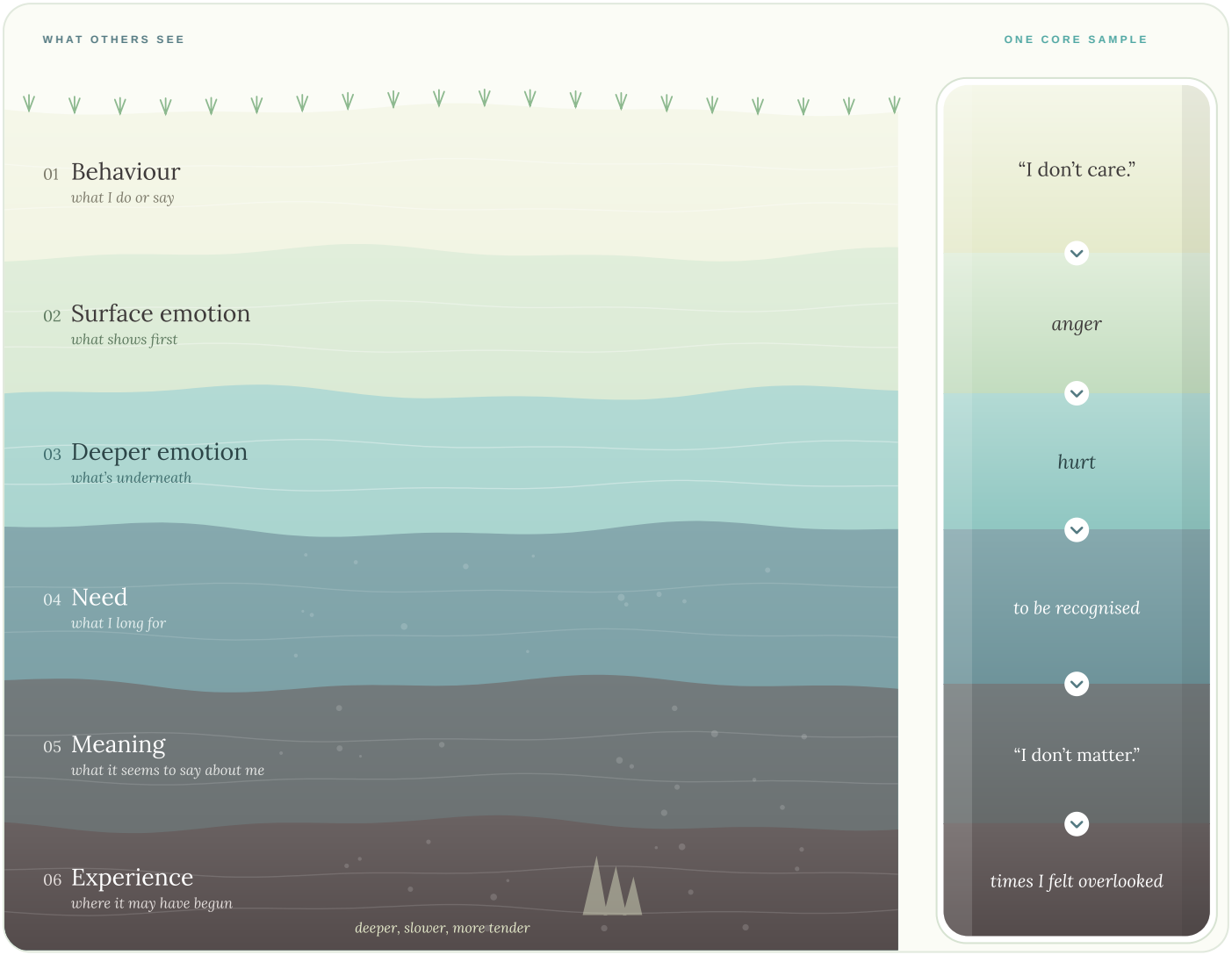
The Emotion Beneath the Emotion

What shows on the surface often rests on something softer underneath

Emotion-focused therapy distinguishes the feelings that show first, often protective reactions, from the more vulnerable feelings beneath them (Greenberg, 2004). Under those lie needs, and the meanings we may have drawn from earlier experiences. Like layers of rock, each one was laid down for a reason.



01 Common pairings

not rules, just possibilities

SURFACE	MAYBE BENEATH
anger	*hurt or fear*
irritability	*exhaustion*
"I don't care"	*disappointment*
control	*fear of chaos*
numbness	*grief*
jealousy	*insecurity*

02 Digging gently

curiosity, not excavation

The surface is real too

Anger at unfairness can be exactly the right feeling. Looking beneath a feeling doesn't mean dismissing it.

Go slowly

You don't need to reach the bedrock in one go. Deeper layers can feel tender; pause whenever you need to.

Needs are human

Safety, connection, recognition, autonomy and acceptance are core emotional needs (Young et al., 2003). Having them is not weakness.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS

The layers here are a teaching metaphor rather than a fixed sequence. Emotions often blend, and not every surface feeling hides another. Putting feelings into words may ease their intensity a little (Lieberman et al., 2007), and reaching the more vulnerable feeling is often what helps others respond with care.

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03 My own core sample

one recent moment, layer by layer

01 Behaviour
what did I do or say?

02 Surface emotion
what did I feel first?

03 Deeper emotion
what was underneath?

04 Need
what did I long for?

05 Meaning
what did it seem to say about me?

06 Experience
when have I felt this before?

04 Questions for digging

answer only what feels manageable

If this feeling could speak, what would it be protecting?

What did I most need in that moment?

Is the meaning I took from it the whole truth?

What would I say to a friend with this layer?

05 Meeting the need

even a little

From me
how I could offer myself some of it

From others
who, and how I might ask

One small step
something I could do this week

06 Reflection

what did I find?

What I noticed about my own layers

SOURCES

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