

RULES FOR PLAYING THE FEELINGS GAME



Feelings play an important role in our lives. They greatly influence our behaviour. That is why it makes sense to understand them. However, many people find it difficult to put their feelings into words. Experience shows that this becomes easier by using this game.

The purpose of this game is to help you discuss the way you experience situations, people or organisations. As a result, you will not only become more aware of yourself, but you can also understand others better.

The Feelings Game consists of 144 cards, divided into four groups:

1. **Pleasant feelings** (symbol: sun, 36 cards).
2. **Unpleasant feelings** (symbol: cloud, 60 cards).
3. **Areas of life** (symbol: rainbow, 16 cards). These represent aspects of life that may be important to you and that are emotionally charged, such as: friends, paid or unpaid work or health.
4. **Pictures** (32 cards). With these you can talk to each other about feelings based on photos.

The 'areas of life' cards contain three cards that differ slightly in content from the rest, namely past, present and future. By using these cards you can examine what feelings you have with regard to specific phases in your life as a whole, or with regard to certain areas of life.

We have made a distinction between pleasant and unpleasant feelings. What you experience as a pleasant feeling in one situation can be experienced as unpleasant in another situation. The chosen wording is based on the sentence: 'I feel...'.

We have divided both groups (pleasant and unpleasant feelings) into two parts. The cards 1 - 24 in each group form part 1, the rest of the cards form part 2. The words in part 1 are

used more often and are simpler than those in part 2. If you want to work with a more limited set of cards you can decide to only use part 1. Of course, you can also put together a set based on your own preferences.

POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS

The Feelings Game has various uses in both formal and informal settings. By using the overview below you can easily determine which method of play is appropriate for a specific situation.

Applications in groups and teams:

1. Sharing how people experience an organization (method 1).
2. Evaluation of a course or training (method 2).
3. Discussing the feelings that you would like to experience less or more often (method 3).
4. Becoming aware of your own feelings in general (method 4).

Individual applications:

5. Problem clarification and feelings (method 5).
6. Comparing areas of your life with regard to how you experience them (method 6).

CONDITIONS FOR USING THE FEELINGS GAME

Experience has shown us that *The Feelings Game* can evoke strong emotions in players. Therefore, care and proper timing are required when using this game, especially when working with the unpleasant feelings. It is essential that players feel safe whilst playing the game. It is also very important to allow sufficient time afterwards to handle any emotions or issues that may have surfaced.

If you want to use the game, check whether you meet the following conditions:

- a. You have been a player in the game, so you have experienced what the game can do.
- b. You must be able to judge which method of play is suited to what situation.
- c. You are able to lead the game in the right way.

Some practical tips when working with the game are:

1. In some of the methods of play you may wish to select a subset of cards, tailored to the situation in advance.
2. The number of cards that players receive or must select can be changed according to your liking.
3. It is important that the players explain what they mean by a chosen term because different people often assign a different meaning to the same word.

METHOD 1: EXPERIENCING YOUR ORGANISATION

Purpose

Share how everyone experiences the same organisation.

Conditions

1. The players work for the same organisation.
2. Number of players: 3-12.
3. Required: all of the cards 'pleasant feelings' and 'unpleasant feelings' or a part thereof, for example the cards number 1 to 24 of both sets.
4. Playing time: 20-45 min.

Method

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

Note

You can use this method of play in the same way when using the images. In step 2 the question then becomes: Which image(s) best describe(s) the feeling that you have about your organization?

METHOD 2: EVALUATION

Purpose

Evaluation of a course or training session.

Conditions

1. Number of players: max. 20.
2. Required: all of the cards 'pleasant feelings' and 'unpleasant feelings'.
3. Estimated playing time: max. 20 min.

Method

1. All of the cards are placed face up on the table.
2. Each player chooses a card with a pleasant feeling (if applicable) and a card with an unpleasant feeling (if applicable), that reflects how they experienced the course or training session.
3. In turn, the players pick up their selected card(s) and explain their choice

Note

You can use this method of play in the same way when using the images. In step 2 the question then becomes: Which image best describes the feeling you have about the course or training?

METHOD 3: FEELINGS: LESS OR MORE OFTEN

Purpose

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

Conditions

1. The players trust each other.
2. Number of players: 2-5.
3. Required: all of the cards 'pleasant feelings' and 'unpleasant feelings' or a part thereof, for example the cards number 1 to 24 of both sets. Pen and paper for every player.
4. Playing time: 30-60 min.

Method

1. Place all of the cards with pleasant feelings and all of the cards with unpleasant feelings face up on the table.
2. Select a card with an unpleasant feeling that you would like to experience less often. 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 you with this? If so, how?
3. Select one card with a pleasant feeling that you would like 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 something that could help you with this? If so, how?
4. Consider if there is a connection 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.

METHOD 4: DO YOU RECOGNIZE THAT FEELING?

Purposes

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

Conditions

1. The players do not have to know each other.
2. Number of players: 2-6
3. Required: all of the cards 'pleasant feelings'.
4. 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 have ever experienced the feeling named on the card. If you did, place the card face up in front of you and describe a situation in which this feeling came up, and how you behaved as a result of it. If you have never experienced this feeling, place the card face up next to the rest of the pack. Your fellow players are allowed to pick this card on their next turn.
3. Continue until the pile of cards has been depleted.
4. Share your experiences.

