

# The Information and Gifts of Each Emotion



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# Distressing Emotions:

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## Anger



### Information:

Violation

### Gift:

Boundaries / direction /  
motivation

### Information:

The information in anger is 'I feel violated.' When we experience anger, we may feel that our values have been violated, or boundaries violated, or that we've been wronged in some way.

### Gift:

The gift of anger is boundaries, direction-setting, and motivation. When we experience healthy anger, we draw a line between what's okay and what's not okay. Anger can also create clarity when none existed before, and can provide the motivation we need to make a change. For some, anger is an easier, more comfortable emotion to access than, say, hurt or helplessness. While anger may be the presenting emotion, it can be useful to ask yourself what's underneath the anger, what's driving it.

### Under access:

The risk of not accessing anger is that we can be taken advantage of by others. Anger helps set boundaries. When we don't access anger, we may allow ourselves to get used, misused, or overburdened by others, intentionally or unintentionally. Anger can be an undesirable or uncomfortable feeling for some, especially if they received messages growing up that anger was 'bad' or 'wrong.'

## Over access:

The risk of over accessing anger, or getting stuck in it and not letting it go, can be to place a distance, a thick boundary, an impenetrable wall between us and the other person. It can be hard, if not impossible, to connect through that wall. As a result, over accessing anger can make repairing relationships difficult.

## Feeling words in the Anger Family:

angry, annoyed, frustrated, irritated, infuriated, outraged, bitter, indignant, mad, perturbed, ticked, seething, cross, enraged, provoked, rankled, riled, livid, vexed, impatient, dismay, appalled, spiteful

## Note:

Notice how many of the synonyms for anger end in -ed, as if it was done unto us, as if it's not our fault. Some emotions have a direction; anger is one of them. Anger points outward, toward the other.

# Anxiety



## Information:

Not enough / too much / conflicting information

## Gift:

Clarity

## Information:

The information in anxiety is 'I don't have enough information,' or 'I am overwhelmed with information,' or 'I have conflicting information.' When we experience anxiety, we seek to gain more information, or to sort out the information we have in an effort to better understand what's going on.

## Gift:

The gift of anxiety is clarity - which can be confusing. How can anxiety bring clarity? If we don't experience anxiety, we don't feel the internal nudge to get more information, or to sort through the information we have in order to get clear and make sense of our experience.

## Under access:

The risk of under accessing anxiety is not getting the information needed to move forward in a wise manner. This can lead to premature action. Anxiety can be an undesirable, uncomfortable feeling. Some may prefer acting prematurely and sorting things out on the backend, rather than experiencing the discomfort of anxiety.

## Over access:

The risk of over accessing anxiety is analysis paralysis, staying in the data-gathering mode beyond the point of incremental usefulness. People who access more than a healthy level of anxiety can get stuck because of the overwhelming amount of information they sense is needed to feel comfortable moving forward.

## Feeling words in the Anxiety Family:

anxious, worried, stressed, nervous, uneasy, queasy, apprehensive, concerned, timid, jittery, angst, tense, misgiving, troubled, doubt, consternation, dubious, perplexed, overwhelmed

## Note:

Anxiety is a directionless emotion and is experienced by many as being in a fog. People experiencing anxiety often put their hands to their heads as if to help sort through all their thoughts.

# Fear



## Information:

Threat

## Gift:

Safety

## Information:

The information that's in fear is 'I'm feeling threatened.' When we experience fear, we feel that we, something or someone important to us, is endangered in some way.

## Gift:

The gift of fear is safety, because if we feel fear, we will take action to keep ourselves, and others, and what's valuable to us, safe.

## Under access:

The risk of under accessing fear is putting ourselves in danger or not taking actions to keep ourselves safe.

## Over access:

The risk of over accessing fear is becoming so risk averse that we minimize ourselves and what's possible.

## Feeling words in the Fear Family:

fear, afraid, petrified, panic, alarm, horror, frightened, panicky, scared, threatened, desperate, foreboding

## Note:

Some people ask "Why are fear and anxiety separated? Aren't they basically the same thing?" Our experience is that fear and anxiety are different and unique from each other. They offer different information within them, and provide us with different gifts.

# Sadness



## Information:

Loss

## Gift:

Sensitivity

## **Information:**

The information within sadness is 'I've lost something / someone.' When we experience sadness, we feel that we've lost something or someone important to us, or that someone close to us has experienced loss.

