

→ WHERE TO START ← TOOLKIT



WORD BANK: WHAT'S UNDERNEATH?

When asked about their feelings, most people will usually say they feel: bad, sad, mad, good, or fine. But underneath “good, bad, sad, mad, or fine” are many words that better describe how we feel. Taking the time to slow down and identify what we are really experiencing can help us feel better and can improve our communication and relationships with others.

Once you identify what you're really feeling, it might give you insight into how to ask for what you really need. For example: “I feel mad. But what I'm feeling deep down is offended, humiliated, and powerless. What I need because I feel offended is for you to listen to me explain why and say that you're sorry.”

FEELINGS LIST (POSITIVE EMOTIONS)

Admiration

Adoration, Affection, Appreciation, Delight, Fondness, Pleasure, Wonder, Regard, Amazed, Amused

Affectionate

Caring, Friendly, Loving, Sympathetic, Warm, Doting, Soft, Tender, Attached, Compassionate

Confident

Bold, Courageous, Positive, Sure, Fearless, Optimistic, Encouraged, Safe, Powerful, Proud, Satisfied, Trusting, Secure, Brave, Empowered

Excited

Enthusiastic, Delighted, Amazed, Passionate, Amused, Aroused, Alert, Piqued, Astonished, Dazzled, Energetic, Awakened, Eager, Charged

Exhilarated

Blissful, Ecstatic, Elated, Enthralled, Exuberant, Radiant, Rapturous, Thrilled

Gratitude

Thankful, Grateful, Moved, Touched, Appreciative, Graceful, Responsive, Recognized, Indebtedness

Included

Engaged, Understood, Appreciated, Accepted, Acknowledged, Affirmed, Recognized, Welcomed, Connected, Supported, Belonging, Heard, Respected, Involved

Intrigued

Absorbed, Fascinated, Interested, Charmed, Entertained, Captivated, Engaged, Engrossed, Curious, Surprised

Joyful

Cheerful, Festive, Heartening, Lighthearted, Upbeat, Glad, Merry, Elated, Enjoyable, Euphoria, Delighted, Jubilant, Hopeful, Tickled, Pleased

Peaceful

Calm, Quiet, Trusting, Fulfilled, Harmonious, Steady, Collected, Composed, Comfortable, Centered, Content, Relieved, Constant, Mellow, Level, Restful, Still, At ease, Satisfied, Relaxed, Clear, Reassured

Refreshed

Stimulated, Replenished, Exhilarated, Reinvigorated, Revived, Enlivened, Restored, Liberated, Lively, Passionate, Vibrant, Rested

FEELINGS LIST (NEGATIVE EMOTIONS)

Afraid

Nervous, Dread, Frightened, Cowardly, Terrified, Alarmed, Panicked, Suspicious, Worried, Apprehensive

Agitated

Bothered, Disoriented, Uncomfortable, Uneasy, Frenzied, Irritable, Rash, Offended, Disturbed, Troubled, Grumpy, Unsettled, Unnerved, Restless, Upset

Angry

Furious, Livid, Irate, Resentful, Hate, Hostile, Aggressive, Worked up, Provoked, Miffed, Outrage, Defensive

Annoyed

Irritated, Frustrated, Bothered, Impatient, Aggravated, Displeased, Exasperated, Disgruntled, Disturbed, Irked

Anxious

Shaky, Distressed, Distraught, Edgy, Fidgety, Frazzled, Irritable, Jittery, Overwhelmed, Restless, Stressed, Preoccupied, Flustered

Confused

Lost, Disoriented, Puzzled, Chaotic, Uncertain, Stuck, Indecisive, Foggy, Mistrust, Dazed, Baffled, Flustered, Perturbed, Perplexed, Hesitant, Immobilized, Ambivalent, Torn

Disconnected

Lonely, Isolated, Bored, Distant, Removed, Detached, Separate, Broken, Cold, Aloof, Numb, Withdrawn, Rejected, Out-of-place, Apathetic, Indifferent, Misunderstood, Abandoned, Alienated

Disgust

Appalled, Horrified, Dislike, Loathing, Disturbed, Repugnant, Contempt, Spiteful, Animosity, Hostile, Bitter

Disorganized

Distracted, Disheveled, Bedraggled, Run-down, Confused, Discombobulated, Disjointed, Displaced, Jumbled, Out of sorts

