



The "L" of RULER

Developing Our Emotion Vocabulary

Emotion-Related Word Pairs | Definitions & Comparisons

Stress vs. Pressure

- **Stress** is the feeling experienced when the demands you're faced with are perceived to be greater than the resources to meet them.
- **Pressure** is what is felt when something at stake is dependent on your effort or actions.

→ It's possible to feel both at the same time when someone is counting on you to come through for them (pressure), but you don't feel you have the ability – based on your skills or resources – to meet the expectations (stress).

Envy vs. Jealousy

- **Envy** is when you don't have something that someone else has, and you want it or wish you had it (their material possessions, lifestyle, job, personality, health, looks, social status, etc.).
- **Jealousy** is when you have something – usually a relationship, affection, attention – and you feel threatened about possibly losing it to someone else.

→ Where jealousy takes three parties to happen, envy only takes two.

Excitement vs. Nervousness

- **Excitement** is described as an energized state of enthusiasm leading up to or during an enjoyable activity.
- **Nervousness** is a feeling of apprehension that is usually linked to a specific situation.

→ Both excitement and nervousness are similar physiologically. They can cause an increased heart rate, dilated pupils, sweating, and rapid breathing. The key difference between excitement and nervousness is how the mind interprets the experience.

Solitude vs. Loneliness

- **Solitude** is the choice to be alone and use that time either for reflection or simply enjoyment in one's own company.
- **Loneliness** is a sense of isolation and/or lack of relational connection.

→ Loneliness is more than simply being alone. Have you ever felt lonely in a crowded room? The feeling can persist even when other people are present.



Happiness vs. Joy

- **Happiness** is the pleasurable but fleeting feeling often sparked by a particular moment or event that brings a sense of excitement or exhilaration.
- **Joy** is a more long-lasting state of being, characterized by an inner contentment and satisfaction overall.

→ It's possible to experience joy without feeling happiness at every moment. Joy endures hardship and trials and connects with meaning and purpose.

Embarrassment vs. Humiliation

Both of these feelings involve discomfort when an aspect of ourselves is revealed that we think is likely to undermine the image of ourselves that we seek to project to others.

- We typically bring **embarrassment** upon ourselves (and can at times be funny).
- **Humiliation** is brought upon us by others.

→ While embarrassment is usually result of something unintended or accidental, humiliation is perceived as intentional with a goal of causing social harm.

Empathy vs. Compassion

- **Empathy** involves the ability to understand what another person feels. It means you can imagine yourself in another person's situation and feel what they must be feeling.
- **Compassion** is the desire to help someone who is experiencing distress and is often fueled by empathy.

→ Empathy encourages people to feel and relate, while compassion motivates people to act.

Guilt vs. Shame

- **Guilt** is feeling remorse or responsible for something you've done wrong or perceived you did wrong.
- **Shame** is feeling that you are bad, worthy of contempt, or inadequate as a person.

→ Guilt says, "I did something bad." Shame says, "I am bad."

Disappointment vs. Regret

Both of these feelings arise when an outcome was not what we wanted, counted on, or thought would happen.

- With **disappointment**, we often believe the outcome was caused by something external or out of our control.
- With **regret** we believe the outcome was caused by our decisions or actions.

→ Both emotions are generated by comparing what is with what might have been. However, disappointment is more situation-focused, while regret is more choice- or behavior-focused..

