

Emotion is what you are

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind as you are learning about emotion, is that emotions involve your whole being -- they are “emotional” processes, but also “cognitive” and “physiological” processes as well.

One implication is that, what you do with your body and your mind IS the emotional experience you will end up having, the emotional life you will end up BEING.

A second implication is that your life is very strongly determined by your emotions, and you are often “out of control” of these processes. (e.g., best times, stupidest mistakes, etc.)

HOMOECONOMICUS





Overjustification Effect

1973 - markers + “good player” award

Intrinsic Motivations

amotivation

intrinsic
motivation



doing for the sake of doing;
engagement, flow, enjoyment,
growth, challenge, etc..



The Source of One's Motivations

➤ intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation

intrinsic motivation: "the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one's capacities, to explore, and to learn"

➤ Doing for the sake of: DOING

OR for the sake of MEANING (integrity, values, purpose, etc...)

intrinsic motivation is self-directed & self-sustaining → greater persistence & more disciplined goal pursuit

The diagram illustrates the four components of Self-Determination Theory. It features four pink ovals arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left oval is labeled 'Autonomy' and is outlined in yellow. The top-right oval is labeled 'Competence' and is outlined in red. The bottom-left oval is labeled 'Relatedness' and is outlined in blue. The bottom-right oval is labeled 'Family Supports' and is outlined in green. To the right of the 'Autonomy' oval is a list of associated concepts: 'family supports', 'independence, self-direction, challenging & fun intrinsic pursuits'. To the right of the 'Competence' oval is a list of associated concepts: 'goal oriented, mastery oriented, growth mindset, success experiences & feedback, PRACTICE'. To the left of the 'Relatedness' oval is a list of associated concepts: 'healthy peer context, mentors, family support, social skills, modeling'.

Autonomy

**family supports
independence, self-
direction, challenging &
fun intrinsic pursuits**

Relatedness

**healthy peer context,
mentors, family support,
social skills, modeling**

Competence

**goal oriented, mastery
oriented, growth mindset,
success experiences &
feedback, PRACTICE**

Healthy Development

(see Csikzentmihalyi & Flow; Ryan & Deci & Self-determination Theory)

- e.g., think back to high school. Did you go to class & engage in extracurricular activities after school, or did you skip class to play cards & go drinking?
- more generally, why do some people make it through their teenage years with vitality, hope, and a general sense that their lives are good and they can pursue meaningful goals, whereas others fall off the tracks?

Healthy Development

consequences?

Using “experience sampling methods” teens who thrive were found to spend a much higher proportion of time in Flow activities (i.e., intrinsic interest, high degree of challenge, intense concentration, absorption in the moment) and less on unstructured time (TV time, bumming around.....)

Healthy Development

- Conclusion? Those who thrive are those who ENGAGE themselves in activities that develop their talents.
- key factor?
- “enjoyment” (Note: this is not pleasure, but more like effortful, absorbed engagement.)
- staying **attuned** to one’s experience of enjoyment depends on the appropriate developmental context (i.e., supporting autonomy, competence, relatedness, meaning, etc.)

"Unfortunately, many adults who have not been able to pursue a vocation that they enjoy will be reluctant to accept this general conclusion," the authors write.

"They will tend to see interest and effort, and play and work, as separate realms because that is how they normally experience them.

"Yet most people remember a time, no matter how brief, when they were swept along by a sense of effortless control, clarity and concentration on an enjoyable challenge. It may have happened on the athletic field, on a scout outing, or in a high school choir, but such moments are often enshrined in memory."



Embodied Cognition



“You make me feel all close and warm”

WARMTH vs. COLD is an embodied metaphor, signifying relationship closeness.

- e.g., memories of social rejection → lower estimates of room temperature**
- e.g., being excluded from a game → craving hot food**
- e.g., holding a hot or cold beverage → feeling closer/
more distant from friends & loved ones**

The Misattribution of Arousal

the Capilano
bridge study 

Emotion & Cognition are Interwoven

The classic Enlightenment picture of humans as rational, self-interested calculators of utility has been thoroughly shattered by the past few decades of social science & biological research.

