



EMOTIONS WHEEL GUIDE

Why should I use these wheels in my classroom?

These emotion wheels were designed to be used as a starting point with students to help increase their emotional literacy. Emotional literacy is the ability to name and communicate your feelings; people with strong emotional literacy skills tend to have greater awareness of both their own emotions and those of others. This [article](#) by Edutopia includes more information about the importance of emotional literacy and how to cultivate it in your classroom.

It can be overwhelming to understand exactly how we feel, why we feel it, and how to respond when we are whisked away by our emotions. Showing our students how to articulate their emotions is empowering, it will prepare them for wherever their future takes them. Another amazing thing about an emotions wheel: It works for adults, too ([A Simple Tool to Help Teachers Regulate Their Emotions](#)).

Recognizing emotions comes naturally to some students, but for others, it's a big struggle. When that's the case, they need to be taught how to identify their emotions. These emotions wheels can help. Students who are able to identify their emotions...

- Display fewer behavior problems,
- Perform better academically,
- Are more empathetic and supportive of others,
- Develop healthy coping skills and resilience,
- Have a positive self-image,
- Have positive and stable relationships with others, and
- Improved mental health.




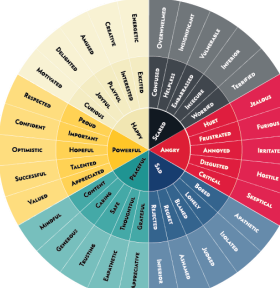
What is an Emotions Wheel?

These emotion wheels were inspired by [Plutchik's Emotion Wheel](#). To put it simply, an emotions wheel is a chart with primary emotions in the center that fans out with more specific emotions. It is a tool that will help your students learn to name what they're feeling so they can become more self-aware and process their feelings more fully.

There are four emotion wheel options. Select the best one for your students based on their age and developmental level. The grade levels below are only meant as a guide, you know your students best, select the wheel you think is the most appropriate.

You may also want to use the [Word List](#) to determine which wheel is the best for your students.

WHEELS OVERVIEW CHART

| WHEEL IMAGE | DESCRIPTION | VERSIONS OF WHEEL |
|---|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">WHEEL ONE</p>  | <p><i>Suggested Grades Kindergarten-First</i></p> <p>This is a beginner emotion wheel to allow students the opportunity to get comfortable with the idea of naming their emotions. All four emotion wheels contain six primary emotions (happy, sad, angry, scared, peaceful, and powerful).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEEL ONE COLOR • WHEEL ONE B&W • WHEEL ONE .png file |
| <p style="text-align: center;">WHEEL TWO</p>  | <p><i>Suggested Grades First-Third</i></p> <p>Once students become familiar with the idea of the emotion wheel and are able to independently name their emotions using wheel one it may be time to progress to wheel two. There are two layers: the inner layer has the same primary emotions as wheel one but the second layer breaks down those basic feelings into more specific emotions.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEEL TWO COLOR • WHEEL TWO B&W • WHEEL TWO .png file |
| <p style="text-align: center;">WHEEL THREE</p>  | <p><i>Suggested Grades Third-Sixth</i></p> <p>The third wheel has three layers of emotions. The first two layers are the same as wheel two but the third layer further breaks down the emotions into even more specific feelings. Notice how the colors relate back to the basic feeling at the center of the wheel.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEEL THREE COLOR • WHEEL THREE B&W • WHEEL THREE .png file |
| <p style="text-align: center;">WHEEL FOUR</p>  | <p><i>Suggested Grades Sixth and Up</i></p> <p>The fourth wheel has three layers of emotions but even more words have been added to the third ring.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEEL FOUR COLOR • WHEEL FOUR B&W • WHEEL FOUR .png file |

Emotion Wheel Word List

*Please note that words carry over from one wheel to the next. Meaning, wheel two will have wheel one and two words, wheel three will also have words from one and two, and wheel four will contain all the words listed in this chart. As students grow and develop understanding of emotions, subsequent wheel words expand to reflect more complex emotions.

