



MOTIVATION AND EMOTION

MODULE 8

8.1: ELEMENTS OF EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Emotions are the feelings that generally have both physiological and cognitive elements and that influence behavior.

Emotions can be either positive or negative. Ordinarily, we might think that positive and negative emotions are mutually exclusive. But this is not the case. **In the brain, positive emotions are processed mainly in the left hemisphere. In contrast, negative emotions are processed in the right hemisphere.** The fact that positive and negative emotions are based on different brain areas helps explain why we can feel happy and sad at the same time (Canli et al., 1998). It also explains why one's right foot is more ticklish than your left foot! The left hemisphere controls the right side of the body and processes positive emotions (Smith & Cahusac, 2001). Thus, most people are more ticklish on their right side.

LeDoux and other researchers have found that an area of the brain called the **amygdala** specializes in producing fear. The amygdala receives sensory information very directly and quickly, bypassing the cortex. As a result, it allows us to respond to potential danger before we really know what's happening. This primitive fear response is not under the control of higher brain centers. The role of the amygdala in emotion may explain why people who suffer from phobias and disabling anxiety often feel afraid without knowing why (Fellous & Ledoux, 2005).

People who suffer damage to the amygdala become "blind" to emotion. An armed robber could hold a gun to the person's head and the person wouldn't feel fear. Such people are also unable to "read" or understand other people's emotions. Like Robert, who you met at the beginning of this chapter, many lose their ability to relate normally to friends, family, and coworkers (Goleman, 1995).

8.2: THEORIES OF EMOTION

Theories of emotion offer different answers to the arousal, behaviour, cognition and expression of emotions. The major theories of emotions are mentioned below.

8.2.1: The James-Lange Theory

This theory states that emotional feelings follow bodily arousal and come from awareness of such arousal.

- This theory presented late in the 19th century by **William James and the Danish physiologist Carl Lange**, turns the commonsense idea about emotions inside out.

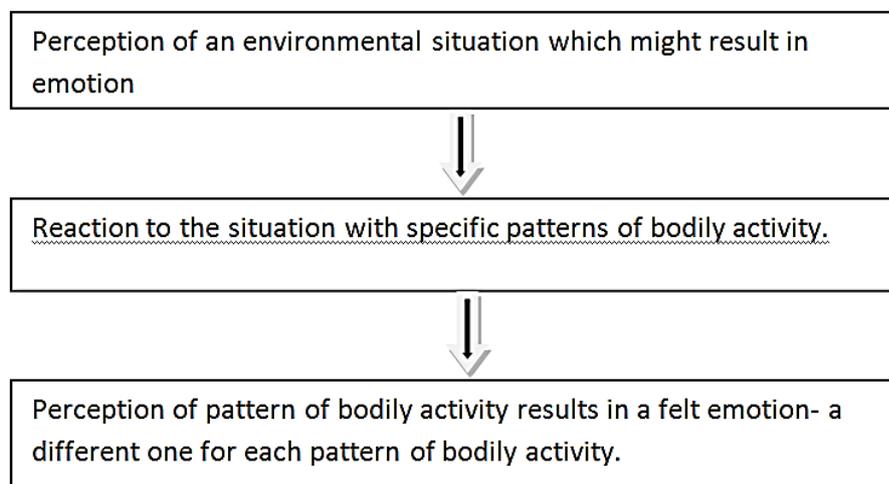
- It proposes the following sequence of events in emotional states.

1. We perceive the situation that will produce emotion.

2. We react to this situation.

3. We notice our reaction.

- It suggests that subjective emotional experiences are actually the *result of* physiological changes within our bodies. In other words, you feel frightened when making your speech *because* you notice that your heart is racing, your mouth is dry, and so on.
- Our perception of the reaction is the basis for the emotion we experience. So the emotional experience (felt emotion) occurs after the bodily changes.
- The bodily changes (internal changes in the autonomic nervous system or movements of the body) precede the emotional experience.
- As William James himself put it (1890, p. 1066): “We feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, and afraid because we tremble.”



Criticisms

- There are three major criticisms of the James-Lange theory.
- First, different emotions are not necessarily associated with different patterns of physiological responses. For instance, anger, fear, and sadness share similar physiological patterns of arousal (Cacioppo et al., 2000). Thus, James's bear example

was backward: Instead of the act of running making you feel fear, you feel fear and then run.

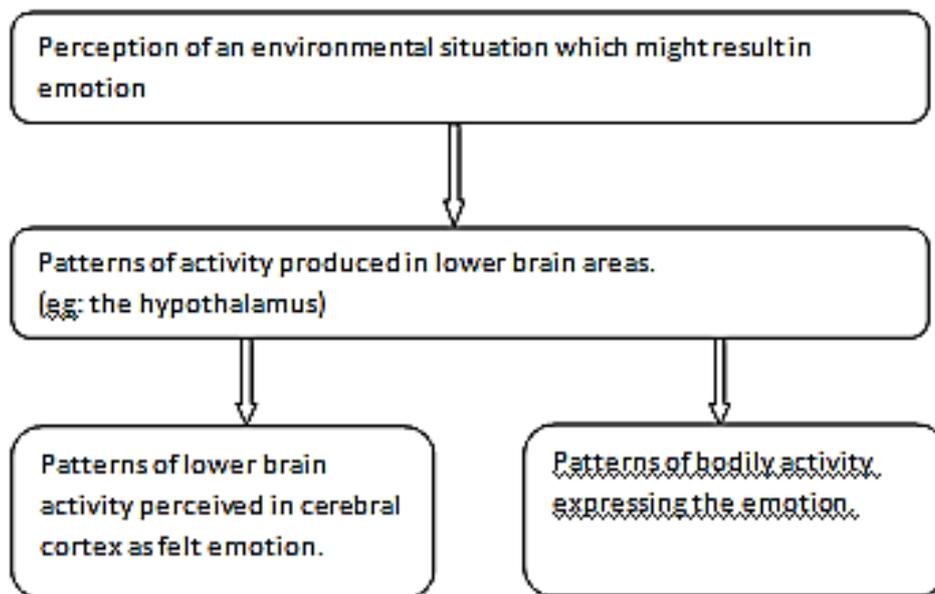
- Second, people whose spinal cords have been severed at the neck are deprived of most of the feedback from their physiological responses (autonomic nervous system), yet they experience emotions with little or no change in intensity. These data are the opposite of what the James-Lange theory would predict, which is that these people should experience little or no emotion (Chwalisz et al., 1988).
- Third, some emotions, such as feeling guilty or jealous, may require a considerable amount of interpretation or appraisal of the situation. The sequence involved in feeling a complex emotion like guilt or jealousy points to the influence of cognitive factors on emotional feelings (Clore & Ortony, 2008).

