

RULES FOR PLAYING THE FEELINGS GAME

Feelings play an important role in our life. They highly influence our behaviour. That is why it makes sense to understand them. Many people however, have difficulty putting their feelings into words. This game is designed to help people get over this difficulty. The intention of this game is to enable people to discuss the way they experience situations, people or organisations. As a consequence people not only become more aware of their own feelings, but will also get to appreciate other people better.

The World of Feelings Game consists of 140 cards, divided into three groups. There is a blank card in each group, in case you need to make any additions. The groups are:

1. **Pleasant feelings** (symbol: sun; 55 cards).
2. **Unpleasant feelings** (symbol: cloud; 69 cards).
3. **Areas of life** (symbol: rainbow; 16 cards). These are aspects of life that may be of importance to you and that are emotionally loaded, for example: friends, (un)paid work or health.

Remember – what people experience as a pleasant feeling in one context, they may experience as an unpleasant feeling in a different context. The chosen wording is based on the sentence: 'I feel...'.

Within the two groups (pleasant and unpleasant feelings) the cards are divided into two parts. Cards 1-24, in each group, represent those feelings, which are more commonly recognised and more likely to be in every day use (part 1).

The remainder of the cards, (part 2) deal with more complex feelings.

The game allows you to be flexible i.e. to use part 1, part 2 or a combination of both. You are of course free to alter the composition of part 1 and part 2 according to your own liking.

There are three cards within the 'areas of life' cards, that somewhat differ from the rest, namely: past, present and future. By applying these cards you can consider specific phases in your life or your life as a whole.

The separate groups can be applied individually or you can combine them.

The Feelings Game can be applied in various situations such as: teamwork, getting acquainted, evaluation in training courses, career planning, job appraisal and coaching.

Conditions for using *The Feelings Game*

Experience has shown us that *The Feelings Game* can bring significant outcomes for the players. Care should be taken in planning the game and deciding in what context to use it. Particular care is needed with the cards 'unpleasant feelings'. It is required that participants feel safe whilst playing the game. It is also very important to allow sufficient time afterwards, to handle any emotions or issues that have surfaced. Before applying the game, consider if you meet the following conditions:

- You have been a participant in the game so you have experienced what the game can do.
- You must be able to judge which method of play is suited to what situation.

- You are able to lead the game in the right way.

Directions for playing *The Feelings Game*

- In some of the methods of play you may wish to select a subset of cards, fitting to the aimed for situation.
- You may vary the number of cards used.
- People often attach different meanings to the same words, so make sure that the participants agree on the definition of each selected card.

METHODS OF PLAY

1. EXPERIENCING THE ORGANISATION

PURPOSE

Share how everyone experiences the same organisation.

PRIOR CONDITIONS

1. The participants work for the same organisation.
2. Number of participants: 3-12.
3. Necessary: all of the cards 'pleasant feelings' and 'unpleasant feelings'.
4. Estimated playing time: 20-45 min. (depending on the number of players).

METHOD

1. Place all of the cards face up on the table.
2. Every player selects two cards 'pleasant feelings' and two cards 'unpleasant feelings' that reflect the way he experiences the organisation. How should you respond to the unpleasant feelings or: Which strength(s) do you need to bring into action to deal with the unpleasant feelings?.
3. In turn you explain your choices. Your fellow players may ask questions for clarification.
4. Which are the most important differences and similarities between the participants? What conclusion can you draw?

NOTE

1. If you prefer to play with a more limited number of feelings, but still want to include the whole spectrum of feelings, apply the cards 1 –24 (part 1) of both the pleasant and unpleasant feelings.
2. This method can also be applied to focus on a team, rather than a whole organisation.

2. FEELINGS: MORE OR LESS OF

PURPOSE

Become more aware of pleasant and unpleasant feelings and the extent to which you can influence these yourself.

PRIOR CONDITIONS

1. The participants trust one another.
2. Number of participants: 2-5.
3. Necessary: all of the cards 'pleasant feelings' and 'unpleasant feelings' or a selection of these cards i.e. part 1 of both sets.
4. Estimated playing time: 30-60 min. (depending on the number of participants).

