

2.18 Express Your Emotions Numerically

Calibrate and communicate the intensity of your emotions.

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Expressing your emotions on a numeric scale—for example, from one to ten—can help you communicate your emotional state more accurately and give others useful information about how to interact with you. When others use this tool, you will understand them better and be able to assess an appropriate response.

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- Placing your emotions on a numerical scale can help you better understand yourself and your reactions.
- Communicating this scale to others can foster mutual understanding and create signposts in otherwise vague territory.

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- Not everyone interprets intensity the same way, so there may still be differences.
- Some people find describing their emotions in numbers uncomfortable.

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When you feel an intense emotion that you want to communicate with someone else, name the emotion and assign it a number from one to ten. For example, when you receive a gift that you really love, you may feel joy at an intensity of nine out of ten. When someone cuts you off on the road, you may feel frustration at an intensity of seven out of ten.

This is an intuitive judgment rather than a scientific process, so don't worry too much about making sure that every emotion you feel fits consistently onto the same scale. Go with your gut and understand that the first number that pops into your head will be the right number. If you prefer a different scale, such as zero to ten or one to five, feel free to use that instead.

The number you share will give whoever you're talking to valuable information about how to communicate with you. If they ask you how angry you are, and you scream "Ten!" they will know that you're triggered and might need to calm down before you can engage in a rational debate. On the other hand, if you say "Two," they will know you are only mildly affected and capable of considering other points of view. This behavior should of course be calibrated to your particular temperament. The scale is relative, and some people might consider a two to be unusually angry, whereas others would experience it as completely normal.

If you and your partner regularly use this scale, you will both become more accustomed to interpreting each other's moods and learn to respond appropriately. Hopefully, this will result in fewer high-intensity experiences of anger and frustration and more of pleasure and joy.

