

# **SESSION 5: HOW TO RECOGNIZE MY FEELINGS**

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Participants will recognize their own feeling levels of comfort and discomfort.
2. Each participants will discover for herself or himself which situations accompany different levels of comfort, how their bodies feel at different levels, and what emotions are attached to these situations and levels.
3. Participants will understand that recognizing their feelings and what triggers the emotional reactions can help them deal with situations that might lead to unsafe sex.
4. Participants will experience comfort through relaxation.

## **RATIONALE:**

Feelings play three basic roles in practicing safer sex behavior. First, they serve as an early warning system. If an adolescent can recognize that he or she is beginning to feel discomfort, then the adolescent can activate effective coping strategies.

Second, feelings can either help or hinder in the coping process. If the intensity of feelings is high, it is more difficult to think straight and put into play appropriate behaviors. For example, the adolescent who is so highly excited sexually that he or she loses self-control is unlikely to use a condom.

Third, feelings can act as motivators. Feeling scared may lead one person to run away. Feeling hurt may encourage striking back. Feeling depressed may direct someone else to hide and withdraw. "If I know that when I have a certain feeling I am more prone to act dysfunctionally, then I can begin to do something about it."

Dealing with feelings is especially important when working with adolescents because they may be unrealistic, unsure, and unclear about their feelings, particularly in situations they have not experienced before.

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. Introduce the group members and have them report an act or attribute that makes them feel proud. Then review the homework and success in practicing safer sex.
2. Explain the importance of recognizing feelings and teach participants how to assess their own comfort-discomfort levels through using the Feeling Thermometer and prepared examples.
3. Have participants generate situations in which they would feel high discomfort, moderate discomfort, low discomfort and no discomfort. Use volunteers to model the task with the group leader probing to help identify the situations.
4. Using the same situations have participants identify bodily feelings associated with each of the situations. Employ modeling and probing as well as sharing of information.

5. Again using the same situations attach labels to the emotions that accompanied these situations. Model and provide assistance through a list of examples of emotional words.
6. Introduce what one can do to reduce discomfort through leading participants through a relaxation exercise.
7. Assign homework for next session.
8. Strengthen group functioning and individual contributions through appreciating what members gave to today's session.

### **MATERIALS:**

Copies of Feeling Thermometer  
Tokens  
Pencils  
Copies of Emotional Terms  
Feeling Thermometer Homework Sheet

### **Exercise 1: Introducing and Reviewing**

GROUP LEADER SAYS

Welcome back.

It sometimes takes a while to get to know people, so let's introduce ourselves again.

This time tell your name and one thing about yourself—an action you took or a quality you have—that makes you feel really proud of.

Like me—my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am really proud of \_\_\_\_\_. (PICK SOMETHING YOU GENUINELY FEEL GOOD ABOUT)

GO AROUND THE ROOM AND HAVE EACH PERSON GIVE THEIR NAME AND AN ACTION THEY TOOK OR QUALITY THEY HAVE THAT MAKES THEM FEEL VERY PROUD.

That was great.

Here are some tokens of appreciation for you to use when a group member does something you like.

I'll be using them to give group members compliments.

PASS OUT SOME TOKENS TO EACH GROUP MEMBER TO USE FOR SHOWING APPRECIATION TO OTHER GROUP MEMBERS.

Remember at the end of the last session you were given some homework—to talk to a friend who had not come-out.

You were to share what you have learned about coming-out.

How did that go?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES AND GIVE OUT TOKENS TO THOSE WHO PRODUCE. TOKENS CAN BE GIVEN OUT ALSO FOR OTHER POSITIVE BEHAVIOR—LISTENING WELL, MAKING HELPFUL OR SUPPORTIVE COMMENTS.

I also like to start sessions finding out how people feel.

If 100 is the most discomfort, the worst, the pits, sucks, nightmare and 0 is total no discomfort, cool, swift, fabulous, deep, how do each of you feel right now?

Like I feel about a \_\_\_\_\_. (GIVE HOW YOU REALLY FEEL.)

ENCOURAGE ANSWERS.

We are going to learn more about feelings today—in a few minutes.

Before we go into feelings, between the last session and today, what did you do that helped keep you safe or that made your life better?

It could be anything that kept you away from the risk of getting HIV or that made you feel good.

So what did you do?

