

Lilli Höch-Corona

Leading with empathy

**Better team meetings and
conversations with
Gefühlsmonster[®] Cards**

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Editorial office: Erik Kinting | www.buchlektorat.net
Illustrations: Christian Corona
Cover & Set: sabine abels | e-book-erstellung.de

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Dedication

First of all I would like to thank my son Christian Corona. Without him, the *Gefühlsmonsters* (quite literally „*Emotion Monsters*“) would never have come into being and I would never have been able to discover my love for lightness in my work in this way. All graphics in this book are created by him. He designed the cover, and it is thanks to his attention that the framework of the book has become coherent. He was also an invaluable help in revising the English version of my book.

Thanks to Corinna Telkamp, without whom the book would not have been created at this point. Her idea was the inner structure for the individual exercises. Thanks to her experience with mediation and training, she was able to quickly familiarize herself with my existing texts and field reports and, in close cooperation with me, to write the drafts for this book.

Thanks also to all those who have told me about their experiences with the *Gefühlsmonsters* over the past 15 years. Their stories have inspired me to try out and develop new things in my work – and to share it in seminars.

Thanks to Peter Metzler, Holger Buchholz, Susanne Sachse and Karin Molnar, who sent us the first feedbacks from company contexts about their experiences with the *Gefühlsmonsters*.

I would also like to thank our seminar participants. Together with them, my colleagues and me, we came to the insight that methods are always evolving.

Thanks to Antje Vorndran who, through her book project, encouraged me to start my own. She was the first to give me the feedback that this book was a compelling read. With her love for the English language she helped me revise this version of the book.

Thanks to Thomas Fehr, who asked colleagues for feedback on this text. This initial feedback from professionals who are not familiar with *Gefühlsmonster* was the final step towards actually giving this book to the world.

Thanks to Ursula Rieger, who had a good advice for the publisher.

Thanks to Tijen Onaran for her message that only what is visible takes place. She is the first one who was able to convince me that visibility helps our work to achieve the desired level of awareness.

Thanks to the editor Erik Kinting, who answered all my questions, set clear deadlines and kept them. Thanks to the layout designer Sabine Abels, who worked assiduously through the various *Gefühlsmonster* depictions in the book, and who also overcame all hurdles in the English translation. Her enthusiasm about Christian's drawings motivated us to add some new icons, so that the structure is now clearly labelled with the respective icons in the margin.

Lilli Höch-Corona

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This book assumes that you know or want to know about the *Gefühlsmonster*® Cards. Take a look at the website (see link below), to get an idea of what they look like and how they work.

The *Gefühlsmonster*® Cards are a tool that makes it easier to talk about feelings.

Emotions are contagious. This also applies to representations of feelings. Most of our users in various fields report that the cards make it easier for people to talk, and that they encourage sharing moods and feedback in groups. Words are found more easily looking at the *Gefühlsmonsters*, statements are memorized better.

The cards are offered in three sizes in the online store at www.gefuehlsmonster.de:

- in mini (business card size) for working at the table and on the go
- in medium (postcard size) for working with small groups
- in extra-large (full page size) for working with larger groups



QR Code our website and -store:



We offer seminars in our *Gefühlsmonster Academy* where you can learn how to use the *Gefühlsmonsters* in different areas.

More about it here:



www.gefuehlsmonster.de/en/seminars-workshops/

Please contact us if you have questions:

e-mail: info@gefuehlsmonster.de

phone: +49 30/411 921 31

Gefühlsmonster GmbH

Bornholmer Strasse 19

10439 Berlin

Introduction

Each chapter of this book is about feelings; about pleasant, difficult, different and common feelings, past and present, inside and outside and surprising feelings.

Feelings have a tendency to come over us sometimes at the wrong moment. This can lead to problems especially with difficult feelings. Conversations about feelings help us to better process what we have experienced, to make differences and similarities clear and to develop new ways of working together. The *Gefühlsmonster*® Cards can facilitate these conversations.

"I couldn't listen very well, I was too annoyed to do so – but I could still watch, and then I saw that my colleague was also feeling bad." These were words from a mediation client in one of my first attempts to use the *Gefühlsmonsters* in mediation. In the 15 years that followed, I developed many other techniques in conversation with our users and colleagues, such as how the visualization of feelings can facilitate the start of a conversation, stimulate a change of perspective and make group opinions visible.

