Emotion and action worksheet

An urge offers information, not an instruction. Include practical needs, boundaries and genuine protection.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Situation / feeling / urge

e.g. Plans changed; I felt angry and wanted to send a sharp text.

My need, priority or safety

e.g. I need clearer notice and time to decide.

Response I am considering	Likely effect now	Likely effect later
e.g. Send the angry text immediately.	e.g. Brief release.	e.g. More conflict and less clarity.

My chosen action or request

e.g. Pause, then ask for the information I need.

Outcome / repair or next step

e.g. The message was clearer; arrange a time to discuss it.

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Using this resource

Emotion and action worksheet

What this helps with

Strong emotions can make the next action feel urgent. This sheet creates a little room to recognise the feeling, name the urge and consider what would help. It is not about deciding that an emotion is wrong or insisting that you calm down before responding. A useful action may be to express a need, set a boundary, seek support or wait until you have enough information. Keep the reflection short enough to lead somewhere practical.

How to use it

1. Name what happened, the emotion and the action you feel pulled towards.
2. Pause briefly if it is safe to do so; choose an ordinary anchor if that helps.
3. Consider what the urge would achieve now and what its later effects might be.
4. Choose a response that protects your needs and fits the situation.
5. Review what happened with curiosity. If you already reacted, choose the next repair or boundary.

A fictional worked example

Alex sees a changed rota and feels angry, with an urge to send a sharp message immediately. They need a fair discussion about their hours. Sending the message may release frustration but make that conversation harder. Alex puts the draft aside for ten minutes, checks the agreed hours and writes a clear request to discuss the change. They still feel annoyed. The aim was not to remove the feeling; it was to express the concern in a way that could help. If a genuine boundary is being ignored, the next step may involve a manager or representative rather than more self-soothing.

Keep in mind

Do not delay leaving a dangerous situation or seeking urgent help in order to complete this sheet. Persistent overwhelming emotions or difficulty staying safe need appropriate support. A brief coping tool is only one part of understanding and responding to the wider problem.

Sources and attribution

Roth, A. D., & Pilling, S. (2007). The competences required to deliver effective CBT for people with depression and anxiety disorders. UCL competence framework.

NHS. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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