| WHEEL ONE | WHEEL TWO | WHEEL THREE | WHEEL FOUR |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| happy | excited interested playful | joyful curious | energetic creative amused delighted motivated |
| powerful | proud important hopeful | talented appreciated | respected confident optimistic successful valued |
| peaceful | content caring safe | thoughtful grateful | mindful generous trusting empathetic appreciative |
| scared | confused helpless embarrassed | insecure worried | overwhelmed insignificant vulnerable inferior terrified |
| angry | hurt frustrated annoyed | disgusted critical | jealous furious irritated hostile skeptical |
| sad | bored lonely blamed | regret rejected | apathetic isolated judged ashamed inferior |

How can I use an Emotions Wheel in my classroom?

There are numerous ways to use an emotions wheel in your classroom. Here are some tips and a few simple ideas to get you started.

- Traditionally the wheel is used from the inside out. It is often easier to identify the basic emotion and then move outward to find a more specific word to describe your feeling.
- Sometimes it can be helpful to use the wheel in reverse. For example, when we realize that an emotion such as regret is related to sadness, it can help us to better understand what we are feeling.
- Use the wheel to normalize emotions, even the unpleasant ones. Help students understand that all emotions are normal, there are no bad or good emotions; instead there are comfortable and uncomfortable emotions.
- Incorporate the emotion wheel into daily or weekly routines so that your students feel confident using the emotion wheel. The goal is to normalize the use of the wheels so students won't hesitate to use them when they are trying to verbalize their emotions during times of stress.
- Why did we choose the word peaceful instead of calm? Calm can sometimes be a word used to dismiss emotions. "Calm down" is phrase students have most likely heard, and as a result many students interpret calm as a behavior, rather than an emotion. Someone can be acting calm but not actually feeling it. Peaceful on the other hand is more about our internal feelings than our actions. Take a moment to read this research article about how to create [Peaceful and Happy Schools](#).
- How do I explain "powerful" to my students? This word was selected intentionally because our students often feel powerless both in and outside of school. When you are powerful we feel bold, confident and motivated. It feels like YOU are in control of your life. You stand a little taller and carry yourself like the strong, capable person you believe you are. There is a difference between being in a position of power, and FEELING powerful. When you experience power as an emotion, you are totally in charge of your feelings, strengths and opportunities. Take a look at this [article](#) by Greater Good about how teachers can help students feel powerful at school.
- Model how to use the wheel with your own emotions. Students love to see and do what adults do, so using an emotion wheel of your own may inspire your students and make them more excited to use the emotion wheel themselves.
- Allow students to color or decorate their own emotion wheel to represent the emotions with colors, symbols or designs that they connect with.
- Writing prompts or journaling alongside the emotions wheel is an excellent way to unpack emotions and practice identifying them. You can allow students to select an emotion from the wheel they are currently feeling or felt that day, or you can select the emotion and ask students to share about a time they felt that emotion. (Helpful Article: [Integrating SEL Into Writing Instruction](#))
- Incorporate the emotions wheel into an assessment, warm-up or activity. Add a question at the beginning or end asking students to share with you how they are feeling. Here are a few suggestions: *Using our emotions wheel, what emotion do you feel most often in our classroom and why? How are you feeling right now about this assignment? Which emotion best describes how you felt taking this test today?*
- Divide your class into groups and secretly assign one emotion to each group and ask them to create a skit, emoji, or meme to describe the emotion. The other groups can guess the emotion based on facial expressions, body language, images, or scenario.

- Use the wheel as a classroom tool to help solve disputes or disagreements. Teach students how to use “I feel” statements to talk through their emotions and resolve them peacefully. (I feel when... next time please...).
- When reading a book or learning about someone from history, ask students to identify what emotion the characters/historical figures must have been feeling, using the emotion wheel as a reference.
- Select an emotion and have students brainstorm a list of healthy and/or unhealthy ways to navigate through it.
- In writing, challenge students to use the emotion wheel to better explain a character’s emotion or their emotions, if journaling about an experience.
- Print the wheel for students to take home and share with their family. Caregivers can use the wheel to talk with their child about their day or to discuss the experiences they share.

