Emotions Guide

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Introduction

This resource is intended as a sort of thesaurus for emotion words. Human emotions are complex things and it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly what a character is feeling at any given moment. Emotions tend to be on a scale from mild to extreme and they are often on a spectrum – for example, happiness might be quite a serene happiness or it might be an excitable happiness. This guide aims to help get to the heart of a character's specific emotion in any given moment and also to suggest how a character's emotional journey might progress from that point on. It is intended as a springboard and is by no means all encompassing, but hopefully it is helpful.

HAPPY

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("untroubled") to extreme ("jubilant") with "calm" happiness to one side of the spectrum and "excited" happiness to the other.

Opposite = "sad"

Combinations (happiness + love = trust / happiness + anticipation = optimism / happiness + surprise = delight)

Pathways (expectant joy might lead to disappointment or accomplishment / tranquillity might be tested by negative elements such as imposter syndrome or doubt)

SAD

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("out of sorts") to extreme ("disconsolate") with "quiet" sadness to one side of the spectrum and "loud" sadness to the other.

Opposite = "happy"

Combinations (sadness + surprise = disappointment / sadness + disgust = remorse / sadness + anger = jealousy)

Pathways (one possible journey follows the five stages of grief – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance)
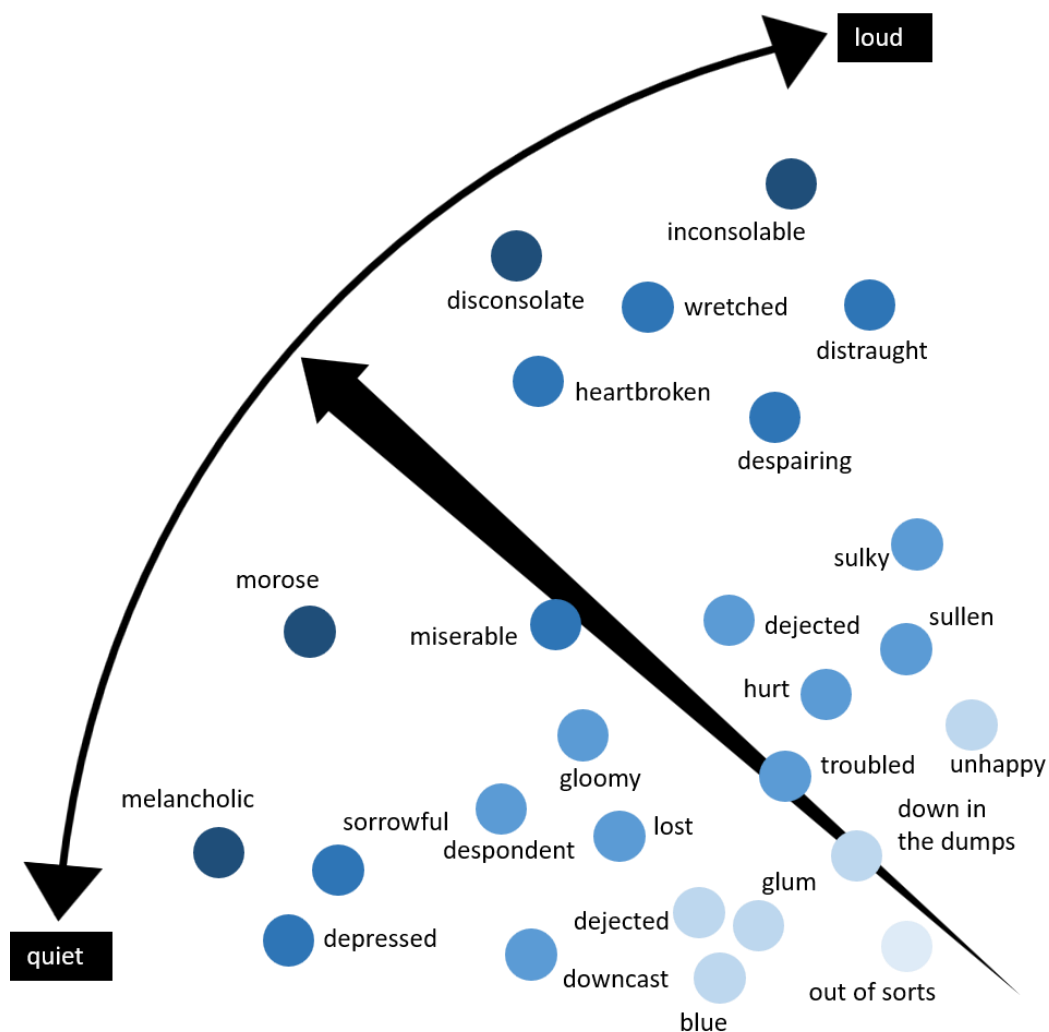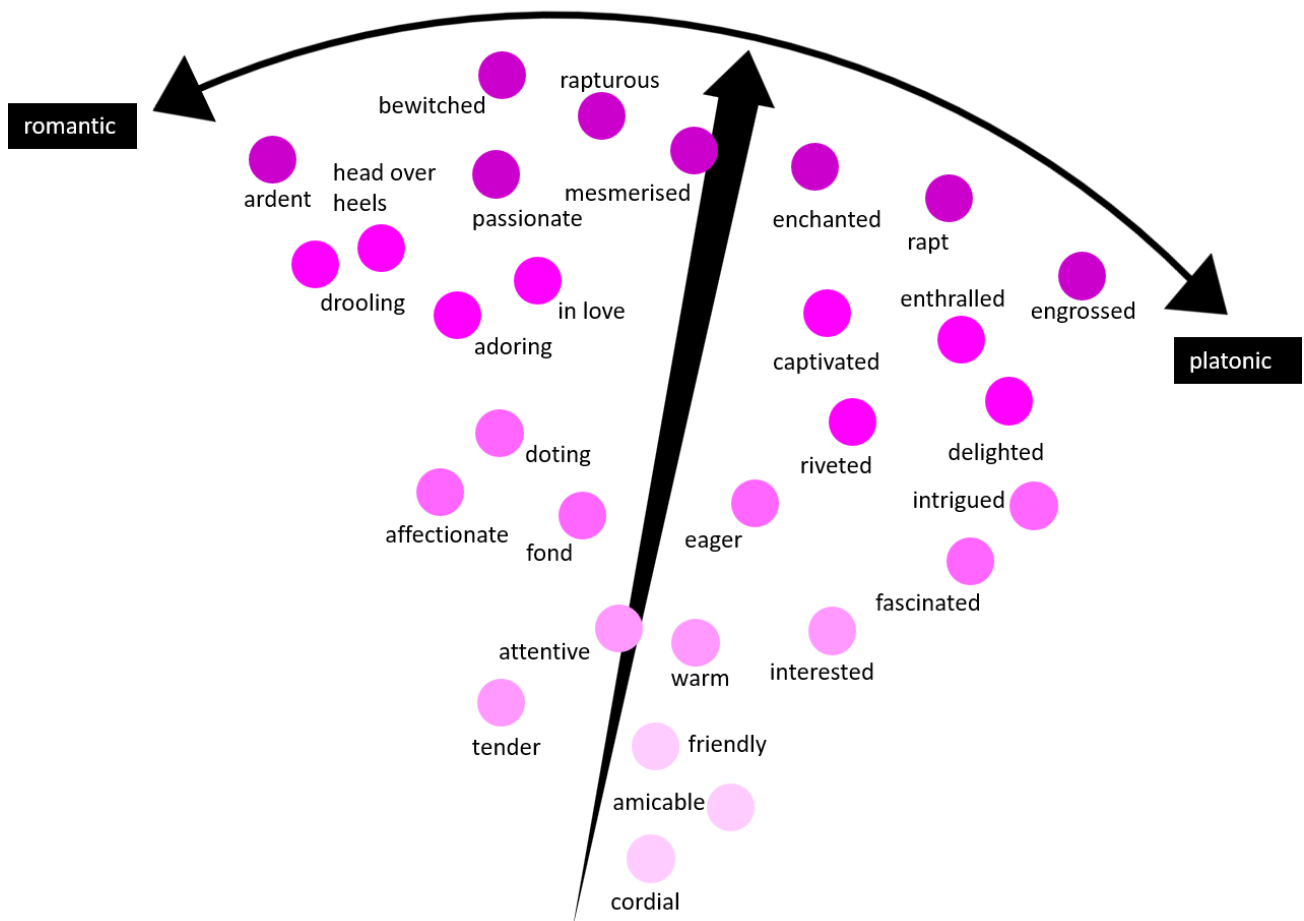
PASSIONATE

