

Psychology 202

Chapter 10: Emotion and Motivation

How Do We Experience Emotions?

- Emotions are immediate, specific responses to environmental events
 - Typically interrupt whatever is happening or they trigger changes in thought and behavior
- Moods are diffuse long-lasting emotional states
 - Influence thought and behavior
 - Refers to peoples vague senses that they feel certain ways
- **Emotion:** Feelings that involve subjective evaluation, physiological processes, and cognitive beliefs
- In exploring emotion, there are three primary components:
 - Subjective experience — The feelings that accompany an emotion
 - Physical changes — Increases in heart rate, in skin temperature, and in brain activation
 - Cognitive appraisals — People's beliefs and understandings about why they feel the way they do

Emotions Have a Subjective Component

- We know we are experiencing emotions because we feel them
- Thus why we refer to our emotions as "feelings"
- The intensity of emotional reactions vary

- People who are overemotional or under-emotional tend to have psychological problems
- Some suffer from mood disorders, such as depression or panic attacks
 - Can become immobilized from such strong emotions
- Alexithymia — The disorder causes people to not experience the subjective components of emotion
 - One cause of alexithymia is that the physiological messages associated with emotions do not reach the brain centers that interpret emotion
 - Damage to the prefrontal cortex is associated with loss of emotion's subjective components

Distinguishing Between Types of Emotions

- Theorists distinguish between primary and secondary emotions
- Primary emotions: Emotions that are evolutionary adaptive, shared across cultures, and associated with specific physical states; they include anger, fear, sadness, disgust, happiness, and possibly surprise and contempt
- Secondary emotions: Blends of primary emotions; they include remorse, guilt, submission, and anticipation
- Circumplex model — emotions are arranged in a circle on a circumplex map.
 - At the center of the circle is the intersection of two core dimensions of affect:
 - *Valence* indicates how negative or positive emotions are
 - *Activation* indicates how arousing they are or increased in autonomic responses

Negative Affect and Positive Affect

- Neurochemical evidence supports the idea that positive affect and negative affect are independent
- Positive activation states appear to be associated with an increase in dopamine, whereas negative activation states appear associated with an increase in norepinephrine
- Both states can produce crying
- Researchers have not discovered the function of crying
- Crying results mainly when negative events leave us unable to respond behaviorally to the emotions we are feeling
- Crying may relieve stress through activation of the parasympathetic nervous system

Emotions Have a Physiological Component

James-Lange Theory

- **James-Lange Theory:** *According to this theory, bodily perception comes before the feeling of emotion. For example, when a grizzly bear threatens you, you begin to sweat, experience a pounding heart, and run. These responses generate in you the emotion of fear*
- According to scientific evidence, physical reactions are not specific enough to fully explain the subjective experiences of emotion
- Recent studies have shown that different primary emotions produce different patterns of brain activation