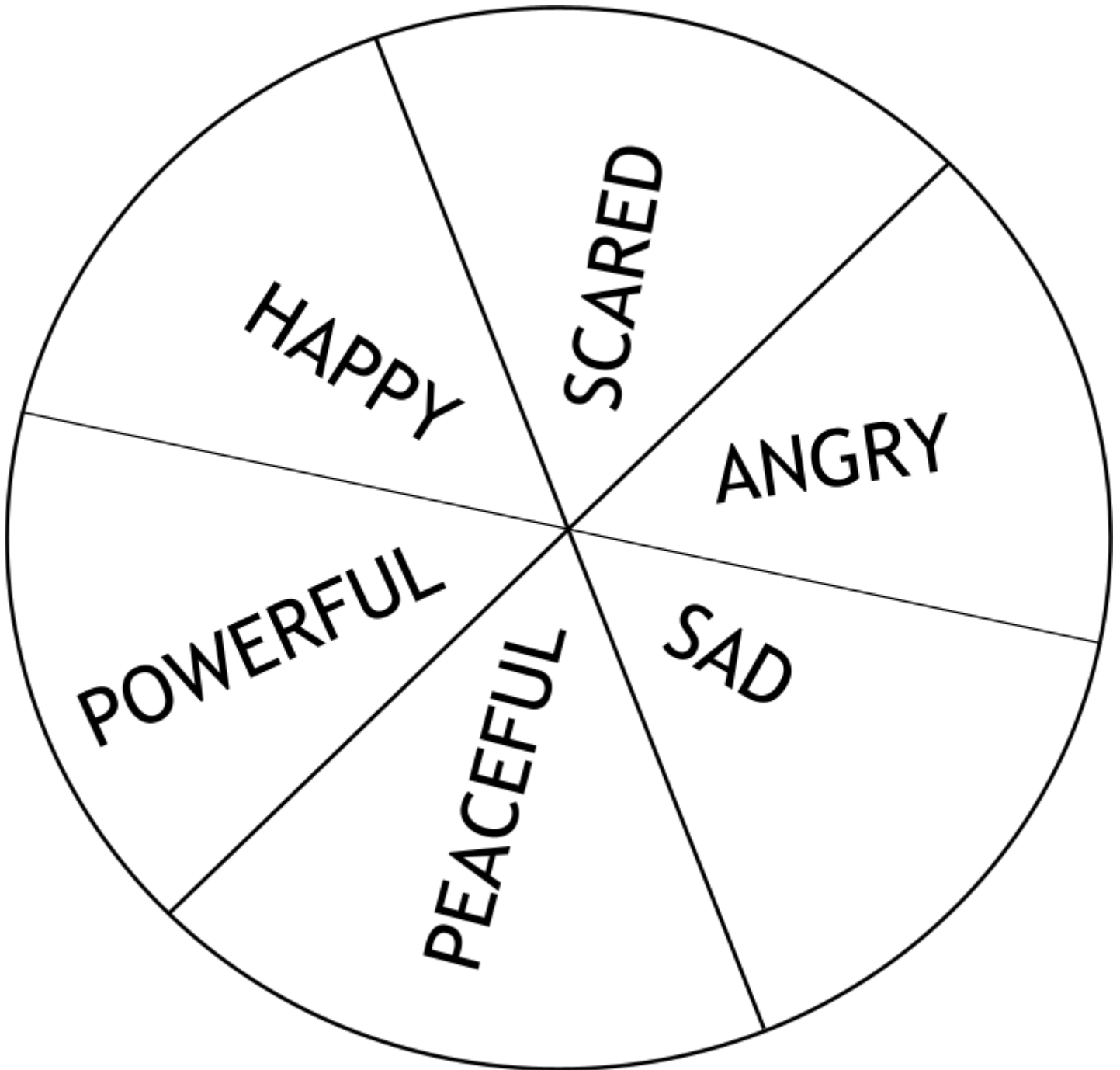
Have you used the emotions wheel in your school or classroom? Tell us about it via twitter. Be sure to use #VASEL and tag us @VDOE_SESS.