We know this. But we often pretend it is not the case, and believe that people are rational.


For e.g., to get people to agree with us, we feel we have to convince them, through rational argument, of our perspective.

In reality though, the debate is usually won emotionally, not “rationally,” UNCONSCIOUSLY, not consciously...

- Why are we fighting a “War on Terror?” (see George Lakoff; A Political Mind)

is it because we really are at war?

The cognitive-emotional consequences of the word “war” are to activate fear, obedience, patriotism, the desire for protection and strong leadership, the feeling of moral justification/superiority.

Because our thoughts are built on past associative networks, “adult” complex cognition is a process of creating variants on early metaphors. E.g., the family 

- The Consequences?

a cognitive science analysis reveals that much of today's "politics" are not really about the issues being discussed, but that the discussions themselves are merely variations on underlying metaphoric themes, themes that are based on our early associative networks, and that are interwoven deeply into our emotional systems.

So, the "winner" is often not the one with the best ideas, but the one that manages to trigger the most positive emotional responses in the public. Debates are not about the details, as much as they are about the METAPHORS being used.....

Fluency Effects

(see Norbert Schwarz)



Remember Labels? “meat” vs. “dead flesh”

Remember the Somatic Marker Hypothesis & the Bechara gambling task?

Remember the socio-emotional dysfunctions of people with PFC damage?

Remember Julie Andrews?

Remember classical conditioning & unconscious perception?

Connect the dots --- think about how profoundly we can be affected by our implicitly-activated emotions. Once triggered, our emotions colour how we see everything else; they even direct our own “rational” processes, so that we notice, filter & remember information that is emotionally consistent.

And once emotions are in full swing, we are largely at their mercy....



Emotions

To understand how to improve emotional functioning, let's take a look at how emotions seem to function...

“There are several obstacles to experiencing emotion in a constructive fashion. By its very nature, the way in which the emotional system has evolved biases us toward having destructive emotional episodes.”

– Paul Ekman

Negative Emotions --> specific action tendencies

e.g., anger --> targets & autonomic arousal
(& blood to your hands)

e.g., fear --> escape & autonomic arousal
(& blood to your legs)

This is evolutionarily adaptive!

But it has to be fast (250 ms), reactive (triggered), and unconscious (little meta-attentiveness).

And generally short-lived (unless cognitively stabilized...)

But waaaaaaait a minute.....

what's the “specific action tendency”
of....

joy?

interest?

love?

Fredrickson's "Broaden & Build" model of Positive Emotions

Pos Emotion --> broadening of the thought-action repertoire

Joy --> play --> physical & social resources

Interest --> exploration --> learning


Love --> time & kindness with people --> relationships --> social capital

Emotions & Health

negative emotions --> avoidance coping
strategies --> self-destructive behaviours
e.g., drinking, smoking, binge eating, drugs

Emotions & Health

stress involves negative emotions & is bad for our health

although **top-down** interpretation/construal processes determine how one is affected by an event. E.g., stress vs. eustress; perceived control; liking vs. disliking 

The “Undoing” Effect of Positive Emotions

positive emotions and cardiovascular recovery from stress: Tugade & Fredrickson (2004)

premeasure “resilience”

prepare subjects to give an impromptu speech in front of a videocamera

resilience → positive emotions → quicker return to physiological baseline

Dealing with Negative Emotions

How can we gain some control over negative emotions?

Are there any strategies we can use to help us handle negative emotions when they arise?

first, let's recognize that **suppression** and **rumination** aren't great strategies



Strategy 1: Problem-focused Coping Strategies

we could always try to do something about the situation...

of course, sometimes we can't change the situation (e.g., past regrets, existential emptiness, chronic insecurity, jealousy about your partner's past relationships), or else problem-focused coping doesn't really apply (e.g., daily hassles stressors)

Strategy 2: Distraction

textbook: “Overall, distraction is the best way to avoid the problems of suppression or rumination, since it absorbs attention and temporarily helps people to stop thinking about their problems.”

note: easiest? yes. most accessible? yes.
best? no.

more generally, this is about **redirecting attention** to other stimuli (as are, ultimately, all the strategies); control of attention is absolutely central

Strategy 3: Relaxation

take a few deep breaths; count to 10

go to your happy place.....

breathing & muscle relaxation exercises

note the role of attention redirection

also note the importance of DELAY (give the PFC a fighting chance!)



