A vocabulary for feelings

Words for feelings, grouped by type and strength.

Many of us get by on a handful of words: fine, stressed, bad, upset. Finding a more exact word is not being fussy. Research suggests that people who can name feelings precisely manage them better.

Family	Mild	Medium	Strong
Sad	Flat, low, disappointed, wistful	Sad, hurt, lonely, discouraged, let down	Heartbroken, grief-stricken, despairing, empty
Angry	Irritated, annoyed, impatient, put out	Angry, frustrated, resentful, indignant	Furious, enraged, bitter, seething
Afraid	Uneasy, wary, nervous, unsure	Anxious, worried, scared, apprehensive	Terrified, panicked, petrified, dread
Ashamed	Self-conscious, awkward, sheepish	Embarrassed, guilty, regretful, inadequate	Humiliated, mortified, worthless, disgraced
Happy	Content, pleased, calm, relieved	Happy, cheerful, hopeful, grateful, proud	Joyful, delighted, elated, thrilled
Loving	Warm, friendly, fond, appreciative	Affectionate, caring, close, tender	Devoted, adoring, deeply connected
Surprised	Curious, puzzled, uncertain	Surprised, confused, startled	Shocked, stunned, astonished
Disgusted	Put off, uncomfortable	Repelled, appalled, contemptuous	Revolted, sickened, loathing
Worn out	Tired, bored, restless	Drained, overwhelmed, stuck	Exhausted, burnt out, numb

Using this list

- When you notice a feeling, start with the family, then look along the row for the word that fits best.
- Try the sentence: "If I had to be more exact, the word closer to it would be..."
- Feelings often come in blends. You can be relieved and sad, or angry and hurt, at once.
- Check the word against your body. Does it match what you feel in your chest, stomach or throat?

Words that fit how I have been feeling lately

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