



# Feelings: Joy, Anger, Fear and Sorrow

Health Psychology (CMED2006)

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# Learning Objectives

At the end of the lecture, student should be able to

- Describe the cognitive appraisal theory of emotion
- Suggest ways to regulate negative emotion
- Distinguish between different components of positive life
- Suggest ways to improve patient's quality of life



# Part 1

## Cognitive Appraisal Theory of Emotion





# Relation between Stimulus & Emotion

Emotion is usually a reaction to something external

But what is the mechanism that produces emotion  
(i.e. the subjective feeling)?

For example, movie → ?? → sad



# Two Traditional Theories of Emotion

## James—Lange Theory

Stimulus → arousal & action → experience

(e.g. I cry → I am sad)

## Cannon—Bard Theory

Stimulus → both arousal, action, and subjective experience of emotion simultaneously



# Activity

Can our facial expression drives (or affect) our emotion?

Try watching a funny (or sad) video while either

- (i) holding a pen with your lips, or
- (ii) Holding a pen with your teeth

And see whether your feeling is different





# Facial Feedback Hypothesis

Some facial muscles/expressions are associated  
with smiling & happiness,  
while others are associated with frowning & sadness

Using certain muscles while not able to use other muscles  
enhance or reduce the associated emotion  
(teeth → more happy)(lips → more sad)



# Cognitive Appraisal Theory

Stimulus → physiological arousal and cognitive appraisal  
(of both the stimulus and the arousal itself) → emotion

“Emotional experience cannot be understood solely in terms of what happens in the person or in the brain, but grows out of ongoing transactions with the environment that are evaluated”  
(Richard Lazarus)





# Implication of Cognitive Appraisal Theory

Even if arousal is universal, appraisal process might be different for different people → can explain why people might have different emotion when facing similar situations

Also, even though arousal can be automatic and subconscious, appraisal can be made conscious → the possibility of changing one's appraisal or trying to reappraise the situation which leads to different emotions



## Tool 45: Emotion (Cognitive Appraisal Theory)

Behaviour might be explained as a result of an emotion, which in turn can be explained by the objective situation, the person's physiological response (arousal), and their cognitive appraisal of both the situation and their own arousal

This theory can be used to explain individual differences, as well as the malleability of emotion



# Part 2

## Regulation of Emotion





# Regulation and Dysregulation

Rather than cope with emotion (like with stress),  
we might try to express it and/or regulate it

Emotional dysregulation refers to “is an extreme or inappropriate emotional response to a situation (e.g., temper outburst, deliberate self-harm)” (American Psychological Association – <https://dictionary.apa.org/dysregulation>)



# Reason for Regulating Emotion

Improve performance

Social motives –  
impression management and self-protection

Hedonic motivation



## Tool 46a: Suppression of Emotional Behaviour

Stop oneself from exhibiting the emotion-driven behaviour  
even when one experiences the emotion  
(e.g., stop yourself from crying)

Doable, but levels of subjective feeling is not reduced,  
and physiological arousal becomes even higher





## Tool 47b: Suppression of Emotional Thought

Stop oneself from thinking about the stimuli or the emotion

Doable, but there is likely to be a rebound effect –

i.e. more obsess with the subject after a period of suppression



# Tool 47c: Social Sharing of Emotions

Talking about an emotional event

Does not decrease its emotional impact; could re-activate the shared emotion, mental images & bodily sensations

But might facilitates the process the emotional information → long term benefits



## Tool 47d: Cognitive Reappraisal

Reinterpret the situation or stimuli to soften or alter the emotion

E.g., picture of autopsy → disgust → being told that the images are from a movie and therefore fake → less disgust

E.g., being diagnosed with cancer → sadness → being told that it is highly curable → less sad





## Tool 47e: Distraction and Distancing

Distraction means diverting one's attention away from an emotional stimulus and onto another thing

Distancing means mentally (or sometimes physically) backing away from an emotional stimulus

As long as it's feasible, both can reduce the intensity of emotion



# Exercise, Alcohol- and Drug-Use

Exercise (like other enjoyable activities like eating, sex, entertainment, etc.) can of course supersede negative emotions – but it can also regulate emotion through physiological effects

Alcohol and other drugs can also (dys)regulate emotion on a physiological level (e.g., alcohol might reduce fear), but their effect might be more complicated and potentially negative



## Tool 46: Emotion Regulation

Behaviour might be explained by the fact that the person is attempting to regulate their emotion

We can also use this tool to predict the effects (and side-effects) of regulation-attempts, as well as employing and teaching them in different circumstances





# Part 3

## Happiness, Flourishing & Wellbeing



# Positive Emotion & Positive Life

In psychology, there is a field called Positive psychology

It is defined as “the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life.”



# PERMA Model

According to this Model, there are five beings to a person's wellbeing – which predicts flourishing:

P – Positive emotion

E – Engagement

R – Relationships

M – Meaning

A - Accomplishments





# Positive Emotion

Activities and things that are pleasure (note that some pleasurable things are limited by diminished return; whereas others like spending time with people you love are less so)

In order to achieve this and maximize it, we can identify things that give us pleasure, then enhance pleasure by being more mindful