8.2.2: Cannon - Bard Theory

This theory states that activity in the thalamus causes emotional feelings and bodily arousal to occur simultaneously.

- In 1920, a theory about the relationship between bodily states and felt emotion was proposed by **Walter Cannon**, who based his approach to the emotions on research done by **Philip Bard**.
- The Cannon – Bard theory says that **felt emotion and the bodily reactions are independent of each other; both are triggered simultaneously.**
- According to this theory, we first perceive potential emotion producing situations in the external world.
- Then, lower brain areas, such as the hypothalamus and thalamus are activated.
- These lower brain areas then send output in two directions and back to the cortex.
 1. *To the internal bodily organs and the external muscles to produce the bodily expression of emotion.*
 2. *To the cerebral cortex, where the pattern of discharge from the lower brain areas is perceived as the felt emotion.*
- The muscles and organs make the physiological reactions to the emotion and the cortex interprets the signal as emotion.

- Thus, this theory proposes that physiological and psychological reactions occur at the same time.
- In Contrast with the James Lange theory, this theory holds that bodily reactions and the felt emotion are independent of each other in the sense that bodily reactions are not the basis of the felt emotion.



8.3.3: Schachter’s Cognitive Theory of Emotion

This theory states that emotions occur when physical arousal is labelled or interpreted on the basis experience and situational cues.

The previous theories are mostly concerned with our physical responses. **Stanley Schachter** realized that cognitive (mental) factors also enter into emotion. According to Schachter’s cognitive theory, emotion occurs when we apply a particular label to general physiological arousal. We likely choose the appropriate label through a process of attribution, by deciding which source is leading to the arousal (Valins, 1967).

For example, if someone sneaks up behind a person on a dark street and says, “Boo!” his body is now aroused (pounding heart, sweating palms, and so on). If he attributes his arousal to a total stranger, he might label his arousal as fear; if he attributes his arousal to a close friend, he may experience surprise or delight. **The label** (such as anger, fear, or happiness) **one apply**

to bodily arousal is influenced by his/her past experiences, the situation, and the reactions of others.

8.4: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1997).

In general, being emotionally intelligent means accepting that emotions are an essential part of who we are and how we survive. Being emotionally skilled can make us more flexible, adaptable, and emotionally mature (Bonanno et al., 2004).

People having high emotional skills are more agreeable than people with low emotional skills (Haas et al., 2007). A lack of emotional intelligence can ruin careers and sabotage achievement. Poor emotional skills can contribute to depression, eating disorders, unwanted pregnancy, aggression, violent crime, and poor academic performance (Parker, 2005). Thus, in many life circumstances emotional intelligence is as important as IQ

8.4.1: Elements of Emotional Intelligence

Many elements contribute to emotional intelligence. A description of some of the most important skills follows:

8.4.1.1: Perceiving emotions

The foundation of emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions in oneself and others. Emotionally intelligent people are tuned in to their own feelings. For example, they are able to recognize quickly if they are angry, or envious, or feeling guilty, or depressed. This is valuable because many people have disruptive emotions without being able to pinpoint why they are uncomfortable. At the same time, emotionally intelligent people have empathy. They accurately perceive emotions in others and sense what others are feeling. They are good at “reading” facial expressions, tone of voice, and other signs of emotion.

8.4.1.2: Using emotions

People who are emotionally intelligent use their feelings to enhance thinking and decision-making. For example, if one can remember how he reacted emotionally in the past, it can help him react better to new situations. One can also use emotions to promote personal growth and improve relationships with others. Likewise, when good fortune comes their way,

people who are emotionally smart share the news with others. Almost always, doing so strengthens relationships and increases emotional well-being (Gable et al., 2004).

8.4.1.3: Understanding emotions

Emotions contain useful information. For instance, anger is a cue that something is wrong; anxiety indicates uncertainty; embarrassment communicates shame; depression means people feel helpless; enthusiasm tells us we're excited. People who are emotionally intelligent know what causes various emotions, what they mean, and how they affect behavior.

8.4.1.4: Managing emotions

Emotional intelligence involves an ability to manage one's own emotions and those of others. For example, if one individual knows how to calm down when he is angry and he also know how to calm others. As Aristotle noted so long ago, people who are emotionally intelligent have an ability to amplify or restrain emotions, depending on the situation (Bonanno et al., 2004).

8.5: REFERENCES

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