

FEELING GOOD ABOUT YOU

THE JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY
THAT LEADS TO SELF-ESTEEM



Module 4 – Worksheet 1

Feelings

“Feelings are everywhere -- be gentle.” [Masai. J](#)

Feelings are a normal, healthy, vital part of being human. All people are capable of feeling and expressing emotion, although for various reasons many may choose to suppress this vital aspect of who they are. Feelings tell us what we value, what we like, what we perceive is happening, what is important, and what we think is fair. All people, including you, have feelings and these feelings are vital to your emotional growth and maturation and reflect your self-esteem.

Unfortunately, in American society there are a lot of rules and "shoulds" about feelings. Little boys are taught that "men don't cry; be strong; don't show any weakness," etc. Consequently, American males often turn all hurt, fear, or insecurity into anger (which society says is acceptable for men to express). Little girls, on the other hand, are encouraged to cry and act weak or afraid, but are discouraged from feeling and acting strong, self-confident, assertive or angry. These emotions are considered to be unfeminine.

At some point in your life you were probably told you "should" or "should not" feel some particular way. Whether or not you actually felt that way was irrelevant! You weren't "supposed to," so you were taught to suppress and ignore it.

When you were told to discount or ignore what you knew very well was happening inside you, you may have begun to be confused and started to doubt yourself. After all, if the adults or authority figures in your life were telling you one thing, and you felt another, you probably decided to believe them (since they were in charge) and not trust yourself or what you knew.

The reality is that *all feelings are normal and OK, for both women and men*, and that whatever you feel is fine and is your right. Nobody can ever tell you what to feel or not feel, because there is no such thing as appropriate feelings. Whatever you feel in response to a situation is just fine.

It's important for you to know that feelings follow thoughts (see section on Self-talk) and it is possible for you to change your mood and emotions by changing your thinking.

Also, know that feelings and actions do not always have to go together! It's appropriate and important to feel any way you wish in any situation, but it is not appropriate to act any way you wish. Once you act, you are imposing your feelings on others and forcing them to deal with your emotions. For example, young parents may be dealing with a baby who has been teething, and crying for three nights in a row. Consequently, they are exhausted, frustrated, angry, and desperate to get some sleep. They may also feel insecure and inadequate about their parenting skills, and wish to give that baby away to the first person who walks by. Anything to achieve the peace, quiet and rest they so desperately need. Of course, even though they may feel this way, they do not actually act on these feelings by giving the child away.

If you were raised in a family that has a lot of expectations about feelings, you may have been taught to ignore your feelings, and have done this for so long that you are no longer aware of what emotions you may be experiencing.

Exercise: Feelings

The following exercise is designed to help you become reacquainted with some common feeling words, and to look at when these emotions may fit into your life.

In the list below, check the words that describe feelings you have experienced in the past, and then identify the situations associated with this feeling. If there are any emotions that you were taught it was NOT OK to feel, write about your expectations regarding these feelings.

FEELING

SITUATION/EXPECTATIONS

Happy

Sad

Angry

Depressed

Hurt

Rejected

Afraid

Lonely

Silly

Envious/Jealous

Powerless

Ignored

Abandoned

Worthless

Proud

Stupid

Excited

Helpless

Devastated

Embarrassed

Confident

Strong

Betrayed

Other

Reflections on Feelings

- Feelings tell you what is important to you.
- The "shoulds" you were taught as a child may often interfere with your true feelings.
- All feelings are healthy and normal
- Feelings follow thoughts.
- Feelings and actions do not always have to go together.
- You can control your feelings by being in charge of your self-talk.