

Expressive writing instructions

CLARITY & FEELINGS

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Why this guide?

I wrote this guide to offer a way to structure your expressive writing sessions.

You can use this for a 7-minute session, a 7-plus-7-minute writing session, or any other length of session that suits you.

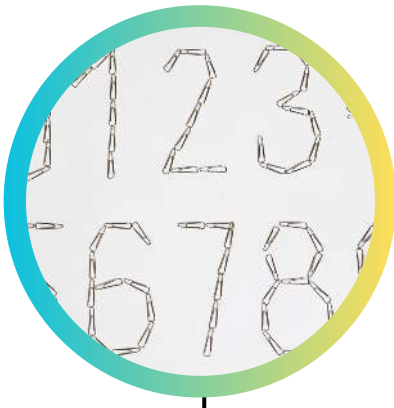
Before writing, note your level of clarity and how you feel about the issue. Then re-rate afterwards.

Getting Started



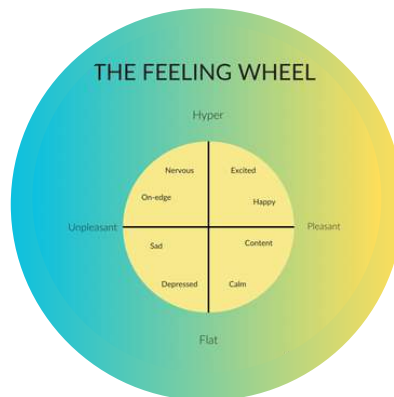
1 Issue / Topic

Choose something that has been on your mind, or something that happened over the past week that you feel niggled you a little bit (not something hugely traumatic). Label it, eg, 'feeling annoyed at my boss'.



2 Clarity

Give this topic a number for how clear you feel about it right now. How much clarity do you feel you have on this issue? 0 - 10, where '0' is not clear at all, and '10' is totally clear, as if you have processed everything about this topic.



3 Feelings

How do you feel about this issue? Plot on The Feeling Wheel (examples of this are later in this guide) and label that feeling, eg, 'annoyed', 'uncertain', 'hazy'.



4 Strength of feeling & sensations

How strong is the feeling right now? Where in your body do you notice any sensations as you think about this issue. Plot this on a 0-10 scale, where '0' is feeling nothing, to '10' is the strongest it could be.

What next?



1 Set Timer

Set your timer for 7 minutes



2 Start Writing

Start writing. Use the words “I feel...” or “I notice” to pick up on any sensations that you noticed in your body as you were rating the clarity and feelings.



3 Keep going

Keep writing for 7 minutes. Then, set your timer for another 7 minutes to process a bit deeper. If you come to a stop, gently push yourself to keep going past that point. Pick up on something that stands out to you and keep writing.



4 Re- rate Clarity and Feelings

When you have finished writing, go back and re-rate how much clarity you feel about this issue now. Also re-plot where you would put yourself on the feeling wheel and how strong the feeling is for you now.

The Feeling Wheel

Plotting how activated your nervous system is, as well as the quality of the emotion that you are feeling right now

