

# Lakewood Counseling and Career Center

6607 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue South • Suite 101 • Richfield, MN 55423 • 612-798-7373 • Fax 612-243-3615

## FEELINGS: WHAT TO DO

By Elaine Johnson

Relationships, whether at home, work, or school, can stir up the most intense, uncomfortable, and at times, unending feelings. These feelings mess up our concentration, our ability to function and our interactions with coworkers, family, and friends. So, what do we do with the mess?

1. First of all, name the feeling. If that is difficult to do, ask if it could fall under mad, sad, glad, afraid, or ashamed/embarrassed. Be aware that there may be complicating circumstances. One major circumstance is that the family we grew up in may have taught us what feelings were safe to express and which ones were totally off limits. Those that are off limits often are expressed through those feelings that are safe. Let me share an example. In one family, the only safe feeling to share was happy. All the other feelings were put down with such statements as "it does no good to get mad", "big boys/girls don't cry", "there's nothing to be afraid of", or "shame on you". As a result, all the feelings were expressed through laughter or smiles. This created great confusion for others, as well as the individual. If you share a similar experience as this person, obtain a feelings list and start to name your feelings little by little.
2. Find a way to safely express the feeling. Talking, crying, exercise, journaling, music, and sculpture are all ways to let the feelings out. Unexpressed feelings often lead to depression, anxiety, and interpersonal problems. Taking care of the feelings takes care of you and your relationships.
3. Feelings can be changed by what you do and think; some examples; go for a walk, think positively, meditate.

We can learn and grow from our feelings and our relationships grow deeper. If expressing feelings is a problem for you, keep working at it; progress is often slow but well worth it.