EMOTIONS WHEEL



**it's okay to
feel your
feelings**

EMOTIONS WHEEL



**it's okay to
feel your
feelings**

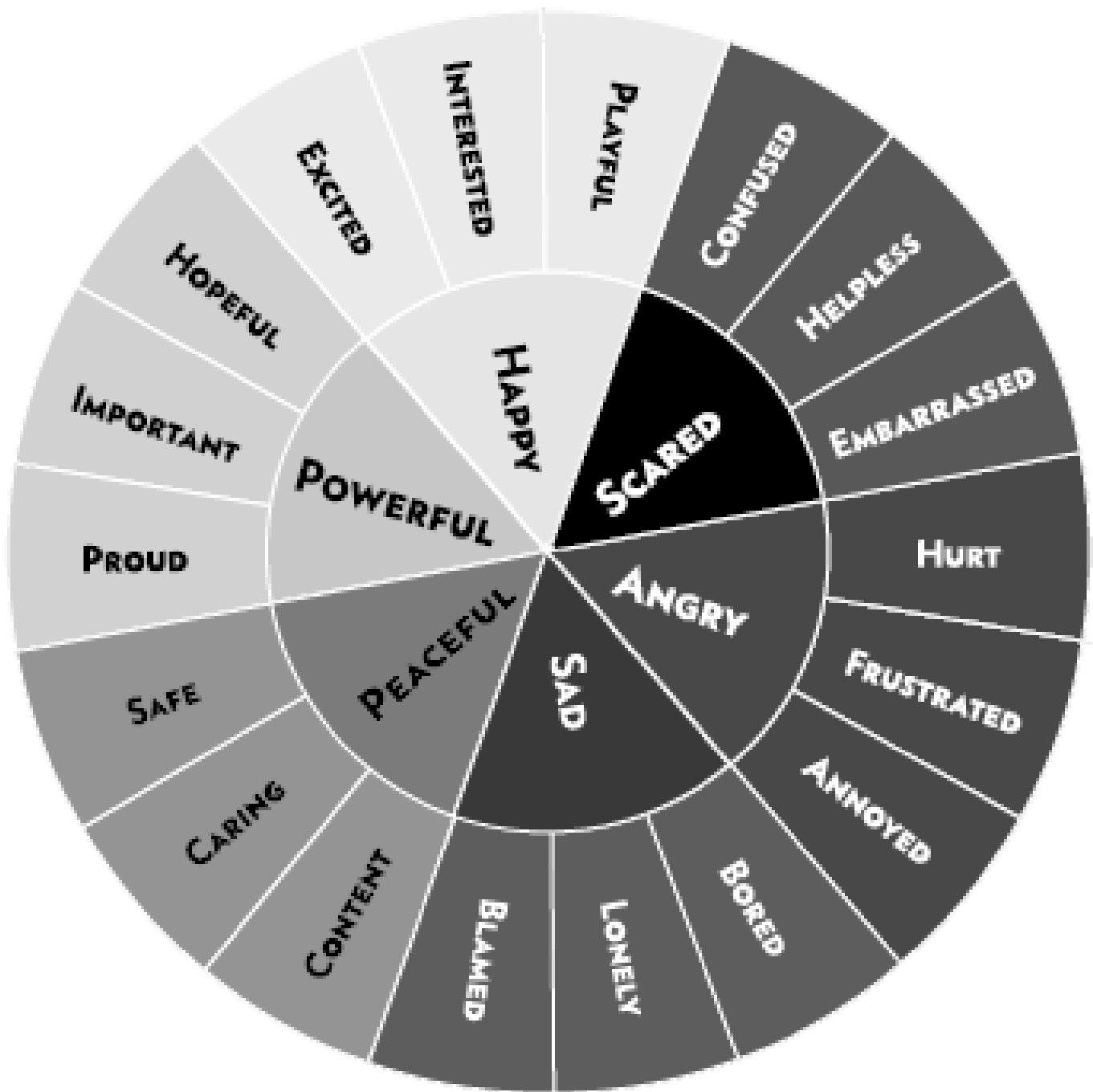
EMOTIONS WHEEL