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION AND GIVE OUT TOKENS FOR EVEN THE SLIGHTEST POSITIVE ANSWERS. ALSO GIVE OUT TOKENS FOR LISTENING WELL, BEING SUPPORTIVE, AND INSIGHT.

### **Exercise 2: Why Feelings Are Important and How To Begin Discovering Them**

Today our goal is to be clear about how we feel.

Why is that important?

Well, if I am so hot to have sex that I am running around the room chasing my partner, falling down with my pants around my ankles, breathing hard, am I going to worry about using a condom?

WAIT FOR ANSWER.

No—I am out of control.

If am being pushed to have unsafe sex when I don't want it and if I don't realize how much discomfort I feel in time, I will have much more trouble getting out of the situation.

Being aware of my feelings as they start to go up, I could have caught things in time and done something about it.

What if every time I feel very depressed and lonely, I go looking for sex— do you think I'm going to care about how safe it is?  
WAIT FOR ANSWERS.

If I recognized my pattern, I could change it before I got in trouble.

So knowing how strong I feel, the situations in which feeling come up, how to recognize those feelings, and what emotions they are can help me.

What are some hot situations that you can think of?

IF NO ONE COMES UP WITH ANY RIGHT AWAY, ASK THE FOLLOWING:

Here are some situations that might create a feeling of discomfort.

Asking someone for a date.

Dealing with a lover who wants unprotected sex.

Refusing to smoke crack with a friend.

Returning a sweater to a store.

Pick one and we'll role play it.

HAVE THE GROUP SELECT A SCENE AND OBTAIN VOLUNTEERS.

Who will be the \_\_\_\_\_ (boyfriend, girl friend, same-sex partner, clerk, etc) and who will be \_\_\_\_\_ (the other person in the scene)?

While you two role play the scene, the rest of us will observe.

We will look for what emotions you are showing.

ASSIGN OBSERVER ROLES TO EACH PERSON IN THE GROUP WHO IS NOT PLAYING ONE OF THE PARTS.

You watch the face of the first person, and you watch the face of the second person.

You look for emotion in the voice of the first person, and you the second person.

You watch the posture of the first person, and you the second person.

You watch the hands of the first person, and you watch the hands of the second person.

OK, now let's do the role play.

COACH THE PLAYERS IN ACTING OUT THE SCENE. MAKE IT A BRIEF SCENE. WHEN IT IS FINISHED, PASS OUT TOKENS AND ASK THE TWO ACTORS THE FOLLOWING:

How did you feel?

HAVE THE TWO ACTORS USE THE FEELING THERMOMETER LEVELS.

What did you like about what you did?

WAIT FOR ANSWERS.

What would you do differently?

WAIT FOR ANSWERS.

Now let's hear what the observers picked up.

What emotions did the two people show?

ASK EACH OBSERVER WHAT THEY SAW.

Remember that feeling tense or scared is not bad.

There is a smart part of me down inside that listens for anxiety, and, when it hears it, starts yelling "Fix it! Fix it!"

The anxiety is a warning.

But if I don't let the smart part hear the anxiety, the smart part gets deaf and dumb.

Here is the Feeling Thermometer.

HANDOUT THE FEELING THERMOMETER.

100 means extreme discomfort, and 0 means no discomfort.

So we are not talking about happy-unhappy, good-bad or anything like that.

Say you owe this older guy \$20 and you haven't got it.

There's a knock on the door and he's standing there all mean like.

He says, "I'll be back at 10 o'clock tonight. You have \$25 for me by then. \$5 is for interest. Have it or...."

He draws his finger across his throat and leaves with a low laugh.

What would your Feeling Thermometer read?

How much discomfort would you feel?

ENCOURAGE ANSWERS.

You can see that we all have our own feeling thermometer readings.

No two people are the same.

Let's try another one.

You've met this very nice person and you like them a lot.

You are going to have sex with them, and you are both crawling in the bed feeling turned on.

Your partner says, "Oh, by the way, I'm HIV positive."

Don't think about it too long.

Give me your feeling thermometer level—how much discomfort?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES

One more. Your lover says to you, "I'm tired of this safer sex stuff. Tonight's the night, and, if you don't do it, we're through."

What's your level of discomfort going to be?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES AND NOTE THE RANGE.

Again you can see we all have our own way of feeling.

### **Exercise 3: Feeling Situations**

OK, now let's figure out for you what situations are high in discomfort and low in discomfort.

Who will volunteer to help me show everyone how to do this?

SELECT A VOLUNTEER AND PASS OUT A TOKEN.

