Feelings Darts

Suitable for:

* Training feelings vocabulary and improving insight into underlying feelings

Why is it useful?

* Because people often feel vulnerable when talking about feelings (even if not their own), it is easier to practice it in ways that feel light-hearted
* Because we want it to feel safe talking about feelings, we want to reinforce it, even when someone’s insight is not good
* We want to, in a safe manner, continuously prompt developing a deeper and more sophisticated understanding

How?

* A therapist or someone with a relatively good understanding of feelings should lead it
* Draw a dart-board with 5 concentric circles. Label the middle 10 (bulls-eye) and the spaces between each circle 8, 6, 4, and 2 going outwards. The circles themselves would be 9, 7, 5, 3, and 1.
* Present a story where the character in the story would feel something. Then give one of the participants a pretend dart. Ask them to name a feeling the person likely would feel. Put a mark on the dart board according to how well you believe it fit, keeping in mind that “10” is reserved for the most specific and applicable feeling. Say “good job! You got ‘X’ points!” where X is the number on where they were put on the board. Then give the person another pretend dart, or give it to another person if there are more participating. “Let’s see if we can find a feeling that fits the situation worth even more points.”
* If they name happy, sad, mad, angry, or upset, or another very general emotion and it seems to fit the situation, make a mark on the “’2’ space” and say “good job! – 2 points!”
* If the “10” was not hit after 3 darts, tell the person(s) “good job” and briefly mention the total points (from everyone). Rhetorically ask if they would like what would have been a 10-point answer and give it. Give a brief explanation if it seems needed, but move on to the next scenario.
* Repeat with further stories/scenarios. You can use stories from your own life, the participants’ lives, or from movies and books.

Example:

Leader: Ralphie has been looking forward to getting a Red Ryder BB-gun for Christmas. He really thinks he is going to get it. He has now opened all his presents, but he did not get a BB-gun. How do you think he felt? [Hands the participant an imaginary dart.]

Participant: “Sad!”

Leader: Good job! He probably did feel sad. 2 points! [Marks a 2-pointer on the dart-board.] Let’s see if we can find a feeling that would get us even more points! [Hands participant another imaginary dart.]

Participant: Hmm… I think he would feel “mad.”

Leader: Good job! That’s another 2-pointer. [Marks another 2-pointer on the dart-board.] Mad, angry, upset, always cover up another feeling, so we know there’s another feeling to find underneath there. [Hands participant another imaginary dart.]

Participant: Okay… I’ll say “frustrated.”

Leader: That is really good! If he has been putting a lot of thought into getting that BB-gun, he would definitely feel frustrated. I’ll give that a whopping 8 points. If we have been looking forward to something and it does not happen, we feel disappointed, which would have been a 10-pointer. [Leader moves on to the next scenario.]