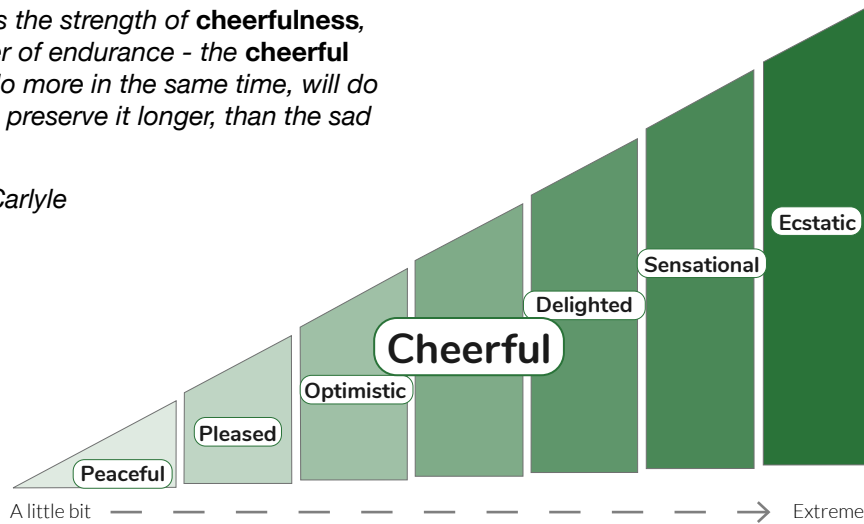
Cheerful

more relaxed and less controlled, lots of laughing



*“Wondrous is the strength of **cheerfulness**, and its power of endurance - the **cheerful** person will do more in the same time, will do it; better, will preserve it longer, than the sad or sullen.”*

— Thomas Carlyle



As humans we love to win, and cheerful is the emotion we feel when we are winning. Cheerful has more energy than optimistic, but is still in control of thoughts and actions (that can be lost in delighted and sensational). Medium levels of dopamine (the brain’s feel-good drug) are released when experiencing cheerfulness, resulting in a big smile and often some body movement to release energy (like clapping or thrusting fists in the air).

Cheerful, sensational and ecstatic are all emotions that are hard to maintain over a long period of time. Learning to experience these states for a time and then consciously dialing it back to an optimistic or peaceful state can be the key to feeling content and remaining within the family of happy emotions. Be careful not to use them to simply suppress other emotions. Remember, all emotions have their time and place.



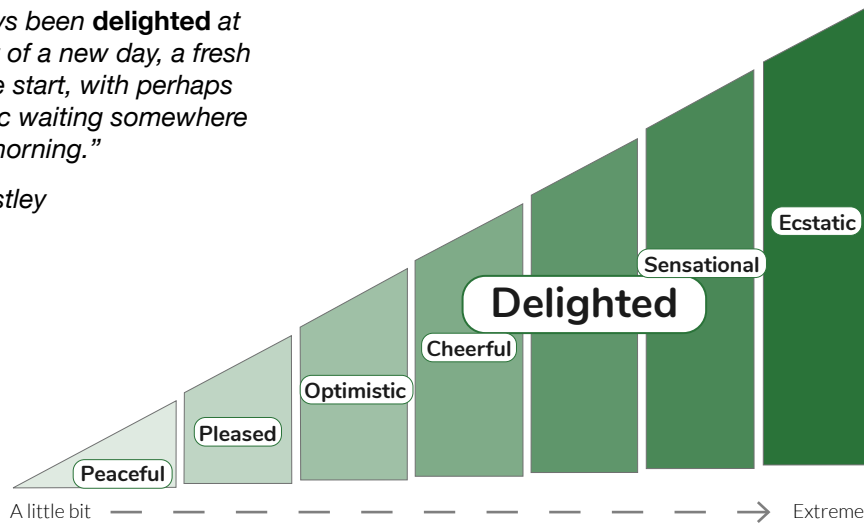
Delighted



higher energy state that is less conscious of immediate surroundings

*"I have always been **delighted** at the prospect of a new day, a fresh try, one more start, with perhaps a bit of magic waiting somewhere behind the morning."*

— J. B. Priestley



The expression of delight is often mixed with a level of excitement and we are not always in control of our actions. When we are delighted to meet someone we often become unaware of others in a conversation, with our attention firmly fixed on the person we are delighted to meet. We are delighted when something unexpectedly good happens, or we meet someone we admire.

When we are delighted our brain releases serotonin and dopamine, two chemicals that make us feel good and immediately enhance our mood. The excitement that often accompanies delight causes our eyes to widen and our movements more pronounced (like shaking hands more vigorously, nodding, or having a slight 'skip' in our step).





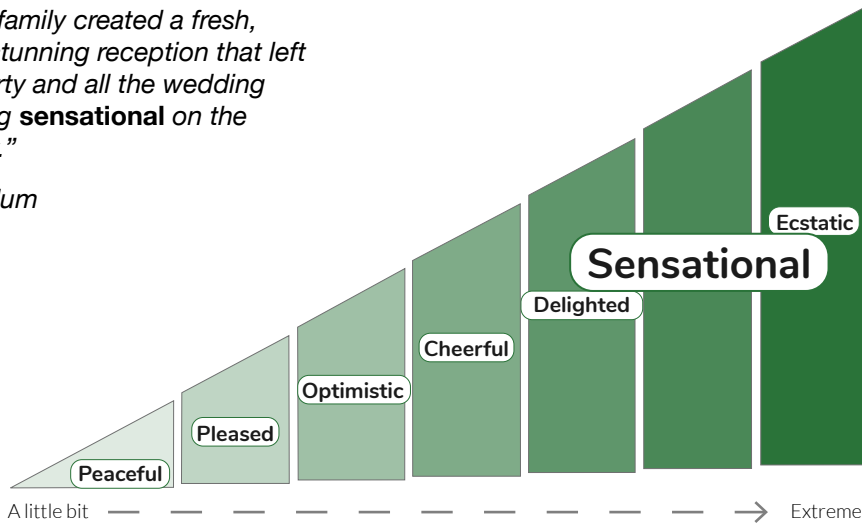
Sensational

Little control or awareness of surroundings



*“The bride’s family created a fresh, radiant and stunning reception that left the bridal party and all the wedding guests feeling **sensational** on the wedding day.”*

— Paula Gallum

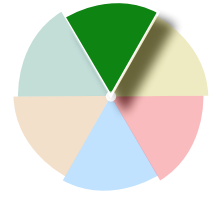


Sensational is sometimes referred to as being in a ‘blindly optimistic’ state. It is often experienced with an unexpected win, or at the beginning of something new and exciting (e.g falling in love). It can also be triggered by large groups applauding or recognising your achievements. It is a high energy state that can be exhausting after some time, which can lead to sadness while you recover mental energy and realign to reality.

It can be difficult to see the more extreme expressions of happiness as undesirable, but long bouts of sensationalism or ecstatic euphoria ‘overcooks’ the brain’s reward system and triggers the brain into a more depressed recovery mode.



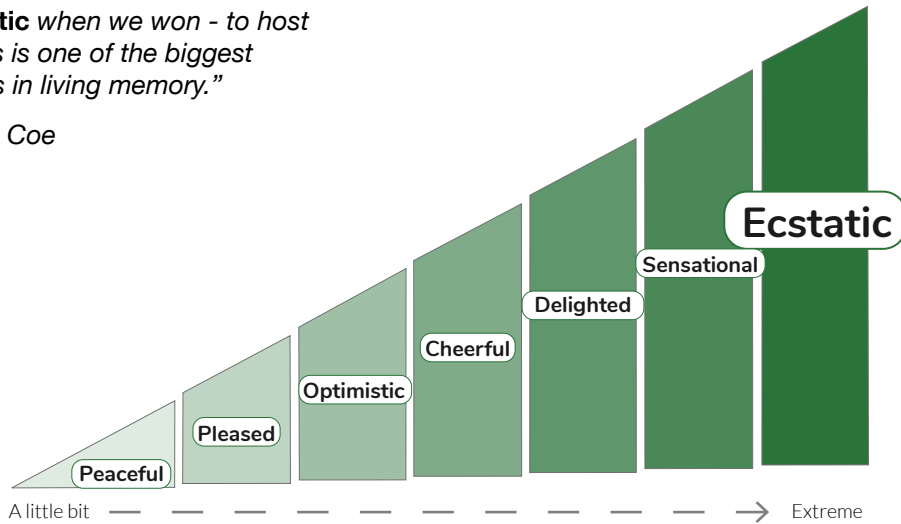
Ecstatic



little to no consciousness of people or things in your immediate environment

*"I was **ecstatic** when we won - to host the Olympics is one of the biggest opportunities in living memory."*

— Sebastian Coe



Ecstatic is an expression of happiness most often reserved for events in life that are positive, unexpected, or that you have been looking forward to for a long time (like seeing your favourite performer on stage). Ecstatic is an extremely high energy emotional state, and people can feel depressed when coming down from a significant, ecstatic emotional state.

