



MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

November 10, 2021



This week...

Exploring Emotions on Remembrance Day

On November 11, Canadians pause in silence to remember the men and women who have served and who continue to serve our country during times of war, conflict, and peace.

The official end of World War I was 103 years ago, on November 11, 1918. Every year on November 11, many provinces and territories designate this day as a statutory holiday, so that people can reflect on the sacrifices that have been made for civil safety.

And here is where my story begins...

My previous career saw me travel across Canada regularly. However, more times than not, I spent November 11 in Ontario where Remembrance Day – at least in the private sector – was a working day. Each November 11, one minute before 11 am, an announcement came on the office loudspeaker acknowledging the day, remembering the sacrifices of past and present veterans, and then two minutes of silence commenced.

You could hear a pin drop. Phones didn't ring, people didn't speak, the only sound was the white noise that you only hear when a room is otherwise completely silent. Each person in their own space, in their own reflection. What emotions were they feeling?

It was a 'forced stop' in our day.

Before I worked in that office in Toronto, there were some years that I attended a ceremony at the local cenotaph, and other years when I was off work and – I admit – 11 am would pass by before I knew it. After spending a couple of years in Toronto on Remembrance Day, where the office stopped for two minutes, that never happened to me again.

Now, I take those two minutes or more to arrive with gratitude and respect. This pause gives me time to welcome a flood of emotions that I name, observe, acknowledge, and truly allow myself to feel as I honour, connect, and remember.

What emotions do you experience in those two minutes of silence, or throughout the day? These moments, hours, or days may be filled with many feelings based on personal experience and context.

What thoughts and emotions will arise for you this Remembrance Day? What words come to mind?

- **Respect:** reflection, tradition, prayer
- **Love:** togetherness, connection, family, nationalism
- **Gratitude:** blessed, grateful, sacrifice, thanks, peace
- **Humility:** serving, touching, selfless, saving, lives
- **Pride:** amazing, awe, celebration, dignity, honour, honouring, joy, proud, support, veterans, wonderful, victory
- **Sadness:** attack, died, fallen, grief, injured, sad, sorry, sorrow, loss, lost
- **Discontent:** angry, clash, disapproval, disgust, outrage, terror, victims, violence, horror, poverty, poor, senselessness
- **Your own emotions in words:** take note which emotions come to mind

The past year and a half has brought many challenges and emotional times. Learning to identify and understand what we are feeling at any given moment helps us move through uncomfortable emotions. However, it is often hard to identify emotions as we rarely feel one emotion at once. We may feel excited but scared; sad as well as angry.

Try this: When you're feeling an emotion that is uncomfortable, unpleasant, or creating distress, take a moment to *pause*, take a *deep breath*, and *name your emotion*. ([This article and particularly the Emotion Wheel](#) will help!)

Take an extra moment and get curious — find more specific words to define how you are feeling. Doing this will activate your brain in a healthy way that keeps you connected with how you are feeling, but still creates a bit of space between you and the feeling. You can then evaluate the feeling and choose how you want to respond, rather than just reacting.

Use language like “I am **feeling**_____” rather than “I am _____.”

Example “I am ***feeling*** overwhelmed” rather than “I am overwhelmed.”

After you've named your feeling, **take a moment to ask yourself, “What can I learn from this feeling?” and continue to explore the feeling.**

The more often you try this process, the more adept your brain will become in learning how to respond and how to evaluate your feelings, rather than simply reacting to them. There is power and clarity to be found in naming our feelings. By simply labelling an emotion, we can create distance between ourselves and our experience that allows us to choose [how to respond](#) – rather than *react* - to challenges.

Want to learn more:

[Here](#) is a great read by the Harvard Business Review.

Sources

The Shine App | [Struggling to Name How You Feel? Try Using This Wheel](#)

Reframe Your Brain with Keridwyn | [Name your feelings to improve your ability to respond \(not react\) to your emotions](#)

Body and Soul | [Why 'naming your feelings' could be the fastest way to stop your anxiety in its tracks](#)