With this book, I would like to contribute to making an exchange about feelings easier and, if possible, to help create a permanently improved basis for communication.

This will not be the case for everyone, just as it is not always a good idea to talk about feelings at every moment. The decision about this is up to you, the reader.

What you will find in this book is a collection of proven tools for group work, self-management, individual counselling and conflict resolution.

Our communication is complex – and we are all different. Our experiences sometimes determine our actions more than we would like, and what we experience is as different as the world we grew up in and live in.

Being annoyed causes the usual tunnel vision, makes us not see the paths we can take, separates us from people we actually love or with whom we work on important projects.

As one of the first mediation instructors in Berlin, I quickly realized that no technique, no matter how good, could be a fool-proof guide for how to handle difficult situations. Besides all that we can learn about techniques and communication, we are always challenged to get involved as a person with what makes us who we are. At the same time, good techniques can give us ideas for constructive strategies, so that we can take people and groups one step further on their path based on our knowledge, empathy and experience.

How to use this book?

I explicitly encourage you to first try out those tools that appeal to you. The best practice examples at the beginning of each tool show what the technique is all about and help you to understand the next steps. If you feel like trying out a technique, this is exactly the right place to start.

I wish you good experiences with the techniques in this book – and many ideas for your own work!

Guidelines

A few words about the attitude with which we use the *Gefühlsmonster*® Cards:

"*Well, let's analyze it,*" said a seminar participant in a consultation with the person who selected *Gefühlsmonster*® Cards for her current situation. His words inspired me to formulate the following guidelines, which have proven themselves over the years in our work:

- The guiding question is: What does this card mean for you? In this way you will receive open answers and invite the other to say more about the card.
- Whoever looks at the cards decides what they see in the pictures.
- Own words about the cards are more helpful than attributions by another person.
- Each figure can and should be understood differently. You can expect to be surprised which figure your conversation partner assigns which meaning.
- If necessary, the conversation partner can add some feedback to these descriptions.
- The quality of the accompanying person's work with the *Gefühlsmonsters*® Cards corresponds to her openness, flexibility and empathy.

- The word monster or *Gefühlsmonsters* should only be used if the person looking at it understands that it is meant playfully.
- In a business context, we like to use the word "emotion cards" as an introduction, in order to soften the initially unusual use of comic illustrations. As soon as people have experienced the cards in action, they like the name *Gefühlsmonsters*, because it makes the intensity of the experienced feelings tangible and combines it with humour.



TEAM

Tool 1: Warm Up

Best Practice

Chantal Meunier holds a workshop with her team leaders to discuss the effects of introducing a new process and to explore them. To start, she chooses to do an entry round with the *Gefühls-monsters* with the question how the team leaders are doing with the new process. Everyone walks around, stops at the card of their choice and explains it in one sentence.

The following picture emerges:



She now knows that the majority of team leaders are open to the process and who is still uncertain or worried about it. This way she feels well prepared for the following conversation.



Occasion

- For workshops, trainings, retreats.
- If you want to activate the participants at the beginning of the event.
- If you want to find out possible resistance right at the beginning of the event.



Goal

- You will receive a mood picture right at the beginning.
- In a short time you will receive information about which participants are motivated, who has concerns about the event or whose attention level is limited due to tiredness or stress.
- You increase the attention for the subsequent topic of the event.



Duration

30–60 minutes, depending on the number of participants



Materials

Gefühlsmonster® Cards medium (or extra-large for larger group option)

How it works

The cards are laid out in a circle in the middle and all participants express how they feel about the start of the event.

First think about what you want to ask. Possible questions are:

- a) How are you feeling in general?
- b) How do you feel here at the event today?
- c) How do you feel about our topic today?

Then place a circle of the medium cards in the middle of the room.

Short introductory speech for this method:

"You see here 25 cards with representations of feelings, called *Gefühlsmonsters*. Emotions are contagious. If you look carefully while wandering around, you will feel a slight resonance in some cards. These figures may have something to do with how you feel right now. That's exactly what I want to ask you: ... (Here you ask your chosen question a, b or c.) At these cards you stop and think for a moment about what the card means to you. Choose a maximum of three cards which you would like to say something about. Please memorize the numbers of these cards. Then I will ask you to show the cards you have chosen one after the other and to comment on them."