When you are ecstatic you are definitely not in control of your behaviours and actions. For some, fainting can be the result of being overly ecstatic, overwhelmed with the situation at hand, triggering a deep 'sleep' mode to recover. Enjoy moments of extreme happiness, but don't stay there too long or work yourself into a frenzied state (where you may not remember much).

SAD

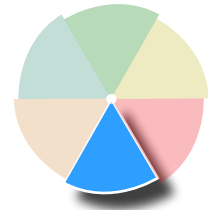
melancholy | down



A little bit ————— → Extreme



Summary



Sadness is often explained as the opposite of happiness. It is a feeling of sorrow and usually makes us want to be by ourselves or with people we know really well. Sadness is usually a result of loss, grief, change, disappointment or a feeling of helplessness (when it seems like you are unable to avoid a future negative outcome or event).

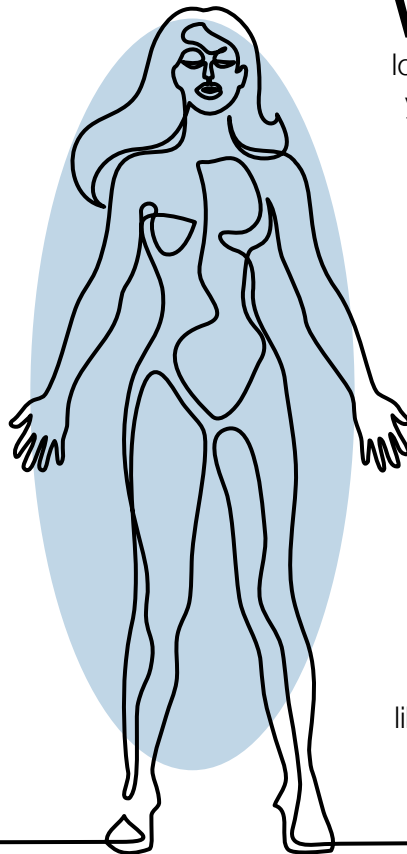
When does it help?

We need periods of sadness for our brain to recover from losing something that we had, or thought we would have in the future. At a higher intensity level this includes the grieving process - our brain's way of healing the mental trauma caused by unexpected loss events. Try not to completely isolate yourself when sad - stay connected to loved ones.

What happens inside my body?



Chemicals slow metabolism and turn attention inward to help recover from loss



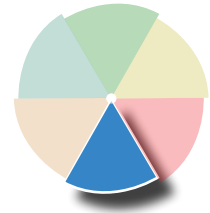
When you are sad you can feel 'heavy', low in energy and not inclined to talk a lot with others. Often this means you want to lie down and sleep a lot. Sometimes your body will want to cry, which is what it does when it needs to relieve pain. You may not feel like eating much, and all the muscles in your face that you use to smile will relax.

Your thoughts also tend to slow down and motivation levels seem to fade away. It's okay to go there, just don't stay there. Take the time you need, but let other people in who can share the journey with you—even if you don't feel like it, it will be helpful.

1



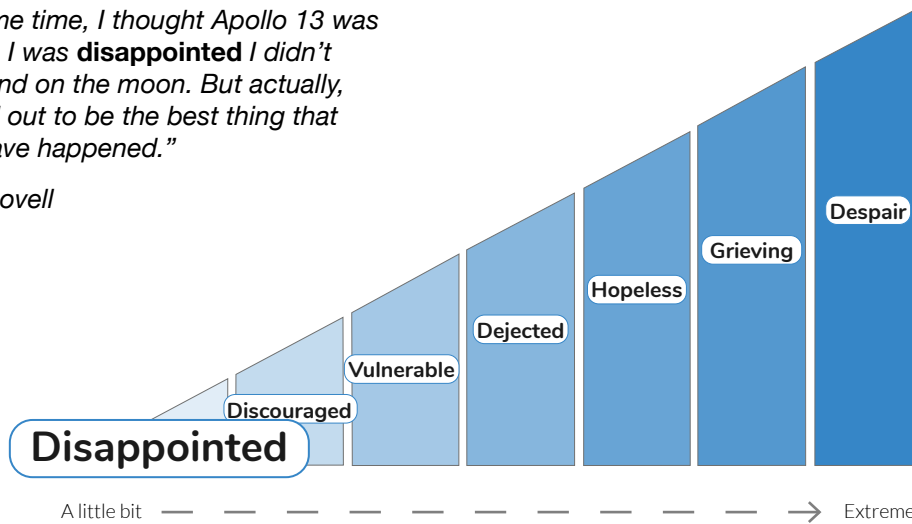
Disappointed



in control, but feel a slight heaviness

*“For some time, I thought Apollo 13 was a failure. I was **disappointed** I didn’t get to land on the moon. But actually, it turned out to be the best thing that could have happened.”*

— Jim Lovell



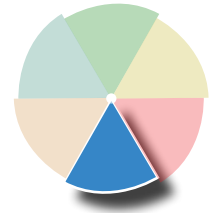
Disappointment is a mild expression of sadness, and often felt when faced with unrealised expectations in yourself or others.

“I am disappointed at my marks on my English exam”. People often close their eyes or look down to help shut out the world for a bit and allow attention to be directed internally. Disappointment is also often felt when someone’s self-worth is being questioned, or they feel embarrassed.

It can be necessary to allow yourself to be disappointed when you need to. Allowing yourself to be openly disappointed can indicate you are in a safe place, and simply in need of some time and space. Try not to get frustrated at people who crowd your space when you feel disappointed in yourself as this will only make you feel worse. Just realise they are usually just concerned about you and trying to show love.



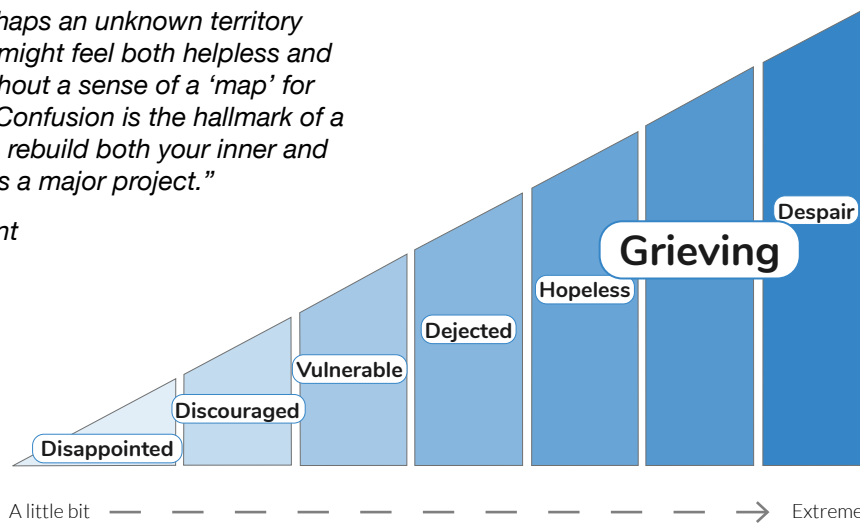
Grieving



we need time to heal from loss, we have little rational control

“Grief is perhaps an unknown territory for you. You might feel both helpless and hopeless without a sense of a ‘map’ for the journey. Confusion is the hallmark of a transition. To rebuild both your inner and outer world is a major project.”

— Anne Grant



Grieving is often the result of significant change or loss of someone or something important to you. Often people who are experiencing grief will want to isolate from social contact, and keep themselves in dark, comfortable places to privately process their thoughts and situation. People can have unexpected bursts of crying, which releases built up energy.

The five stages of grieving are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Going through this grieving process is healthy, and necessary in relevant circumstances, but extended periods of grieving can actually lead to emotional trauma and periods of deep depression. Knowing how to sense when you need to move through the different stages can be the key to mental resilience and finding hope.



A close-up photograph of a young boy with brown hair and bangs, wearing a white t-shirt. He has a wide-eyed, open-mouthed expression of surprise or shock, looking slightly to the left. His hands are clasped in front of him.

SURPRISE

A close-up photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing pink lipstick. She has a strong expression of disgust, with her nose wrinkled and her mouth open in a grimace, showing her teeth.

DISGUST

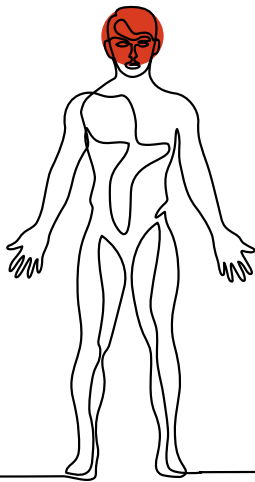
Two extra emotions that aren't in the Switch Emotion Wheel™, but worthy of mentioning...