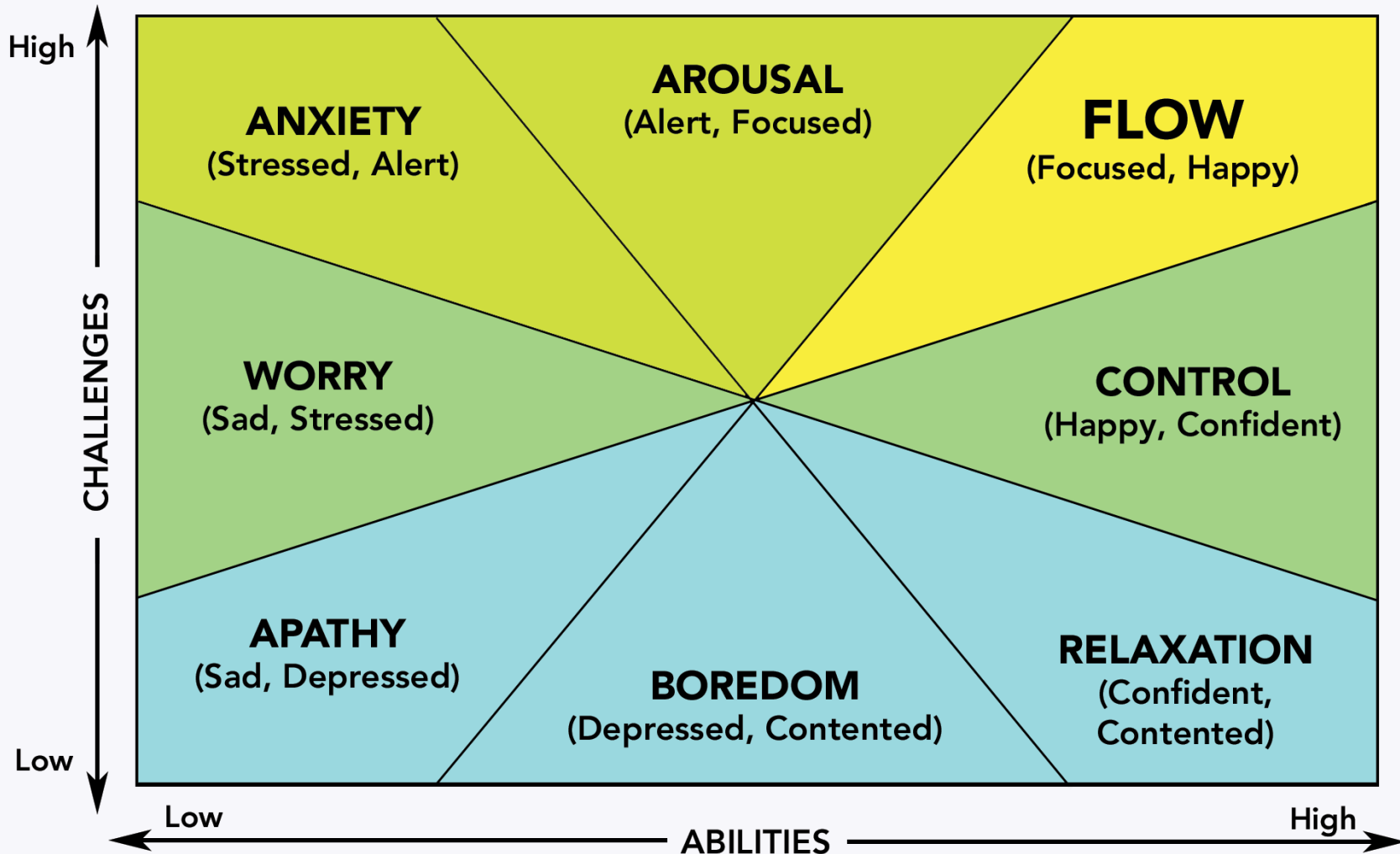


# Engagement

Focus on flow (proposed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi)

Flow (absorption & intense concentration) happens when a person is fully utilizing one's ability in response to challenge

In order to achieve this, we can identify activities that gives us flow and try to do more of it







## (Positive) Relationships

Because humans are inherently social creatures, feeling supported, loved, and valued by others improve our wellbeing

Maintain contact with people you care about

Develop friendship with people you are acquainted with



# Meaningful

Having a purpose in life and doing things that serve that purpose  
(e.g., helping other people versus making money for yourself)

Spirituality (seeking a connection to something larger than self)

Finding the meaning of life through creating values, leaving a  
mark in society, and constructing life stories



# Accomplishments

By achieving something (particularly through hard-work), we feel a sense of self-worth and pride

Achieving intrinsic goals (e.g., growth & connection) usually has a larger positive impact on wellbeing than achieving extrinsic goals (e.g., money & fame)





## Tool 47: PERMA Model

Behaviour might be explained by the fact that the person is attempting to live a positive life (through chasing positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and/or accomplishments)

It can also be used as a guide to help us, and our patients, to achieve a positive life



# Part 4

## Explaining and Suggesting Behaviours



## Scenario 0

Look back at the last 24 hours of your life

Name 5 things/events/activities that were positive

Then, label each one as either i) pleasurable, ii) engaging,  
iii) meaningful, iv) a combination of the above, or  
v) none of the above





## Scenario 0 (Continue)

Go back to the last 24 hours of your life

See how you can maximize the pleasure you get from activities

See how you can find more flow in your activities

See how you can have more meaningful activities



# Part 5

## Behavioural Change



## Case 9

Canice and Cathy have just been told by a clinical psychologist that their son, Caleb, is formally diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

As soon as they received the news, Cathy began to sob. On the other hand, Canice started to berate his wife for causing their son's ADHD.

Caleb, 7, who is also in the room, is annoyed that his parents are getting emotional, and just wants to leave.







# Conclusion

Emotion is the result of our appraisal of external situation  
and our own bodily arousal

We often want to regulate our emotion (to reduce negative  
emotion or negative effects of emotion), but note that  
wellbeing involves more than positive emotions



## Reading / References

- Taylor, SE & Stanton, AL (2021) Health Psychology (11th ed.). Chapter 7.1: Coping with Stress and Resilience; Chapter 11.2: Emotional Responses to Chronic Health Disorders. McGraw-Hill.





~ End of lecture ~