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("amicable") to extreme ("rapturous") with "romantic" love to one side of the spectrum and "platonic" love to the other.

Opposite = "angry"

Pathways (unrequited love might lead to frustration, jealousy or anger / interrupted love might lead to grief or depression / thwarted love might lead to guilt or regret)

romantic

bewitched

rapturous

head over heels

ardent

mesmerised

passionate

enchanted

rapt

drooling

in love

enthralled

engrossed

adoring

captivated

platonic

doting

riveted

delighted

affectionate

intrigued

fond

eager

fascinated

attentive

warm

interested

tender

friendly

amicable

cordial

ANGRY

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("irked") to extreme ("infuriated") with expressions ranging from the more formal ("wrathful") to the more informal ("pissed off").

Opposite = "love"

Combinations (anger + disgust = contempt / anger + surprise = outrage)

Pathways (repressed anger might lead to frustration or jealousy / unleashed anger might lead to remorse or isolation)
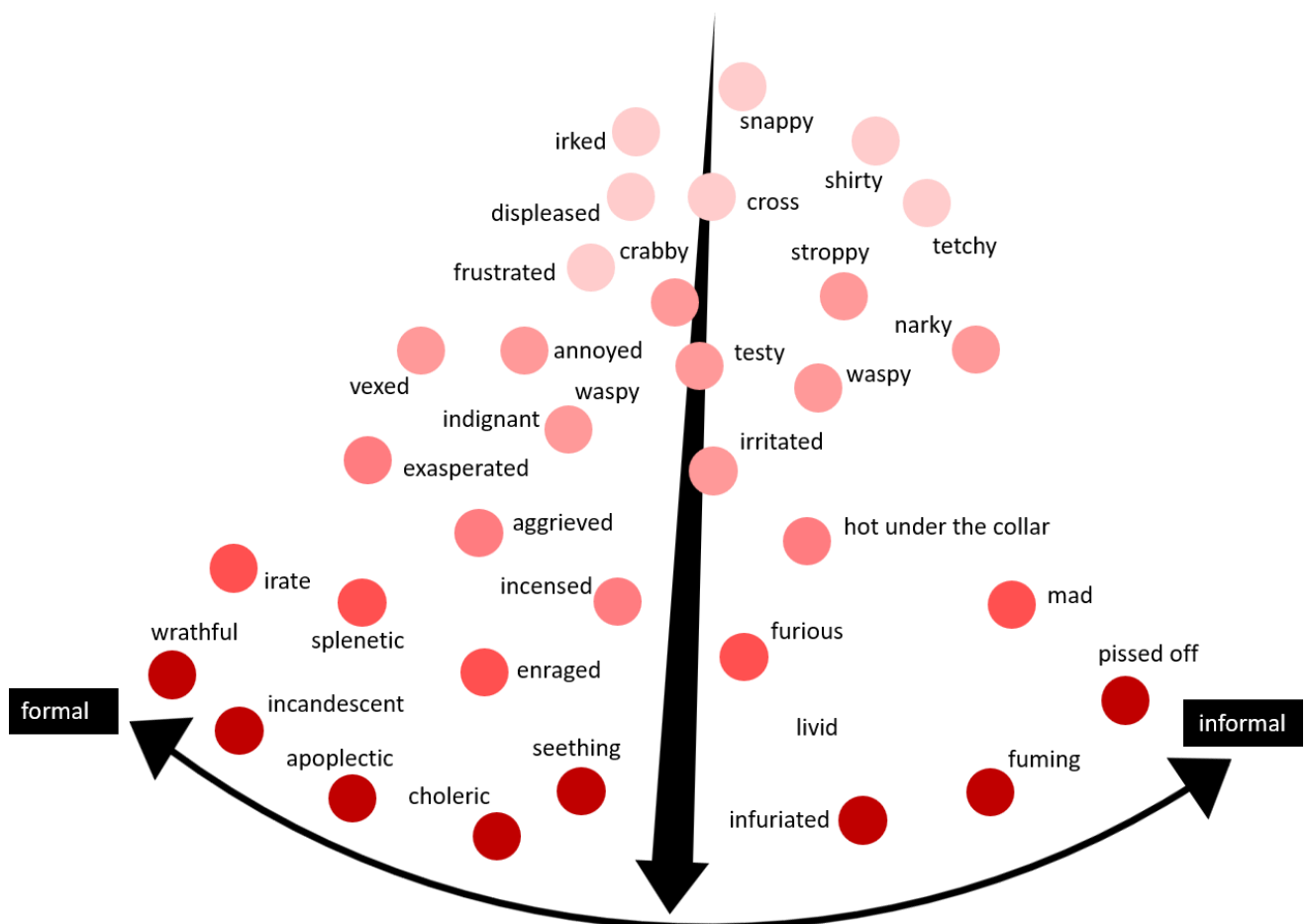
SURPRISED

