

Dealing with Difficult Emotions

Adapted from: <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/stressful-feelings.html?view=ptr&WT.ac=t-ptr>

Positive vs. Negative Emotions

Some emotions (feelings) are positive. For example, happiness, joy, curiosity, love, and excitement.

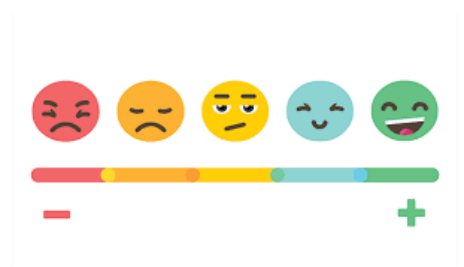
Some emotions (feelings) are negative. For example, sadness, anger, self-criticism, fear, rejection, and worry.

Negative emotions can be difficult and painful, especially when we feel that negative emotion too often, too strongly, or for too long. Everyone feels negative emotions sometimes. **We can learn how to handle negative emotions when we feel them.**

Here are three helpful steps for dealing with negative emotions.

Step 1: Identify the Emotion

- **Name the negative emotion you are feeling.** This takes practice! Your body and your mind give you clues about what negative emotion you might be feeling.
For example: *I feel **sad** when I disappoint my parents.*
Body clue: *I feel so tired it's hard to get out of bed in the morning.*
Mind clue: *The thought in my head is: "I disappointed my dad."*
- **Know why you feel the way you do.** What happened that caused you to have a negative emotion?
- **Don't blame yourself for having a negative emotion.** Negative emotions are normal. If you name and accept the negative emotion you are feeling, this can help you make sense of what you are experiencing and feel better.



Step 2: Take Action

- **Learn how to change your mood.** Do things that make you happy even when you think you don't want to. For example, listening to music, watching a funny movie, or hanging out with a friend.
- **Build positive emotions.** Focus on what's good in your life – even if it is something small.
- **Seek support.** Talk about how you are feeling with a parent, trusted adult, or friend.
- **Exercise.** Physical activity helps produce natural chemicals that help people to have a positive mood. Exercise can also release stress.

Step 3: Get Help with Difficult Emotion

Sometimes, no matter what you do, you can't make a difficult emotion go away. If you feel sad or worried for more than a couple weeks, or if you feel so upset you think you might hurt yourself or someone else, **it is important to reach out for more help.**

Talk to a school counselor, parent, trusted adult, or therapist. Counselors and therapists are trained to teach people how to handle negative emotions. They can provide lots of tips and ideas that will help you feel better.