WORKSHOPSKILL · FACILITATION KIT

Mad · Sad · Glad — Facilitator Run Sheet

Folder: `mad-sad-glad` · Category: reviews · 6–20 people · 20 min · offline + online · print props · tool pack

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20	6–20	print props
MINUTES	PEOPLE	SETTING

Mad · Sad · Glad — Facilitator Guide

A 20-minute, 6–20 person retrospective. Everyone writes what about the last cycle made them mad, sad, and glad — then the team clusters the notes, dot-votes what resonates, and lands one concrete, owned action per colour. It's faster than "what went well / what didn't", and because it names feelings, it surfaces the things a status report never will.

Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will have:

1. Put the emotional truth of the last cycle on the wall — what made them mad, sad, and glad — in their own words.
2. Clustered and dot-voted the notes into the themes the whole team actually shares, not the loudest voice at the table.
3. Left with one concrete action per colour, each with a named owner and a revisit date.

When to use this activity

- A team finishing a sprint, project or quarter that needs to name how it actually felt — not just what shipped.
- A retro that keeps producing action items nobody owns; feelings get aired, then nothing changes.
- You have 6–20 people and 20 minutes, and the mood of the cycle is the thing you can't see in a status report.

Why naming feelings beats good/bad

People rarely say "I'm quietly demotivated" in a standup — but given a Sad column they'll write it down. Mad/Sad/Glad gets the emotional truth onto the wall fast, then forces the one discipline retros usually skip: an owner and a date for each theme. Mad is energy you can redirect; Sad is morale you have to rebuild; Glad is what to protect. Naming which is which is what turns a mood into three actionable themes.

Setup

Space: three labelled columns on a wall or a shared board — **Mad**, **Sad**, **Glad**. Above 20 people, run two groups on the same board theme and compare the clusters at the end.

Materials per person: a stack of sticky notes and a pen — one item per note, silently, no names on notes. Dots for the vote.

Materials for the room: the card faces from `mad-sad-glad-prop-cards.pdf` — mad, sad, glad, cluster & vote, one action each, owner & revisit.

Grouping: one team that just finished a shared cycle (sprint, project, quarter). It runs the same way online on a shared board.

Roles: everyone writes and votes; you hold the clock, the two rules, and the line between systems and people.

Optional: put `mad-sad-glad-activity-poster.pdf` (A3) on the wall so "one item per note" and "one owned action per colour" stay in view. No projector, no account, no online form needed.

How to run it

Time	Phase	What you do
0–5	Write	Silent, private notes: one item per note across Mad / Sad / Glad. No names on notes.
5–11	Post & cluster	Everyone posts to their column. Read them aloud, then group duplicates into clusters.
11–17	Vote & choose	Dot-vote the clusters that resonate. For the top item in each colour, the team picks one concrete action — not a wish.
17–20	Own & revisit	Each action gets a named owner and a revisit date. Write the three actions where everyone can see them.

The card

The three colour cards (mad, sad, glad) hold the columns; the “cluster & vote” card marks the middle move, and “one action each” plus “owner & revisit” are the two rules the retro must not skip. Keep them from `mad-sad-glad-prop-cards.pdf` on the wall so the discipline outlasts the conversation.

Failure modes

- **The Mad column turns into blame.** Keep it to systems and events, not people — reframe “X dropped the ball” into “the handover had no owner.” Fixable, and less poisonous.
- **Everyone writes safe, obvious Glad notes.** Ask “what would have made this cycle genuinely better for you, not just fine?” to reach the real Sad and Mad under the politeness.
- **You get actions but no owners.** Stop at three actions total — one per colour — and don’t close until each has a name and a date. Three that happen beat ten that get posted.

Variations

- **First retro ever:** run it anonymous on a shared doc; people won’t say hard things with their name on a Sad note.
- **A long, draining project:** give Sad and Glad equal airtime to Mad — morale often needs acknowledging before problems get fixed.
- **Keep going:** re-run each cycle; the shift in what lands in each colour is the health signal.

Facilitation notes

- A thin Glad column is itself a finding — say it out loud: the team is running on frustration alone.
- When the top Mad item is something leadership controls and can’t change, name that honestly so it doesn’t rot as an unowned gripe.

Put it on the wall

Print `mad-sad-glad-activity-poster.pdf` (A3) to hold the three columns, the minute flow and the two rules on one wall while you run it.

Props in this folder

- `mad-sad-glad-prop-cards.pdf` — poker-spec print sheet (63.5 × 88.9 mm, bleed and cut guides): mad, sad, glad, cluster & vote, one-action-each and owner & revisit cards, blanks, branded backs
- `mad-sad-glad-run-sheet.pdf` — the print edition: this run sheet + the debrief, bound as one A4 document with bookmarks (`-Letter.pdf` is US Letter)
- `mad-sad-glad-activity-poster.pdf` — the whole retro on one A3 wall sheet
- `mad-sad-glad-guide.md` · `-debrief.md` · `-start-here.md` — the facilitator guide, the debrief, the one-page start here
- `mad-sad-glad-license.md` — what you may do, how to rebrand, what shipped when
- `SKILL.md` · `mad-sad-glad.zip` — the machine-readable manifest, and the whole folder in one download

Agent version

Every file in this folder has a stable public URL — an AI agent can fetch the cards, the debrief and this run sheet with three curl commands (see `SKILL.md`). The paper version needs nothing but sticky notes, three columns and a pen each.

Mad · Sad · Glad — Debrief

> You did not just air feelings. You turned the mood of a cycle into three themes the team can act on — each with an owner and a date.
>
> Use with `mad-sad-glad-guide.md`. The three owned actions at minute 17 are the compressed version; this sheet is the full one.

How to run this debrief

- Keep the three clusters and the three actions **visible on the wall** while you talk — you are debriefing the map the team just drew, not re-litigating the sprint.
- Read the weight before the words: where the dots landed tells you whether this is an energy problem (Mad) or a morale problem (Sad).
- Close on owners and dates. An action without a name is a wish — don't leave until all three have one.

Read the emotional shape

1. **Where the weight is.** A lot of Mad is energy you can redirect; a lot of Sad is morale you have to rebuild. The mix changes what the actions should target.

2. **How full Glad is.** A near-empty Glad column is a finding of its own — people are running on frustration alone. Say it out loud.
3. **What surprised the room.** Which note collected the most dots, and whether it took anyone by surprise. The team's vote is not your guess about the team.

The four debrief questions

- For the top Mad item: is this a problem to solve, or a reality to accept and work around — and did the team name which?
- For the top Sad item: what value or need is underneath it — recognition, autonomy, steadiness — and does the action actually touch it?
- Is there a note only one person wrote that matters more than its dots suggest? Sometimes the important thing is held by one person.
- What's the first sign next cycle that a colour has actually shifted?

Failure modes of the debrief

Failure mode	Why it happens	The rescue
Mad turns into blame	People, not systems, get named	Reframe every item to a system or event: "the handover had no owner," not "X dropped the ball."
Glad is all safe notes	Politeness hides the real Sad and Mad	Ask "what would have made this genuinely better, not just fine?"
Actions with no owners	The retro ends on vibes	Stop at three actions — one per colour — each with a name and a date before anyone leaves.
An unfixable Mad item	Leadership controls it	Name that it's out of the team's hands so it doesn't rot as an unowned gripe.