Surprise & Disgust

Surprise is an often overlooked emotion as it is one of the briefest emotions that we feel. It arises when we encounter sudden and unexpected sounds or movements. Its function is to focus our attention on what is happening and quickly assess if it is dangerous or not.

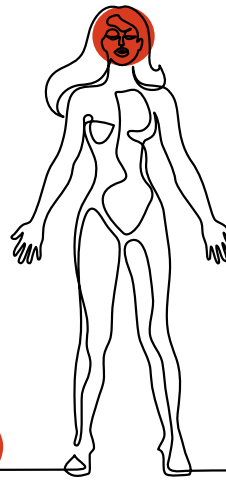
Disgust is a core survival emotion that makes us want to expel something toxic to us. We can feel disgusted by something we perceive with our physical senses (sight, smell, touch, sound, taste), by the actions or appearances of others, and even by ideas.

What happens inside my body?



Eyebrows, face

eyes open wide to allow more light on the retina to increase visual information



Nose, lips

Upper lip curls ready to spit out poison.
Nostrils close to reject a noxious odour.
Frown to disapprove

Why are they not on the Switch Emotion Wheel?

While these are really useful emotions, they are both only felt momentarily and are a natural reaction to the environment. Therefore they are unlikely to need to be understood and managed in the same way as the emotions represented on the Switch Emotion Wheel™ that have a much larger impact on our day to day activities and interpersonal connections.

Going Deeper...

for those who want to travel down the rabbit hole



History and Epistemology

of the Switch Emotion Wheel™®

epistemology

/ɪˌpɪstəˈmɒlədʒi/

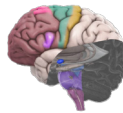
noun

PHILOSOPHY

1. the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion.

The Switch Emotion Wheel™® I have developed (the language of emotional arousal segmented into the six key emotional families) is a key pillar of the Switch app. It draws upon key findings in the areas of behavioural economics, evolutionary psychology, emotional expression research, attachment theory, emotion focused therapy, positive psychology and extensive testing and feedback from schools and people using the Switch4Schools platform. This is true translational research in action.

System 1 and System 2



It all starts with behavioural economics and the key idea that we have two systems of thinking, or pathways which our brain processes information. The first system is fast, automatic, unconscious, holds our long-term memory and includes that part of the brain that produces the chemicals we then interpret as emotions (the amygdala). We also find these parts of the brain in chimpanzees, which is why I call this our ape brain. If you are human, then part of your brain is an ape brain. This reactive and automatic part of the brain helps us navigate the world safely, quickly and efficiently, but also gets us into trouble when it jumps to incorrect conclusions, or incorrectly assesses situations as more threatening than they actually are.

As mentioned already, this unconscious first system includes the amygdala (that produces chemicals our brain interprets as emotions) and areas we believe house our long-term memory. Our long-term memory includes all our experiences and life moments. When those experiences teach us that the world is unsafe (commonly called traumas), our ape is programmed to avoid these experiences in the future, and so deploys different emotions to inspire us to move toward safety. The problem is that our ape is trigger happy, over-reacting and making snap judgements regarding situations we think may or may not be safe, irrespective of the reality of the situation. And all this happens in a blink of an eye (.0042 of a second) in our sub conscious.

What differentiates us as humans is the fact that we have a second system of thinking. Largely associated with the frontal cortex of our brain, it is rational, conscious, slower, and purpose-built to focus attention on the novel and challenging elements of our day-to-day lived experience. It helps us problem solve, plan ahead, dream about the future and inhibit our instinctive desires that are being driven by our system one ape. But how can we understand and manage our ape, our emotional reactivity, if we have no way of consciously thinking about it in the first place? This is where the magic of language comes into focus.

The importance of language

As mentioned earlier, humans need words to describe things in order to think about them. Words create conceptual vessels that facilitate the possibility of thinking about something. That is why learning different languages is such a gift, because you discover new words that encapsulate or describe things in different ways which unlocks new ways of thinking and seeing the world. Without the words, these concepts remain somewhat hidden to us.

The Switch Emotion Wheel™ gives us the language, the conceptual vessels, to help us understand and manage emotion. It creates a bridge between our conscious system two (you) and our unconscious system one (ape) so that we can better understand and manage what is going on in our brain. If we can't control what's going on inside our head, we can't use what's inside our head. If we can't manage our emotionally charged system one, then we become a slave to it, either submitting to its every whim or spending immense amounts of energy suppressing it—and it's quite tricky to suppress something you can't see.

However, language in of itself isn't the whole story. Learning more emotion words is a good start, but in order for it to really work we need to ascribe specific meaning and function to those words. It is the combination of the words, the meaning, and the logic of how they work together that builds a conceptual framework we can actually use and master. Therefore, the Switch Emotion Wheel™ links words to levels of arousal, giving us a logic we can use to manage emotion. Now we can think about how to dial things up and down, and recognise when we are approaching losing control. Saying you're sad is not entirely useful. We need to know whether we are merely disappointed (low arousal), hopeless (medium arousal) or in complete despair (high arousal) for us to know what to do about our emotional state. Each of the six core emotion families (happy, excited, scared, sad, angry and anxious) have language that can help describe emotional intensity. The more intense an emotion is, the less we are in control, and the more control we cede to our ape brain.

Universal emotions

In order to build this emotional lexicon we initially drew upon the research of Dr Paul Ekman and his life-long study of universal emotion. He and his team studied different cultures all over the world to look at facial expressions, which also communicate emotion, and found that there were many intuitive expressions that do not change from culture to culture. From deep inside the jungles of Papua New Guinea, to the ancient tribes in South America, to more modern cultures throughout the East and West, emotional expression was similar.

It was Ekman who started to map emotions into family groups and levels of arousal. He needed it in order to study the facial expressions – he needed the words to describe and understand it. In particular, Ekman gave us the words mapped to arousal for anger (annoyed/frustrated/fury), sadness (disappointed/hopeless/grief/despair) and fear (nervous/dread/panic/terror). A good website if you'd like to look further into this is <https://www.paulekman.com/universal-emotions/>.

For those familiar with Ekman's work, you will notice that we diverge in three significant ways. The first is that we split fear-based reactions into scared and anxious, scared being fearful of things in the present and anxious being fearful of things in the future. We did this primarily because the things you do to help control these two expressions of fear can be quite different. We need a model that informs the management, not just the understanding.

This aligns with the attachment theory research, which looks at attachment styles of children and their primary caregivers, and lifelong behavioural impacts on anxiety management, trust and interpersonal relationships. British psychologist, Sue Johnson, works extensively in this area and she offers a good starting point for anyone interested in digging deeper into these topics. A great video of Sue explaining some of these concepts can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=630vKb1TA-g>.

Fear is such a strong driver because one of our ape's key jobs is to keep us alive, so fearing things that could be dangerous is critical. As a result we have a lot of words we have created over time to describe fear. This is handy because it means we have enough words already familiar to us to effectively split fear into the two conceptual buckets of scared and anxious, and still maintain the integrity of the framework.

The second divergence from Eckman's work relates to two of the emotions that are absent from the Switch Emotion Wheel™ – surprise and disgust. Their exclusion was based on their momentary nature and therefore are not as easy to control intensity. Arousal of these emotions tends to depend on the circumstances of your surprise or the nature of the thing you find disgusting. However, surprise and disgust do lead to other emotions. Your disgust at a particular food may have high arousal but not much further emotional impact. However, your disgust at someone's attitude or behaviour may not be as intense, but could lead to highly aroused feelings of anger or scared. Therefore, from our perspective it is not the disgust that is so important to control, as much as the emotions that bleed from it. Therefore, surprise and disgust were omitted from the Switch Emotion Wheel™ (even though we do describe them in the definitions section of this book).

The third divergence is the dropping of some words that already carry too much meaning in modern society. Depression, for instance, when looked at purely from a scientific perspective, should be plotted on the arousal scale within the sadness family of emotions, possibly between discouragement and hopelessness. However, the word depression has been so pathologised that it already holds too much meaning and stigma in the minds of the general population for us to be able to practically use it. While I would personally love to strip the incorrect and unhelpful conceptualisations associated with depression, I'll have to leave that for another day and be content with limiting ourselves to words that don't carry this level of popularity or stigma. As a side note, we continue to monitor the stigma associated

with anxiety, but at this stage, we feel that as an overall family descriptor, it remains useful, and therefore remains in the model.

