Feelings and needs: a printable list with a worksheet

IN SHORT

Feelings say how you are; needs say what matters to you underneath. This list helps you name both more precisely, and the worksheet helps you spot judgements dressed up as feelings.

By Taro Turtle · October 23, 2026

In a difficult conversation the words that would make it easier are often the ones missing. "I'm angry" may be true, but underneath there is sometimes disappointment or worry. And behind the irritation about the dishwasher there may be a wish for reliability.

The list is a tool, not a test. Read it before you prepare a conversation and mark the words that fit.

The separation of feelings, needs and judgements that only sound like feelings comes from Nonviolent Communication (NVC) as described by Marshall B. Rosenberg. This page is a short working selection for everyday conflicts, not a complete inventory; it is meant to be printed, marked up and used.

How to use the list

1. Think of the situation and read the feelings slowly. Which words make something in you react?
2. For each of those feelings ask: what matters to me here, what is missing? Look for the need in the second list.
3. Check the words you wrote down first against the third list: is it a feeling, or a judgement about the other person?
4. Make one sentence of it: "I feel …, because … matters to me."

Feelings

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When something is missing

disappointed | sad | hurt | angry | annoyed | frustrated | exhausted | overwhelmed | worried | unsure | scared | helpless | lonely | embarrassed | at a loss | impatient | tense | confused

When things are right

relieved | grateful | calm | glad | hopeful | curious | moved | relaxed | connected | proud | at ease | motivated

Needs

With others

reliability | respect | closeness | recognition | trust | honesty | belonging | being seen

For yourself

rest | space | recovery | safety | autonomy | clarity | direction

Doing things together

fairness | a say | support | order | agreements that hold | meaning

Sounds like a feeling, is a judgement

These words say more about what the other person did than about how you are. They are not forbidden, but they invite defence. Ask yourself: what do I feel underneath?

Judgements in feeling form

ignored | used | misunderstood | let down | not taken seriously | attacked | manipulated | rejected | patronised | betrayed

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Worksheet: find the feeling and the need

Read each sentence. Which feeling might lie underneath, and which need? There is more than one right answer.

1. My colleague presented my idea in the meeting as his own.

2. My roommate played music at three in the morning.

3. My partner booked the holiday without asking me.

4. My friend cancelled an hour before we were due to meet.

5. I feel patronised by my manager.

Worksheet: build the sentence

For each situation, write one sentence following the pattern "I feel …, because … matters to me." Take the words from the lists above.

1. For the third time, your brother has not paid back the money he borrowed by the date you agreed.

2. Yesterday a colleague helped you with a difficult presentation without being asked.

3. Your partner plans the weekend without asking you.

4. For weeks you have spent every evening doing things for other people.

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Answers

Worksheet: find the feeling and the need

1. Feeling: angry, hurt. Need: recognition, fairness.
2. Feeling: exhausted, annoyed. Need: rest, recovery.
3. Feeling: disappointed, sad. Need: a say, closeness.
4. Feeling: disappointed. Need: reliability.
5. A judgement in feeling form. Underneath, perhaps: frustrated, unsure. Need: autonomy, trust.

Worksheet: build the sentence

1. "I feel disappointed, because reliability matters to me."
2. "I feel grateful, because support matters to me."
3. "I feel frustrated, because having a say matters to me."
4. "I feel exhausted, because rest matters to me."

The four steps of observation, feeling, need and request are based on the work of Dr. Marshall Rosenberg and the Center for Nonviolent Communication (cnvc.org). This site is not run by a CNVC-certified trainer.

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