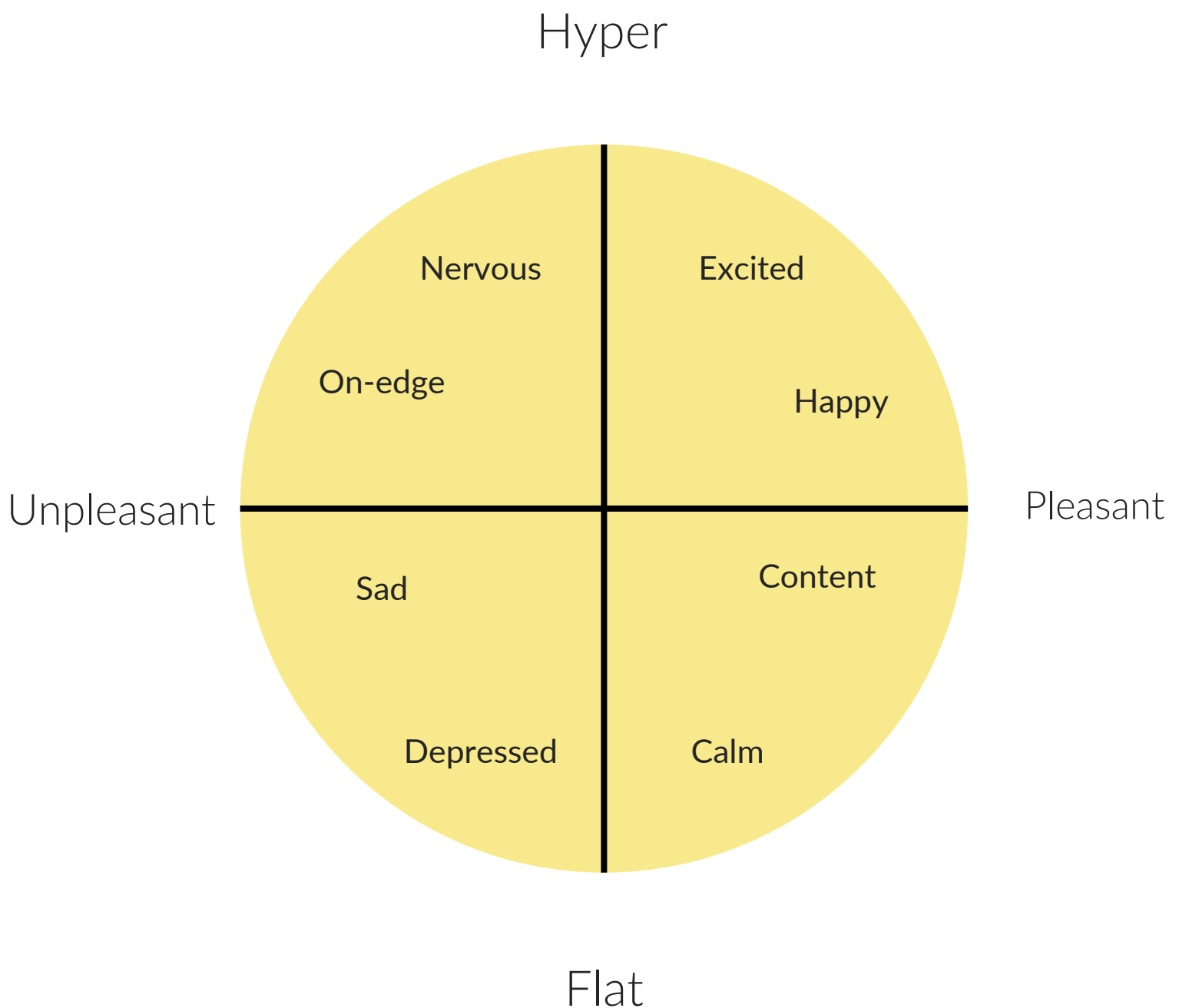


Image by Donna Bottomley.

Adapted from: Posner J, Russell JA, Peterson BS. (2005). The circumplex model of affect: an integrative approach to affective neuroscience, cognitive development, and psychopathology. *Journal of Developmental Psychopathology*. 17(3):715-34.