The unhelpful stigma of positive and negative



Most of us know that emotions are not good or bad, they just are. However we have such an unhelpful stigma with pleasant emotions seen as positive, and unpleasant emotions seen as negative. One thing we learn from positive psychology is the importance of not demonising any emotions. At no point in this chapter have I talked about positive or negative emotional states, but we have all thought it. This stigma encourages us to avoid negative emotions, leading to people feeling inadequate when they feel anything but happy or excited—often making them feel worse as they suppress their real emotions out of shame.

Emotions are not good or bad. We have emotions that make us feel good, and emotions that make us feel uncomfortable. All emotion is the brain's way of motivating us toward an action to help us keep safe and thrive in a complex world. It is our responsibility to make sure we're feeling the right emotions at the appropriate levels of intensity, to match the contexts and direct our behaviours and energy in appropriate ways.

The suppression or avoidance of unpleasant emotion can lead to disastrous consequences. One common consequence is that the psychological gap between our 'presentational selves' and our 'real selves' widens, and any leak of our real self to others is perceived as an extremely threatening and unsafe prospect. We then spend time and precious cognitive energy protecting the presentational self. When it gets too much, our ape finally explodes with terror, panic and fury at something irrelevant in order to protect us from revealing this hidden side, consequently causing irreparable social damage to ourselves and others. This is particularly salient in families, where uncontrolled and random outbursts of emotion create psychological pain in those we love, and can be the vehicle for intergenerational trauma to be passed on well after we have gone. Not the legacy any parent wishes to leave.

Defining intensity



The arousal level of each emotion is just as, if not more, important to define than the overall family of emotion. The more aroused you are, the more your ape is running the show and the less in control you are. In the low arousal states you are more likely to control and use those emotions to help you, irrespective of the positive or negative inferences that are popularly attributed to these states.

With this in mind, we debated whether we should colour the families of happiness and excitement green, anger red, and sad blue. It could be argued that the colouring could contribute to the prejudice. However, when we tested with students, we observed that trying to challenge these colour associations created too much confusion, and so we kept the colours intuitive to increase adoption and keep the emphasis on arousal. We counter these unhelpful misconceptions in other ways. It is important that we embrace sadness, anger, anxiety and scared feelings as natural and critical to our success in life. Knowing how to dial these emotions down or up for the betterment of ourself and others is what should be our focus.

On the very rare occasion that it is appropriate to be in a high arousal state, it is important that we know how to dial it back down quickly and effortlessly. Being angry is fine, but try to cap it at irritated and annoyed, and dial it down if you find yourself frustrated or furious. Being anxious is really useful as motivation to do things, but you should avoid panic and overwhelm by dialing it back to simply being aware and concerned. Even the high arousal states of happiness and excited are not good for us for any extended periods of time. Even understanding that peace is a low level of happiness takes the pressure off people needing to constantly be aroused to show others that they are happy, thereby saving energy and improving cognitive capacity. Controlling the intensity of your emotions at a very core level is the key, something we learn from psychologists who use emotion focused therapy.

Insights from research examining emotion focused therapy was also critical in the ordering of the high arousal emotions. In observed sessions using emotion focused interventions in the treatment of anxiety challenges, panic is seen as a more aroused state than overwhelm. Therefore, panic is positioned as a higher order emotion in the framework. Supporting this approach, we can observe in EEG and MRI studies that certain states like panic flood the brain with chemicals much more vigorously than others, indicating higher arousal. There are far too many research studies to list all the useful findings here, but some good examples of studies that informed this thinking were the 2018 study by Kaur, Singh and Roy (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2018.05.087>), or the 2015 paper by Abhang and Gawali (www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Correlation-of-EEG-Images-and-Speech-Signals-for-Abhang-Gawali/9dcefc8dcab5671fc284baeae9a318eafb63d53c?p2df).

Emotions in the real world



The final part of the puzzle was to test the model in the real world to refine the generalisability and practical applicability. Schools were seen as the perfect place to study this with feedback from teachers and students. From this process, some words or positions were adjusted to make the framework more intuitive. For instance, miserable was replaced with despair as the highest arousal descriptor of sadness, and hyperactive was shortened to hyper to avoid negative associations with spectrum disorder associations.

The model continues to be refined based on new research and user feedback, and we encourage anyone who has some insight that may help further work to improve the model to reach out to us to discuss. The collective genius is more powerful than the insights of the few.

We know how transformative this model has been for people from all cultural, professional and personal contexts. By growing our emotional intelligence, mastering our emotional reactivity, and improving our emotional health, we can solve most of the big challenges we face at an individual, family and societal level.

A simple idea like the emotional arousal wheel holds the power to change the world.

Feelings, Emotions and Experiences

the differences between

Feeling

/ˈfiːlɪŋ/

noun

1. an internal state, reaction or sensation.

Emotion

/iˈməʊʃn/

noun

1. a strong feeling deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others.
2. a neural interpretation of chemical information released in response to an experience.

Experience

/ɪkˈspɪəriəns, ɛkˈspɪəriəns/

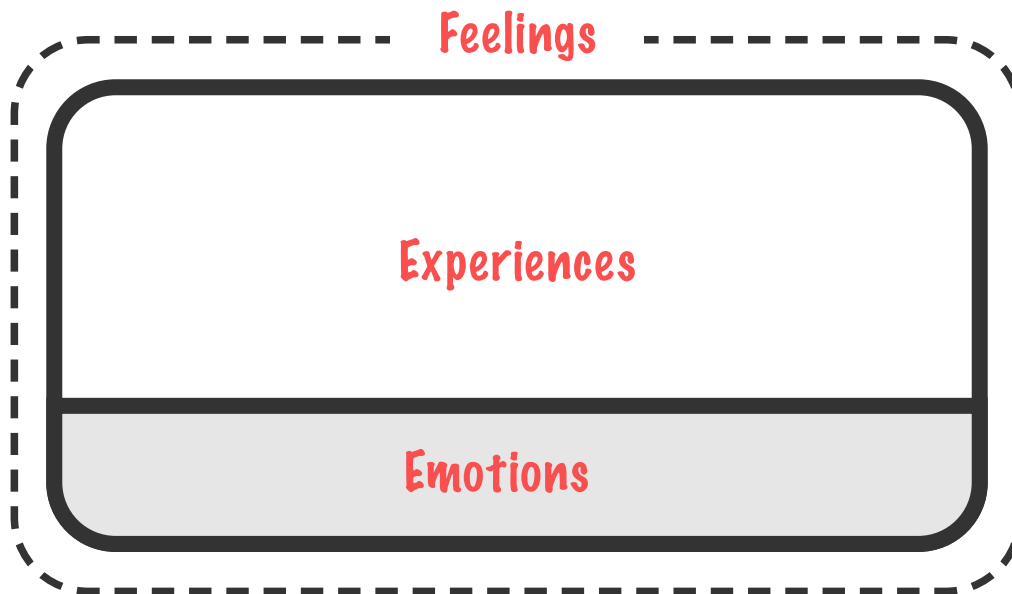
noun

1. an event or occurrence which leaves an impression on someone.
2. practical contact with and observation of facts or events.

All roses are flowers, but not all flowers are roses. The same goes for feelings and emotions. All emotions are feelings, but not all feelings are emotions. The feelings that are not emotions we refer to as experiences.

As discussed previously, emotions are simply chemicals released in our brain (primarily from the amygdala – our ape brain's emotion hub) to make us feel good or uncomfortable, shifting our internal state and motivating us toward some form of action. Happiness, fear, anger, sadness, excitement, surprise and disgust are all emotions because they are our body's reaction to chemicals released by the amygdala. All of these emotions are feelings, but we also feel things internally that are not a direct response to this process. Any feelings that are not a direct result of chemicals released by the amygdala we class as experiences.

Bored, tiredness, pain, jealousy, envy, confusion, confidence, embarrassment, hot, cold, sick or hungry are all examples of things we experience that either trigger, or are experienced as a result of emotion. They are all feelings, but not emotions. In my view this is a critical distinction so we can effectively use and manage emotion. Emotions are much more in our control than experiences, which tend to be more dictated by external factors. Good emotional health comes when we control the controllables (the emotional response to experiences), rather than things outside our influence (experiences).



Example 1: Boredom

Boredom is simply experiencing an absence of mental stimulation. The environment lacking stimulation is not always something in your control, but the emotional reaction to experiencing boredom is, and can change between individuals. Some people get frustrated, others feel sad, some people even feel anxious when they are bored and start to panic or desperately search for distraction.

Learning to control your emotions when you are experiencing boredom changes your behaviour and perception. You can learn to love boredom by finding low levels of excitement in noticing small details. Irritation can be refocused toward being curious. An absence of distraction can give your mind time to process things left unresolved, be creative or think through complex problems. You could be mindful of your immediate surroundings to feel peace (happiness). These are all different ways to manage your emotions in response to experiencing boredom.

