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What is surprise?

Surprise is one of the seven universal
emotions

(https://www.paulekman.com/universal-
emotions/) and arises when we encounter
sudden and unexpected sounds or
movements. As the briefest of the universal

emotions. its function is to focus our
Paul Ekman Group. g  what is happening
and whether or not it is dangerous.

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Feeling surprise

Some emotion scholars do not consider surprise to be an emotion because they say it is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, claiming that all emotions must be one or the other. Many emotions experts, including Dr. Paul Ekman, disagree with this stance, noting that surprise *feels* like an emotion to most people; in the moment or two before

we figure out what is occurring, before we
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surprise itself *can* feel good or bad.

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Duration of surprise

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lasting a few seconds at most. Other

emotions can be very brief, but they can also
endure much longer, whereas surprise has a
fixed, limited duration.

What follows surprise

Within seconds, surprise passes as we figure
out what is happening. From there, surprise
may merge into fear, amusement, relief,
anger, disgust, and so forth depending upon
what it was that surprised us. It may also be

followed by no emotion at all if we
Paul Ekman Group crisis event was of
(no) consequence to us.

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What surprises us?

The universal triggers for surprise are
sudden and unexpected occurrences.

Common surprise triggers:

- Loud sounds (e.g., a balloon popping or a car backfiring)

- Unexpected movements (e.g., someone  throwing a  ball at you without warning)

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The difference between startle and surprise

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Whereas surprise is an emotion, startle is a physical reflex. Startle has an even more constrained timing than surprise: the startle expression becomes apparent in 1/4 of second and it's over in 1/2 second. While being told about a surprise beforehand can eliminate feeling surprise, no one can inhibit the startle reaction. Being warned that you will be startled by a loud noise may reduce, but won't eliminate, its expression. Conversely, you can't be surprised if you know what's going to happen.

Startle also shows an exact opposite
Paul Ekman Group surprise expression. In
startle, our eyes are closed tightly, brows
lower, and our lips are stretched tensely.
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In surprise, our eyes are wide open;
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Recognizing surprise

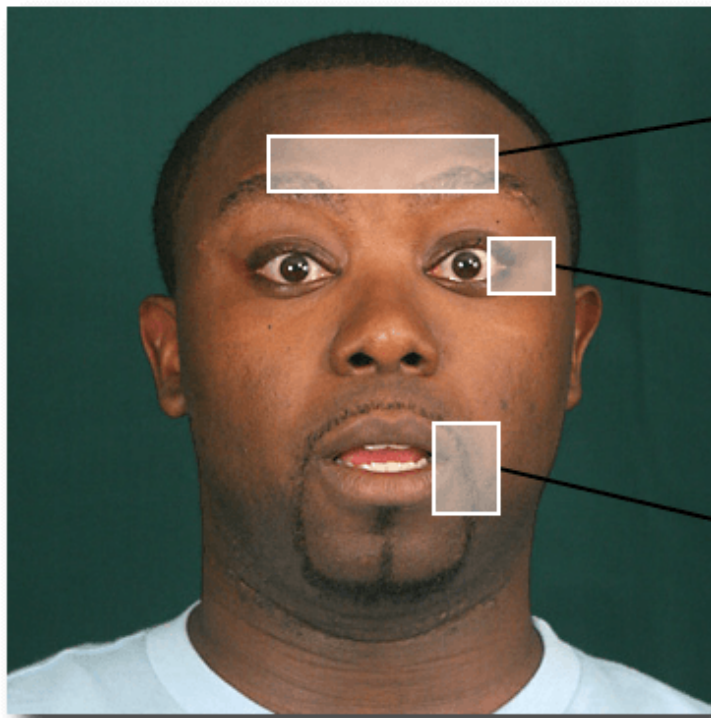
Facial expression of surprise

Fear (/emotions/fear/) and surprise are two
PaulEkmanGroup. ly  confused facial
expressions because they are shown in the
same key features: eyebrows, eyes, and
mouth. In surprise, the eyebrows are raised
but show more curve than seen in fear. The
upper eyelids and jaws are also more relaxed
when expressing surprise.

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The Face of Surprise



1. Eyebrows raised, but
not drawn together

2. Upper eyelids raised,
lower eyelids neutral

3. Jaw dropped down

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There is often an audible gasp—a quick,
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momentary intake of breath with surprise.
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Sensations of surprise

Sensations include a general sense of
attentiveness.

Posture of surprise

Moving the head, bringing the hands up to
shield the face, and/or stepping backwards
away from surprising object.

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~~The function of surprise is to focus our
attention so we can determine what is
happening and whether we are in danger or
not.~~

Responding to surprise

Some people never want to be surprised,
even if it is by a positive event. They tell
people never to surprise them. Others love
being surprised; they deliberately leave
many things unplanned so that they can

often experience the unexpected. They seek
Paul Ekman Group is likely they will be
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trigger

original
situation

how early
in life it's
learned

initial
emotional
charge

density
of
experience

affective
style

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