

Ways to recognize and to defuse unpleasant emotions

Do unpleasant emotions such as sadness, guilt or frustration overwhelm you and persist over time?

Recognizing and defusing these unpleasant emotions is a practical strategy to consider preserving your energy and quality of life together.

Like many couples who have adopted this strategy, you too can benefit from the unpleasant and persistent emotions associated with a situation. First, it is helpful to become aware of these emotions, learn to see them differently and defuse them.

In fact, when you look at them with a certain distance, these emotions weigh down your daily life, but they are also clear indications that a problem exists.

Moreover, because you cannot put up with these unpleasant emotions forever, they can become sources of motivation to set a goal, make changes and solve the problems they produce.

The following table provides some suggestions for questions that can help you recognize, defuse and effectively use unpleasant emotions.

Questions to use to effectively defuse any unpleasant emotions

① Which emotions do you feel more?	② What do these emotions mean?	③ What is behind these emotions?	④ Which beliefs or thoughts are feeding these emotions?
Feeling anxiety and fear?	Do you sense a threat or danger nearby?	What are you afraid of?	On what facts do you base these beliefs?
Feeling frustration and anger?	What are you hindered by?	What do you really want?	How can you spend more time together doing what you love as a couple?
Feeling sadness?	Are you experiencing a significant loss?	What have you lost?	Would there be win-win solutions for both of you?
Embarrassment?	Do you believe someone can see your limits or your flaws?	What can this person see?	If you have a limitation or make a mistake, is it that bad?
Do you feel guilty?	Do you feel responsible for something?	What do you regret?	What would another couple do in your place?
Feeling of helplessness?	Do you think you can control everything?	What do you want to be in control of? Is it realistic?	In what respect do you have to think that?

Table inspired and adapted from the work of Nezu, Nezu & D'Zurilla (2007), as well as Ducharme, Trudeau & Ward (2008)

By identifying the unpleasant emotions and trying to answer the questions suggested in the table, you will be more in a position to know what you want to change and solve as a difficulty or problem. And finally, the decrease in the intensity of these emotions will contribute to your well-being. It will also be a good indication that the difficulty or the problem is being resolved and that your goal is being achieved.