Thanks for agreeing to help me.

I want you to think of a situation where you would feel 100—the most discomfort.

Then write a word or two by the 100 on the Feeling Thermometer so you know what it is about.

For example, if getting fired from a job was high for me, I'd write, "Fired from " and the name of the place.

IF THE PERSON HAS DIFFICULTY, ASK SOME STIMULATING QUESTIONS: 1) SOMETIMES HAVING SOMEONE CLOSE DIE IS 100. DID THAT HAPPEN TO YOU? 2) OR FACING SOMEONE WHO IS VERY ANGRY AT YOU? 3) HOW ABOUT TELLING SOMEONE "NO" OR 4) GETTING HURT BY A PERSON YOU REALLY LIKED—DID THAT HAPPEN? OR 5) HAVING SOMEONE CALL YOU A DYKE, FAG, NIGGER, SPIC—DID THAT HAPPEN TO YOU—

Thank you very much for helping us show how to select a situation high in discomfort.

Has everyone got the idea about picking a high situation—

ANSWER QUESTIONS.

Take a few minutes, think of a situation, and write down a couple of key words.

WAIT A FEW MINUTES.

Now think of a situation of yours that shows the 0 end of the scale.

Like sitting under a tree in the park, petting my dog, watching the waves come in, brushing my teeth, taking a shower, and lying in bed.

So think of a completely comfortable situation for you and write down the key words.

ALLOW A FEW MINUTES. THEN ASK FOR A COUPLE TO READ WHAT THEY WROTE. CONTINUE USING TOKENS TO CATCH SOMEONE DOING SOMETHING GOOD.

Who will share what they put down for that one—

ENCOURAGE ABOUT TWO PEOPLE. BY THE TIME THE SESSION IS OVER EVERYONE WILL HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO VOLUNTEER.

Thanks.

Now think of a situation that fits at 75 on the Feeling Thermometer and write it down and find one for 25 on the Feeling Thermometer and write it down also.

ALLOW A FEW MINUTES.

So everyone should have four situations—one at 100, one at 75, one at 25, and one at 0.

Has everyone got 4?

IF SOMEONE DOES NOT HAVE ALL FOUR, ASK THE CLASS TO HELP THE PERSON OUT.

#### **Exercise 4: Recognizing Bodily Feelings**

Now I want you to answer the question, "What is going on in your body during these situations?"

Who will volunteer to help me show how this works?

SELECT A NEW VOLUNTEER AND GIVE OUT A TOKEN.

What is the situation that you wrote down for 100?

OBTAIN ANSWER.

When that situation happened, how did your head feel?

OBTAIN ANSWER. YOU ARE LOOKING FOR THINGS LIKE "ACHED, TIGHT, DIZZY, LIGHT HEADED."

What about your mouth and your throat? How did they feel?

OBTAIN ANSWER. YOU ARE LOOKING FOR ANSWERS LIKE "DRY, TIGHT."

What about your neck, back and shoulders?

OBTAIN ANSWER. YOU ARE LOOKING FOR "TIGHT, STIFF, SORE."

And your hands?

OBTAIN ANSWER. YOU ARE LOOKING FOR "SWEATY, FIDGETY."

Here's a good one—your stomach. How did your gut feel?

OBTAIN ANSWER. LOOK FOR "SICK, NAUSEOUS, JUMPY, IN KNOTS, TIGHT."

What about your legs?

OBTAIN ANSWER. LOOK FOR "TENSE, WEAK, TWITCHING."

That was very good!

So now everyone write down how your body felt opposite each of the four situations that you listed.

ALLOW SOME TIME FOR PARTICIPANTS TO WRITE DOWN HOW THEIR BODIES FELT. THEN ASK FOR TWO VOLUNTEERS TO SHARE WHAT THEY WROTE.

Will two people share what they wrote down?

OBTAIN RESPONSES AND GIVE OUT TOKENS.

### **Exercise 5: Labelling Emotions**

Now see if you can find a word that describes the emotions that went with each situation.

By emotions, I mean things like sad, happy, angry, scared, and nervous.

Often it is hard for people to think of emotion words.

Here is a list that might be helpful to you.

HAND OUT LIST OF EMOTIONS.

Now put down the emotional words that best fit what you experienced.

ALLOW TIME TO WRITE DOWN EMOTIONS AND THEN ASK FOR TWO VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE SITUATION, INDICATE WHETHER IT WAS A 100, 75, 25 OR 0, AND TELL WHAT EMOTIONS THEY WROTE DOWN.

