

Name It to Tame It

Introduction: A cancer diagnosis may elicit a variety of feelings and emotions. It is important that we learn how to express these feelings and cope with a challenging situation such as cancer or any serious illness. Having cancer changes a person's life and the lives of those around them. This lesson will help students learn how to cope with the many issues and concerns that occur when cancer happens.

**Students can apply this exercise to any stressful situation.*

Objectives:

- The student will develop knowledge and skills to enhance mental and emotional well-being.
- The student will be able to identify certain feelings and learn to cope with them in a positive way.

Learning standards addressed:

S1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.

S7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

Materials Needed: "Feeling Wheel" Handout, "Healthy and Unhealthy Coping Skills" Handout, optional video

Description:

Part I - Identifying Feelings – Name It

A: Focus Question – 5 minutes

Teacher will ask students the following questions. "Who has been impacted by cancer?" This could include a family member, a friend, a teacher, a neighbor, etc. Allow students who wish to share their stories. "Has anyone in the class been impacted by any other serious illnesses, such as stroke, heart attack, serious injury, etc." For example, a student's father suffered a heart attack.

B: Feeling Activity – 15 minutes

Take a quick poll of your class. How are you feeling right now? Most students will probably say "good, bad, fine, happy, okay..." Many people find it hard to describe their emotions. A famous psychiatrist, Dan Siegel, always claimed you need to "name it to tame it." It is important to be able to describe your emotions in order to know how to deal with them.

Next teacher will pass out the "feeling wheel" handout to all of his/her students. Now, ask the students what feelings they were experiencing when going through any of the above-mentioned challenging situations, such as cancer. Have the students circle any feelings they experienced. If students have not had a cancer experience or another challenging experience, have them circle feelings they imagine themselves or others would experience in a difficult situation. Have students share some of their feelings.

Tip: Emphasize that all feelings are normal when going through a difficult situation. There is no one "right" way to feel. A person's feelings may even change daily, hourly, or minute to minute. Below are some common feelings from those who have a family member or loved one with cancer:

- Scared about what might happen their family member

- Guilty about being healthy and having fun
- Mad that this is happening to their family or mad that their family member isn't able to eat dinner or play with them or go to their basketball game
- Sad for their family member
- Worried that they will get cancer too
- Alone, neglected, ignored, and left out
- Lonely because they are seeing less of family members and friends
- Embarrassed about the way people stare or talk about their family member/loved one
- Jealous about the attention and gifts their family member/ friend receives
- Concerned about what is happening to their relationships
- Overwhelmed with all of the changes

Part II - Managing Feelings – *Tame It*

A: Focus Question – 5 minutes

Teacher will write the word **cope** on the board and ask the students to define it. Arrive at a definition along these lines: to handle something successfully. When strong feelings come up, we all have ways we try to cope with them. Some of our approaches, or strategies, are successful; others are not.

B: Unhealthy vs Healthy Coping Skills - 15 minutes

Teacher will pass out the “coping skill” handout to all of the students. Students will complete the handout by circling all of the coping skills they have utilized before, healthy or unhealthy. Next, students will label each of their circled coping skills, “healthy” or “unhealthy.” Lastly, have students/class come up with 3-5 new ways to manage their feeling in a healthy way.

Guiding Questions?

1. Why do you think it is important for you to learn how to control your emotions?
2. Who do you talk to when you are feeling down? What does this person do that helps? Do you ever do the same for others?

Optional Video: [Someone In My Family Has Cancer](#)

