



Emotional Granularity

Materials:

- Worksheet
- Chart paper

Brainstorm

Ask students to list as many emotions as they can in one minute. When time is up, make a comprehensive list and keep it displayed for students to use as a reference later in the lesson.

Discuss

After you complete the list, ask students: *Do you think it's important to distinguish one emotion from another? Why? How precise do you think you need to be? Is it enough to say you're happy or is it important to use specific words like cheerful, joyful or delighted?* Continue to facilitate the class discussion as long as the discourse remains productive and on topic.

Dive in!

Emotional granularity is our ability to precisely name our emotions and distinguish specific emotions from similar ones. When we develop emotional granularity, we build greater awareness of ourselves and our emotions. Being able to accurately name what we are feeling and why allows us to deepen our understanding of our experiences and can help us to predict how certain situations might make us feel. Sometimes it can be tricky to know exactly how we are feeling and we might misinterpret one feeling for another. When we have more vocabulary with which to describe our emotions and we have a greater understanding of the differences between each emotion, we are able to express ourselves and manage our emotions in a more sophisticated way. When we have a better understanding of emotions, we can also better understand the people around us and how they might be feeling, which is really important for building and maintaining relationships. The way that we experience and express emotions is a complex process that results from how our bodies and minds interact with our environment, other people, and our prior experiences. Think about how many different feelings that you came up with that are related to the emotion that you were assigned in our warm up. Each of those emotions are slightly different and how you experience each of those emotions might be different from the person sitting next to you. Even your own experience of an emotion differs from one experience to the next. Take happiness as an example, some related emotions might be content, joyful, glad, ecstatic, excited, cheerful, delighted, humorous, and elated. Most of us have experienced an instance of happiness, but the way that we feel and experience happiness



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is different depending on the situation, the day, our thoughts, and the other feelings that we may be experiencing at the same time. All this information goes into the creation of our happy concept and all these concepts are what our brain uses to make predictions. Sometimes our brain predicts an instance of emotion. When that happens, sometimes we might laugh when we are happy, sometimes we might jump up and down, sometimes we might have a slight grin on our face, sometimes we might even cry when we are happy, and sometimes we do nothing at all when we are happy. Happiness is also experienced and expressed differently depending on what you've learned about happiness from your family and culture. Our introductory activity today was designed to increase our emotional vocabulary, which is important for improving our emotional granularity.

Activity

For this task, have students work in pairs or groups. Review the list of emotions from the table on the worksheet and a few of the provided synonyms. Then, have them add as many more synonyms as they can think of in the next row. Then, have them pick one emotion (each group should have a different word) and describe it in detail on their chart paper. Encourage students to be creative and to add pictures, descriptions, and examples using the probing questions listed on the worksheet. When students are finished, call on volunteers to present their emotions. Remind students as they present that everyone may feel the emotion differently and have different examples to demonstrate the emotion.

Reflect

To wrap up the lesson, ask students to respond to the question on the worksheet: *On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not good at all and 5 being excellent) how would you rate your level of emotional granularity?*

Optional Home Connection → Encourage students to use more specific emotional vocabulary at home and make a list of some new words they've used.

Professional Development

Take 5 minutes and reflect on your own level of emotional granularity. How can you model more emotional granularity in the classroom?



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For Further Study:

- Edutopia: *Emotional Regulation Activities for Tweens and Teens*:
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/emotional-regulation-activities-tweens-and-teens>
- Lisa Feldman Barrett: *Try these two smart techniques to help you master your emotions*:
<https://ideas.ted.com/try-these-two-smart-techniques-to-help-you-master-your-emotions/>
[Showing Empathy | Learning for Justice](#)
- TED: *You Aren't at the Mercy of Your Emotions - Your Brain Creates Them*:
https://www.ted.com/talks/lisa_feldman_barrett_you_aren_t_at_the_mercy_of_your_emotions_your_brain_creates_them