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("distracted") to extreme ("dumbfounded") with "positive" surprise to one side of the spectrum and "negative" surprise to the other.

Opposite = "bored"

Combinations (surprise + fear = alarm / surprise + sadness = disappointment / surprise + trust = curiosity)

Pathways (positive surprise might lead to joy or excitement / negative surprise might lead to fear or anger)
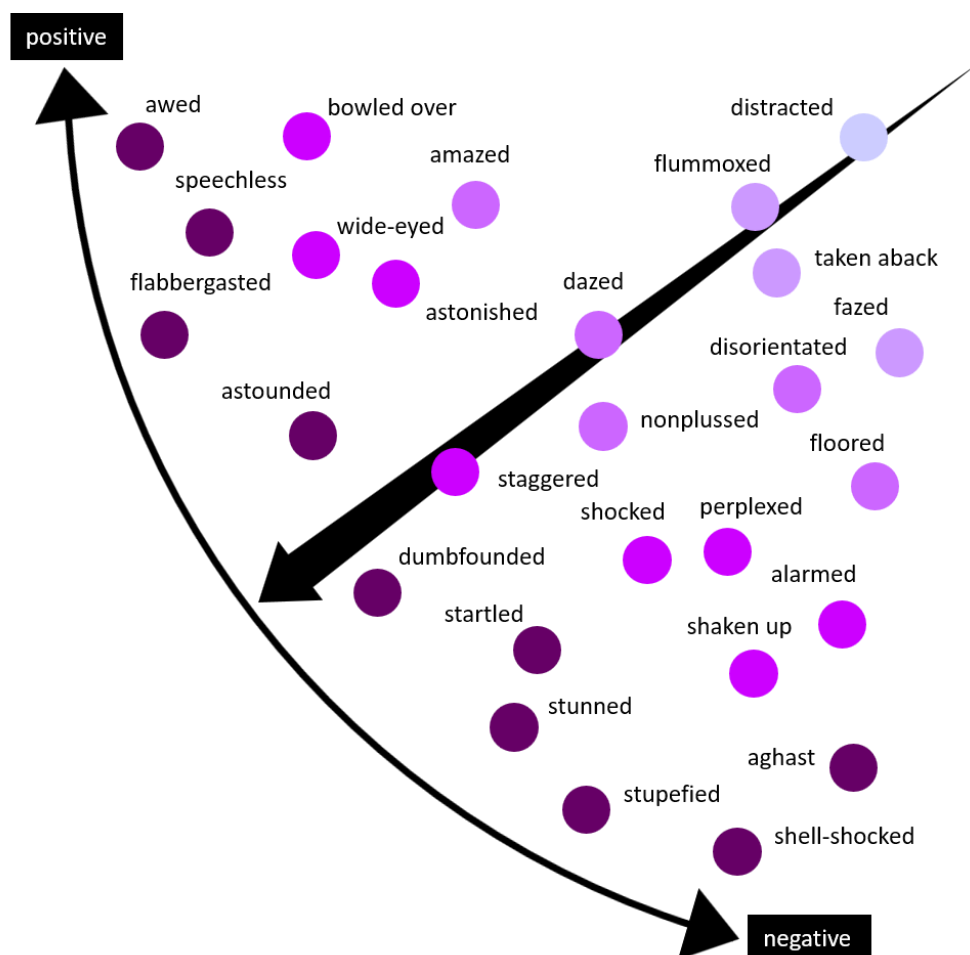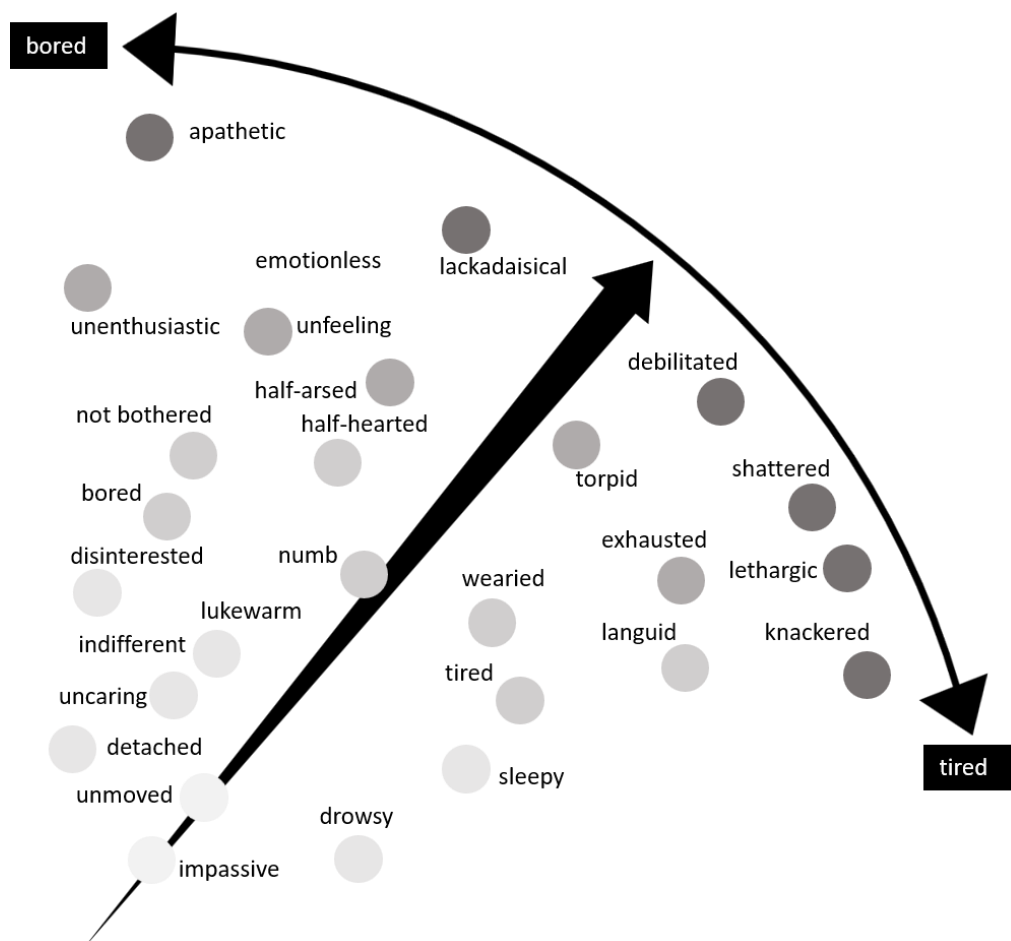
BORED / TIRED