## **Gift:**

The gift of sadness is sensitivity, because when we can feel our own sadness, we can be with others in theirs.

## **Under access:**

The risk of under accessing sadness is being experienced by others as aloof, uncaring, or insensitive.

## **Over access:**

The risk of over accessing sadness is depression and / or depletion. Sadness may be the most distressing of all of the distressing emotions, perhaps because it can feel so uncontrollable, so final, so permanent.

## **Feeling words in the Sadness Family:**

sad, sorry, disappointed, depressed, mournful, sorrowful, unhappy, morose, despondent, gloomy, cheerless, dismal, grim, tragic, sombre, crushed, distraught

## **Note:**

Americans access more sadness than any other distressing emotion. It's hard to say exactly why. Perhaps because it's more accepted than other emotions; perhaps because it has the ability to connect us. :)

# Shame



## Information:

Wrongdoing / wrong-being

## Gift:

Humility

### Information:

The information within shame is 'I've done wrong' or 'I am wrong.' When we experience shame, we point the finger at ourselves, believing that we messed up, did wrong, made a mistake or that we are wrong or bad.

### Gift:

The gift of shame is humility. When we experience humility, when we admit to our wrongdoing, and / or accept our part of the blame, we are more likely to stay in relationship, particularly when it's hard to stay in relationship.

### Under access:

The risk of under accessing shame is being experienced by others as 'teflon,' as if nothing bad sticks, like our stuff doesn't stink, or not accepting responsibility for how we contributed to an issue.

### Over access:

The risk of over accessing shame can show up in a couple of different ways. It can manifest in the limiting belief that 'I am wrong / bad' which can result in the prevailing assumption "Whatever's wrong must be my fault." Or it can manifest as judging self and others by the same virtually impossible-to-meet set of values.

### Feeling words in the Shame Family:

shame, guilt, contrite, disgraceful, embarrassed, mortified, chagrined, condemned, culpable

## Note:

Shame points inward just as anger points outward. It's curious how many more words there are for different nuances of anger than there are for nuances of shame. Perhaps it's because anger can feel so strong, so righteous, and so right; and shame can feel so weakening, so wrong, and so wronging.

# Positive Emotions:

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## Information:

Confidence

## Gift:

Vitality

## Information:

The information in joy is 'I've got this!' When we experience joy, we feel a sense of confidence, of certainty, of capacity, of the ability to sustain a level of resilience through interpersonal conflict.

## Gift:

The gift of joy is vitality. When we experience joy, we have a sense of vitality, aliveness, buoyancy, resilience.

## Under access:

The risk of under accessing joy is the inability to withstand the 'thousand tiny paper cuts of being in relationship.' Every relationship of any significance brings with it a natural level of friction related to



having two people with different wants, needs, desires. Without joy, we have a more difficult time maintaining consistent emotional connections with anyone: coworkers, friends, family.

## Over access:

The risk of over accessing joy is under accessing distressing emotions and appearing inauthentic and / or intimidating to others. We can, at times, be overconfident, and thus dismissing, ignoring or simply not accessing what might reduce our confidence.

## Feeling words in the Joy Family:

joy, confidence, vitality, resilience, buoyancy, stability, self assured, certain, energetic, lively, brave, curious, eager, elated, comfortable, relaxed, hopeful, dynamic, excited, optimistic, bold

## Note:

Joy in this context doesn't mean happy. It's closer to meaning "engaged-in-life."

# Love



## Information:

Connection

## Gift:

Warmth

## Information:

The information in love is 'I feel connected.' When we experience love, we feel connected, joined with another, sharing a joint experience, a relationship.

## Gift:

The gift of love is warmth. When we experience love, we have a sense of warmth for another in a way that is connecting.

## Under access:

The risk of under accessing love is that we tend to withhold our warm energy. We become hard to read and are less likely to take emotional risk.

## Over access:

The risk of over accessing love (yes, you can over access love relative to other emotions) is missing the information in the distressing feelings, and ironically, appearing unreal and inaccessible to others. It can be hard to honestly relate to someone who only sees and feels the positive.

## Feeling words in the Love Family:

love, caring, warmth, connection, attentive, tender, compassionate, fond, attached, adore, devoted, cherish, treasure

## Note:

Here, love doesn't refer so much to romantic love. It refers to the quality shared within any warm, kindly connection with anyone - coworkers, neighbors, friends, family.

*For specific measurements of the extent to which an individual accesses each of these emotions, consider learning more about [how the EQ Profile can help](#).*



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