



November 8, 2023

Exploring Emotions on Remembrance Day

This week, we bring you an updated, yet timely ReFresh article, first released in November 2021.

On November 11, Canadians pause in silence to remember the women and men who serve our country during times of war, conflict, and peace. The official end of World War I was 105 years ago, on November 11, 1918. Every year on November 11, people from different backgrounds, countries, and spiritual beliefs pause and reflect on the sacrifices made for our civil safety. This year, as wars are fought in other parts of the world, may we also pause and hope for peace.

As I age and see the world through wiser and more experienced eyes, I am more attentive to making time on November 11 to be mindful of those who have sacrificed, and to reflect both on how I arrive, and the emotions I experience through two minutes of silence at 11:00 am. This pause allows me to welcome a flood of emotions that I name, observe, acknowledge, and feel as I honour, connect, and remember.

What emotions do you experience in those two minutes of silence, or throughout the day? These moments are filled with our feelings, based on personal experience and context. What thoughts and emotions will arise for you this Remembrance Day, and what words will come to mind? For example:

- **Respect:** reflection, tradition, prayer
- **Love:** togetherness, connection, family, nationalism
- **Gratitude:** blessed, grateful, sacrifice, thanks, peace
- **Humility:** serving, touching, selfless, saving, lives
- **Pride:** amazement, awe, celebration, dignity, honour, honouring, joy, support, veterans, victory
- **Sadness:** attack, death, fallen, grief, injured, sad, sorry, sorrow, loss, lost

- **Discontent:** anger, clash, disapproval, disgust, outrage, terror, victims, violence, horror, poverty, poor, senseless

Take note of which emotions come to mind.

The past few years have been unsettling and emotional. Learning to identify and understand what we are feeling at any given moment helps us move through feelings of discomfort. It is often hard to identify emotions, as we rarely feel just one emotion. 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 this Emotion Wheel](#) visual, will help.

Take an extra moment and get curious: find specific words to define how you are feeling. This will activate your brain in a healthy way that keeps you connected with how you are feeling, but still creates 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 ____." For example, "I am feeling overwhelmed," rather than, "I am overwhelmed."

After you have named your feeling, 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 your feelings.

Power and clarity can be found by labelling an emotion, and when we create distance between ourselves and our experiences, we can choose how to respond – rather than react – to challenges.

Want to learn more? [Here is a great read](#) by the Harvard Business Review.

Sources:

<https://advice.theshineapp.com/articles/struggling-to-name-how-you-feel-try-using-this-wheel/>

<https://keridwyn.medium.com/name-your-feelings-to-improve-your-ability-to-respond-not-react-to-your-emotions-654d6ccb2ca1>

<https://www.bodyandsoul.com.au/mind-body/wellbeing/the-science-behind-why-naming-our-feelings-makes-us-happier/news-story/d01d3c35f3394db3e1d2e80dd4dcec40>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.