

# Using the emotion grid

## What the grid is

An emotion grid places feeling phrases on two independent axes: energy from low to high, and pleasantness from unpleasant to pleasant. The Mental grid uses seven steps on each axis, producing 49 prompts.

## A 30-second check-in

- 01 Pause and notice the amount of energy in the moment.
- 02 Notice whether the moment feels pleasant, unpleasant, or somewhere between.
- 03 Choose the nearest cell. Treat it as a working description, not a verdict.
- 04 Optionally add one line of context: what was happening just before this?

## Four quadrants

|                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| High energy + unpleasant | tense, angry, restless   |
| High energy + pleasant   | eager, excited, joyful   |
| Low energy + unpleasant  | flat, worn down, drained |
| Low energy + pleasant    | settled, calm, serene    |

## Worked example

After a difficult meeting, someone notices high energy and an unpleasant tone. They compare 'anxious, tense' with 'angry, tense' and choose the phrase that feels closer. The useful next question is not 'Which one is objectively correct?' but 'What detail made this phrase fit better?'

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## Facilitation prompts

- Which axis was easier to answer first?
- What nearby cell also seemed plausible?
- Did the feeling change after naming it, or only become clearer?
- What single context detail would make this entry useful next week?

## Methodology and limitations

The two-axis structure is based on James A. Russell's circumplex model of affect. The 49 everyday-language phrases are Mental's editorial interpretation of that space; they are not a clinical scale, diagnostic instrument, or exhaustive list of emotions. People can reasonably choose different neighboring cells for the same moment.

## Use with care

Invite, do not force disclosure. Let people pass, choose their own words, or keep a selection private. Do not infer a diagnosis or make a high-stakes decision from a cell. If tracking becomes distressing or compulsive, pause the exercise and seek appropriate human support.

## Source and licence

Method basis: Russell, J. A. (1980). A Circumplex Model of Affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39(6), 1161-1178. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0077714>

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