By learning to control and direct your emotion attached to an experience, you change your attitudes, behaviour and overall wellbeing. The experience of a relatively unstimulating environment hasn't changed, only your emotional response to it — which somewhat ironically changes your experience of it. You can't always control how stimulating your environment is, but you can change your emotional reaction to it.

Example 2: Conflict

In another example, imagine you are the target of someone's aggression for an unspecified reason. You cannot control the person bringing the aggressive behaviour in the first instance, but you can control your emotional response to the aggression, which will then influence the situation for better or worse. By controlling the things you can control, you influence

and change the experience. Dialing down the terror you might be feeling in the face of the aggressor will mean you are better able to diffuse the situation. It may also be the case that momentarily dialing up anger may be appropriate to bring order to the mayhem. The point is that you need to be in control, not your emotions.

Example 3: Jealousy and Envy

But what about jealousy or envy? Surely they are emotions? Jealousy is what you experience when you notice someone else attracting the attention of someone you love and don't want to lose. Envy which is when you want something someone else has. People often confuse the two words, but they do explain different feeling states.

To investigate this further, let's use the story of Mary and Jason to help test the emotion versus experience notion.

Mary and Jason are in a committed relationship with each other. They are both working hard to save money, which often means they don't get a lot of time with each other. While getting ready for a New Year's eve party they get into a fight over something silly, but they are both exhausted after a big week and easily irritable. That night at the party Jason notices that Mary is talking and laughing a lot with her boss, Danny. Danny and Mary spend a lot of time together at work, and Jason starts to feel something unpleasant as he observes the playful connection Mary and Danny have.

What he experiences could be envy (of the attention Mary is giving to someone else), or jealousy (that he might lose her to someone else). Both of these experiences could trigger a level of terror, panic, fury or even excitement depending on Jason's lived experiences. Mary, on the other hand, may be still angry at Jason and intentionally ignoring him, or she may be just enjoying the attention, or even simply using the conversation to distract her from the fury she is still getting over from the afore mentioned argument. Jason, however, starts to misinterpret her focused attention on someone else as desire. He is jealous, which is making him furious and terrified.

If Jason tries to control the experience, he'll be seen as controlling, dominating and displaying a low level of trust or confidence in Mary. In that moment he really has little direct control over the situation. What Jason can control is how aroused his emotions are in response to these triggering experiences. Dial down fury to annoyance, and terror to hesitancy. Only when Jason can master his own emotional arousal can he engage respectfully and with the lightness the situation deserves. It's only when he can take charge of his reactivity that he can explore any issues of trust, control, rejection and other traumatic memories that contribute to the jealousy.

When Jason controls his emotion and dials it down to a lower intensity, the feeling of jealousy or envy is fleeting and quickly becomes irrelevant. Jealousy or envy is the feeling Jason experiences which trigger emotions, and by controlling the emotion he is able to then influence the situation constructively. This might seem like a weird distinction, but it's not until people separate the two that they can call out the emotional dysregulation and learn

to better navigate the world. This brings us to another feeling people often mistake for an emotion, love.

Example 4: Love

Controversial as that may sound, it starts to make sense when we separate the experiential feelings from the emotional ones.

We experience love, but the reason this experience is so powerful is that it is often linked to a potent mix of multiple emotions. Love is ingenious by design, as it helps find partners to successfully propagate the species, form strong tribes, and give us a sense of belonging and meaning. It helps propel life. Love, particularly romantic love, is a strong feeling we experience, but it is not an emotion in the way we would conceptualise it. It is a connection, a commitment, a state of mind. You can be furious at someone, and still love them. Your temporary emotional state should not impact your love for, or connection to, someone.

When we do 'fall' in love with someone, there are all sorts of emotions and chemicals that get released. It's a literal party of emotion. You feel excited, energised, ecstatic, apprehensive and nervous all at the same time. Dopamine and endorphins explode in the brain giving us a high that is only reserved for those moments when our brain wants to connect very deeply with someone. Our brain does an instant experience match of what a desirable partner might be and releases all the 'feel-goods' it can in order to overcome our doubts and inhibitions to forge a strong bond.

Nowadays we are swamped with a media obsessed with romance, so we often confuse love for this mix of high arousal happiness, excitement and fear. People who incorrectly equate this happy/excited/fear feeling with love often describe themselves falling 'out of love' if they don't continue to feel this high level of arousal – a state that is impossible to maintain. These people are bound to bounce between relationships until they can learn to 'settle down' with someone and discover what true love really is. It's a commitment, a state of mind, not just the occasional emotional highs that being around the other person can trigger.

Modern media often simplifies and confuses 'love' with romantic excitement. Love is stronger and deeper than that. It is a verb, not an adjective. We may not have a lot of control over why we develop deep connections with some people and not others, but the emotional reactivity to connectedness is something we have agency over. We are not as subservient to the power of the emotions that accompany love as the poets, artists and filmmakers would like us to believe. We have more power over our choices and mindsets than we give ourselves credit for.

Love is not blind as such – it is being in a high state of arousal that blinds you, irrespective of what that emotion is. Anxiety, happiness, scared, excitement, anger and sadness can all be blinding if left unchecked, and all can be maladaptive if high arousal of any emotion is linked to the deep connection and belonging that our human brains need. Love is simply the experience our brain has of being unconditionally accepted by another. We love our kids, our partners, our siblings, our trusted colleagues, our parents, our close friends –

even when we don't feel emotionally positive toward them. The level of connection and the specific expression of the love will differ between people, but love is a commitment to each other, not simply a fleeting emotional state.

It is important to note that when people make a connection between love and a fear response, particularly if the other person's actions or words reinforce a negative self view, they can be drawn to (and trapped in) abusive relationships. In this case they bond with their fearful and abusive situation because it can feel like a more honest connection. The negative view of themselves needs to be reflected in others, or they don't believe they are being genuine. Dealing with the emotions that are driving these maladaptive connections is the first step to addressing some of the self image, identity and trauma that is present in many abusive relationships.

When people say you need to love yourself before you can love others, they are spot on. It's not an emotional feeling they are talking about, it's a state of mind. Knowing you are not a mistake, and believing that you are worthy of love and kindness (because you are okay and likeable) is key. Be comfortable with your strengths and weaknesses, and knowing that you deserve to be embraced as a human being, as do those around you.

All emotions are feelings,
but not all feeling are
emotions. Once we identify
what we can control (our
emotions) then we start
using them for good, rather
than being subservient to
them. This is how we learn
to control, harness and use
our superpower.

Cognitive empathy

Using the Switch Emotion Wheel™: PART A

Cognitive empathy

/ˈkɒɡnɪtɪv ɛmpəθi/

adjective

PSYCHOLOGY

1. How well an individual can perceive and understand the emotions of another without having to access a personal experience of that emotion.
2. Having more complete and accurate knowledge about the contents of another person's mind, including how the person feels.
3. Cognitive empathy is knowing how other people think and feel, while experiential empathy is feeling another person's emotions.

One of my very first jobs as a provisional psychologist was as a student counselor for a film academy that was situated on the Warner Brothers film lot on the Gold Coast, Australia. I'm not sure that there was a more eclectic or diverse group of people who were all working through their own versions of deep trauma. The activities that are done in acting schools can pick at some pretty raw areas, and the whole industry is full of incredible highs and devastating lows - particularly as an aspiring artist. Being a counselor in this environment exposed me to all manner of stories and personal tragedies—it really encapsulated the complexity that is life's journey. I truly cherish my time with the students at the academy, it was in many ways the perfect start to my career.

I still remember the very first day. I had already met the student body at a presentation I gave in orientation week, spruiking my services. I must have done a pretty good job pitching my wares because I had a full day of sessions on my very first day. Unfortunately in my inexperience, I had accidentally put myself as available for all the hours the Academy was open in the online booking service, which was from 8am to 9pm - and they all filled up. Twelve sessions back-to-back without a break! However, I was so excited. This was the first day of the rest of my life! I packed food so I could eat on the go and arrived with all the enthusiasm and apprehension that you would expect from a first-timer. I was so pumped.

One of the things that had been talked about relentlessly at university was the fact that the effectiveness of any therapy was primarily rooted in the rapport between client and counselor. I had to connect in order to be effective. I was ready, armed with all the emotional empathy, appreciative enquiry and all manner of psychological techniques I had learned over the years. I was determined to be awesome for these students, turning around lives and inspiring people to a better future.