Embarrassed

Awkward, Self-conscious, Silly, Mortified, Humiliated, Flustered, Chagrined, Ashamed, Put down, Guilty, Disgraced

Envy

Jealous, Rivalry, Competitive, Covetous, Resentful, Longing, Self-conscious, Insecure, Inadequate, Yearning, Nostalgic, Wistful

Helpless

Paralyzed, Weak, Defenseless, Powerless, Invalid, Abandoned, Alone, Incapable, Useless, Inferior, Vulnerable, Empty, Distressed

Pain

Hurt, Remorseful, Regretful, Disappointed, Guilty, Grief, Bereaved, Miserable, Agony, Anguish, Bruised, Crushed, Wounded

Sadness

Heartbroken, Disappointed, Hopeless, Regretful, Depressed, Pessimistic, Melancholy, Sorrowful, Morbid, Heavy-hearted, Low, Blue, Gloomy, Miserable, Despair

Stress

Tension, Pressure, Overwhelmed, Frazzled, Strain, Imbalanced, Worried, Uneasy, Cranky, Distraught, Dissatisfied, Weighed down, Overworked, Pounded, Anxious, Shocked, Frustrated

Tired

Bored, Fatigued, Exhausted, Uninterested, Overworked, Worn out, Fed up, Drained, Weary, Burned out, Lethargic, Beat, Sleepy, Depleted

Vulnerable

Insecure, Shaky, Open, Unsure, Exposed, Unguarded, Sensitive, Unsafe, Inferior, Raw, Weak, Judged, Inadequate

LETTER: TIME TO TALK

Starting conversations about mental health can be scary and you might be unsure about how to start. Use the letter below and fill in the blanks to figure out what you want to say. You can pick from the options we've listed or use your own words. Once you're finished, you can send (or email) the letter, turn the letter into a series of texts, or have it with you to guide a face-to-face talk.

Dear _____,

For the past (*day/week/month/year/_____*), **I have been feeling** (*unlike myself/sad/angry/anxious/moody/agitated/lonely/hopeless/fearful/overwhelmed/distracted/confused/stressed/empty/restless/unable to function or get out of bed/_____*).

I have struggled with (*changes in appetite/changes in weight/loss of interest in things I used to enjoy/hearing things that were not there/seeing things that were not there/feeling unsure if things are real or not real/my brain playing tricks on me/lack of energy/increased energy/inability to concentrate/alcohol or drug use or abuse/self-harm/skipping meals/overeating/overwhelming focus on weight or appearance/feeling worthless/uncontrollable thoughts/guilt/paranoia/nightmares/bullying/not sleeping enough/sleeping too much/risky sexual behavior/overwhelming sadness/losing friends/unhealthy friendships/unexplained anger or rage/isolation/feeling detached from my body/feeling out of control/thoughts of self-harm/cutting/thoughts of suicide/plans of suicide/abuse/sexual assault/death of a loved one/_____*).

Telling you this makes me feel (*nervous/anxious/hopeful/embarrassed/empowered/pro-active/mature/self-conscious/guilty/_____*), **but I'm telling you this because** (*I'm worried about myself/it is impacting my ability to function at school or work/it is impacting my friendships/I am afraid/I don't want to feel like this/I don't know what to do/I don't have anyone else to talk to about this/I trust you/_____*).

I would like to (*tell my family/talk to a doctor or therapist/talk to a guidance counselor/talk to my teachers/tell my boss/talk about this later/create a plan to get better/talk about this more/find a support group/_____*) and I need your help.

Sincerely,

(Your name _____)

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WORKSHEET: DEALING WITH TOUGH SITUATIONS

We will all be in tough situations at some point in our lives. It can be helpful to think through these situations to figure out what we can change and how to go about it. This worksheet can help you through this process. Be sure to start a new sheet for each different situation that you want to tackle.

What is the situation that is troubling you or stressing you out?

What about this situation can you change?

Whom can you ask for help to change it, and what do you want them to do?

While you can't always control your feelings or emotions, you can challenge your own thoughts and change your own actions. You also can't change what has already happened or other people's thoughts or behaviors. As hard as it is, sometimes we have to accept what we can't control or change and make a plan to deal with those situations.

What about this situation are you NOT able to change?

What do you need to hear to feel better?

WORKSHEET: LOOKING FOR GOOD

Changing the way we see negative situations, reframing common negative thoughts, and practicing gratitude have been shown to reduce sadness and anxiety. This worksheet walks you through different ways to rethink situations or thoughts.

