

# Annex 2

## Glossary of typical emotional reactions



### Anger

This is a very complex emotion, but it is related to frustration and comes about when people are denied something of great importance to them. This is why frustration often turns to anger, as a next step in the escalation of a conflict between people's goals or needs and their circumstances. Anger is a more energetic emotion than frustration and has the advantage of making the person feel some power to overcome the situation. At its worst, anger makes us feel like annihilating or eliminating those who obstruct us from our goals, and for this reason people are often embarrassed to talk about or even admit their anger. This can appear to be a very irrational response because it is also the most misunderstood emotion. Anger does not have to make sense. It just happens to motivate us to overcome threats to our survival or our well-being. That is why people can be angry at a dead loved one for abandoning them or at an earthquake for causing such destruction.

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### Anxiety

Anxiety is a more diffuse, less intense form of fear. While it is always focused on unpleasant future outcomes, there may be no specific target for the anxiety. Anxiety can be expressed in restlessness (agitation) or an inability to act (indecision). Unrelieved anxiety can become paralysing, because it may prevent people from doing things that before were a natural part of their daily routine. Chronic anxiety is very bad for the body as well and may lead to symptoms of physical illness.

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### Blame

This is when people feel at least partly responsible for bad things happening. People are blamed for not preventing or foreseeing the event or for not having helped others enough. People fear blame because it lowers them in the eyes of others, which is very painful and can have severe consequences, including death. In most cases, feeling that you or others are to blame requires that there was some power or opportunity to have acted differently and that the outcome of those acts was predictable.

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### Despair

The person might feel so sad, heavy, and empty that all he really wants is to pull back and isolate himself from the surroundings. This is maybe because he does not want to be reminded about what happened, or because he feels so much guilt that he cannot stand being close to others.

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**Dread**

Disasters can give people cause for dread as they look into a future that includes unpleasant events, like burials, relocating from their communities or otherwise rebuilding their lives. People with HIV/AIDS, or other serious physical ailments, may dread nauseating medications, future medical procedures, the deterioration of their health, dying, or leaving others (such as children) behind.

**Fear**

People often feel afraid if they are suddenly faced with something they think might harm them. This emotion is so powerful that it usually captures the full attention, leaving very little reserve for coping with anything else (also known as terror). The object of the fear is not always visible (e.g. the fear of losing one's mind). The fear might also be concerned with the surroundings; fear of being left alone, fear for the loved ones' lives, fear that the event will happen again, or that it will never be overcome. Fear can leave such a strong imprint on a person that they are permanently changed by it. Chronic fear can lead to panic or emotional collapse.

**Frustration**

When people try to accomplish something and encounter an obstacle, they experience an emotional reaction called frustration. This emotion signals to the person that they must adjust in some way to the presence of the obstacle, usually by increasing their effort or trying something else. Unrelieved frustration leads either to anger or depression.

**Grief and mourning**

People who have suffered a loss, especially of a loved one, experience a very painful reaction that interferes with their ability to go on with their lives. These emotions are so powerful that they seem impossible to hide and people have been known to show physical symptoms, such as shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat and fainting. Mourning often refers to the expressive or ritual behaviour engaged in by grieving people or communities. Expressive rituals can be helpful or necessary for relieving these feelings.

**Guilt**

Guilt is felt when something unfair has happened for which the person was at least partly responsible. Often people feel guilty for not preventing or foreseeing the event or for not having helped others enough. Guilt may also be felt for not having expressed the right things to people before it was too late. One may also feel guilty of being in a more fortunate situation than others, again because it seems unfair. A specific kind of guilt found after disasters is called survivor's guilt, in which a person feels guilty for having survived when others did not. Sometimes people feel guilty that they could not prevent the event, even though they realise that this is irrational. In this case the guilt expresses a wish to have acted differently or to have created a better outcome.

**Loss**

The name of this feeling actually describes the situation, for the person is reacting to losing something. Similar to grief, sorrow, and mourning, this emotion robs people of energy and leaves them feeling empty inside, as though something is missing. It is common for such a person to think almost exclusively about that which they feel is lost and to wish for its return.

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<b>Regret</b>	This is a painful feeling resulting from reflecting on a past decision or behaviour. People often feel some kind of regret after a disaster because they see how they might have chosen differently, though they may have had no way of knowing at the time. This can be seen as a way of wishing to have been more powerful in the face of overwhelming circumstances.
<b>Sadness or sorrow</b>	These feelings share similarities with regret and grief and reveal a person who is mourning some loss. It is easy to recognise sadness because the person lacks energy and appears physically sunken in their face and posture.
<b>Shame</b>	Unlike guilt, shame does not focus on an unfair situation or misdeed, but rather is a person's feeling of being completely bad or inadequate. A person who feels this way will find it very hard to talk about it, because he/she feels undeserving of being cared for or understood by others. Sometimes people feel shameful about how they behaved in the event, even though this may be unfounded. In this case the shame expresses a sense of personal inadequacy.
<b>Vulnerability</b>	When people are hurt physically and psychologically, they feel fragile or insecure. This means that they easily misinterpret their surroundings and that they generally feel misunderstood and betrayed. They may be low on patience and easily irritated.

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