



Exploring Emotions

Aim: to identify our emotions and reactions and explore how we can choose to respond effectively.

Items needed this week

- Notebooks and pens
- A variety of craft materials to cover and decorate books and make 'Thank You / Forgiveness' cards (eg wrapping paper, stickers etc)
- Example of decorated notebook and DIY card
- Heart of music: Download
- 10 different tracks of music using a smartphone, or play using YouTube and a laptop - using a range of different music types.
- Speakers
- Riverbank The Course Session 3 PowerPoint Template

Welcome

Give a short summary recapping the previous session. Ask the group how they have been getting on over the past week, particularly with their stress-buster ideas. Allow a couple of minutes for sharing.

Icebreaker

Refer to the list of icebreakers in Appendix 1 and select one - don't forget to prepare any items needed for the chosen icebreaker before the session.

Activities

Heart of music

Play different pieces of music that stir the emotions - select songs that you think the group will mostly recognise in terms of musical eras/genres.

Play 30 seconds of each song you select and ask the women to write down in their notebooks how the piece makes them feel. Some songs may get different reactions; encourage them to share the emotions they have written down.

Ask the group the following question: *What other things evoke emotion?*

Have the group discuss this for a few minutes. Be aware that some people may not appreciate expressing or speaking about emotions as much as others.

What would a world without feelings and emotions be like? We must be aware that feelings and emotions can strongly dictate the behaviours we show.

Identifying your emotions

Display the 'Identifying your emotions' slides from the Session 3 PowerPoint template.

Look through the list of emotions, offering support with meanings if needed and being mindful of any language barriers.

Invite people to share in small groups and to discuss times they've experienced these emotions, and how their feelings may have influenced their behaviour.

Do you have examples of how your feelings may have affected your behaviour and actions today? Can we always trust our emotions? Are there any times you can think of when you can't trust them?

Allow up to ten minutes for discussion, displaying the questions for reference.

While we can't always change how we feel, recognising our emotions can be a first step toward responding to them in healthier ways.

Identifying situations: 'It's OK to be angry'

Introduce the 'It's OK to be angry' activity, being sensitive to the group as they explore this topic. You may choose to display the 'It's ok to be angry' slide.

If possible, it would be helpful for you as the leader to share your own short example of a time when you felt angry, worried or frustrated. When you do this, it helps others feel safer and more willing to share their own experiences. As you prepare, think about how you might answer the three reflection questions below.

Get into pairs or discuss with the people next to you. Think back over the last couple of weeks. Think of a situation when you were angry, worried or frustrated and share it with your partner.

Encourage the group to answer the questions below.

- *What factors created this emotion?*
- *How did you respond?*
- *On reflection, is there anything you could have done differently?*

Suggest that everyone writes their answers in their notebooks and to write the title: 'I have a right to feel angry when ...' at the top.

Sometimes it can be helpful and healthy to express anger.

Invite them to brainstorm situations where anger might be a positive response and write these down, discussing why anger can be useful in these situations.

Finally, ask each pair to come up with:

- Two examples of unhelpful or destructive anger (for example, slamming a door)
- Two examples of justified or healthy anger (for example, responding to injustice)

Invite pairs to share their examples with the wider group if they wish.

Managing Emotions

Display the quotes below - also available on the Session 3 PowerPoint template.

Read the following quote:

'Your emotions are your inner guidance system. You have within you the power to create a life of joy, abundance and health; or you have the same ability to create a life filled with stress, fatigue and disease. With very few exceptions, the choice is yours.' (Christiane Northrup)

The next slide on the template includes some tips for handling conflict and coping with criticism. Read through this and ask the group to make notes if that's helpful.

Two scenarios

Divide the group into two smaller groups. If appropriate, try and encourage people to divide in different groups than previously so they get to know other people. Discuss the following scenarios:

Group 1: You were meant to meet a friend on the high street. It's pouring with rain. You wait 40 minutes for her, then she texts to say she is not turning up because something else has come up.

Referring to the 'Managing Emotions' slide, what would be the best way to respond? What would happen if you didn't respond so well?

Group 2: You're in the supermarket. Your trolley's full. You're anxious to get home but someone tries to push in front of you.

Again, referring to the 'Managing Emotions' slide, what would be the best way to respond? What would happen if you didn't respond so well?

Discovering happiness

Display the 'discovering happiness' slide and read through the suggestions.

Do you agree? Write down on the any tips that you would want to take on board this week.

Which of these suggestions could we adopt as a group?

There will always be bad days from time to time, but today's session has been about exploring how they make us feel and how we can respond more positively. We always have a choice.

Craft: decorating notebooks and making cards

Hand out a variety of art and craft materials to customise the outside covers of the group's notebooks. Show your example notebook to help inspire the group as they begin the craft activity.

Ask the women to write down positive thoughts or events in their notebooks, which can even become their very own 'Gratitude Journal'. Encourage them to see that these can then inspire them during tougher times.

You could also make some handmade cards. These could be a thank you note to someone who has inspired them or had a positive influence on their life. The cards could also be used as a gentle way to offer forgiveness, helping some people let go of lingering anger or resentment.



Reflect and respond

Spend some time reflecting on this first session - you may choose to refer back to the aim. Ask the women if they have any questions before going further into the course.

Spend some time reflecting on this session using the questions below:

- *What went well?*
- *Even better if...?*
- *Is there anything else you'd like to say?*

Invite the group to write the answers to these questions in their notebook and follow up with them individually. Alternatively, have a time of open sharing.

After the session, consider if there are any immediate changes to make based on the feedback. Record all other comments for future reference for your leader's feedback at the end of the programme.

Preparation for Session 4

Remind the group to bring in their notebooks for Session 4.

Ask the group to bring in any magazines either they have or other friends/family have.