METHOD

1. Place all of the cards face up on the table.
2. Select a card with an unpleasant feeling that you would prefer not to experience (if possible).
Write down the answers to the following questions:
 - a. In what kind of situation would you prefer to not experience this feeling (that often)?
 - b. What would you have to do or not do to let this happen?
 - c. Is there someone or something that could help in this? If so, how?
3. Select one card with a pleasant feeling that you would want to experience (more often). Write down the answers to the following questions:
 - a. In what kind of situation(s) would you like to experience this feeling (more often)? Why?
 - b. What would you have to do or not do to let that happen?
 - c. Is there someone or anyone that could help in this? If so, how?
4. Consider if there is a relationship between the two chosen feelings.
5. In turn you pick up the selected cards and share your answers to the questions. Your fellow players can ask questions and give directions on the issue.

3. EVALUATION

PURPOSE

Evaluation of a course or training session.

PRIOR CONDITIONS

1. Number of participants: max. 20.

2. Necessary: all of the cards 'pleasant feelings' and 'unpleasant feelings'.
3. Estimated playing time: 20 min.

METHOD

1. All of the cards are placed face up on the table.
2. Consider a card with a pleasant feeling (if relevant) and a card with an unpleasant feeling (if relevant), that reflect how you experienced the course or training session.
3. In turn you pick up the selected card(s) and explain your choice.

4. FEELINGS AND AREAS OF LIFE

PURPOSE

Become aware of feelings relating to various areas of life.

PRIOR CONDITIONS

1. This method is for individual, rather than group work.
2. Necessary: all of the cards of this game.
3. Estimated playing time: 20-30 min.

METHOD

1. Take all of the cards 'areas of life'. Select min. 4 and max. 7 areas of life that are important to you. Place these cards in a vertical column.
2. Take the cards 'unpleasant feelings' 1-24 (part 1). Consider the cards one by one and ask yourself for each: 'Do I ever experience this feeling about a particular area of my life? If so, in which area of life do I experience this feeling the most frequently?'.
Place this card on the left hand side of the 'area of life' card. If this feeling is not experienced in relation to any of the areas of life, discard it.
3. Continue the process at step 2 until the pile of cards 'unpleasant feelings' has been depleted.
4. Take the cards 'pleasant feelings' 1-24 (part 1). Repeat step 2, but place the cards that are relevant on the right hand side of the 'area of life' card.
5. Continue the process at step 4 until the pile of cards 'pleasant feelings' has been depleted.
6. Consider the result. Guiding questions could be:
 - a. What strikes you in the overall picture? Did it meet your expectations? How does this effect you?
 - b. In what area of life do you experience unpleasant feelings the most? Does this reflect your experience?

- c. In what area of life do you experience pleasant feelings the most? Does this reflect your experience?
- d. At what area of life have most cards been placed (both pleasant as unpleasant feelings) and at what area the fewest? How do you feel about this?

NOTES

1. You can also apply this method in the presence of someone who knows you well, in which case the other person can give feedback.
2. At step 2 you can also place the cards in the light of the question: in what area of life do you experience this feeling most acutely (in stead of the most frequently).
3. You can also consider the pleasant and unpleasant feelings for those areas of life that you did not select at first. Or consider them in relation to past, present and future only. What conclusion can you draw?
4. If you play this game with someone else, you might decide to have the other player select the areas of life for you. In turn, you can ask each other questions and, provided that you know each other well, give feedback.

5. DO YOU RECOGNIZE THAT FEELING?

PURPOSES

1. Become aware of one's own feelings.
2. Get acquainted with one another.

PRIOR CONDITIONS

1. The participants do not have to be familiar with one another.
2. Number of participants: 2-6
3. Necessary: all of the cards 'pleasant feelings'.
4. Estimated playing time: 30-60 min.

METHOD

1. Place all of the cards in a pile face down.
2. In turn you pick up a card and consider whether you yourself have ever experienced the feeling named on the card. If so, you place the card face up in front of you and describe a situation in which this feeling came up, and in what kind of behaviour from your side, this resulted.
If you have not ever experienced this feeling, place the card face up next to the rest of the pack. Your fellow players can also select this card.
3. Continue until the pile of cards 'pleasant feelings' has been depleted.
4. Reflect on what most struck you about this method of play.

NOTE

1. At step 1, you may also narrow the question down to one related solely to work.

2. If the participants know each other, they can also give feedback.

VERSION 1

This method can also be applied using the cards 'unpleasant feelings' as well. In turn you play a round with the pleasant and then with the unpleasant feelings. You should finish with the pleasant feelings.

INTRODUCTION TO FEELINGS

Feeling or emotions serve as an indicator. They reflect whether or not our personal interests are met. For instance: I feel angry, when thieves break into my house and steal my belongings and content, when the thieves are caught and justice prevails.