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("impassive") to extreme ("debilitated") with boredom / tiredness on the same spectrum since they often overlap.

Opposite = "excited"

Pathways (boredom might often lead to tiredness; it might often lead to sadness, irritation or other negative emotions)

AFRAID

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("uneasy") to extreme ("petrified") with expressions ranging from reactive emotions ("hysterical") to more continuous states ("frightened").

Opposite = "calm"

Combinations (fear + surprise = alarm / fear + anticipation = anxiety)

Pathways (fear might manifest itself towards the negative – i.e. anger / or it might manifest itself towards the insular – i.e. becoming withdrawn)
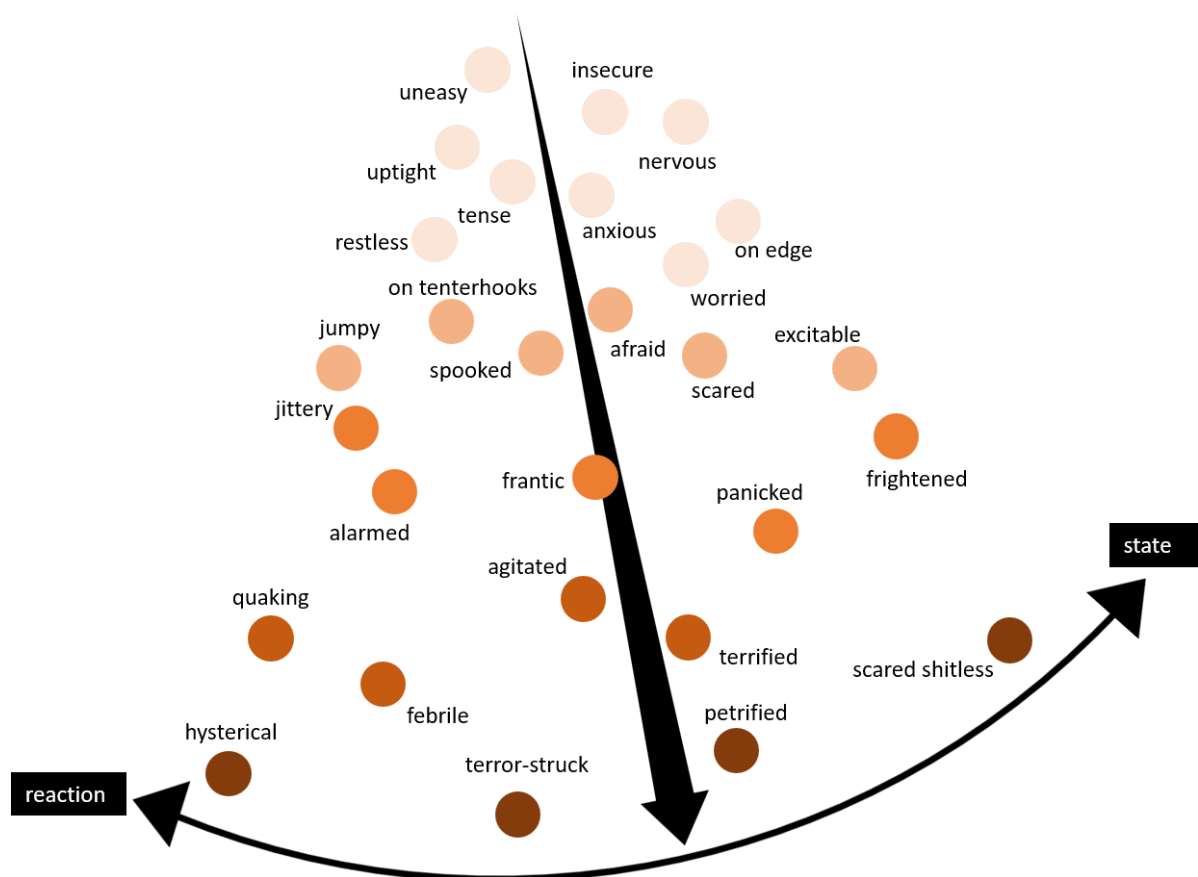
CONFIDENT