The first student arrived and we had an amazing session. Within minutes I'd built a good rapport and they were sharing some very deep and personal troubles. I dug deep to put

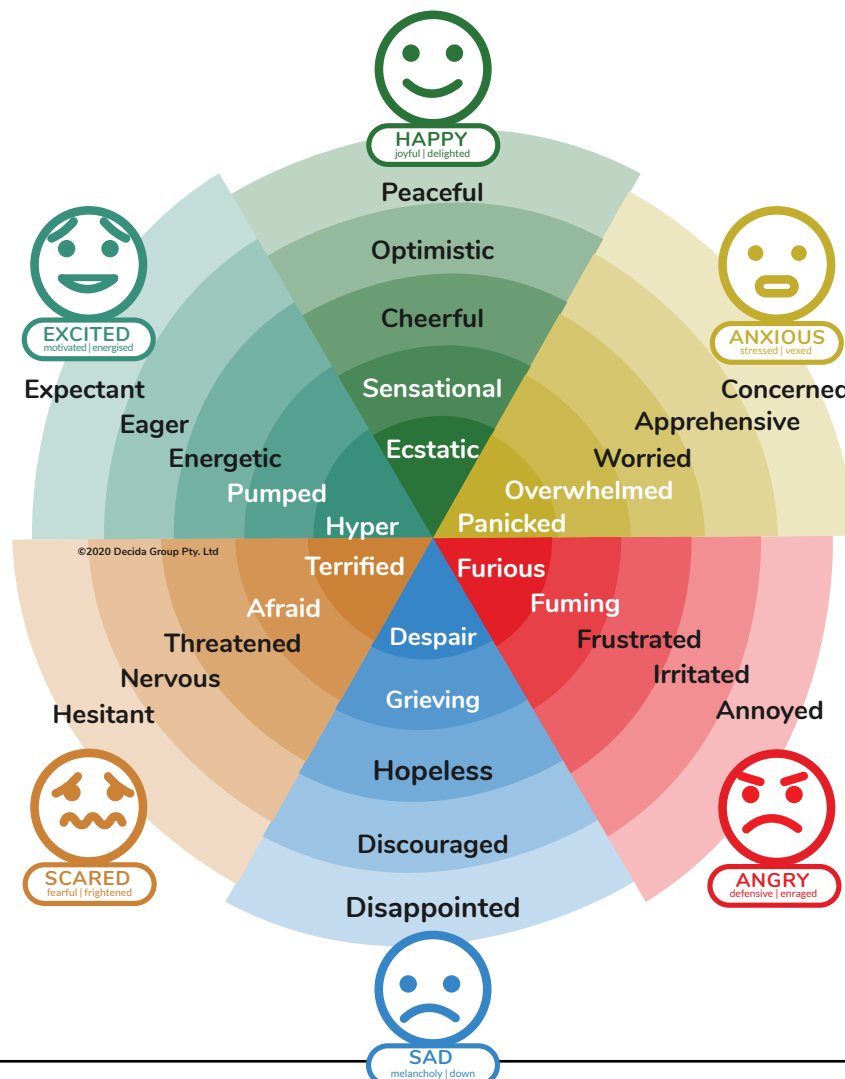
myself into the students shoes, imagining and feeling what they might be experiencing, based largely on my own experience. We had breakthroughs, there were tears, there was revelation, we made a plan and the student left the room feeling a little more secure, hopeful and whole than before. A big win!

The second student arrived right on time and we also had an amazing session. I built rapport, they shared, I dug deep to put myself in their shoes, we had breakthroughs and made a plan. Another big win—two out of two! But I did notice that I was considerably more drained.

By the time the third and fourth session came and went with high-fives and active plans, I was utterly fatigued. And I had eight more sessions to go! By the time I finished the twelfth session I was way past the point of complete and total exhaustion. I remember staggering to my car and just sitting in the front seat for about an hour. Too shattered to even drive. This was a tragedy - this was day one! How was I going to survive doing this for the rest of my working life if I can hardly survive one day??

In somewhat of a panic, I rang my supervising psychologist and told him of my predicament. He laughed and said “You need to practice cognitive empathy, not experiential empathy! Learn to do that and you’ll be fine.”

Seven years of study and not one mention of this thing called cognitive empathy. Never. The one tool I really needed to survive as a psychologist. Typical.



The basic principle of cognitive empathy is this – people don't need you to feel what they are feeling to connect with them, they just need to know you've heard and understood how they are feeling, and why they are feeling that way. That's all we ever really want as humans, to be heard and understood. In reality we can't possibly know what others are actually feeling and experiencing, we aren't in their head. So why waste so much energy trying to conjure up our own emotions linked to our experiences if they are guaranteed to be an inaccurate match?

So let's take a closer look at what cognitive empathy is, and the Switch Emotion Wheel™® is a good place to start. If someone is experiencing a high arousal of an emotion, try talking about the thing they are emotional about with a word that sits in the same family of emotions they are experiencing. For instance, if someone is furious with their partner for not pulling their weight around the house, then talk about being annoyed when people we care about don't show the same respect for things that we do. Or, how frustrating it is when people keep messing up a place that we're trying to keep tidy. Here I have not conjured up a personal experience, I have simply articulated an emotion related to what they are feeling and the thing that is triggering the emotions. They feel heard and understood. I haven't had to feel anything, have expelled no energy, and have connected deeply with them. Cognitive empathy.

There are two key things to keep in mind.

Firstly, creating connection is not about you and your emotions and experiences, it's about them. When the other person is feeling high arousal, they don't need or want you to try and feel what they are feeling. In fact, this can often be counter productive as this can make the other person feel like they need to help manage your emotions. They just need to know you can see and understand *their* emotion, in this moment your feelings should be irrelevant.

Secondly, you need to articulate accurately what has triggered their pain. It's not good enough to say, "I can see that you're frustrated". You need to let them know you know what they are frustrated about. If you get this wrong, then they will let you know, and they will want to keep correcting you until you get it right. You need to identify the emotion they are feeling *and* what they are emotional about.

As an exercise, think of someone you are close to and imagine they are furious at you for something you did. The worst thing you can do is say "I just think you should calm down." This will not end well for you. Why? Because you've basically said that you're not listening, which will usually cause the emotion to get more intense in order to be heard. You are much better to say, "It annoys me when I do [insert trigger action] as well, I can see how it is infuriating for you." They will still be angry, but the anger will have dialed down to irritation, and you'll still have a relationship.

It's also worth noting that it is hard to use cognitive empathy if you yourself are triggered. You need to put your own mask on first before you help others. Cognitive empathy requires a clear and open mind.

Using language as a path to cognitive empathy, you can now have deep and connected conversations all day long without it draining your energy. Identify the emotion (using language) + the thing that is triggering emotion. Connecting through cognitive empathy.

A Motivation Map

using the Switch Emotion Wheel™: PART B

Motivation

/,məʊti'veɪʃn/

noun

PSYCHOLOGY

1. A reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way.
2. The driving force behind human actions.
3. The process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviours.

While the Switch Emotion Wheel™ is regularly used to understand (language of emotion) and connect (cognitive empathy), people often fail to use it to help better understand motivation. The whole reason we have emotions are to move us toward (motivate) an action, so it stands to reason that we should be able to use the wheel as a map of motivation.

By looking at the different families of motivation we can easily see how each emotion is often used.

We use fear of immediate danger and threatening statements to **scare** people into action. “If you don’t do this right now, I’ll take away [insert something the person wants]!” Or, “Do what I want you to do or I’ll [insert something the person does not want]!”

We use fear of the future (**anxiety**) to panic people into action. “You had better study for that exam, because if you don’t you might not get into the university degree you want.” Or “You’d better get a job or you’ll just end up wasting your life away!” Or, “It’s a climate catastrophe, If we don’t act now the planet is doomed!”

We use **anger**, often through perceived injustice to incense people into action. “It’s not fair, they don’t care about you, look at all the wrong things they are doing! Vote for me and I’ll make thing fair again!” Or, “Hey, look at that person who has jumped the queue! We’ve been waiting for hours – let’s protest!” Or, “The system’s stacked against us, join our group and we’ll fight for a more just system!”

We use **excitement** to inspire wonder, curiosity and enthuse them into action. “Look how amazing the universe and all the natural wonders are, I wonder if we could all do better to look after our natural environment?” Or, “Saturday’s big game is going to be an incredible spectacle, not seen ever before, the game of the century so get tickets now!” Or, “When we win the whole crowd is going to erupt with joy, so lets give them something to cheer about!”

We use **sadness** and the avoidance of falling short of someone’s expectations to disappoint them into action. “I cannot believe you are even thinking about doing [insert poor behaviour]. I expected better from you, I’m so disappointed.” Or “Was that really you’re best effort? Do

you think you've let yourself down by not putting in 100%?"