Unpleasant emotions warn us, wake us up and help us to take action. Our emotions serve as our sixth sense which interprets, regulates, directs and sums up the other five senses. They pass on information concerning our relation to the world around us.

Likewise our feelings represent the most direct reaction to what we observe. They determine and partly mark our response to future experiences. Only those who are aware of their feelings, retain the free choice of how to act on them.

FEELINGS: INNATE OR ACQUIRED

Some emotions are not acquired, but innate and universal. These are called basic emotions and they include joy, grief, anger, fear, amazement and disgust. We find them in people of any culture. This is proved by the fact that even small babies born blind, show facial expressions corresponding to these basic emotions.

Basic emotions help us to face the fundamental challenges that all people meet with. Over time generally shared basic emotions have developed into their own shape and form and have taken on various culturally determined nuances. For instance, "being angry" has extended into the more specific "being offended". Basic emotions will develop under practically any circumstance. Emotions that are specific to a certain culture will however only develop if you are raised in that particular culture.

FEELINGS AND CULTURE

Our values, norms and ideals, that are partly influenced by our culture, largely determine the emotional effects certain events have on us. This also means that our moods cannot be regarded as separate from the forces around us, but are marked by the sense of values that determines which emotions are or are not allowed. For instance, in western countries jealousy and disappointment are not that readily accepted and as a result of this, these emotions are less quickly expressed than for instance grief. In other cultures on the other hand the acceptance level for effusive anger expression is much higher. Sometimes it is quite alright to experience a certain emotion as long as we do not express it in any arbitrary way and thereby act upon it.

By trying to comply with emotional norms that operate in a particular culture, people tend to lose touch with a part of their person for norms can cloud or impede our perception. For this reason some emotional signals are more easily overlooked than others.

Likewise views concerning whether or not personal qualities are praiseworthy, cause certain emotions that stem from applying those qualities are to expressed in larger or smaller measure. For instance: Modesty is quite becoming, so bridle your enthusiasm over your success.

FEELINGS AND THE BODY

Relaxing and being able to focus on your inner self are essential in becoming aware of your emotional signals. Your body often gives off signals concerning your emotional state and personal actions. Once you are able to put your physical signals into words your understanding of the affect a certain situation has on you will grow. For instance: experiencing tightness in the chest may well signify feeling constricted . Experiencing a lump in the throat may help you become aware of not expressing yourself fully. Often convictions play an impeding part in this. For instance: 'I should not voice my opinion because it will hurt other people's feelings'.

HANDLING FEELINGS

Handling your feelings is partly influenced by the thoughts you have about what is taking place. These thoughts may lead to either pleasant, positive feelings or unpleasant, negative feelings.

These negative feelings may have a wholesome or unwholesome effect. A wholesome effect is seen when these negative feelings spur on to action. For example worry, irritation or regret cause you to take action to change an unwanted situation. An unwholesome effect is apparent when these feelings lead to apathy. For example fear, depression or guilt could cause a stagnation in your energy flow so no action is undertaken. You adopt a passive attitude.

This unwholesome effect is increased when you start avoiding negative events. Shunning fearful situations may lead to greater tension in such situations which again causes a greater fear.

Most emotionally charged moments may evoke more than one state of mind. At such a time each person will randomly select the term matching that state of mind that fits him best. The terms he would rather not apply to himself are unconsciously not even considered. In response to a loss a person may for example clutch onto anger or even feel guilt merely to avoid grief. Likewise someone may prefer jealousy over fear when, for example due to flirtation, he is afraid to lose his partner.

The benefits that certain emotions hold over others explain the persistent clinging to these emotions. Acts of avoidance or diversion often serve to tone feelings down. Thus, one does not have to give way to the emotion and can the tension be reduced.

Instead of merely experiencing your feelings in a certain situation, you also have the option to put into words your thoughts on what is perceived. However, processing reality by means of rational thinking is much less direct than experiencing feelings. It is therefore a way to try and handle your emotions rather than endure them.

REFERENCES

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OTHER GAMES

The Feelings Game, The Feedback Game, The Development Game, The Motivation Game, The Values Game form a series and are a helping aid at finding the answers to five essential questions:

- Who am I? (The Feedback Game)
- What is valuable to me? (The Values Game)
- What am I good at? (The Development Game)
- What do I want? (The Motivation Game)
- What do I feel? (The Feelings Game)

These games can be applied individually or you can combine them.

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