REFLECTION OF FEELING
Koltz references literature and research pointing to how emotions guide our behavior even when we believe we are making a decision “logically” and objectively. Emotion then becomes critical to understanding what motives clients and their behaviors.
Feeling reflections should:
(1) Convey you heard what the client is saying; and
(2) Bring awareness to the client’s emotional state.

The text goes through 4 tips for successful feeling reflections (so check those out!), but here we’ll highlight some of the common mistakes counselors can make when reflecting feelings. For each “mistaken” given, consider how you might construct an appropriate reflection.

#1 NO MINI-ME
Unsure counselor may use minimization with their reflections. “You feel a little scared.” Get rid of the minimizer, use another feeling, etc. just try to stay clear of minimization client’s feelings.

#2 FEELING LIKE A FAILURE
You use a feeling reflection and the client replies, “No. I’m not scared. It’s more anxious.” Counselors may feel like they’ve failed, but remember: you know how more information. Use this. Maybe the client isn’t feeling scared or maybe they’re just not at a place yet to recognize that they are feeling scared. Keep going!

#3 SMALL MENU SELECTION
Especially when starting out, counselors may have a limited selection (or menu) of feeling words they use. This limits the expression and recognition of emotion in the session. Don’t confuse this with core emotions though! The core emotions serve a purpose, and we need to utilize them in session. But let’s also include other feeling words when reflecting emotion.

#4 NO CONFIDENCE IN VOICE
Counselors unsure of the client’s emotion (and worrying about #2 feeling like a failure) may be tempted to raise their voice at the end of the reflection in a questioning tone. “You feel scared?” This no longer has the value or function of a feeling reflection.

#5 PARROTING
Whether using too many of the client’s same words, their own same words, or using the same structure, counselors repeating themselves sound odd. Most people dislike parroting so try to avoid this. Because most people dislike parroting so try to avoid this. So remember that most people dislike parroting and try to avoid this.

#6 BLENDED LANGUAGE
Client discussed the challenges of new job, trying to please the manager, maintaining home-work balance, discipline problems with their children, feeling ashamed they are not at home as much, feeling scared they aren’t performing up to manager’s expectations, yet excited about this new chapter in life.