**your
emotions
are valid**



EMOTIONS WHEEL



**your
emotions
are valid**

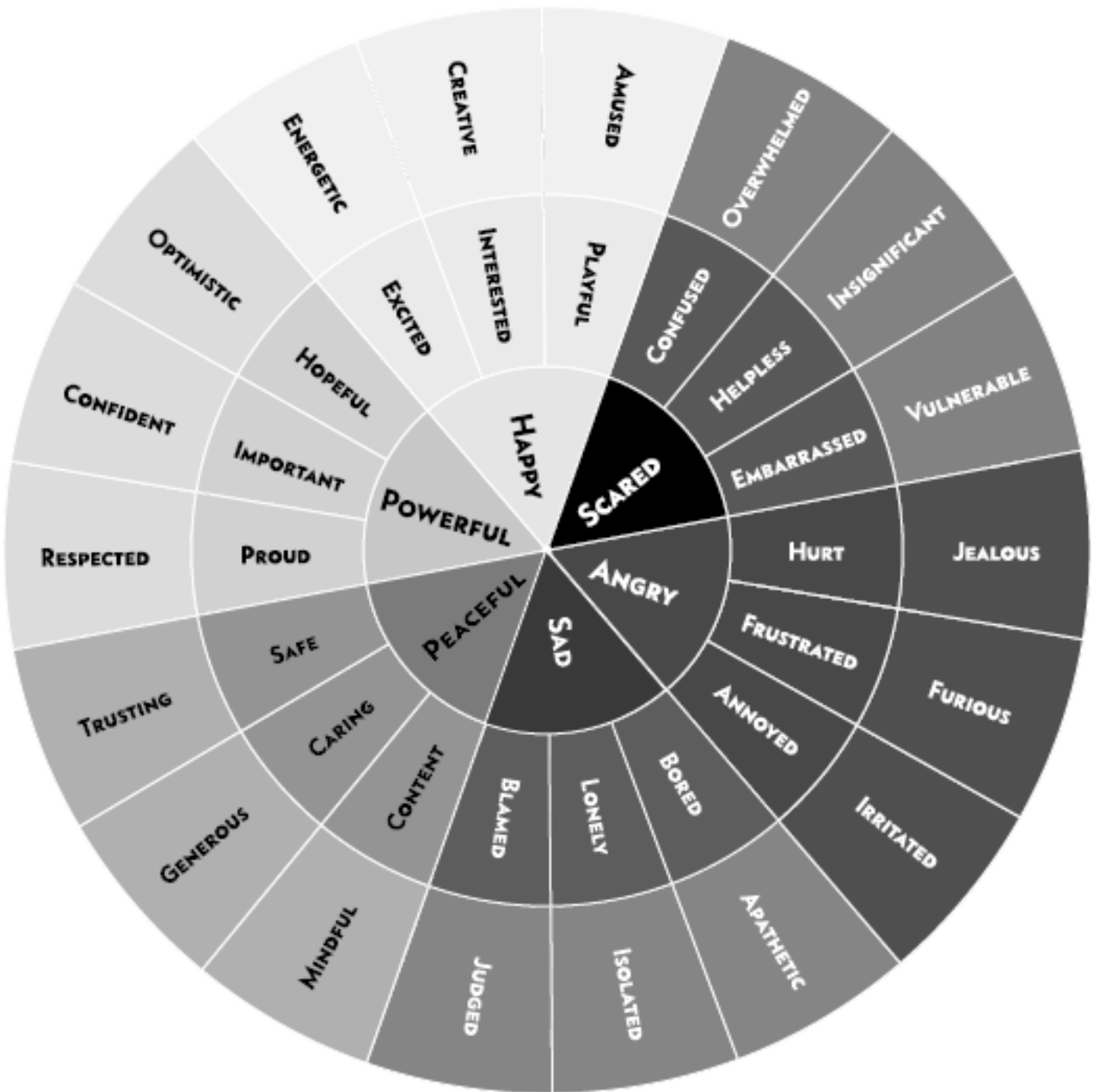


EMOTIONS WHEEL




**your
emotions
are valid**

