

Over the last eight months we've learned to live in a new way. We move through the world differently, more conscious of the space between us and those around us. We don't see our co-workers in person daily. We take classes online. We might even be hiding pajamas under the desk while presenting business-appropriate for the camera. All of this has a profound impact on our moods from day to day. Sometimes we are firing on all cylinders and other times struggling to keep our heads above water. I have found that identifying and naming those moods is vital for being able to keep moving forward.

As neuroscientists we think a lot about our facts, and we try to tell stories in our papers. We never say how we feel. Learning to do this has made a big difference for me, both on a personal level and as a leader whose goal is to create an environment for success. As scientists, we also tend to be very critical and to see positive emotion as shallow or insignificant. We benefit personally and professionally from acknowledging positive emotion. It can fuel us through tough times, but only if we see it and celebrate it.

Separating mood from facts is challenging. Sure, you may feel exhausted, and that's a fact, but why do you feel that way? That depends on mood. A few years ago, if someone asked me about my mood, I almost certainly would have responded "good" or "fine." But that doesn't really answer the question. I have learned to dig deeper with myself and with others, to ask the question and truly listen to the answer. The attached Mood Check chart offers an array of descriptions that offer a better path than "fine." I encourage you to use this to check in with yourself and your colleagues.

So what is my mood right now?

I am **amazed** at how everyone has persevered and found alternative ways to address research questions and keep moving forward in the lab.

I am **proud** of the work our graduate students are doing to set themselves on a course for future success, especially our new class who just finished a great first rotation.

I am **confident** that our postdoctoral fellows are preparing to lead us to new insights and breakthroughs.

I am **inspired** by the papers I've seen from faculty colleagues who never missed a beat in working through data during the spring shut down.

I am **humbled** by the support we receive from lab and administrative staff, without whom, I can assure you, the wheels would be flying off.

Taken together, and in the spirit of this Thanksgiving month, all of this makes me **grateful**. I am grateful to be here at Iowa with so many creative and inspiring colleagues, doing the work we love and which has such a profound impact on the world we live in.

I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving and a restful, rejuvenating holiday next week.

Ted

MOOD CHECK & CENTERING

CULTIVATING EMOTIONAL LITERACY



POSITIVE	MILD	MODERATE	INTENSE
Love	Accepting Encouraged Friendly	Appreciative Generous Compassionate	Loving Proud Courageous
Happiness	Pleased Amused Glad	Optimistic Playful Happy	Grateful Enlightened Joyful
Excitement	Eager Curious Intrigued	Excited Hopeful Enthusiastic	Amazed Inspired Passionate
Peace	Relieved Reassured Content	Secure Committed Patient	Trusting Confident Humble
DIFFICULT	MILD	MODERATE	INTENSE
Anger	Disrespected Impatient Frustrated	Resentful Critical Offended	Hostile Contemptuous Furious
Sadness	Discouraged Neglected Disappointed	Bored Abandoned Resigned	Uninspired Rejected Hopeless
Fear	Concerned Wary Shy	Anxious Vigilant Defensive	Panicky Intimidated Frozen
Guilt	Embarrassed Apologetic Criticized	Ashamed Guilty Blamed	Humiliated Disgraced Ostracized
Doubt	Confused Hesitant Pessimistic	Suspicious Insecure Skeptical	Mistrusting Insignificant Cynical

- Avoid words like *Good, Fine, Okay, Stressed, Tired, Exhausted* which are not moods.
- We can be *Stressed + Excited* because we are happily sprinting to complete a major new initiative — or we can be *Stressed + Resentful* because we keep staying late with no one helping us.
- When difficulties arise and it's time to re-center, it's good to remember that "*The secret four-letter word of leadership is love.*"

MOOD CHECK PRACTICE

Naming Moods – Find a word to describe your mood. When done frequently, this builds emotional literacy, which gives us a sense of what is driving our attention & behaviors as well as the effects we are having on others.

Difficult Moods – Each difficult mood holds information about needs or longings. By naming these moods, we can start to request help/receive support/take action in resolving challenges we are facing. Untended, difficult moods are highly contagious.

Positive Moods – Sharing positive moods and making an effort to celebrate the contributions of others fosters appreciation, optimism, and pride in teams.



CENTERING PRACTICE

Length – Elongating our spine supports our connection to our own vision and values and signals self-mastery and credibility.

Width – Squeezing our shoulder blades together tightly, doing shoulder rolls & doing twists restores circulation & opens the heart, releasing burdened, closed stances. Open palms create a greater sense of receptivity. Soft eyes open our gaze to the periphery, enabling us to be more inclusive.

Depth – Ensuring we are not too future oriented (leaning forward, too far ahead of ourselves or others) nor too stuck in the past (leaning back, too far away from the action, not participating enough).

Ground – Dropping into a lower center of gravity to support feelings of confidence, security & balance.

Breath – Attending to our breath (with big, exhales at first) supports renewal and ease.

Reflections – Noticing how we get off center helps us see how we are moving into possibilities or shutting them down.