

**Living Out The Grace of God Together**  
**Lesson 4: Identifying Feelings**

**I. Review of the Showing Understanding Skill**

- a. One way to think about the skill of showing understanding is that it is **God's way** of providing us with wisdom and knowledge in our human relationships and is a vital ingredient to deepening and strengthening them. *Dan 2:21-22 God gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. NIV*
- b. **Listen** in a way that shows strong interest.
- c. **Become** your partner
- d. **Name** thoughts, feelings, concerns and desires.
- e. Accept and make corrections **graciously**.

**II. Ten Ways to Show Understanding**

- a. Stop what you are doing and **pay close** attention when your partner talks to you.
- b. When you listen, look at your partner in a **caring way**.
- c. When you listen, imagine **you are** your partner.
- d. Let your partner know that you **are trying** to see things his or her way.
- e. When your partner is upset, listen and show understanding **BEFORE** (or in stead of) disagreeing.
- f. When your partner is happy or loving, spend some time **together** enjoying the good feelings; reinforce the experience.
- g. When your partner wants or needs help, do **something** to help and this will encourage the expression of good feelings.
- h. When your partner is tired, rest **together**.
- i. When your partner is worried or sad, stay **close by**.
- j. When your partner needs space, **back off** a little.

**III. Feeling Words**

- a. Many people experience difficulty **identifying** feelings that they may have and may even be oblivious to the fact that they have feelings as they go through an experience.
- b. Below is a starter list which may help you put names to feelings. If you think of each word below as belonging on a **continuum**, I.E. Happy could be anything from OK to Ecstatic; Sad could run the gamut from upset to suicidal; etc.
- c. Obviously, this list can be greatly expanded and if you have difficulty **naming** your own feelings, brainstorming a list of related words for each category below would be a useful exercise.

Happy	Sad	Angry	Scared	Excited	Like
Love	Surprise	Confident	Lonely	Hurt	Embarrassed
Guilty	Jealous	Determined	Hate	Disgust	Aggressive

**IV. Practice Naming the Emotion**

The following personal narrative is a true and accurate recounting of the last time I saw my step-father in our family home. After this event, 15 years would pass before I saw him face to face again.

**Scene 1:** Name the feelings that you might expect to be present as I relate the events. I was 15 at the time and I remember vividly that this event took place in the early evening hours. It was late fall and a steady rain had enveloped the Sacramento area leaving the ground around our house saturated. My mother and father had been fighting earlier in the day and she and my 7 year old sister had left to get away from the hostility. My 9 year old brother and I for some reason had remained at home. My step-dad, as he did frequently, had been drinking heavily throughout the day. He was becoming increasingly agitated and I just wanted to stay out of his way.

**Scene 2:** I do not recall what exactly started the incident but my brother said or did something to me to which I responded that if you do that again I am going to "pound you". The words were no sooner out of my mouth than my step-dad had me by the collar and threw me against the wall and with his fist doubled up in a menacing gesture he screamed at me that "If you ever threaten my son again, I'm going to beat you!"

**Scene 3:** He was drunk and while he had never done anything to me, I had seen him hitting my mother frequently when he was drinking. I knew that his words were not an empty threat. I said nothing but he was not finished making his point. He stumbled to the closet where I kept my shotgun and was attempting to load a shell in the

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chamber but could not get the mechanism to load. He staggered back into the hallway where I stood frozen against the wall.

**Scene 4:** When he was about three feet from me he pitched the shotgun to me and said, “If you are such a man why don’t you just shoot me?” I caught the shotgun but quickly leaned it against the wall and turned and ran from the house into the pouring rain. I never looked behind me to see if my dad attempted to follow me, I was running for my life.

**Scene 5:** 15 years later I was married with children of my own and now as a born again Christian I knew that I needed to be reconciled to my step-dad. He was at that time living in Ohio and suffering from a variety of physical illnesses which would eventually take his life.

**Scene 6:** When we met, he was a broken man both physically and spiritually. In the few hours we spent together he could not stop apologizing for the abuse he perpetrated on my mother and the wasted years of drunkenness that ruined any chances we had to experience any sense of normalcy as a family.

**V. Practice Application**

- a. Think of a childhood experience (either pleasant or unpleasant) but it needs to be something that has both meaning and emotion. As you tell your story don’t say too much before giving your listener a chance to empathize.
- b. The other person will listen attentively with empathy, trying to understand from the inside what it must have been like to have that experience. Then switch roles where person #2 tells a childhood memory and person # 1 listens with empathy.