

Describing Feelings and Feeling Words

Feelings are hard to get out because we've been trained to think, rather than feel.

It takes patience and gentle questioning on the part of the spouse to help the partner discover feelings. Don't be discouraged. It may take months of daily dialogue before we begin to recognize the difference between thinking and feeling.

Suggestions for describing feelings

- Describe the feeling from experience - the children, a baseball game, etc.
- Recognize the difference in male and female viewpoints.
- Realize that men usually write less, women write more.
- "Why" does not describe a feeling. It explains the circumstance that causes the feeling. "I feel good because..." is not a description, it's an explanation. "I feel as good as the time you brought me flowers" is a description.
- Sometimes you can identify a feeling by relating the sensation to a particular part of the body, i.e., gut feelings felt in the stomach (nausea, that butterfly feeling): an ache in the throat with longing; pounding heart with fright.

I THINK vs. I FEEL RULE

If you can substitute "I am" for "I feel", you have expressed a feeling.

If you can substitute "I think" for "I feel", you have expressed a thought or a judgment.

Describing Your Feelings

Category	How to rate the feeling	Example(s)
Intensity	Rate the feeling from 1 to 10	"My feeling is a '10' "
Taste	Sour, sweet, bitter, etc.	"I feel bitter, like a sour lemon"
Touch	Scratchy, soft, prickly, etc.	"It has a softness like silk"
Color	Red, blue, etc.	"My anger is red hot"
Sound	High pitched, screech, wail of a siren, crack of thunder.	"It was like the singing birds on a spring morning"
Physical reaction	Sick, chilled, giggling, etc.	"It was like an upset stomach"
Similar past experience	Childbirth, riding a bike, etc.	"It was like the time our child took her first steps."
Nature scene	Beautiful sunset, crashing waves, still forest.	"It has all the colors of a sunset at sea"
An image	Hitting a home run.	"I feel gleeful, like a kid who hit his first home run."