Encompasses a small range of emotions from mild ("at ease") to extreme ("assertive").

Opposite = "unconfident"

Pathways (confidence might lead to accomplishment, a sense of fulfilment, a sense of being at ease with the world; over-confidence might lead to conflict through rubbing others up the wrong way; it might also lead to embarrassment, sadness or anger if the confidence is misplaced)
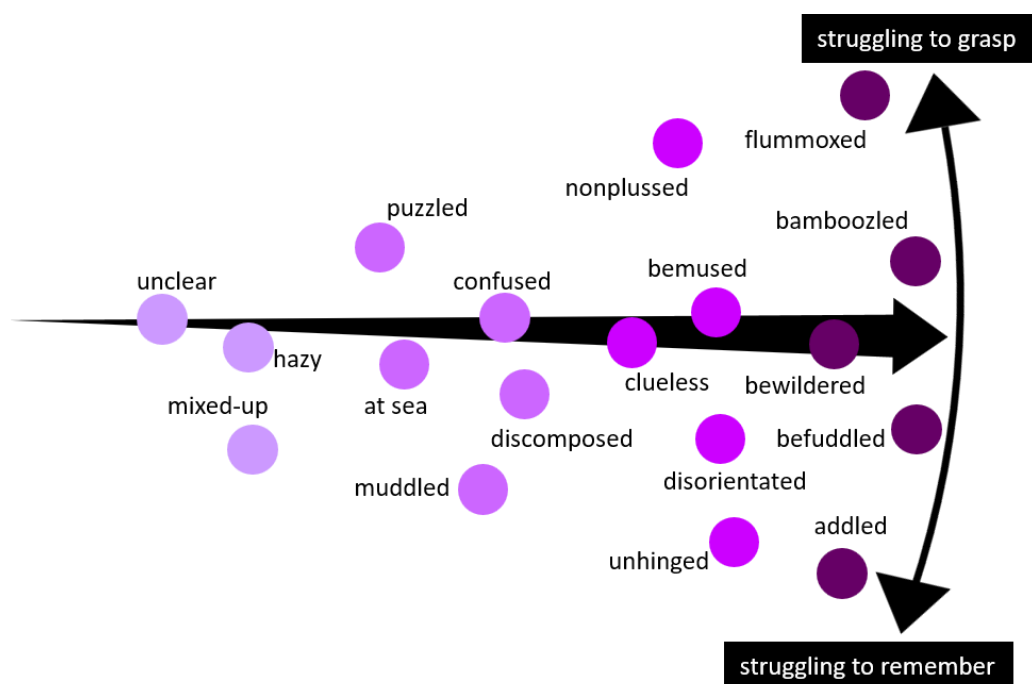
composed

at ease

poised

level-headed

confident

unruffled

unflappable

assertive

swaggering
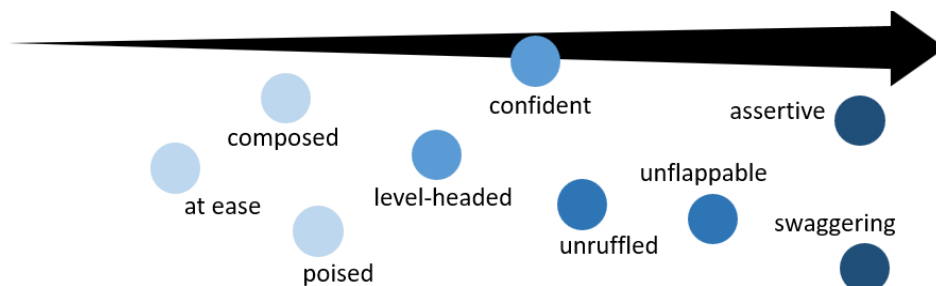
CONFUSED

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("unclear") to extreme ("bewildered") with expressions ranging from struggling to grasp an idea to struggling to remember something (memory loss / dementia etc.)

