

## Identifying Emotional Signs

It is important for you as leaders to recognize your own reactions to topics like mental health, sexual and relationship violence, substance use, and discrimination so that you can plan for self-care, set appropriate limits and boundaries for yourself, and ask for help from your co-leaders/group members. Sometimes, conversations like these can also be triggering in unexpected ways. Many people have been taught through their life experiences to silence the signals that our minds and bodies send us, so that we are less aware and able to respond to our own needs. The activity below is designed to help you identify your own signals and cues, as well as to help you share important cues with your co-leaders/group members. Please complete the below activity, then discuss with your group using the questions on the next page.

**Instructions for Identifying Emotional Signs Activity:** For each of the emotions listed on the left of the chart, complete the sentences in the right hand columns in as many ways and with as much detail as you can. Include sensations and behaviors (i.e., “my chest feels light,” “my stomach feels unsettled,” “I clench my jaw,” “my heart races,” “I turn away,” “my brow wrinkles”), as well as thoughts (i.e., “I tell myself x,” “I think I’m worthless,” “I never want this to end”), and feelings (i.e., “I feel terrified,” “I feel at peace”).

Emotion	Internal Signal I can tell that I’m feeling ____ when . . .	External Cue My partner/friend family member can tell that I’m feeling ____ when . . .
Happy		
Angry		
Sad		
Hurt		
Worried		
Scared		
Frustrated		

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Loved		
Embarrassed		
Proud		
Annoyed		
Jealous		
Passionate		

### Building on the Identifying Emotional Signs Activity—Personal Activity:

Was it difficult to identify the internal signals for any of the emotions listed?

- If yes, which ones?
- Why might those emotions be more difficult for you to identify for yourself?
- Take time to notice how you respond to your own emotional signals, and identify self-care/self-compassion responses that might help you to feel more comfortable with particular emotions, or that might help you move through those feelings.
- Did you list any signals for more than one emotion? Does that lead to confusion about your own emotional state?
  - How might you be able to utilize other internal signals to help you identify how you're feeling?

Was it difficult to identify the external cues for any of the emotions listed?

- If yes, which ones?
- Do you think that others are generally able to tell what you're feeling?
  - Do you think you intentionally try to mask certain feelings? Why do you think you do so?
- Did you list any cues for more than one emotion? Do you think that might be confusing for others?
  - How might you help others know what you're feeling in those situations?

### Sharing Important Information with Your Co-Leader:

Share the external cues you identified for yourself.

- Identify similarities and differences in how you express emotions.
  - Anything surprising?
  - How might you use your observations about differences in external emotional cues to help you identify tripees who might be in distress?
- Explore how you can be supportive to one another (i.e., "if you notice I seem anxious, it's most helpful if . . .").

Most of us have some topics that are more difficult for us to discuss. Explore together what topics are more difficult for you.

- What you might anticipate your emotional response to be when these challenging topics comes up, and what would be most supportive for you if you find yourself feeling distressed.