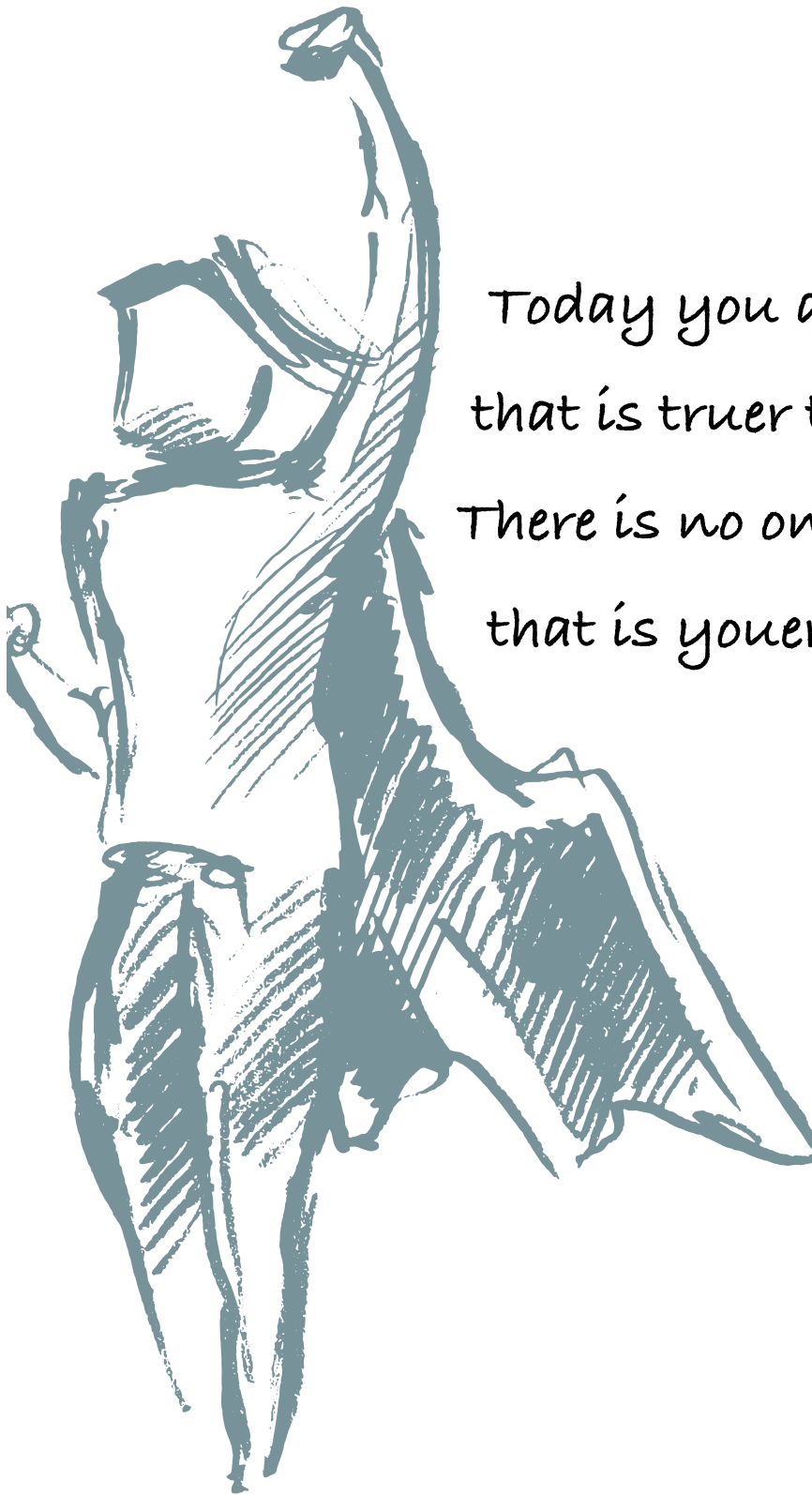
We use **happiness** to encourage people in their strengths and give them confidence to achieve things previously thought impossible. "That was a really good effort, congratulations! Let's give it one more try and see if we can do any better!" Or, "I see real potential in you, all you need to do is step into what you are capable of and you'll really shake things up!"

As you can see, there are many ways we can use different emotions to motivate people. The problem is that we often only use the emotions that work to motivate ourselves, and forget that others may be better motivated through other emotions. All emotions have their place and can all be used in good and bad ways. Remember, emotions are not good or bad, they just are. It's how and what we choose to do with them that makes them either moral or immoral.

Skillfully dialing up emotion to an appropriate level is the key to motivation.

Similar to empathy, when motivating someone it's important to remember that it's not about your emotion, it's about theirs. For instance, using anger is not the same as being angry. Being angry often makes others scared, so you are actually using fear to motivate rather than anger. Putting your feelings aside and choosing the appropriate emotion to dial up is the key. If you're having trouble motivating someone, try intentionally using a different emotional lever and see if it changes anything. Don't simply rely on the emotion that would motivate you, think outside your own experience to find a better, more empowering solution.





Today you are you
that is truer than true.
There is no one alive
that is youer than you