Strategy 4: Cognitive Reframing

changing our interpretation of the experience
(i.e., redirect attention to our own
interpretation and search for alternatives)

▲ e.g., it doesn't really matter (McD's)

e.g., actively replacing negative thoughts (I
am a loser; I can't do anything right), with
others (I failed that time, but I can work hard
to do better next time.)

▲ e.g., challenge appraisals

Strategy 4: Cognitive Reframing

Challenge appraisals: (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004; study 2)

record an impromptu speech

conditions:

- low vs. high resilience

- threat vs. challenge appraisals

Challenge Appraisals

Result?

threat condition: low resilient ppl
experienced fewer positive emotions, and took
much longer to return to cardiovascular
baseline

challenge condition: low = high resilience!!

this is the power of **a few seconds**' worth of
practicing challenge appraisals

Emotional Control Involves Cognitive Processes

So, PFC research, Schacter & Singer, CBT & cognitive reframing, challenge appraisals, etc. all suggest that A key to healthier emotions is through manipulating cognitive processes

Notice the overwhelming emphasis on the CONTENT of thoughts. 

(This is not the same as one's RELATIONSHIP to one's thoughts....)

Brand-New Ancient Wisdom: You Have More Control Than You Think

recently, the field of psychology is seeing increasing interest in ancient practices of consciousness control & improvement

e.g., meditation (brain changes, e.g., PFC) & mindfulness (e.g., anxiety, depression, pain, stress, emotional reactivity, attention control, performance, emotional awareness, health, immune function, etc.)

Our Normal Patterns of Thinking

- **evaluative:** this is good; that is bad
- **discrepancy-based:** comparing ourselves & others to **standards of comparison**: e.g., our goals, our perceptions of others

Am I good/bad? Am I closer/further from my goals? Is that person right/wrong? Do I like/dislike that? Is he/she cool/not cool? hot/not hot? interesting/not interesting trustworthy/not trustworthy?

Our Normal Patterns of Thinking

- focused on past (regret, guilt, memories, failure, good ol' days) or future (worry, fear, hope, planning, end-point of goals, dreamy “someday” when you will be happy)
- problem-solving: X is a problem; I need to understand it so I can fix it (e.g., I'm not happy; what's wrong with me? Once I figure myself out, I'll be okay.....)

Our Normal Patterns of Thinking

➤ THINKING!

Perhaps most importantly, normal patterns of thinking are relentless and incessant. The mind is always chattering to itself, in a cacophony of voices, and as soon as one finishes, or one 'train of thought' ends, the mind runs off in other directions, skipping continually from thought to thought to thought

“monkey mind”

We tend to be particularly unaware that we are thinking virtually all the time. The incessant stream of thoughts flowing through our minds leaves us very little respite for inner quiet. And we leave precious little room for ourselves anyway just to be, without having to run around doing things all the time.

-- Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness

an open, non-evaluative, non-reactive present-moment focus of attention 

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression

depression has very high relapse
rates.....why?

rumination seems to be key
reacting to our reactions + ruminating to
“figure out what is wrong with me”

this sets in motion negative cascade of
thoughts, magnifying small dips in mood
into large-scale depressive episodes

Maybe the attempted solution is the cause of depression!

monitoring ourselves, and problem-solving keeps a person focused on problems & primed for negativity. And they are kept from developing an alternative way of thinking.

the “doing mode” vs. the “being mode”

through practice, a non-evaluative, non-reactive associative network can be built, a new habit of thought can be developed, and a new type of conscious experience can begin to develop (open, spacious, relaxed, aware....& courageous!!)

The hidden neurology of “doing nothing”

how could “just observing” and “accepting” your negativities, your problems, your “issues,” and your various demons, possibly be helpful?

think of what happens in the act of accepting and “turning towards” the darkness inside yourself...not to indulge it, but simply to face it and acknowledge its existence (and see what it has to teach you about yourself)

