

## The 6 Core Emotions

It is said that there are 34000 human emotions! Making sense of all these is something that many scientists and psychologist have endeavoured to do for decades.

*Several proposals have been put forward for organising and categorising emotions into groups which are thought to relate to each other.*

- *William James in 1890 proposed four basic emotions: fear, grief, love, and rage, based on bodily involvement.*
- *Paul Ekman identified six basic emotions: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. Wallace V. Friesen and Phoebe C. Ellsworth worked with him on the same basic structure.*
- *Richard and Bernice Lazarus in 1996 expanded the list to fifteen emotions: aesthetic experience, anger, anxiety, compassion, depression, envy, fright, gratitude, guilt, happiness, hope, jealousy, love, pride, relief, sadness, and shame, in the book *Passion and Reason*.*
- *Psychologists identify twenty-seven categories of emotion: admiration, adoration, aesthetic appreciation, amusement, anger, anxiety, awe, awkwardness, boredom, calmness, confusion, contempt, craving, disappointment, disgust, empathic pain, entrancement, envy, excitement, fear, guilt, horror, interest, joy, nostalgia, pride, relief, romance, sadness, satisfaction, sexual desire, surprise, sympathy and triumph. This was based on 2185 short videos intended to elicit a certain emotion. These were then modelled onto a "map" of emotions.*

*Wikipedia; Contrasting and categorization of emotions*

Dr Gloria Wilcox, developed the "Feelings Wheel" (1982) comprising of 6 core emotions, identified as being: **Sad, Mad, Scared, Joyful, Powerful** and **Peaceful**.

The Feelings Wheel was designed to aid people in learning to recognise and communicate about their feelings. It consists of an inner circle with 5 sectors and two outer concentric circles. The sectors are each labelled with the name of a primary feeling (mad, sad, scared, joyful, powerful, and peaceful). The outer rings contain names of secondary feelings related to the primary ones.

The feelings wheel has been used to identify the specific feelings and emotions experienced at any given point in time and connect these with other linked groups of emotions, which branch off from the central circle. This helps to identify the root core feeling by tracing back

to one of the main core emotions in the centre of the chart. For instance, if someone is feeling confused, the associated *core* feeling (nearer the centre) is scared.

*This means that, while it's impossible to fully understand all 34,000 distinguishable emotions, learning how to accurately identify how each of the primary emotions is expressed within you can be empowering. It's especially useful for moments of intense feelings when the mind is unable to remain objective as it operates from its older compartments that deal with the fight or flight response. (Watkins, 2014)*

While the wheel is used as a tool to identify core emotions, it has also been used by teachers to help build emotional vocabulary as a way to help students better describe and understand their emotions. A student firstly chooses an adjective to accurately reflect how they are feeling then they can use the wheel to refine that choice and drill down on a more accurate description. For example, if you feel sad, a more specific descriptor might be lonely, which could then be refined even further to isolated.

Dr Wilcox's wheel has also been utilised by many therapists, counsellors and psychologists to better understand human emotions.