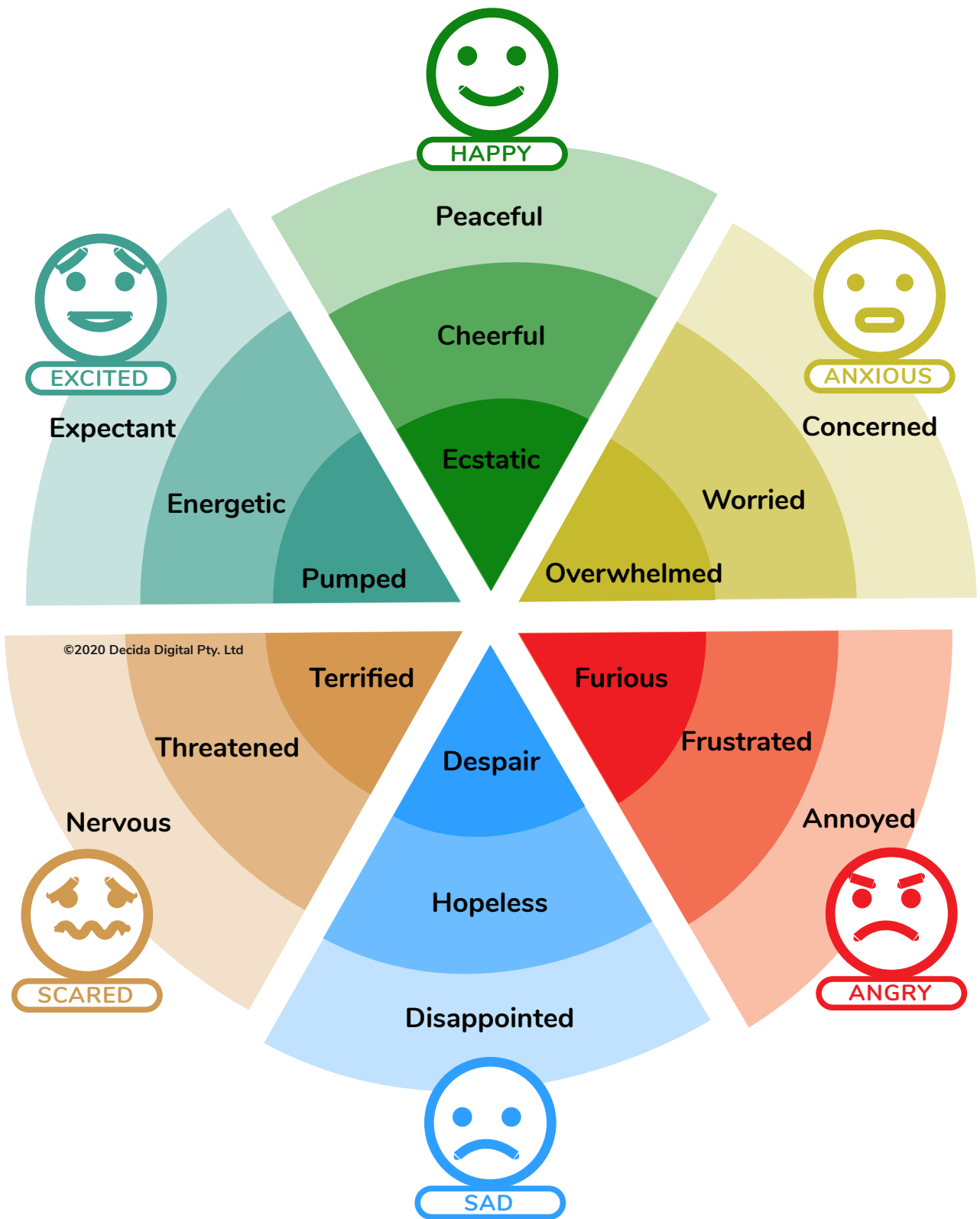
-Dr. Seuss

A Final Word

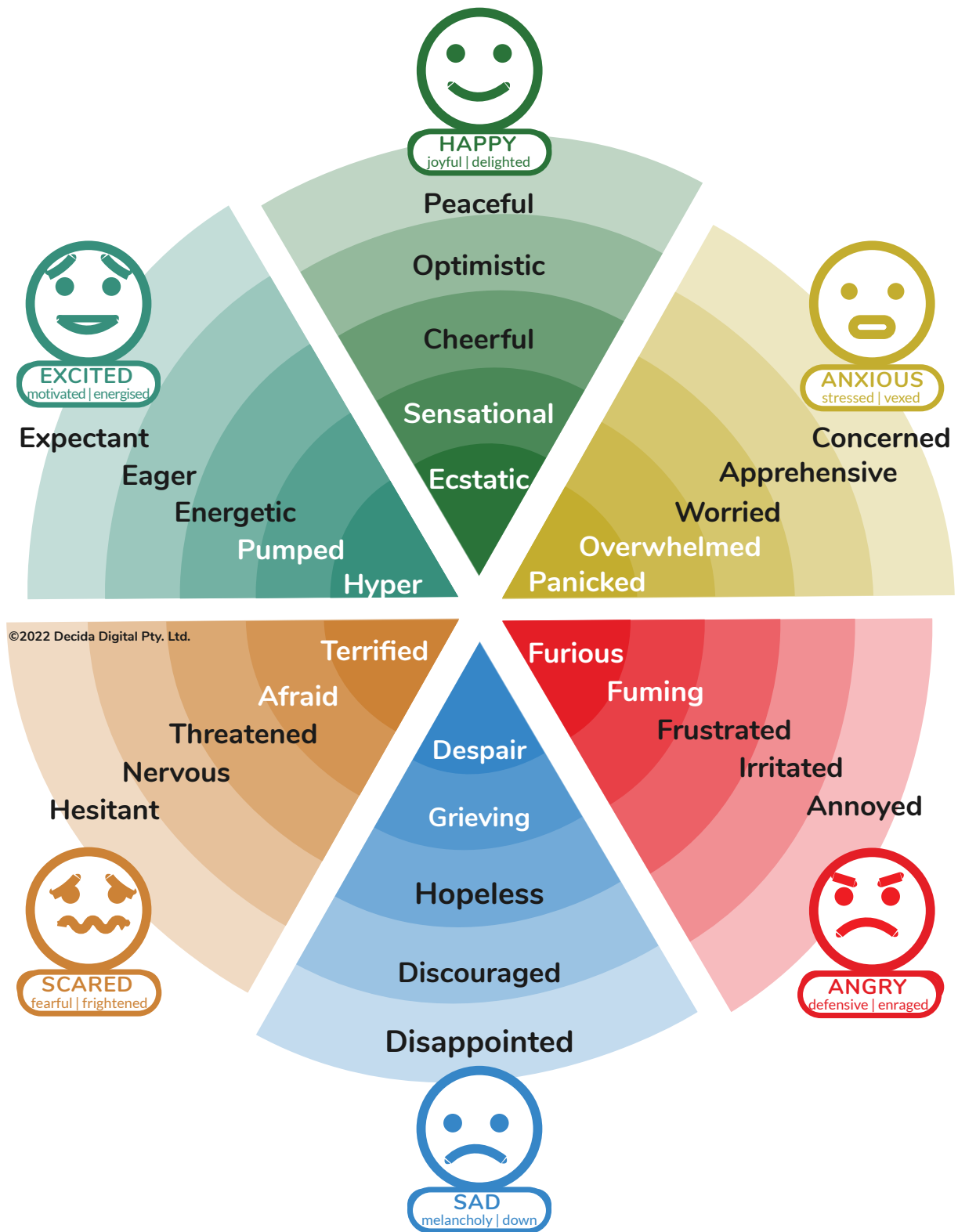
Emotions are wonderful things that help us be better humans and more successful at life. If this Little Book of Big Emotions has helped you rethink the way you think about emotion, that is brilliant! Don't keep it to yourself! Share this little book with as many people as you can, spread the word so we'll all be a little better at understanding and managing our emotions, and all work together to make life just a little bit better for everyone.

Thank you for taking the time to read and be curious.

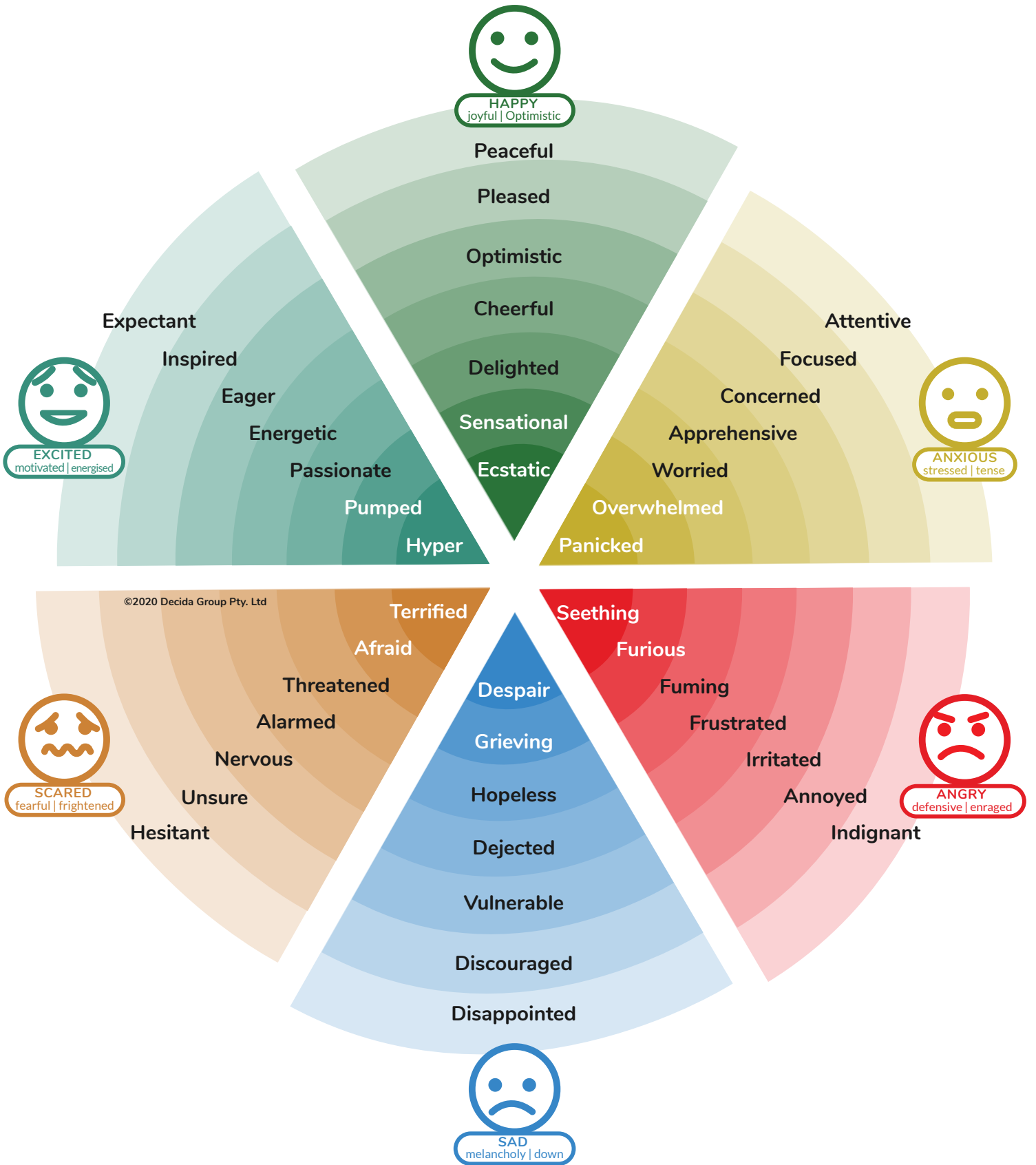




The Switch 3-level Emotion Wheel™®



The Switch 5-level Emotion Wheel™



The Switch 7-level Emotion Wheel™®

A simple, proven digital tool that helps teachers monitor and manage emotion in the classroom, and build social and emotional intelligence.



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The little book of **BIG** EMOTIONS



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

P sychologist, behavioural economist, award-winning musician, author, co-founder of Decida and creator of Switch4Schools, Phil makes psychology simple, interesting and fun. Through his monthly columns in magazines, regular commentary in the media and extensive work in schools and organisations, Phil inspires people to become less reactive and more responsive. His humour, casual approach and unique background help people to master their own choices, and design their own destiny.

Change yourself.
Change the world.