Opposite = "clear"

Pathways (confusion might often lead to negative emotions such as anger or fear or sadness; however, overcoming confusion might lead to joy or a sense of accomplishment)
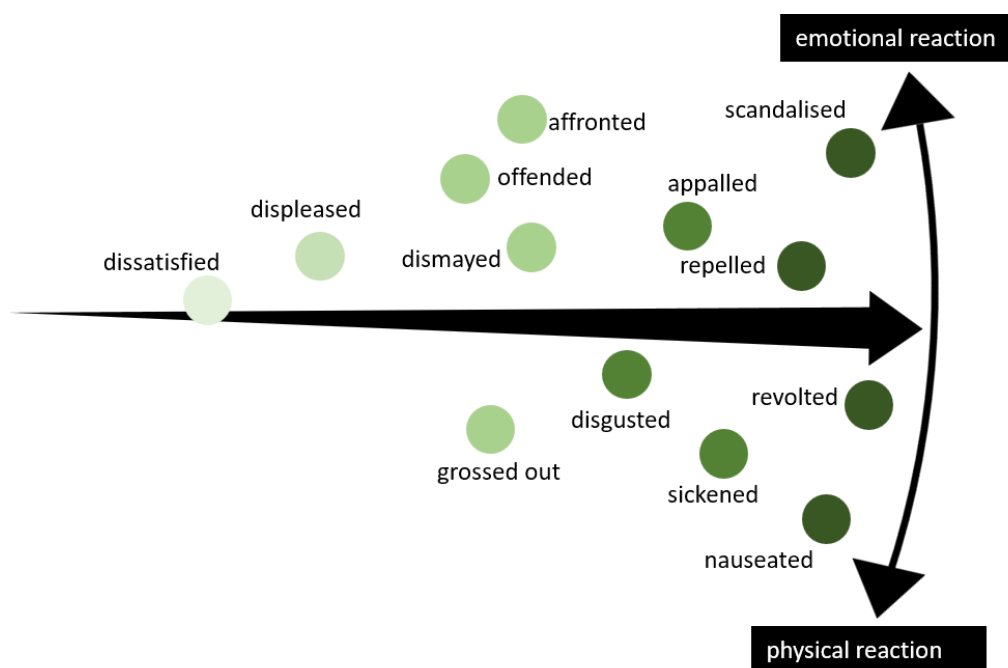
struggling to grasp

flummoxed

nonplussed

puzzled

bamboozled

bemused

unclear

confused

hazy

at sea

clueless

bewildered

mixed-up

discomposed

befuddled

disorientated

muddled

addled

unhinged

struggling to remember

DISGUSTED

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("dissatisfied") to extreme ("revolted") with expressions ranging from emotional reactions ("scandalised") to physical reactions ("nauseated").

Opposite = "accepting"

Combinations (disgust + sadness = remorse / disgust + anger = contempt / disgust + fear = shame)

Pathways (disgust might manifest itself towards the negative – i.e. anger / or it might manifest itself towards a backing away – i.e. fear)

emotional reaction

scandalised

affronted

offended

appalled

displeased

dissatisfied   dismayed

repelled

disgusted

revolted

grossed out

sickened

nauseated

physical reaction

JEALOUS

Encompasses a small range of emotions from mild ("jealous") to extreme ("covetous").

Opposite = "admiring"

Pathways (jealousy might lead towards other negative emotions such as anger or sadness / it might lead a character to become active in order to acquire whatever it is that the object of their jealousy has {we might then have more positive emotions such as energy / excitement} or to destroy that thing so the object of their jealousy is at the same level as them {generally leading to anger / sadness / unfulfillment})

jealous

green

envious

resentful

covetous

begrudging
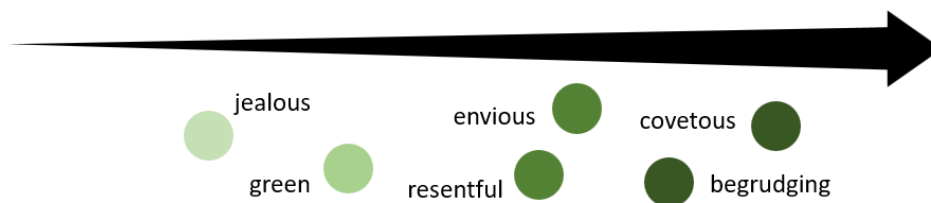
PENSIVE

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("thoughtful") to extreme ("meditative") with expressions ranging from thinking ("philosophical") to dreaming ("rapt").

Opposite = "vacant"

Pathways (a state of thoughtfulness might lead to a revelation {especially on the more logical side of the scale}, or it might lead to action {especially on the more daydreaming side} or a general shift in mood)
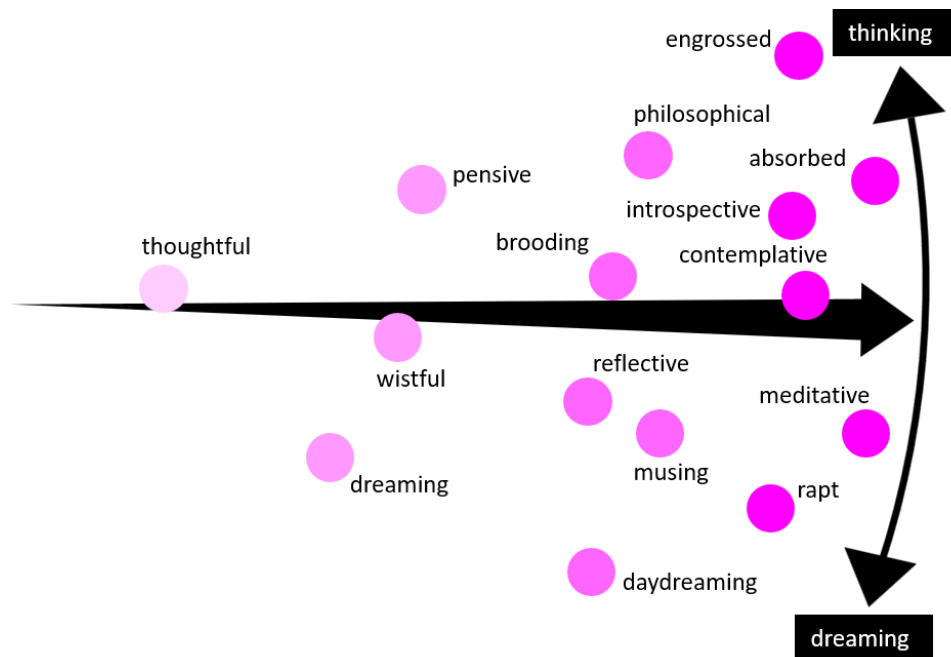
SHY

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("shy") to extreme ("bashful") with expressions ranging from reactive emotions ("embarrassed") to more continuous states ("docile").

