

CLIENT HANDOUT: EMOTION RECOGNITION: FEAR

Ekman's research demonstrates that producing the emotions' corresponding facial movements, trigger changes in physiology in the body and brain. The idea is to become familiar with emotions and their external environmental signals. People differ in how they experience fear, you may find that your hands get colder; that you're breathing more quickly and/or deeply; that you may begin to perspire; you may feel trembling or tightening of your large muscles; you may feel your face or body beginning to retreat into the chair. People almost always recognize when they are terrified, but many of us are not as familiar with the sensations that accompany slighter variations of fear. Knowing your own process and how it may differ from those you care about may help you better understand some of the miscommunications and misinterpretations that may occur or may have occurred in your life.

Caution: Experiencing the facial muscle movement exercises, most people will experience fear. Know how much fear is manageable for you and stop if you become overwhelmed at any time.

Instructions: You will be watching your reflection in a mirror, as you replicate the facial movements that accompany the primary emotion, fear. Once you begin to "feel" the emotion, if bearable, let it expand. After thirty seconds or so have passed, relax and consider what you felt.

Replicating the facial movements of fear:

1. Raise your upper eyelids as high as possible.
2. If possible, slightly tense your lower eyelids (if tensing your lower eyelids interferes with raising your upper eyelids, and then just focus on raising your upper eyelids.)
3. Let your jaw go slack.
4. With your jaw dropped, stretch your lips horizontally back toward your ears. (If this is not possible, then just let your jaw hang open.)
5. With your upper eyelids raised as high as they can go, stare intensely straight ahead.
6. Raise your eyebrows as high as you can.
7. With brows raised, pull your eyebrows together (if you can't do both, then just keep the eyebrows raised with your upper eyelids raised).

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EMOTION RECOGNITION: FEAR, CONT.

Concentrate on what those facial movements feel like — paying particular attention to your own process as you first begin to experience the feelings:

1. How does the feeling register?
2. What is your breathing like?
3. Do you notice a change in temperature?
4. How does it change your awareness and perception of your internal environment?
5. How does it change your awareness and perception of your external environment?
6. What other changes do you notice in your body?

Head: _____

Neck: _____

Face: _____

Throat: _____

Area in your chest surrounding your heart: _____

Shoulders: _____

Upper back: _____

Lower back: _____

Arms: _____

Stomach: _____

Legs: _____

7. As you let the feeling expand, what sensations or changes in sensations do you notice in your:

Head: _____

Neck: _____

Face: _____

Throat: _____

Area in your chest surrounding your heart: _____

Shoulders: _____

Upper back: _____

Lower back: _____

Arms: _____

Stomach: _____

Legs: _____