

Naming what you feel

Easy · 2 min to do · Free

Putting a feeling into words, even just "I feel angry," can turn down the brain's alarm and make the feeling less intense. Let yourself react safely, notice what your body is doing, pick a word for the feeling (not a judgment about someone else), and say "I feel ___" in your head or out loud. It takes seconds, works in the middle of a hard moment, and the effect is real but modest.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ The word list below, saved on your phone if it helps

DO IT LIKE THIS

- 1 **Respond.** Without hurting yourself or anyone else, let yourself react. There's no right or wrong way to feel, so try not to push it down.
- 2 **Observe your body.** What is your face doing? What's tense or hurting? What urges do you have? Tears, a pit in your stomach or an urge to yell are all clues.
- 3 **Find a word.** Use what you noticed. Clenched fists and a racing heart might mean "enraged". It's fine if it takes a few seconds or a few minutes.
- 4 **Name the feeling, not the other person.** "Bullied" or "targeted" are guesses about what someone else did. "Hurt" or "angry" describe what you actually feel.
- 5 **Say it, aloud or in your head: "I feel ___."**
- 6 **If it's still heavy, talk to a friend or write it down.** Talking with someone or writing in a journal are both ways of putting feelings into words.

Watch out Naming helps, but the effect is likely modest, according to the UCLA researcher who led the brain study. It's a first step, not a cure. A bad mood now and then is normal. Moods become a problem when they come with significant distress or start affecting your work or relationships. If that's you, see Stress vs. something more.

DAD NOTE *Name it to tame it. "I'm mad" is a sentence, not a decision.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/mind/emotional-regulation/naming-what-you-feel/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: Greater Good Science Center; UC Berkeley; UCLA Newsroom; NIH News in Health; National Institute of Mental Health.