Opposite = "confident"

Pathways (embarrassment might manifest itself towards the negative – i.e. anger or depression / a more general state of timidity might manifest itself towards a backing away – i.e. seclusion / fear)
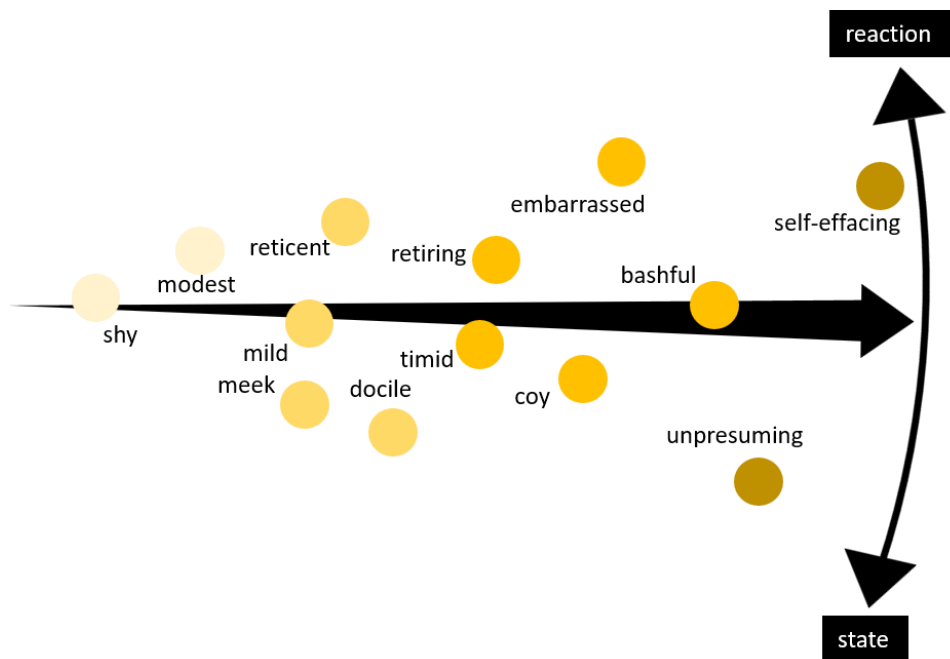
S M U G

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("complacent") to extreme ("puffed-up") with expressions ranging from loud / extravagant ("swaggering") to quiet / internal ("haughty").

Opposite = "humble"

Pathways (a sense of smugness might lead towards confrontation {where others are put out by it, especially on the more extravagant side of the scale}; it might also lead to isolation {especially where the character thinks they are better than others})
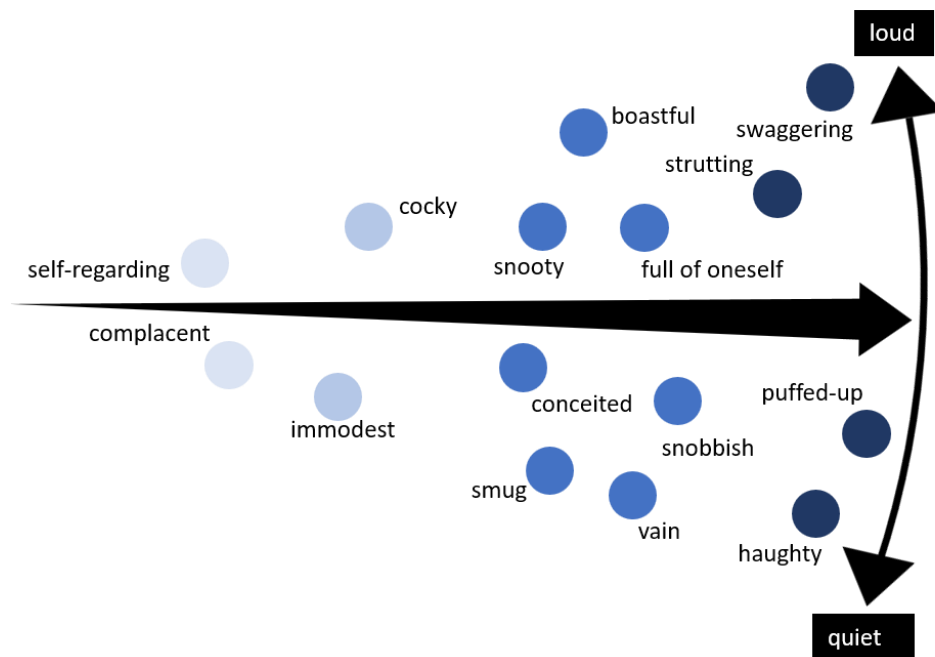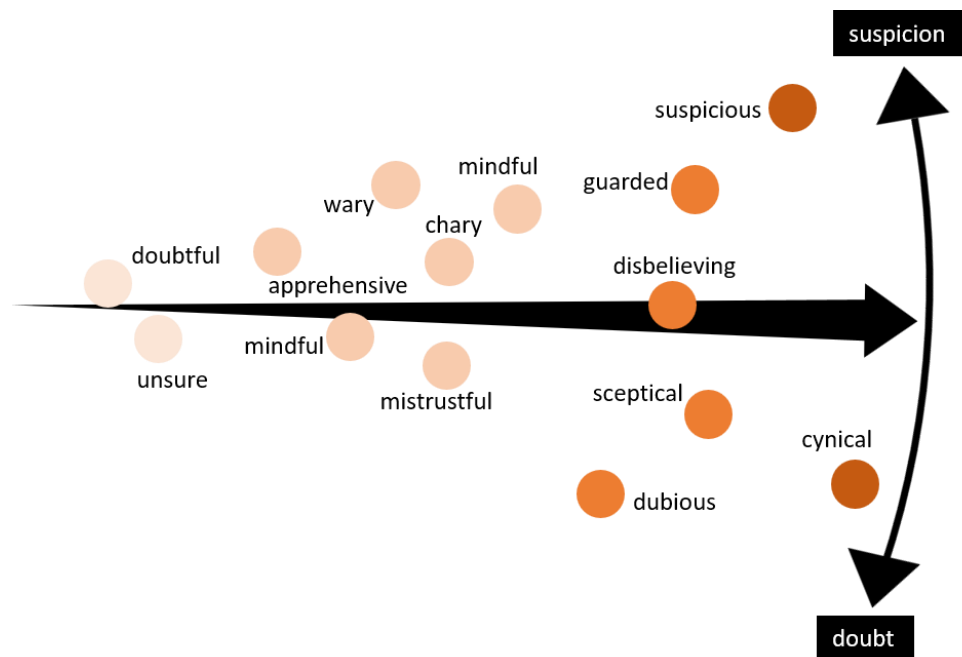
SUSPICIOUS

