

Understanding the Four Basic Emotions: A Deep Dive into Glad, Sad, Mad, and Scared

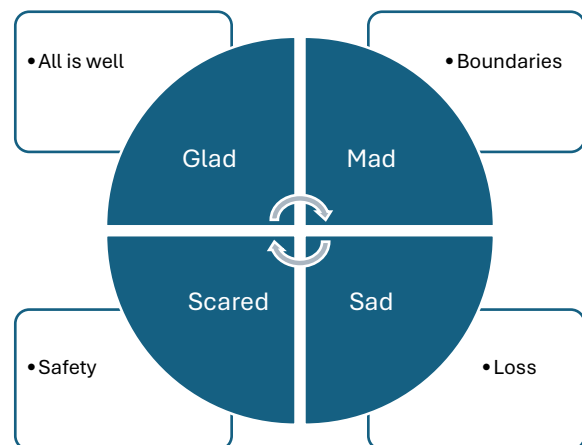
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We are all connected by a shared experience of the four basic emotions: glad, sad, mad, and scared. These feelings are fundamental to our human experience and color our interactions with ourselves and the world around us. Although these emotions are universal, how we experience and express them makes each of us unique individuals. Understanding why we feel these emotions and how to manage them can lead to deeper self-awareness and improved relationships with others.

Understanding Emotions: The Basics

Why Do We Feel Our Feelings?

- **Glad** : We feel glad when things are going well in our lives. Joy often stems from achievements, relationships, or fulfilling experiences.
- **Sad** : Sadness surfaces during moments of loss. This can include the loss of reputation, influence, money, time, energy, a place (such as work or home), a relationship, position, power, or even the death of a loved one.
- **Mad** : Anger typically arises when boundaries or rules are broken. Often, these boundaries are not communicated to others, leading to frustration when someone else does not adhere to them. It's important to consider whether the rule was agreed upon or is a silent expectation. Many "rules" about life and behavior are passed down through generations, such as "If you work hard, you'll succeed" or "Younger people shouldn't die before older ones." Life, however, often defies these unwritten rules.
- **Scared** : Fear emerges when we perceive a safety risk. Notably, we are unique in the animal kingdom for the way we can scare ourselves with our own thoughts, even in the absence of real danger. Deep in our brain is the amygdala, a part that acts like a smoke detector, alerting us to potential threats. Just because our amygdala is triggered doesn't mean we are in actual danger. In fact, we often override our innate fears and ignore the protective signals our brains give us



The Spectrum of Emotions

Each of these four basic emotions exists along a continuum. There are numerous shades and variations within each emotion. By identifying our feelings more precisely, we can understand the underlying issues that provoke them. For instance, the feeling of anger can range from mild irritation to intense rage; sadness can involve everything from disappointment to profound grief.

Find the specific words to describe your experience



Feeling	Mild	Medium	Strong
Glad	Pleased	Happy	Joyful
Mad	Annoyed	Angry	Rage
Sad	Disappointed	Isolated	Depressed
Scared	Startled	Fearful	Panic

Tracking and Managing Emotions

To harness the power of our emotions, we can develop a system for tracking our feelings over time:

1. **Identify the Feeling** : Begin by simply recognizing what emotion you are experiencing. Is it glad, sad, mad, or scared?
2. **Clarify the Issue** : Once you identify the feeling, explore the cause. What triggered that emotion?
3. **Recognize Patterns** : Set a timer during the day to pause and check in with your feelings. Use a feelings wheel or a similar tool to mark the emotions you are experiencing. Over time, this practice can help you recognize patterns in your emotional responses.

The Dichotomy of Expression

An important aspect of emotional management lies in how we express our feelings outwardly versus how we experience them internally. Sometimes the expressions we observe in others do not align with their internal experiences.

- **Crying** : While crying is commonly associated with sadness, some individuals may cry when frustrated or relieved. Understanding the context of these tears can provide deeper insights into emotional expressions.
- **Laughter** : Similarly, laughter is often linked to joy; however, people may laugh when they feel nervous or uncomfortable, using humor as a defense mechanism.

Conclusion

Managing our basic emotions—glad, sad, mad, and scared—is essential for emotional health and effective communication. By deepening our understanding of these feelings, recognizing their triggers, and learning how to track and express them, we can navigate our emotional landscape more skillfully. In doing so, we can foster greater connections with ourselves and others, ultimately enhancing our overall quality of life. Embracing the complexity of our emotions allows us to use them as tools for understanding and growth rather than obstacles to overcome.

To learn more about the impact of emotions on leaderships and organizational outcomes, contact me at sarah@ampersandbox.net