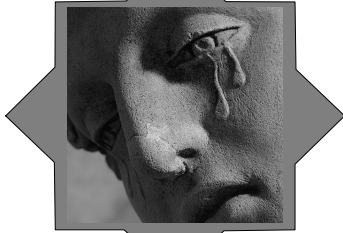


Nature of emotion



Dr James Neill
Centre for Applied Psychology
University of Canberra
2011

Image source
1

Five questions

1. What is an emotion?
2. What causes an emotion?
3. How many emotions are there?
4. What good are the emotions?
5. What is the diff. between emotion & mood?

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 299)

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Upcoming lectures



- **Emotion**
 - Nature of emotion (Ch 11)
 - Aspects of emotion (Ch 12)
- **Individual differences**
 - Personality (Ch13)
 - Unconscious motivation (Ch 14)
 - Growth psychology (Ch 15)
- **Summary & conclusion (Ch 16)**

2

Outline – Nature of emotion

- **What Is an emotion?**
 - Definition
 - Relationship between emotion & motivation
- **What causes an emotion?**
 - Biology vs. cognition
 - Two-systems view
 - Chicken-&-egg problem
 - Comprehensive biology-cognition model
- **How many emotions?**
 - Biological perspective
 - Cognitive perspective
 - Reconciliation of #s issue
 - Basic emotions
- **What good are emotions?**
 - Coping functions
 - Social functions
 - Why we have emotions
- **Difference between emotion & mood?**
 - Everyday mood
 - Positive affect

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 297-298)

5

Nature of emotion: Five perennial questions

Reading:
Reeve (2009)
Ch 11
(pp. 297-328)

3

Five more questions?

1. How can emotion be measured?
2. What are the consequences of emotions?
3. How can emotion be changed?
4. How and why did emotions evolve?
5. How do emotions of animals & humans vary?

6

Five more questions?

1. ?

2. ?

3. ?

4. ?

5. ?

7

Relationship between motivation & emotion

Emotion as motivation

Emotions are one type of motive which energises and directs behaviour.

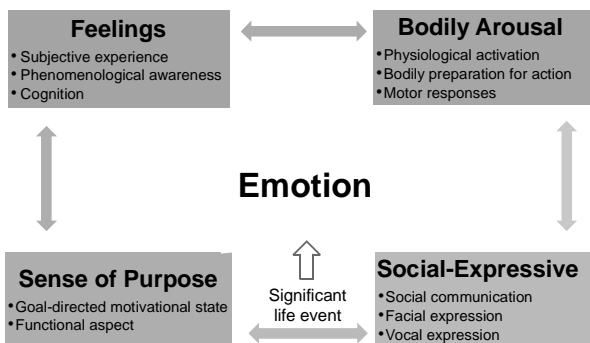
Emotion as readout

Emotions serve as an ongoing “readout” to indicate how well or how poorly personal adaptation is going.

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 301-303)

10

What is an emotion?



Based on Reeve (2009, Figure 11.1 Four components of emotion, p. 300)

8

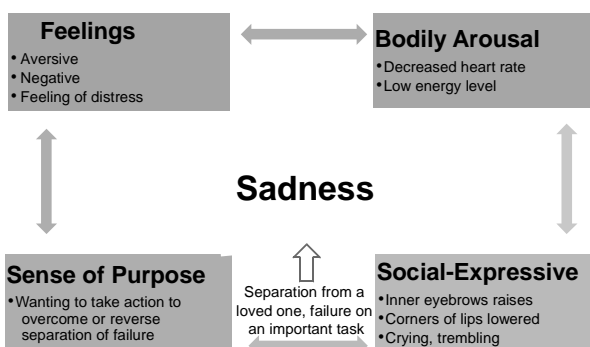
Definition of emotion

“Emotions are ... short-lived, feeling-arousal-purposeful-expressive phenomena that helps us adapt to the opportunities and challenges we face during important life events.”

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 301)

11

Four components of sadness



Based on Reeve (2009, Figure 11.1 Four components of emotion, p. 300)

9

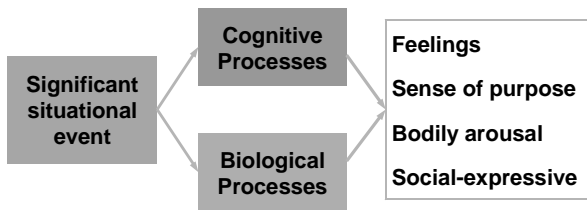
Definition of emotion

“Emotions are ... the synchronised systems that coordinate feeling, arousal, purpose, and expression so as to ready the individual to adapt successfully to life circumstances.”