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("doubtful") to extreme ("sceptical") with expressions ranging from suspicion on one side of the scale ("suspicious") to general doubt on the other ("cynical").

Opposite = "trustful"

Pathways (suspicion might lead towards action – i.e. to find out if their suspicions are true; it might also lead to conflict since their belief is put in contrast to that of others' claims)

TRUSTFUL

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("naive") to extreme ("foolhardy") with expressions ranging from trust on one side of the spectrum ("unguarded") to naivety on the other ("gullible").

Opposite = "suspicious"

Pathways (trust might lead towards happiness / joy; however, where trust is broken this will likely lead to more negative emotions such as anger, sadness, embarrassment)
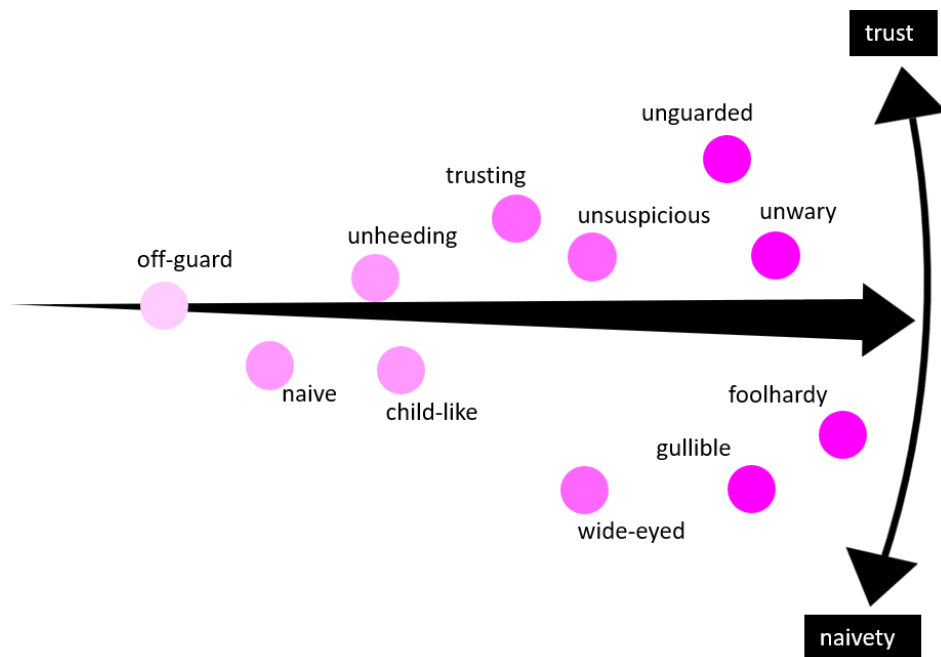
UNCOMFORTABLE

Encompasses a range of emotions from mild ("discomposed") to extreme ("fazed") on a spectrum from what someone is feeling ("hemmed in") to how they are reacting ("twitchy").

Opposite = "comfortable"

Pathways (discomfort might lead towards other negative feelings such as anxiety or suspicion; it might lead a character to project bigger emotions than they are feeling / to overcompensate; it might lead to action to get away; but it might also lead to self-reflection)

reactive

twitchy

fidgety

restless   jittery

discomposed

in pain

ill at ease

uncomfortable   fazed

cramped

hemmed in

feeling

ENDNOTE

Bio:

This resource has been created by Matt Kendrick. Matt is a writer, editor and teacher based in the East Midlands, UK. His short fiction has been widely published both online and in print. He has been placed or listed in various writing competitions including Bath, Flash 500, the Oxford Flash Fiction Prize, Reflex and Leicester Writes. His work has been included on the Biffy 50 list for 2019-20, in Best Microfiction 2021, Best Small Fictions 2022 and the Wigleaf Top 50 list for 2022. He has also been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize.

Other Resources:

For links to other free resources, please visit my website: https://www.mattkendrick.co.uk/resources

Services and Courses:

Information about my courses and editorial services can also be found on my website.

Support me on Ko-fi

As a workshop facilitator, I am committed to opening up writing opportunities to people from all backgrounds based on ability to write rather than ability to pay. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to finance pay-what-you-can and free spots exclusively from my own pocket. So, if you've downloaded this resource and are in a position to support narrowing the access gap to creative writing opportunities, I would be very grateful if you would consider buying me a virtual coffee*.

*Any money donated to my Ko-fi page will be used to fund free and reduced-price places for my Write Beyond The Lightbulb courses, as well as to provide free editing and mentoring opportunities for low-income writers, and to support other opportunities that seek to level the playing field.