In class, on Wednesday, February 28th, the theme of Chapter Four, emotions, was introduced to us by our professor, Ron Gaiz. The discussion covered many aspects of “emotions” but I will focus on Robert Plutchik’s “emotion wheel.” The concepts of primary and mixed emotions, as well as intense and mild emotions, were introduced. This part of the discussion grabbed my attention because it related to an experience I had had the evening prior to the class. In particular, the idea that “many feelings need to be described in more than one single term” (Looking Out/Looking In), triggered my memory of Tuesday night’s fiasco.

Tuesday night, Sarah, a close friend, called and asked if I would pick her up at the store which is down the street from her house. I told her I would and I asked her if anything was wrong. To me her voice sounded a bit edgy and rushed, but yet somewhat calm, as she explained to me that she and her sister were fighting over the use of the stereo system. She said she was “upset” (her exact word) and wondered if I could pick her up. On the drive over I wondered why Sarah would drag me out in the middle of the night to pick her up. A little fight between her and her sister was not a good reason to me. I thought about other fights that Sarah and her sister had had before and how usually they were resolved within a short period of time. However, when I pulled up in front of the store I realized why she had wanted to leave her house. Sarah’s top was ripped,
her eyes were blotchy and puffy and her hand was bleeding. Later, she informed me that the fight was really over more than who could use the stereo, when she could use the stereo and how loud she could play it. Some awful words were exchanged, they began physically and verbally fighting and Sarah had cut her hand. The fight really had related to a lot of issues which hadn’t been dealt with before and the stereo use was really just the “last straw” for both of them.

Relating this back to the class discussion, Sarah’s original description of her emotions that evening did not fully nor accurately describe her emotional state. I believe that she needed something from me, some sort of help, and that’s why she phoned. Yet, because she had originally only described the situation as the usual “sisters fighting” and that she was “upset,” I took it as that they had only had another of their petty fights. According to our textbook, “some people fail to communicate clearly because they underestimate their emotions, failing to let others know how strongly they feel.” As for Sarah, if she had continued using this mild description of events, I would not have been able to provide her with the comfort she needed.