Would two of you volunteer to tell us what your wrote down?

SELECT VOLUNTEERS.

Tell us the situation, what level it was, and the emotion words you wrote down.

HAVE VOLUNTEERS SHARE AND GIVE OUT TOKENS.

That was great.

So what was your reaction to today's session on getting in touch with your own feelings?

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

### **Exercise 6: Getting Relaxed**

Later, in another session, we are going to work on what you can do when you feel high discomfort.

For now, I just want you to get relaxed.

Get yourself in a comfortable position.

ON THE RELAXATION EXERCISE READ THE WORDS IN A SLOW, RHYTHMICAL, SOFT VOICE. DON'T RUSH IT. THE BEST GUIDE IS HOW RELAXED YOU FEEL AS YOU GO OVER IT.

Now just pay attention to your breathing. Observe your breath.

PAUSE

Now breathe out slowly three times. PAUSE

Feel the cool breath coming in and the warm breath going out.

Feel the cool breath coming in and the warm breath going out.

PAUSE

Think of your arm as a gate blowing gently in the breeze.

PAUSE

Let your arm swing back and forth like that gate in the breeze.

As it blows back and forth, back and forth, breathe in and out; breathe in and out.

PAUSE

Just let your arm swing back and forth as you breathe in and out.

PAUSE

Back and forth, back and forth.

PAUSE

Now make a tight fist and see how that feels. PAUSE

Now release it. PAUSE

Notice the difference between being tight and relaxed.

Now focus on your face.

If you feel any tight spots around your eyes or forehead or cheeks or mouth, say, "Tight forehead," sigh and let the tension drain away.

Check out your head and neck. PAUSE

Any tension? Say, "Tight neck" and sigh. Let it out. PAUSE

Check your shoulders. PAUSE

Now your back. PAUSE. Your chest. PAUSE. Your stomach. PAUSE

Check out your hips. PAUSE. Sigh and let the tension go.

What about your legs, ankles and feet? Any tension there?

PAUSE. Sigh and let it go.

OK, now breathe out a couple of times.

Next I want you to think of a special place where you feel safe and really good.

Try to use all your senses.

Hear the sounds; see the colors; smell the air; taste the sweetness; feel the touch of familiar things. PAUSE

Really get the place fixed in your mind.

See yourself there, feeling at peace. PAUSE FOR A MINUTE.

Now take a big yawn and stretch.

Each person relaxes in a different way.

Some like breathing; some like releasing the tension in their bodies; and others prefer thinking of a safe place.

Practice these different approaches and see which one works best for you.

For homework, take one situation that happens to you between now and when we meet again.

Indicate what the feeling level is, remember what went on in your body and what emotions you felt.

Put your rating on the Feeling Thermometer that I am going to give you to take with you.

PASS OUT THE FEELING THERMOMETER.

This Feeling Thermometer asks you to rate some other situations as well.

Put how you feel under "Feelings."

Then rate what you would do.

If you would have unsafe sex in that situation, you would rate your actions a 100.

If you would rate your actions completely safe, give yourself a 1.

You can rate your actions anywhere in between.

Has everyone got the idea?

We'll go over it at the beginning of the next session.

You have all worked really hard today.

Where are you on the Feeling Thermometer now?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES.

Let's end by giving some strokes to each other.

Tell other members of the group what you appreciated about them in today's session.

ENCOURAGE GIVING STROKES AND GIVE STROKES TO THOSE WHO MIGHT BE OVERLOOKED BY OTHERS IN THE GROUP.

I will see you next on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) at \_\_\_\_\_ (time).

END OF SESSION 5

### FEELING THERMOMETER WORKSHEET

<u>FEELING THERMOMETER</u>	<u>SITUATIONS</u>	<u>BODY FEELINGS</u>	<u>EMOTIONS</u>
100 (extreme discomfort)			
90			
80			
70			
60			
50			
40			
30			
20			
10			
0 (most comfortable)			