What is the situation you are facing that makes you feel bad? Or what is a common negative thought you struggle with?

REFRAME

Even though the situation is hard, is there something you have learned from it or some other silver lining? If you could go back and change the original thought, what's a healthier thing you can say to yourself? *For instance, if you've just lost a loved one after they have been extremely sick, does it feel healthier to think about their death as an end to their pain?*

GRATITUDE

Are there other things going on in your life that you are thankful for? *This doesn't have to be related to the situation above. For instance, you can be thankful for your good health, having a stable home to live in, or a recent promotion at work.*

REMINDE YOURSELF

How can you reinforce your reframed thoughts and remind yourself of what you are thankful for? Make a list of ways. *Example: Copy what you've written above onto post-it notes and stick them in places around your house as visual reminders.*

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WORKSHEET: MANAGING FRUSTRATION AND ANGER

Anger and frustration are both common emotional responses that everyone faces. However, if these feelings become too intense, they can lead to both mental and physical distress, and cause problems in relationships. This worksheet can help you identify the emotions and thoughts behind your anger and frustration, and help you determine what you need to feel better.

Describe the event and identify specific things someone said or did that brought on your anger or frustration.

List out any emotions that were underlying your feelings of frustration or anger. *For a list of emotions, see the Word Bank: What's Underneath tool.*

What parts of the description above are focused on facts, actions, or behaviors (and not a judgment or opinion)? Write it down.

Take some time to think about what needs to happen for you to feel better (less angry). Focus on what you can do and what you need someone else to do.

What about this situation are you NOT able to change?

What do you need to hear to feel better?

The next time you feel angry or frustrated, walk yourself through these same steps to help you process your feelings. Ask yourself these questions:

What happened? → What do I feel? → What do I need?

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WORKSHEET: PROCESSING TRAUMA AND STRESS

After a traumatic experience, it can be helpful to get your thoughts outside of your head. Writing down your experiences can help you gain perspective about your situation and help to reduce how distressing they are.

Use the lines below to jot down anything that comes to mind related to your traumatic experiences.

When you've experienced multiple traumatic experiences, or carried trauma for a long time, it can shape the way you see yourself, the world, and others. These changes in beliefs are there to protect you from future harm, even when threats are gone. They can change the way you relate to others, whether or how you take risks, or how you feel positively about yourself.

How have your traumatic experiences shaped the way you see:

Yourself?

Others?

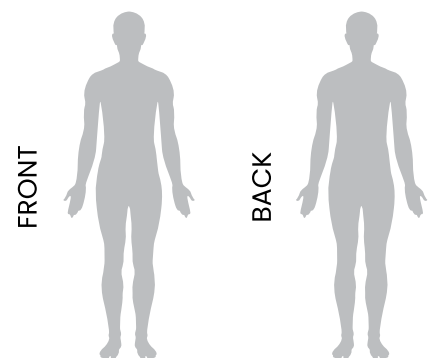
The World?

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Reflecting on your writing experience above, do you notice how your body has changed in response to your feelings?

Feelings

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WORKSHEET: SOCIAL CONFIDENCE AND CONNECTIONS

At some point, pretty much everyone struggles with feeling alone, insecure, or like they just don't fit in. Use this worksheet to think through what kind of connections are important to you and how you can make sure you have them in your life.

EXPLORING CURRENT CONNECTIONS

What are times you have felt connected? Were you with certain people, doing a certain activity, or in a certain location?

What are some things you are proud of yourself for doing in the past to create a stronger sense of belonging?

Are there friends, loved ones, or pets in your life who make you feel understood? What makes those relationships feel good?

Connection looks different for everybody. What are some experiences or groups that made you feel like you belonged?

EXPLORING NEW CONNECTIONS

Comparing your social life to others' can make you feel more alone or insecure. Let's try looking at this with a different lens.

Regardless of what you see in others' lives, what kind of social life do you want?

What makes a quality friendship?

How would you like to spend your time?

When you look at your thoughts around feeling connected, do you notice any patterns? What are they?

Are there opportunities to get connected, like a program in your community that you can get involved with?

SETTING GOALS

Think about how you described connection in the section above. Based on that, what is one goal you can set to make your social life feel better?