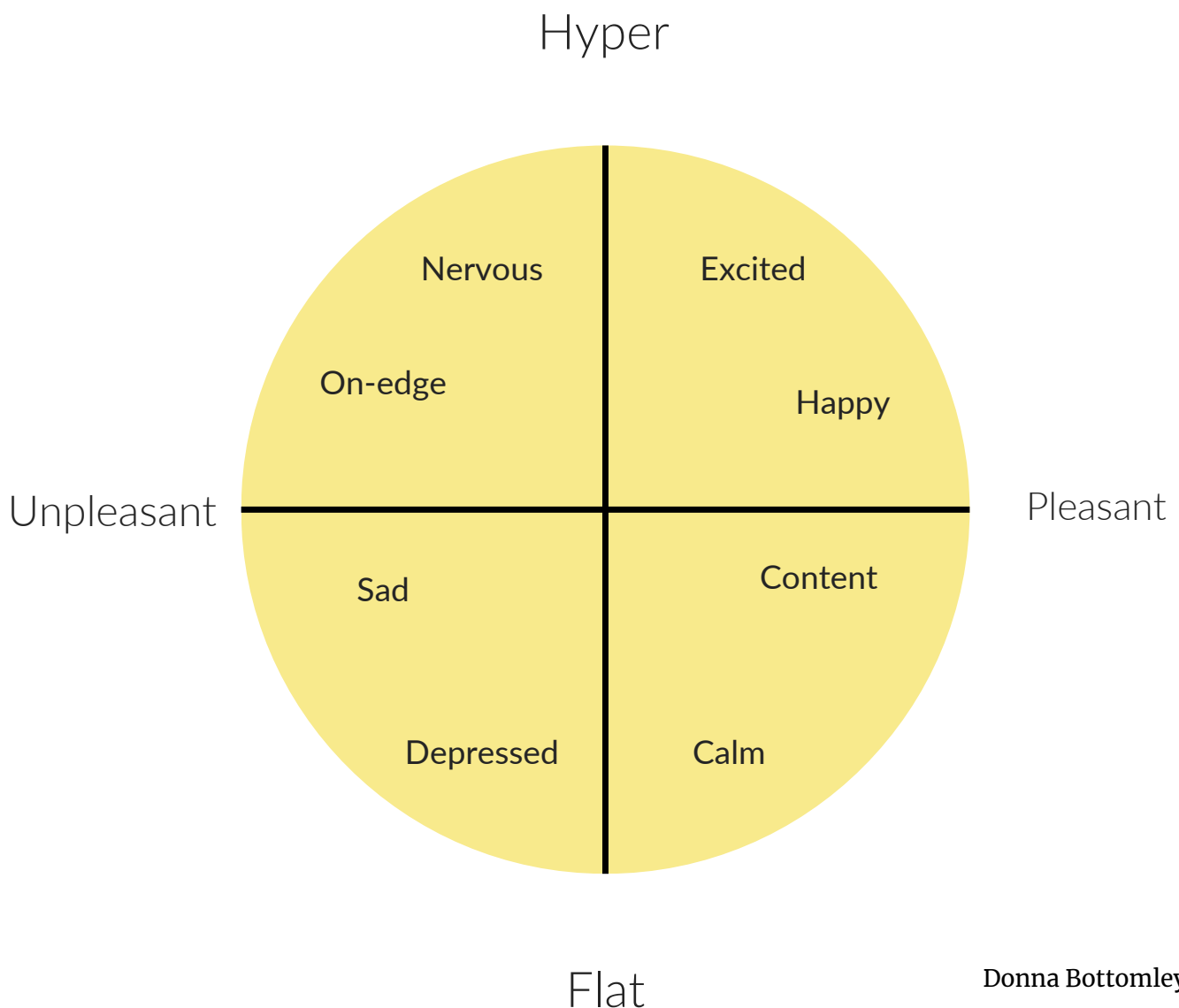
The Wheel has two main parts:

Top - Bottom is how activated you feel right now

Left - Right is the quality of the feeling that you have right now

If you are feeling really activated, this could be because you are excited and getting ready for something that you feel good about, or it could be activation because you are dreading something and are worried about it.

Notice how activated you feel right now first, then whether you are feeling good or not so good and plot this. Then try to find a word that best describes this feeling for you. Add your own words to the circle



Quadrants, or a dial?

I sometimes see this wheel written as a dial of activation

To see it in this way is to go from flat, calmness, to shutdown and dissociation - which is past high activation and then into deactivation/shutdown response

