

CLIENT HANDOUT:

EMOTION RECOGNITION: SADNESS

Ekman's research demonstrates that producing the emotions' corresponding facial movements, trigger changes in physiology in the body and brain. The idea is to become familiar with emotions and their external environmental signals. By becoming familiar with these emotions and reflecting on what they feel like, you will have a better chance of recognizing them earlier before they become unbearable.

However, the unpleasant (possibly painful) feelings and sensations that you may feel with this exercise on sadness should be noted. Some common reactions during sadness are heavy eyelids; rising cheeks; tightening sensation or a lump in the throat; watery eyes. People differ in how they experience sadness, knowing your own process and how it may differ from those you care about may help you better understand some of the miscommunications and misinterpretations that may occur or may have occurred in your life.

Instructions: You will be watching your reflection in a mirror, as you replicate the facial movements that accompany the primary emotions of sadness, anger and fear. Once you begin to “feel” the emotion, if bearable, let it expand.

Caution: Experiencing the facial muscle movement exercises, most people will experience some sadness, but if the feeling grows extremely strong or is held for long, it might change to anguish. Know what is manageable for you and stop if you become overwhelmed at any time.

Replicating the facial movements of sadness:

1. Drop your mouth open.
2. Pull the corners of your lips down.
3. While holding the lip corners down, aim to raise your cheeks, like you are squinting (so it pulls against the lip corners).
4. Keep the tension between the raised cheeks and the lip corners pulling down.
5. Allow your eyes to glance downward and your upper eyelids to sag and droop.
 - a. Although a bit more difficult, try to:
 - i. Pull your eye brows together and up in the middle only, drawing the inner corners of your eyebrows up in the middle only, not the entire brow.
 - ii. Continue looking downward as your upper eyelids sag and droop.

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If you were able to safely experience sadness, try repeating it, before answering the following questions. Concentrate on what those facial movements feel like, paying particular attention to your own process as you first begin to experience the feelings:

1. How does the feeling register?
2. How does it change your awareness and perception of your internal environment?
3. How does it change your awareness and perception of your external environment?
4. What changes do you notice in your:

Head: _____

Neck: _____

Face: _____

Throat: _____

Area in your chest surrounding your heart: _____

Shoulders: _____

Upper back: _____

Lower back: _____

Arms: _____

Stomach: _____

Legs: _____

5. As you let the feeling expand, what sensations or changes in sensations do notice in your:

Head: _____

Neck: _____

Face: _____

Throat: _____

Area in your chest surrounding your heart: _____

Shoulders: _____

Upper back: _____

Lower back: _____

Arms: _____

Stomach: _____

Legs: _____