## FEELING WORD LIST

- ANGRY:** ANGRY, ANNOYED, BITTER, BURNED UP, CRITICAL, DISGUSTED, DISMAYED, ENRAGED, ENVIOUS, FED UP, FRUSTRATED, FURIOUS, HATEFUL, HOSTILE, IMPATIENT, IRATE, IRRITATED, LIVID, MAD, OUTRAGED, PUT OUT, RILED, RESENTFUL, SEETHING, SORE, TICKED OFF, WORKED UP.
- CONFUSED:** ANXIOUS, AWKWARD, BAFFLED, BEWILDERED, BOTHERED, CONFUSED, DAZED, DISORGANIZED, DISORIENTED, DISTRACTED, DISTURBED, EMBARRASSED, JOLTED, LOST, MIXED UP, PANICKY, PARALYZED, PERPLEXED, PUZZLED, SHOCKED, STUCK, STUNNED, SURPRISED, TANGLED, TRAPPED, TROUBLED, UNCERTAIN, UNCOMFORTABLE, UNDECIDED, UNSURE.
- FEARFUL:** AFRAID, APPREHENSIVE, AWED, CAUTIOUS, CHICKEN, EDGY, FEARFUL, FRIGHTENED, HESITANT, HORRIFIED, ILL AT EASE, INTIMIDATED, JUMPY, NERVOUS, PANICKED, SCARED, SHAKY, STRESSED, TENSE, TERRIFIED, THREATENED, TIMID, UNEASY, WORRIED.
- HAPPY:** ALIVE, AMUSED, CHEERFUL, CONTENT, DELIGHTED, ECSTATIC, ELATED, ENERGIZED, EXCITED, FANTASTIC, FULFILLED, GLAD, GREAT, HOPEFUL, LIVELY, OPTIMISTIC, OVERJOYED, PLEASED, PROUD, REFRESHED, RELIEVED, SATISFIED, SPIRITED, THANKFUL, THRILLED, TURNED ON, UP, WONDERFUL.
- LOVING:** ADMIRING, AFFECTIONATE, AMICABLE, AMOROUS, ATTRACTED, CARING, CLOSE, CRAVING, DEVOTED, DESIROUS, FOND, FRIENDLY, HOT, INTERESTED, KINDLY, LIKING, LOVING, LOYAL, NEIGHBORLY, MOTHERLY, PASSIONATE, SENTIMENTAL, SYMPATHETIC, TENDER, WANTING, WARM.
- SAD:** AWFUL, BAD, BLUE, BUMMED OUT, CRUSHED, DEPRESSED, DESPERATE, DEVASTATED, DISAPPOINTED, DISSATISFIED, DISTRESSED, DOWN, GLOOMY, GLUM, HOPELESS, HURT, LONELY, LOW, MISERABLE, PAINFUL, SAD, SORRY, TERRIBLE, TURNED OFF, UNHAPPY, UNLOVED, UPSET.
- STRONG:** ACTIVE, AGGRESSIVE, ALERT, ASSERTIVE, BOLD, BRAVE, CALM, COOL, CAPABLE, CONFIDENT, DETERMINED, EAGER, ENERGETIC, FORCEFUL, GREAT, HEALTHY, OPEN, POSITIVE, POTENT, POWERFUL, RELAXED, SECURE, SOLID, STRONG, SUPER, SURE, TOUGH.
- WEAK:** ASHAMED, BORED, DEFENSELESS, EXHAUSTED, FRAGILE, FRAIL, GUILTY, HELPLESS, ILL, IMPOTENT, INADEQUATE, INCAPABLE, INSECURE, LIFELESS, LOST, OVERWHELMED, PASSIVE, POWERLESS, RUN-DOWN, SHAKY, SHY, SICK, SLOW, SMALL, STUPID, TIMID, TIRED, USELESS, VULNERABLE, WORN OUT.

## FEELING THERMOMETER HOMEWORK

### FEELING THERMOMETER LEVELS      SAFE ACTION LEVELS

100 = uncomfortable  
90  
80  
70  
60  
50  
40  
30  
20  
10  
1 = comfortable

100 = unprotected sex  
90  
80  
70  
60  
50  
40  
30  
20  
10  
1 = protected sex

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SITUATION

FEELING LEVEL  
(How feel?)

ACTION LEVEL  
(What Do?)

1. MY SITUATION (DESCRIBE).
  
2. GOING ON A FIRST DATE.
  
3. SEX PARTNER WANTS UNPROTECTED SEX.
  
4. SAYING "NO" TO GOING TO A PORNO MOVIE.
  
5. FRIEND OFFERS YOU CRACK.
  
6. GOING TO A WEEKEND BASH WITHOUT PARENTS BEING THERE.
  
7. BEING ASKED OUT BY A VERY SEXY PERSON.