

# UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

Emotional Intelligence Cards



# EMOTIONS AS DATA

This feeling isn't a problem to fix; it's feedback.



## ACTION

Ask: "What information is this giving me?"

# LEARNING TO SURF

You can't stop the waves of emotion from arriving.



## ACTION

Your goal isn't to stop them, but to learn how to surf them.

# THE MYTH OF CONTROL

Suppressing feelings is like holding a beach ball underwater.



## ACTION

Let yourself notice the feeling without needing to act on it immediately.

# EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY

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# NAME THE WEATHER

Most of us use a three-word forecast: happy, sad, mad.



## ACTION

Find one more specific word for how you feel right now. Is it content? Discouraged? Irritated?

# BEYOND "MAD"

Being "mad" could mean you're irritated, resentful, or furious.



## ACTION

Getting specific gives you the clarity to respond wisely.

# SHARE WITH CLARITY

"I'm fine" is a wall. "I'm a bit overwhelmed" is a bridge.



## ACTION

Share one specific feeling with someone today.

# **BODY AWARENESS**

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# YOUR BODY SPEAKS FIRST

Emotions often show up physically  
before your mind catches up.



## ACTION

Do a quick scan. Where is the feeling  
living in your body right now?

# THE GUT FEELING

"Gut feelings" aren't mystical; they're biological. Your gut communicates directly with your brain.



## ACTION

When making a decision, notice the signals from your gut. Acknowledge them as data.

# A DIFFERENT KIND OF RADAR

For neurodivergent people, internal body signals can be confusing. Your radar just works differently.



## ACTION

If a body scan is hard, try a sensory break or a grounding exercise to connect.

# THE INNER CRITIC

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# CRITIC OR COACH?

Your inner critic tries to protect you, but its only tool is shame.



## ACTION

Reframe its harsh words into the encouraging voice of a wise coach.

# THE KINDER TRUTH

Shame leads to burnout. Self-compassion fuels growth.



## ACTION

When the critic appears, answer back: "That's a harsh way to put it. Here's a kinder truth".

# WHOSE VOICE IS THIS?

Your inner critic is often an echo of past messages or pain.



## ACTION

Gently ask your critic, "Whose voice is this, really?" to reduce its power.

# EMOTIONAL REGULATION

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# THE PAUSE BUTTON

Between impulse and action, there is a space.



## ACTION

Find that space today. Take one slow breath before you reply.

# BREATH AS AN ANCHOR

Your breath is a direct line to your nervous system.



## ACTION

Breathe in for 4, and out for 6. A longer exhale calms your body.

# REFRAME THE STORY

Emotions are fueled by the  
stories we tell ourselves.



## ACTION

Change one unhelpful thought. "They ignored me" can become "They are probably busy".

# SENSORY RESET

Strong feelings live in the body.



## ACTION

Reset your nervous system: Splash cold water on your face, stretch, or wrap up in a heavy blanket.

# **SOCIAL AWARENESS**

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# READING THE ROOM

Most communication isn't words;  
it's tone and body language.



## ACTION

In your next conversation, listen for the emotion underneath the words.

# EMPATHY, NOT SYMPATHY

Sympathy watches from a distance. Empathy steps into the circle with someone.



## ACTION

Instead of saying "At least...", try saying "That sounds so difficult."

# CURIOSITY OVER CERTAINTY

Social awareness isn't about assuming you know how others feel.



## ACTION

Instead of stating, "You're angry," ask, "I'm sensing frustration. Is that right?".

# RELATIONSHIPS

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# INTERRUPT THE DANCE

Every relationship has  
recurring conflict patterns.



## ACTION

Next time a familiar argument starts, do one thing differently. Pause, soften your tone, or just listen.

# USE "I" STATEMENTS

"You always..." invites combat. "I feel..." invites dialogue.



## ACTION

Rephrase one "you" statement into an "I" statement. (e.g., "You never listen" becomes "I feel unheard".)

# BOUNDARIES WITHOUT WALLS

Healthy boundaries aren't punishments; they are statements of clarity.



## ACTION

Practice a gentle boundary: "I need to pause this conversation and come back when I'm calmer".

# THE ART OF REPAIR

What matters most isn't avoiding conflict, but how you make things right afterwards.



## ACTION

Offer a simple, honest apology: "I overreacted. I'm sorry. Can we try again?".

# THE MESSY STUFF

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# SHAME NEEDS EMPATHY

Guilt says "I did something bad."  
Shame whispers "I am bad".



## ACTION

Shame shrinks when spoken to someone  
who can meet it with empathy.

# TRAUMA & GROUNDING

Trauma can leave the body on high alert, even when you are safe.



## ACTION

When feeling unsafe, ground yourself. Name five things you can see right now.

# BURNOUT IS AN EMPTY TANK

You can't regulate your emotions  
when your system has no fuel.



## ACTION

The answer isn't more effort, but more care. What is one small act of rest you can give yourself today?

# BUILDING HABITS

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# THE MORNING CHECK-IN

Before diving into the day,  
pause for thirty seconds.



## ACTION

Ask: "What's my emotional weather right now?" Just name it, without judgment.

# THE ONE-BREATH RULE

A single, slow breath can be a powerful buffer.



## ACTION

Take one conscious breath before you respond to a tricky email or a child's tantrum.

# PIGGYBACK YOUR HABITS

New habits stick best when anchored to something you already do.



## ACTION

Anchor your "emotional weather check-in" to your first cup of coffee.

# MICRO-KINDNESS

Emotional intelligence grows when you offer small doses of it to others.



## ACTION

Perform one small act of kindness: a genuine thank-you, a warm smile, or a quick check-in text.