EMOTIONS WHEEL



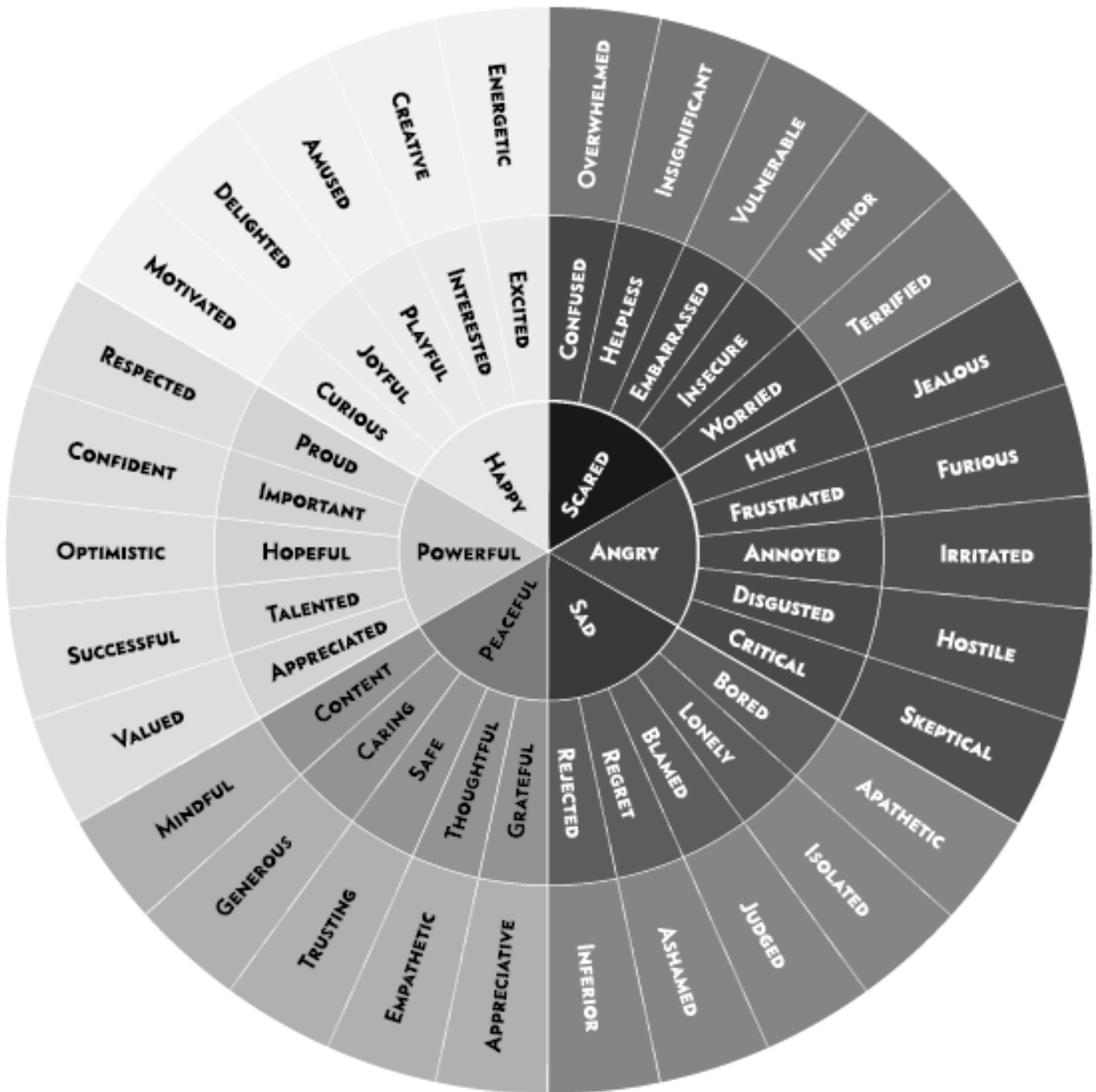

**your
emotions
are valid**

EMOTIONS WHEEL



**your
emotions
are valid**

EMOTIONS WHEEL



**your
emotions
are valid**