

BASIC EMOTIONS GLOSSARY

Emotions and How to Show Them in Your Writing

When we write it's important to show how a character feels. We tell the reader how the characters are feeling **externally** by writing details other people would notice about the characters. We show what's happening on the character's **outside**, what the body is doing and what they're saying.

Just as important is to show the reader what the characters are feeling **internally** by writing details that only the character can feel or know about. We show what's happening **inside** the character's body, mind, and imagination.

This table shows basic emotions and others that are related to them. The glossary below shows ways to describe those emotions in your stories.

Emotions						
Anger	<i>Annoyance</i>	<u>Frustration</u>	<i>Jealousy</i>	<i>Rage</i>		
Calm	<i>Determination</i>	<i>Indifference</i>	<i>Peacefulness</i>	<i>Satisfaction</i>	<i>Sympathy</i>	
Disgust	<i>Contempt</i>	<u>Shame</u>	<u>Guilt</u>	<u>Denial</u>		
Happiness	<i>Desire</i>	<i>Eagerness</i>	<i>Gratitude</i>	<i>Hopefulness</i>	<i>Love</i>	<i>Smugness</i>
Fear	<i>Nervousness</i>	<i>Paranoia</i>	<u>Anxiety</u>	<i>Terror</i>	<u>Conflicted</u>	
Sadness	<i>Defeat</i>	<i>Desperation</i>	*<u>Hurt</u>			
Surprise	*<u>Confusion</u>	<i>Curiosity</i>	<i>Doubt</i>			

Directions: As you write your scene, think about how your character feels. Choose emotions you want to show and find them on the list. Choose two to three ways to show that emotion. You must use both external and internal descriptions.

Look at this example. What emotions does Peiqi feel? How do you know?

Example:

Peiqi reached for her teddy bear, but her older brother raised his hand even higher so she couldn't get it.

Her eyes tightened and she crossed her arms.

"Give it back," she said, her heart pounding.

Basic Emotions Glossary

Anger:

External:

- he flared his nostrils
- she raised her chin
- he breathed noisily
- she shook her fist
- *he cut her off and said, "..."*
- she bared her teeth
- he flexed his arms
- she flexed her fingers
- he cracked his knuckles
- her eyes were cold (flinty)
- his eyes tightened
- her expression tightened
- he glared her face reddened
- his lips curled
- she crossed her arms
- he slammed the door
- she threw _____
- he stomped
- the vein in her jaw twitched
- "... " he said with a shaky voice
- snap at people, pick fights

Internal:

- she ground her teeth
- his pulse sped up
- her heart beat pounded

- heat flushed through his body
- she jumped to conclusions
- he wished she could be somewhere else

Anxiety:

External:

- he rubbed the back of his neck
- she crossed her arms
- he clutched (something important)
- she wrung her hands
- his foot bounced
- she glanced at the clock
- he held his stomach

- she rocked in place
- he shook his head
- she couldn't get comfortable
- he constantly adjusted his clothes
- she couldn't eat he prayed
- *repeated doing the same motion

Internal:

- She felt too hot
- he felt too cold
- she was dizzy
- his stomach churned
- her limbs tingled

- his breathing accelerated
- she thought about the worst-case scenarios
- he worried irrationally
- she replayed the events over and over

Calm = (opposite of surprised)

External:

- he made eye contact
- she breathed deeply and smoothly
- he relaxed his muscles
- she leaned back
- he stood, ready
- she smiled

Internal:

- he filtered out distractions
- she felt like she was floating
- his stomach settled
- her mind stilled
- his hands steadied

Conflicted: *having opposing emotions*

External:

- his lips pressed together
- she grimaced
- his smile wavered
- her gaze ping-ponged between...
- *self interrupting
- he struggled to find the right words
- * she voiced support but without a lot of enthusiasm in her voice
- he scratched his neck (cheek)
- *asked for more input from friend family, team)
- she shook her head softly

- he rubbed at his forehead
- *voiced conflicted feelings: "This is a tough decision"
- he stood restlessly

Internal:

- she had a headache
- his body felt heavy
- she felt a tightening in her chest
- he lost his appetite
- she got a sinking feeling in her stomach

- she smoothed her clothes
- he held out his hands, as if to weigh his options

- he lost focus
- he weighed the pros and cons of...
- she played "What if..." in her head to figure out...

