PRINTABLE TOOLKIT

Putting Your Experience Into Words

An emotion wheel, a needs map, and guideposts for choosing what comes next.

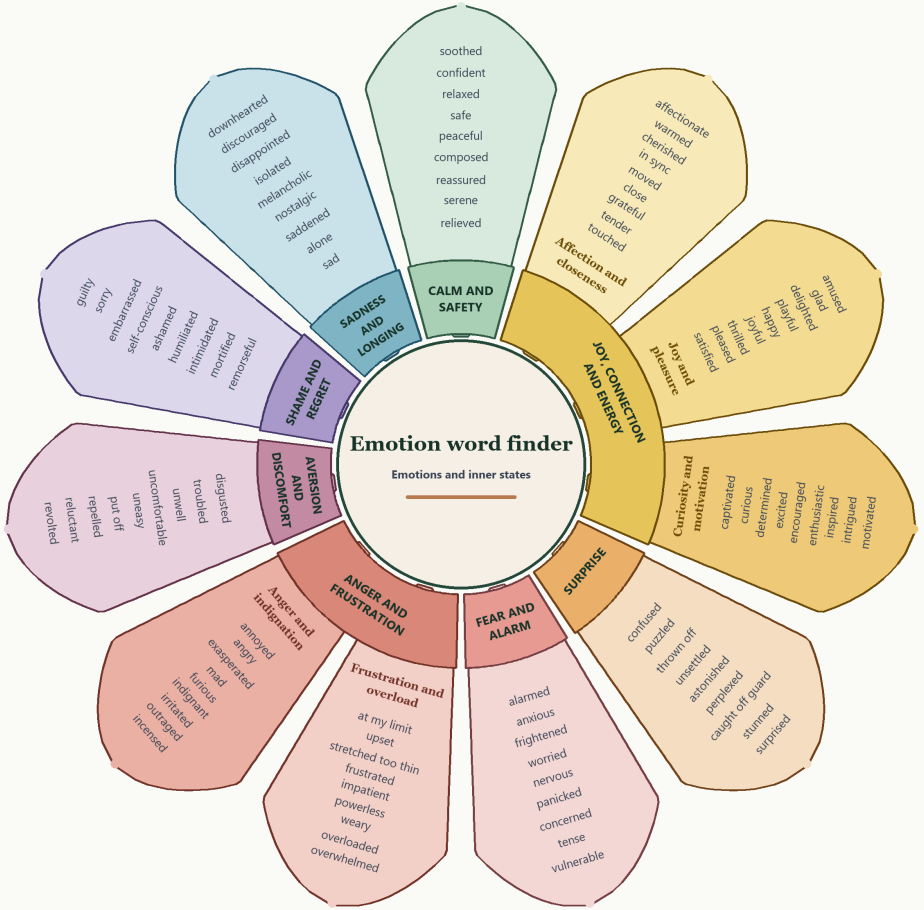
This toolkit invites you to observe a situation, try out words, and consider a realistic next step. You can move at your own pace, skip a step, or stop at ‘I don’t know yet.’

1 Situation → 2 Clues → 3 Emotions → 4 Needs → 5 Next step

Printable edition · November 2026 · Original tool created by Judy Turcotte, S.W.

Emotion Word Finder: Emotions and Inner States

Begin with a broad family, then choose one or two words that come close to your experience. The words may overlap or remain approximate.



The order and colours help with identification by reflecting similarities between affective states. They are not a universal classification and do not indicate the intensity or value of an experience.

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Larger wheel and accessible linear version: judyturcotte.com/en/emotion-identification-wheel

Needs Map: Explore What Matters

What matters to you in this situation? What is missing, seems threatened, or deserves to be protected?

Choose one or two possible needs. The groups may overlap and do not represent a hierarchy of priorities.

Finding some breathing room

- Rest
- Respite
- Personal space
- A sustainable pace

Relying on a more stable daily life

- Safety
- Predictability
- Sufficient resources
- Suitable living conditions

Finding your place with others

- Presence
- Belonging
- Consideration
- Reciprocity

Having a say

- Choice
- Room to manoeuvre
- Participation in decisions
- Respect for your limits

Seeing things more clearly

- Information
- Points of reference
- Understanding
- Coherence

Receiving support for what you carry

- Listening
- Practical help
- Shared responsibilities
- Recognition of your efforts

Making room for what matters to you

- Enjoyment
- Learning
- Creativity
- Contribution

One need can have several possible responses.

‘I need some respite’ leaves room for different possibilities. ‘I need this person to handle every task’ already describes a specific response.

Keep in mind

One emotion can invite you to explore several needs. Recognizing a need does not mean one specific person must meet it. Some needs call for resources, services, or changes in the environment.

Observe a Situation

Choose a recent situation that feels manageable enough to revisit. You may answer in a few words, skip a question, or return later.

1 The situation

What happened, concretely?

Describe one specific moment without immediately explaining the other person's intention.

2 The clues

What do I notice?

A recurring thought, a body sensation, an urge to act, or a reaction.

3 Possible emotions

Which words come close to my experience?

Choose one or two words from the wheel, add your own, or write 'I don't know yet.'

Explore Needs and What Comes Next

4 Possible needs

What matters to me here?

What is missing, seems threatened, or deserves to be protected? Keep your answers as possibilities to explore.

Is this need receiving little, some, or enough space right now?

5 A realistic next step

What small step could I consider?

An action within your reach, a request, a resource to look for, a limit, or time to pause.

What could help me

What could make this step harder

Bring your answers together

When [the concrete situation], I notice [a thought, sensation, or reaction]. I may feel [one or two words from the wheel]. I may need [one or two words from the map]. As a next step, I could [one realistic small step].

You may leave some parts aside. This sentence does not have to be recited or shared.

Entirely Fictional Examples

These examples illustrate one possible process. They do not prove another person's intention or guarantee an agreement.

When responsibilities pile up

Situation : For three evenings, dinner and cleanup have fallen to me after work

Clues : I sigh, answer sharply, and think I cannot manage again tonight

Emotions : Irritation, discouragement

Needs : Respite, shared responsibilities

Next step : Simplify dinner, then suggest reviewing the week's tasks together

When loved ones are far away

Situation : Since moving, I speak with loved ones but often spend evenings alone

Clues : I wait for replies and want to share the small details of my day

Emotions : Sadness, disappointment

Needs : Presence, belonging

Next step : Suggest a call or look for a local activity that interests me

When something feels good

Situation : A teacher thanks me for contributing to a team project

Clues : I smile and want to continue the project

Emotions : Joy, pride, relief

Needs met : Recognition of effort, contribution

Next step : Take in the feedback and note what makes the collaboration satisfying

The limits of these tools

- The suggested words cannot cover every experience; your vocabulary, culture, and context matter.
- One emotion may accompany several needs, and the same need may be associated with different emotions.
- An emotion does not prove another person's intention.
- Recognizing a need does not mean one specific person must meet it.
- Some needs call for resources, services, or changes in the environment.
- You may stop the exercise if it becomes uncomfortable and seek support.

This toolkit offers general information; it is not a test, diagnosis, or assessment of your situation.

Judy Turcotte, T.S.