Notes

1. At step 1, you may also narrow the question down to a certain subject, e.g. work.
2. If the players know each other, they can also give feedback.
3. If the players know each other and feel safe with each other, you can also work with the unpleasant feelings in this method of play.

4. You can use this method of play in the same way when using the images. In step 2 the question then becomes: What feeling does the image evoke in you and in what situation did you have this feeling? Talk about this situation and what behaviour evoked the emotion.

METHOD 5: PROBLEM CLARIFICATION AND FEELINGS

Purpose

Mapping the emotional side of a question, problem or situation.

Conditions

1. Number of players: 1 or 2. Preferably use the method with a coach or a conversation partner. If there is no official coach, you in turn act as a coach. In that case you will need more time.
2. Required: the cards 'pleasant feelings' (numbers 1-24) and 'unpleasant feelings' (numbers 1-24).
3. Playing time: 30-40 min.

Method

1. Choose a question, a problem or a situation that is on your mind and that you want to put some more thought into.
2. Take the cards 'unpleasant feelings'. Select the unpleasant feelings you have with regard to your question or problem and put them on the table in front of you. Discard the rest.
3. Take the cards 'pleasant feelings'. Select the pleasant feelings that you have regarding your question or problem and put them on the table in front of you. Discard the rest.
4. Discuss the results. Do so by giving an explanation per card. The idea is that you put all aspects of the problem together. If some of the feelings belong together, you can put them next to each other. Discuss the question: Has this exercise brought up a new perspective? If so, which?

Notes

1. You can also use the complete sets of feelings, instead of only numbers 1-24 of both text cards.
2. You can also apply the images instead of or in addition to the text cards. At steps 2 and 3, you then select the images that relate to your question, situation, or problem.

METHOD 6: FEELINGS AND AREAS OF LIFE

Purpose

Become aware of feelings regarding different areas of life.

Conditions

1. Number of players: 1 or 2. Preferably use this method with a coach or with someone who can be a conversation partner. You can also use this method in pairs, where you each take turns as coach/player. In that case, more time is needed.
2. Required: the cards 'pleasant feelings' (nos. 1-24), 'unpleasant feelings' (nos. 1-24) and 'areas of life'.
3. Playing time: 30-40 min.

Method

1. Take all of the cards 'areas of life'. Select min. 3 and max. 5 areas of life that are important to you. Place these cards in a horizontal row on the table.
2. Take all of 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 above the 'area of life' card. If this feeling is not experienced in relation to any of the areas of life, discard it. Continue until the pile of cards is depleted.
3. Take all of the cards 'pleasant feelings' 1-24 (part 1). Repeat step 2, but place the cards that are relevant below the 'area of life' card.
4. Consider the result. Some relevant questions are:
 - a. What strikes you in the overall picture? Did you expect this result? 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 and unpleasant feelings) and at what area the fewest? How do you feel about this?

Notes

1. In areas of life where many feelings play a role, you can place the cards over each other so that you can only see the word. By doing so you can save some space and make the whole thing easier to review.

2. In step 2 you can also place the cards based on the question: In which area of life do you experience this feeling most strongly (instead of most often)?
3. Review the feelings that are unfamiliar to you in the chosen areas of life. Do you experience these feelings in a different situation? If so, when?
4. 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?
5. 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.
6. With this method you can also use the complete sets of feelings, instead of using only numbers 1-24 of both parts.
7. With this method you can also use the images instead of the text cards. Instead of steps 2 and 3, check per image whether it fits the way you experience a certain area of life. If that is the case, place that image below the area of life in which you experience this feeling the strongest.

AN 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 colour and partly determine the way in which we will later respond to similar experiences. Only those who are aware of their feelings are free to choose how they 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 proven by the fact that even babies that were 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, shared basic emotions 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 values that determine 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 often expressed than, for instance, grief. On the other hand, in other cultures 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 an arbitrary way and 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 who they are, as norms can cloud or impede our perception. For that 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 to be expressed in a larger or smaller measure. For instance: modesty is quite becoming, so bridle your enthusiasm over your success.

Feelings and the body

Being able to relax and focus on your inner self is 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 effect a certain situation has on you will grow. For instance: experiencing tightness in the chest may signify you are feeling constricted. Experiencing a lump in the throat may help you become aware that you are not expressing yourself fully. Often limiting beliefs play a part in this. For instance: 'I should not voice my opinion because it will hurt other people's feelings'.

Handling feelings

How you are handling your feelings is influenced in part 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 and keep you from taking action. 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 for 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, he sees his partner flirt with someone else and is afraid of losing her.

The benefits that certain emotions hold over others explain the persistent clinging to these emotions. Acts of avoidance or diversion can often serve to tone feelings down. They can reduce tension and keep the person from having to give way to the emotion.

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

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OTHER CARD GAMES

The Feelings Game forms a series together with *The Leadership Game*, *The Values Game*, *The Quotations Game*, *Getting Acquainted* and *The Feedback Game*. You can find more information at: www.kwaliteitenspel.nl/en

Distribution

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