



Using Music to Express Your Feelings

Goal: *The goal of this exercise is to help you communicate your feelings and concerns by using music as a medium to “translate” personal experiences. Because this intervention requires you to identify and describe your emotions, it may increase your emotional awareness. Emotional awareness has been argued to be the skill most fundamental to emotional intelligence (Lane, 2000).*

Description:

Emotional expression is considered one of the most important criteria for the “perceived” aesthetic value of music (Juslin, 2013). Some authors have even described music as a “language of the emotions” (Cooke, 1959). Indeed, research findings confirm that listeners believe that music expresses their emotions (for a review, see Gabrielsson and Juslin, 2003).

For example, in a survey study by Juslin and Laukka (2004), participants were asked to indicate what they think music expresses by selecting responses from a list of options. The results indicated that all participants selected “emotions,” as opposed to other options.

Music can be a powerful way of evoking complex emotions, creating mood states that may otherwise be difficult to categorize as positive or negative. This makes music an interesting tool because it distills a multi-dimensional and complex nature of feelings in individuals. This exercise introduces music to facilitate a rich understanding about your present feelings and concerns.

Directions:

At times, it is difficult to express what we feel using only words. In these cases, music seems to be expressing exactly how we are feeling. Take the sheet below and try to find a song that describes how you’re feeling about your situation right now. You can try finding 3 songs if you want to challenge yourself or go deeper into this exercise.

Please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong ways to choose a song, only what makes the most sense to you. After choosing your songs, please take a few moments to respond to the questions below. You can always share your song and responses with your coach to have a deeper conversation about your emotions.



References:

- [Cooke, D. \(1959\). The Language of Music. University Press.](#)
- [Gabrielsson, A., & Juslin, P. N. \(2003\). Emotional expression in music. In R. J. Davidson, K. R. Scherer, & H. H. Goldsmith \(Eds.\), Handbook of affective sciences. Oxford University Press.](#)
- [Juslin, P. N. \(2001\). Communicating emotion in music performance: A review and a theoretical framework. In P. N. Juslin & J. A. Sloboda \(Eds.\), Music and emotion: Theory and research. Oxford University Press.](#)
- [Juslin, P. N. \(2013\). From everyday emotions to aesthetic emotions: Towards a unified theory of musical emotions. Physics of life reviews, 10, 235-266.](#)
- [Juslin, P. N., & Laukka, P. \(2004\). Expression, perception, and induction of musical emotions: A review and a questionnaire study of everyday listening. Journal of New Music Research, 33, 217-238.](#)
- [Lane, R. D. \(2000\). Levels of emotional awareness: Neurological, psychological and social perspectives. In R. Bar-On & J. D. A. Parker \(Eds.\), Handbook of emotional intelligence. Jossey-Bass.](#)



Song 1:

What is the title of this song?

When you hear this song, what comes to your mind?

How does this song make you feel?

Which part of the song is the most important to you?



Song 2:

What is the title of this song?

When you hear this song, what comes to your mind?

How does this song make you feel?

Which part of the song is the most important to you?



Song 3:

What is the title of this song?

When you hear this song, what comes to your mind?

How does this song make you feel?

Which part of the song is the most important to you?