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 301)

12

What causes an emotion?



Based on Reeve (2009, Figure 11.3, Causes of the emotion experience, p. 303) 13

Two-systems view

- Levenson (1994) – the two systems influence one another
- Panksepp (1994) – some emotions are primarily from the cognitive system (e.g., fear and anger), other emotions arise from experience, modeling and culture (e.g., gratitude and hope).

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 306)

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Biology and cognition

Biology perspective

Biology lies at the causal core of emotion.
(e.g. neurotransmitters)

- Izard (1989) - infants
- Ekman (1992) – emotions happen to us
- Panksepp (1982, 1994) – genetically-endowed neural circuits

Cognitive perspective

Cognitive activity is a necessary prerequisite to emotion.

- Lazarus (1984, 1991a, 1991b) – appraisal needed
- Scherer (1994a, 1994b, 1997) – specific appraisals (good/bad, cope, morality)
- Weiner (1986) - attribution

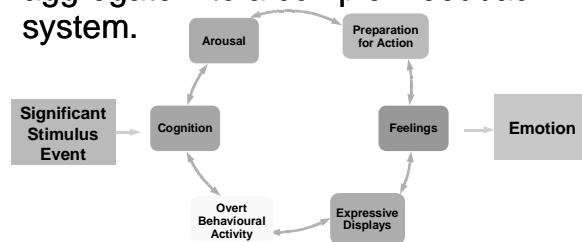
Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 303-305)

14

Cognition vs. biology debate: A chicken-&-egg problem

(Plutchik, 1985)

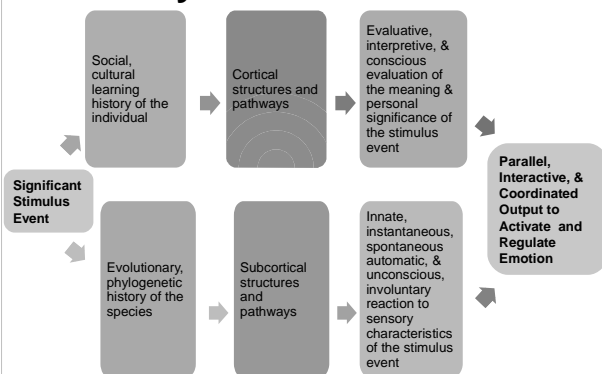
Emotion is a chain of events that aggregate into a complex feedback system.



Based on Reeve (2009, Figure 11.5 Feedback loop in emotion, p. 307)

17

Two-systems view (Buck, 1984)



Based on Reeve (2009, Figure 11.4, Two systems view of emotion, p. 306)

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How many emotions are there?

Biological Perspective

- Emphasises primary emotions (e.g., anger, fear); downplays secondary or acquired emotions.
- See: Figure 11.6 8 research traditions in the biological study of emotion
- Small #: 2 to 10 emotions
- Universal
- Products of biol. & evol.

Cognitive Perspective

- Acknowledges the importance of the primary emotions, but stresses the complex (secondary, acquired) emotions – thus there are many, varied emotions which arise in response to different meaning structures
- See: Figure 11.7 9 research traditions in the cognitive study of emotion

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 308-312)

18

Basic emotions criteria

1. Innate rather than acquired
2. Arises from the same circumstances for all people
3. Expressed uniquely & distinctively
4. Evokes a distinctive and highly predictable physiological response

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 312-317)

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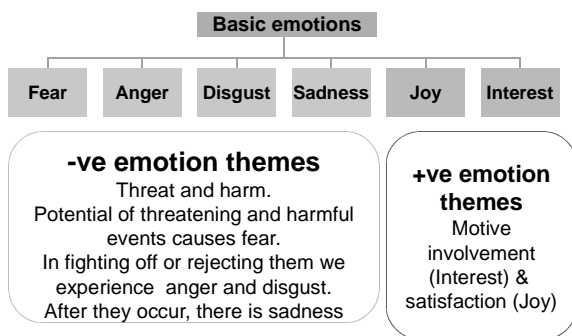
Anger

1. Caused by:
 1. (Perceived illegitimate) **restraint** or interference in pursuit of one's goals, plans, or well-being by some outside force
 2. Betrayal of trust, rejection, unwanted criticism, lack of consideration by others, cumulative annoyances
 3. Perception that one can do little to cope i.e., **perceived vulnerability**
2. High passion – energises, strengthens, fight/flight, increases sense of control. Can cause sig. damage, but assertive, non-violent expression usually pays off

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 313-314)

22

Basic emotions (Families/clusters of emotions)



Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 312-317)