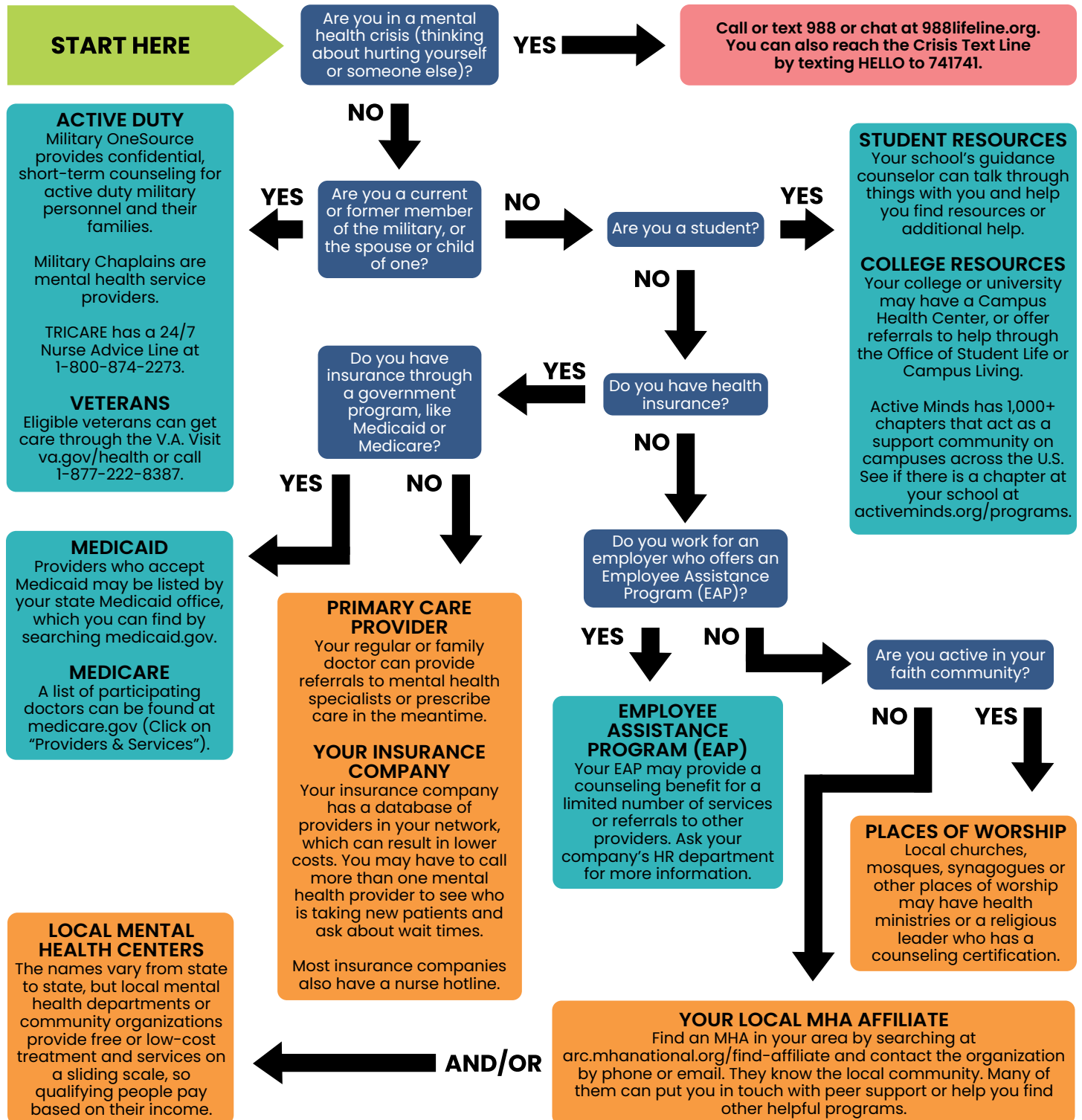
What are three steps you can take to meet that goal?

Picture yourself in a year. What would future you look back and be proud of you for doing to create a stronger sense of belonging?

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DECISION MAP: WHERE TO GO

When you've decided to seek help, knowing what resources are available and where to start can be tricky. Use this decision map to help you figure out your options. If you don't find help where a path ends, try any of the resources in the gold boxes.



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Mental Health America has partnered with Happy Color this Mental Health Month to advance mental health awareness through art. [Download the app](#) to find a special collection of color-by-number pictures and spark mindfulness as you care for yourself and others.



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