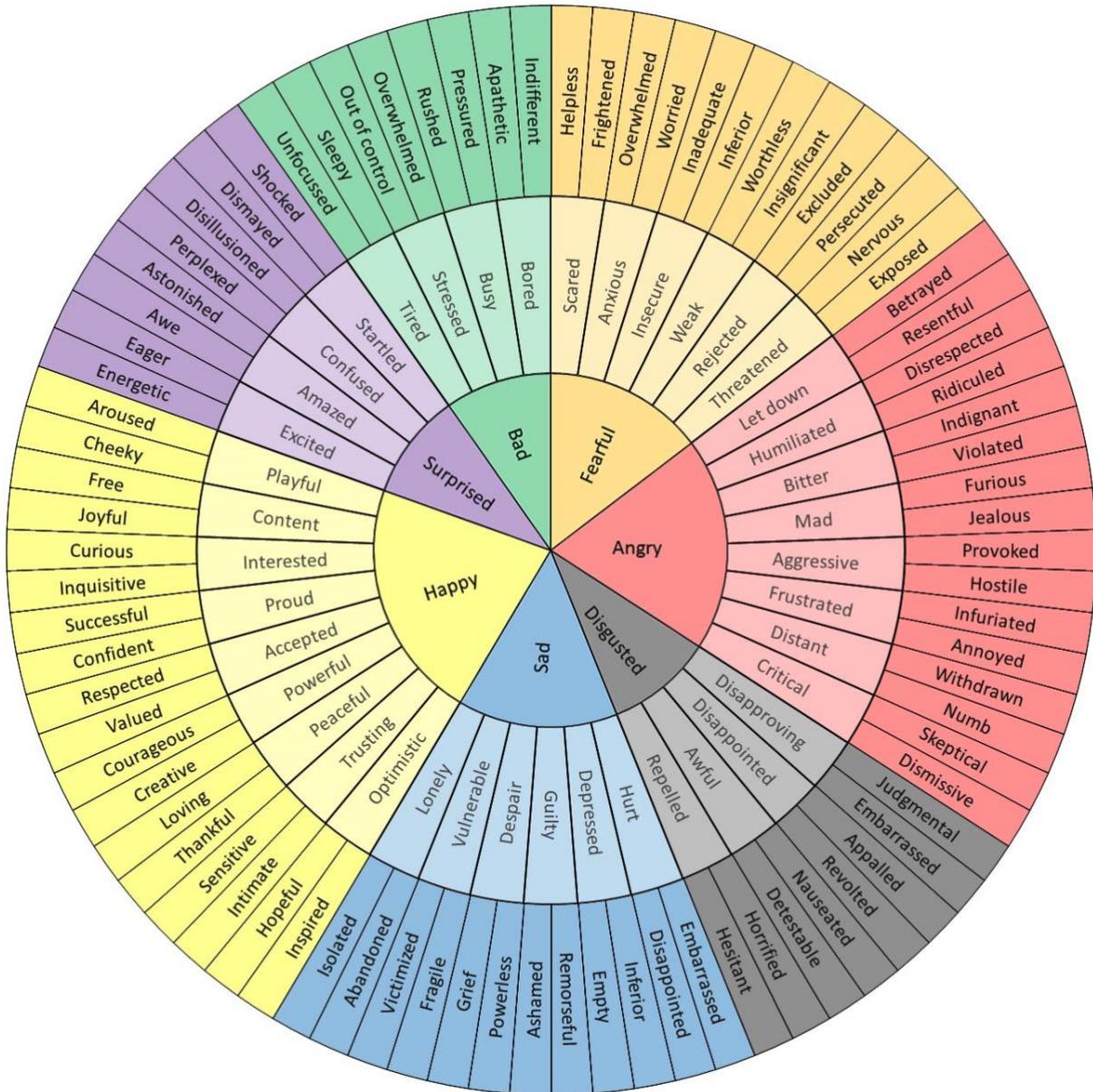
Above and Beyond opportunity for students to further develop their skills

Write about your story. Tell us about your own experience, whether it's your own diagnosis or that of a loved one. Cancer Pathways hosts a writing contest every year, **Cancer Unwrapped**. Click the link for more information. [Cancer Unwrapped Writing Contest](#).

Build a list of support people. This list can include family members, friends, coaches, church members, guidance counselor, grief counselor, nurses, etc. It may also be helpful to identify any local resources that offer support or connect with a social worker. You can find a list of cancer support resources [here](#).

Feeling Wheel

The wheel has six core feelings: mad, scared, joyful, powerful, peaceful and sad. A secondary ring of words helps narrow those feelings down. A third, outer ring gets even more specific. In all, there are 72 adjectives to link to your feelings. Use this wheel to help communicate and express how you feel.



Purpose of Emotions - motivate us to take action – help us survive – thrive and avoid danger
 – help us make decisions – allow others to understand us – allow us to understand others.



HEALTHY OR UNHEALTHY

Coping skills are ways in which we learn to deal with various stressors. Each person copes differently. Circle all the ways you have dealt with difficult situations that may have caused stress, anxiety, or anger. **Next**, label each of the circled coping mechanisms as "healthy" or "unhealthy."

meditate - throw a tantrum - watch tv
beat up my sibling - think/reflect
talk to a counselor - hide - be with friends
play sports - break/throw things - take a walk
talk to a trusted adult - develop an attitude
curse/use foul language - listen to music
be rude to my parents - tell jokes - write in a journal
draw/paint - threaten someone - read a book
hurt myself - gossip - play a game - Count to 10
take deep breaths - sleep - scream/yell - run
punch pillows - shop - eat - drink/drugs - talk to self
feel sorry for myself - become silent - go to peaceful place

Can you list 3 other healthy coping skills?