Confusion:

External:

- She fumbled
- "Ummmm...." he said
- she hesitated
- he scratched his head
- she repeated the question she was asked
- he shrugged

- "_____" she said with an uncertain tone
- he couldn't find the right words
- she tilted her head to the side
- his eyes narrowed she frowned
- "Are you sure?" he asked

Internal:

- His thoughts froze
- her mind raced

- he went in circles in his mind

- she replayed the events in her head

Happiness: (opposite of sad)

External:

- her face was upturned
- he hummed
- she whistled
- her eyes sparkled
- *she told jokes
- he tapped his feet to a beat
- she bounced on her toes

- he smiled
- she spoke quickly
- shows enjoyment of activity (example: sways to music)
- *random acts of kindness

Internal:

- his arms and legs felt light
- she felt weightless
- *he thought positively, she had hopeful thoughts

- *she wanted to spread her happiness by...
- he noticed (good) small things (like the smell of flowers, or the cloudless sky)
- she had difficulty staying still

Desire =(happy + want something + eager)

External:

- his lips parted
- she trembled
- he leaned in
- she leaned forward

- his eyes shined
- she held her breath
- his knees became weak

Internal:

- she heard her own heartbeat
- he was filled with warmth
- She thought of nothing else but (the thing she wants)
- his breathing quickened
- she was breathless

- he was light headed
- she shivered
- he tuned out everything else around him

Denial = (sad + refuse to accept true things)

External:

- she shook her head
- he pointed his finger
- she shrugged
- he crossed his arms
- she spoke rapidly

- he wouldn't let others talk
- she raised one eyebrow
- *said "No," emphatically
- he pounded his fist
- she made "x" motions with his hands

Internal:

- his chest tightened
- her blood pressure rose
- she wanted to tear down him down
- he wanted to embarrass her

Disgust = (angry + sick feeling + want to push something away)

External:

- he curled his lip
- she wrinkled her nose
- he flinched (recoiled)
- she swallowed hard
- he leapt back
- she turned her back on (disgusting thing)
- he refused to look at (disgusting thing)
- she shook her head, muttering
- he covered her mouth
- she spat
- he put his hands in front of him and walked away
- she demanded he stop (talking about or doing disgusting thing)
- he cringed away from...

Internal:

- she felt like she wanted to spit
- he felt nauseas
- she felt seasick
- he felt the need to get clean
- she felt like running away)

Frustration (annoyance cause by problems that are not being solved)

External

- her lips were pinched
- he rushed his speech
- she scratched at her neck (cheek)
- he began to pace
- her movements were stiff
- he clenched his jaw
- she spoke through her teeth
- he drew in a quick breath before speaking
- she threw up her hands
- "I give up!" he said
- *she spoke without thinking (possibly saying things she'll regret later)
- he slammed the door
- she sighed heavily
- he voice was strained when he spoke
- she squinted her eyes

Internal:

- her stomach hardened his chest tightened
- her jaw gave her pain his blood pressure rose
- *she replayed the scene over and over again in her head
- * She talked to herself to calm down.

Guilt:**External:**

- he averted his gaze
- she turned away
- he shifted about
- she blushed
- *lying to cover up guilty secret
- he bit his lip
- she talked too quickly
- she stuttered
- he became unusually quiet
- her voice cracked
- he sent darting glances at her
- she hid her palms
- he looked haunted

Internal

- her stomach was upset
- his chest tightened
- she lost her appetite
- he replayed what happened again and again
- she wanted to confess
- he couldn't concentrate

Hurt = (sad + hurt feelings or hurt body)

External:

- his eyes went wide and his brow furrowed
- she lowered her head
- he shook his head in disbelief
- her chin trembled
- his mouth fell open
- color drained from her face
- he flinched
- "How could you?" she said
- his eyes watered
- she broke eye contact
- he hung his head

Internal:

- she became dizzy
- he felt nauseous
- her muscles weakened
- his limbs trembled
- she saw bright spots flashing
- time seemed to slow down
- his thoughts spun
- she felt broken inside

Sadness = (opposite of happy)

External:

- he cried
- her face became puffy and red
- she sniffled
- he stared down at his hands
- she spoke with a flat voice
- he walked with heavy feet
- he smiled sadly
- her chin trembled
- his voice broke
- she stared emptyly
- he touched his (something comforting, like a teddy bear, or favorite necklace)
- her shoulders quaked (shook)

Internal:

- his chest ached
- heart broke
- his vision blurred
- her body felt cold
- he had difficulty focusing
- the world spun around her
- he had difficulty answering the question
- *she turned inward
- *avoided talking about...

Shame

External:

- her cheeks burned
- "What have I done?" he muttered
- she hid her face
- his eyes were wet
- her face was blank
- he couldn't meet her gaze
- her lip trembled
- he teared up

- she held back tears
- he pulled at his clothes

Internal:

- he had flue like symptoms
- she wanted to run away and hide
- he wanted to avoid his family
- *she berated herself

- She tried to become invisible

- he denied it
- she wanted to disappear
- *he felt the need to make things right

Surprise:

External:

- His mouth fell open
- her hands flew to her chest
- he stared incredulously
- she looked dazed
- he slapped his hands to his cheeks
- she jumped back a step
- he yelled (gasped, squealed)
- she went rigid

- *he stumbled mid (action: run, walk)
- her eyes widened
- he did a double take
- he touched his throat
- she turned away (for a bad surprise)
- "What!" he exclaimed
- she ducked

Internal:

- Her skin tingled
- his heartbeat raced
- she was breathless
- he felt a sudden coldness in his stomach (bad surprise)
- she felt butterflies in her stomach