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Disgust

1. Rejection (getting rid of or away from) of contaminated object (which depends on learning and culture) – infants only show disgust for bitter or sour taste
2. Contamination sources
 1. Bodily (e.g., poor hygiene, gore, death)
 2. Interpersonal (e.g., physical contact with undesirable people)
 3. Moral (e.g., child abuse, incest, infidelity)
3. Motivates positive coping behaviours to prevent or avoid contamination sources

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 314-315)

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Fear

1. Caused by combination of:
 1. **Situational threat** (esp. threat of psychological or physical harm)
 2. Perception that one can do little to cope i.e., **perceived vulnerability**
2. Motivates defense (flight or stillness) – warning signal
3. Trembling, perspiring, looking around, nervous tension
4. Provides motivational support for learning new coping

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 313)

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Sadness

1. Most negative emotion, arising from experiences of separation or failure.
2. Motivates behaviour to alleviate distressful circumstances
3. Motivates cohesiveness of groups (to prevent separation)

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 315)

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Joy

1. Most positive emotion arising from experiencing desirable outcomes e.g., task success, achievement, getting what we want, pleasant surprise (opposite of causes of sadness)
2. Energises, enthuses, makes optimistic (opp. of sadness) – increases willingness to engage in tasks and relationships; it also “soothes” → create pleasant well-being which helps to dissipate distress

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 316)

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Coping functions of emotion

Emotion	Stimulus Situation	Emotional Behavior	Function of Emotion
FEAR	Threat	Running, flying away	Protection
ANGER	Obstacle	Biting, hitting	Destruction
JOY	Potential mate	Courting, mating	Reproduction
SADNESS	Loss of valued person	Crying for help	Reunion
ACCEPTANCE	Group member	Grooming, Sharing	Affiliation
DISGUST	Gruesome object	Vomiting, pursing away	Rejection
ANTICIPATION	New territory	Examining, mapping	Exploration
SURPRISE	Sudden novel object	Stopping, alerting	Orientation

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. Table 11.1 Functional view of emotional behaviour (Plutchik, 1980)*)

28

Interest

1. Most prevalent in day-to-day functioning (some ever present)
2. Interest fluctuates and shifts from each event, thought, and action (being continually redirected)
3. Interested in life events that involve our needs, well-being, or cortical arousal/curiosity (novel/complex tasks)
4. Creates desire to explore, investigate, seek out, manipulate, and extract information from the objects that surround us
5. Underlies creativity and learning

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 316-317)

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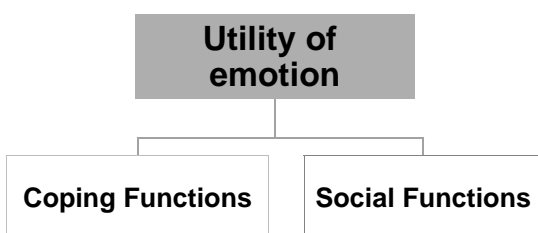
Social functions of emotion

1. Communicate our feelings to others.
2. Influence how others interact with us.
3. Invite & facilitate social interaction.
4. Create, maintain, & dissolve relationships.

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 319-320)

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What good are the emotions?



Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 317-320)

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Emotions regulate behaviour (as part of a complex feedback system)

1. Coping (surviving & thriving) behaviour
2. Social behaviour

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What is the difference between emotion & mood?

Criteria	Emotions	Moods
Antecedents	Significant life events	Ill-defined
Action-Specificity	Specific	Influence cognition
Time course	Short-lived	Long-lived

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 322)

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Next lecture



Aspects of emotion (Ch 12)

- Biological
- Cognitive
- Social and cultural

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Everyday mood

Positive affect and Negative affect are independent ways of feeling.

Positive Affect

- Pleasurable engagement
- Reward-driven, appetitive motivational system
- Approach behaviour
- Dopaminergic pathways

Negative Affect

- Unpleasant engagement
- Punishment-driven, aversive motivational system
- Withdrawal behaviour
- Serotonergic & noradrenergic pathways

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. *)

32

References

- Reeve, J. (2009). *Understanding motivation and emotion* (5th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Note: Image credits are in the slide notes

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Positive affects

Everyday, low-level, general state of feeling good.
Benefits of feeling good

Prosocial behaviour

Creativity

Decision-making efficiency

Sociability

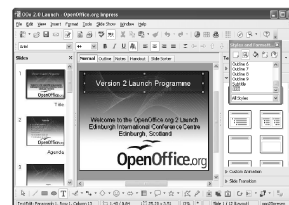
Persistence in the face of failure

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. *)

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