

DO Therapy

What Am I Actually Feeling?

Sometimes we know something is happening internally before we know exactly what it is.

We may say we're **stressed, frustrated, annoyed, tired, fine, or just not in the mood**. Those words may be accurate but sometimes they're only the first layer.

Getting more specific about what you're experiencing can make it easier to understand yourself and communicate what is happening to someone else.

The goal isn't to become more emotional. It's to become **more aware of the information your emotions may be giving you**.

NOTICE

Think about a recent moment when you reacted, withdrew, became irritated, shut down, got defensive, or simply felt **off**.

Start with what you know. **What happened? What did you notice in your body?**

Maybe:

- Tension
- Pressure
- Restlessness
- Tight chest
- Heavy feeling
- Racing thoughts
- Low energy
- Wanting to leave
- Wanting to shut down
- Wanting to argue

Now ask: **“If I had to get more specific than stressed, frustrated, upset, or fine what might I actually be feeling?”**

Maybe:

- Disappointed
- Worried
- Embarrassed
- Overwhelmed
- Rejected
- Unappreciated
- Lonely
- Inadequate
- Uncertain
- Hurt
- Afraid
- Jealous
- Ashamed
- Disconnected

You don't need to find the perfect word.

Try to get **closer**.

REVIEW THE GAME TAPE

Now look underneath the emotion.

Ask: **“What seems important to me here?”**

Maybe you wanted:

- Respect
- Reassurance
- Fairness
- Appreciation
- Competence
- Belonging
- Connection
- Acceptance
- To feel wanted
- Autonomy
- Affection
- To feel understood

For example:

- **What happened:** My partner questioned something I did.
- **First reaction:** Irritated.
- **Look underneath:** Defensive → embarrassed → worried I disappointed them.
- **What matters:** I want my partner to see me as capable and dependable.

The irritation wasn't necessarily wrong. It just wasn't the **whole story**.

Ask: **“If my reaction makes sense, what might be underneath it?”**

PRACTICE

Take what you discovered and put it into one simple statement.

Try: **“When _____ happened, I noticed I felt _____. I think part of what mattered to me was _____.”**

You don't need a speech. You don't need to explain everything. You are practicing making something internal **visible enough for another person to understand**.

Instead of: “I'm fine.”

- Try: **“I'm disappointed. I was really hoping that would work out.”**

Instead of: “I'm just pissed off.”

- Try: **“I'm frustrated, but underneath that I think I'm feeling unappreciated.”**

Instead of: “I don't want to talk about it.”

- Try: **“I'm overwhelmed and I don't know what I think yet. I need a little time before I can talk about it.”**

The goal isn't perfect emotional language. The goal is to give yourself and your partner **better information**.

BUILD REPS

You may not recognize what you're feeling immediately. That's okay.

Build the habit of checking again.

Notice:

- What emotions are easiest for me to identify?
- Which ones are harder?
- Do I tend to call several different emotions “stress” or “frustration”?

- What happens in my body before I recognize the emotion?
- What do I tend to do when certain emotions show up?
- Does getting more specific change what I want to do next?
- Does my partner understand me differently when I give them more information?

Over time, try moving from: **“Something is happening.”**

to: **“I know what I'm experiencing.”**

to: **“I can help someone else understand it.”**

WHAT HAPPENED → BODY SIGNAL → EMOTION → WHAT MATTERS → COMMUNICATE

DO Therapy

NOTICE → REVIEW THE GAME TAPE → PRACTICE → BUILD REPS → TEST & LEARN

Notice what's happening. **Review the game tape** with curiosity rather than judgment. Choose something to **practice**. **Build reps** by trying it more than once and noticing what happens. Then **test & learn**—keep what helps, adjust what doesn't, and try again.

The goal isn't to get it right. The goal is to learn from what happens.