All participants now walk around the cards and choose 1–3 cards, memorize the numbers and sit down again. Then the first participant starts, picks up the chosen card(s), says what the card means to them, puts it down again and sits down. Then it is the next one's turn until the whole group has spoken.





Impact

- Focused attention in the group due to the highly structured process.
- Participants who are prevented from paying attention to the event by other circumstances (for example, because of other day-to-day problems) or simply by unpleasant feelings have the opportunity to state this at the beginning. This subsequently helps them to focus on the event.

Option for larger groups and sufficient space

Spread out the extra-large cards on the floor.¹ Invite the participants to walk around the room, going from card to card and standing on or next to the card they want to choose. The physical change of place helps to get moving mentally as well.

Small groups are likely to form around individual cards and some participants will stand alone at a card. Decide,

- a) whether you walk from card to card and interview those standing there about what the card means to them (for quiet, more disciplined groups)
- b) whether you ask the participants to discuss the meaning of the card with the people they meet at a card. You might ask people standing alone at one card to join one of the groups for the exchange or to get together with other individuals.

Afterwards, a speaker for each group reports what has been discussed, and the individuals speak for themselves.

¹ The non-laminated cards are suitable for putting them on the floor, too, since they are protected by cellophane wrapping.

Options of possible questions



- How are you doing with project XY (topic of the event/team meeting)?
- How would you like to feel about project XY?
- Which *Gefühlsmonsters* can accompany you at this event today so that it will be a good event for you?²
- Possible follow-up question: What can you contribute to make you feel with project XY as desired? (Possibly have it written on moderation cards)

Further options of questions (solution-oriented)³:

- How are you doing at the moment? Which moods correspond to you at the beginning? (1–3 cards)
- In which mood(s) would you like to go home tonight/would you like to be at the end of the day?" Or: "How would you like the mood in the team to be after the day?" (1–3 cards)

Afterwards the following transition offers itself for team days:
"Which topics would we have to talk about today, so that it becomes more probable to make these feelings possible?"

.....
2 Thank you Thomas Fehr (www.inveni-co.de) for this question.

3 Thanks to Rita Wawrzinek (www.fiberlin.de) for this suggestion!

TEAM

Tool 2: Flash Feedback

Best Practice

It is the afternoon of the one-day retreat of the department heads. The morning was very intensive and constructive, now the next steps have to be planned so that the new strategy can be implemented. With the goal of starting the new workshop phase in a clear state of mind, the moderator initiates a quick mood scan. The following picture emerges:



I am quite happy how much we have achieved today. I had not expected that.



I feel good. I am ready to continue.



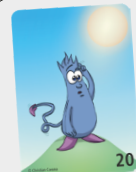
I feel energetic and can start right away.



I am happy to see now how we can put this into practice.



I can see the work that is coming up due to the restructuring of the processes.



There is still a long way to go.



It makes me think about how we can put this into practice.

Now the moderator knows: The group is on the right track. However, there are also some concerns about how and perhaps also whether the path to practical implementation can be well mastered.

Occasion

If you want to get a quick mood scan in between sessions (this can be useful after certain units or if you have the impression that something is going on in the group).



Goal

- You will learn how the participants are doing and where they stand at the moment.
- Sometimes it becomes apparent that somebody needs to talk and you can respond to that directly.



Duration

10–15 minutes



Materials

1 Set *Gefühlsmonster*® Cards extra-large



How it works

The participants stop at a card that reflects their current mood.



You distribute the *Gefühlsmonster*® Cards in the room and ask the question: "How do you feel now after this module/currently in the event?". The participants walk around with an open gaze and see which card is right for them. Then let the participants briefly say what this card means for them at the moment.

Impact

- Participants can briefly get out what is bothering them. Afterwards they will have more attention for the event again.
- A need for discussion can be recognized and taken up immediately.
- You receive a good assessment of the group's attitude towards the current course of the event.



Option: High-speed Flash Feedback

If you want to save time, you can also let the pictures speak for themselves. Then only ask a few individuals why they chose this or that *Gefühlsmonster*. If you do not address all of them, ask who else would like to say something (in case one or more participants still have something on their mind).