

EXPLORING
PSYCHOLOGY
(7th Edition)
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Emotions, Stress, and Health

Chapter 11

Theories of Emotion

Emotions are a mix of 1) physiological activation, 2) expressive behaviors, and 3) conscious experience.

Controversy

- 1) Does physiological arousal precede or follow your emotional experience?
- 1) Does cognition (thinking) precede emotion (feeling)?

Commonsense View

When you become happy, your heart starts beating faster. First comes conscious awareness, then comes physiological activity.

James-Lange Theory

William James and Carl Lange proposed an idea that was diametrically opposed to the common-sense view. The James-Lange Theory proposes that physiological activity precedes the emotional experience.

Cannon-Bard Theory

Walter Cannon and Phillip Bard questioned the James-Lange Theory and proposed that an emotion-triggering stimulus and the body's arousal take place simultaneously.

Two-Factor Theory

Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer proposed yet another theory which suggests our physiology and cognitions create emotions. Emotions have two factors—physical arousal and cognitive label.

Emotions and the Autonomic Nervous System

During an emotional experience, our autonomic nervous system mobilizes energy in the body that arouses us.

Arousal and Performance

Arousal in short spurts is adaptive. We perform better under moderate arousal, but optimal performance varies with task difficulty.

Physiological Similarities

Physiological responses related to the emotions of fear, anger, love, and boredom are very similar.

Cognition Does Not Always Precede Emotion

When fearful eyes were subliminally presented to subjects, fMRI scans revealed higher levels of activity in the amygdala (Whalen et al. 2004).

Two Routes to Emotion

Zajonc and LeDoux emphasize that some emotions are immediate, without conscious appraisal. Lazarus, Schachter, and Singer emphasize that appraisal also determines emotions.

Culture and Emotional Expression

When culturally diverse people were shown basic facial expressions, they did fairly well at recognizing them (Matsumoto & Ekman, 1989).

Experienced Emotion

Izard (1977) isolated 10 emotions. Most of them are present in infancy, except for contempt, shame, and guilt.

Catharsis Hypothesis

Venting anger through action or fantasy achieves an emotional release or “catharsis.” At times, expressing anger can be calming, if it does not leave one feeling guilty. In general, expressing anger breeds more anger, and through reinforcement it is habit-forming.

Feel-Good, Do-Good Phenomenon

When we feel happy we are more willing to help others.

Does Money Buy Happiness?

Wealth is like health: Its utter absence can breed misery, yet having it is no guarantee of happiness.

Happiness & Prior Experience

Adaptation-Level Phenomenon: Like the adaptation to brightness, volume, and touch, people adapt to income levels. “Satisfaction has a short half-life” (Ryan, 1999).

Stress and Health

Stress can be adaptive. In a fearful or stress-causing situation, we can run away and save our lives. Stress can be maladaptive. If it is prolonged (chronic stress), it increases our risk of illness and health problems.

General Adaptation Syndrome

According to Selye, a stress response to any kind of stimulation is similar. The stressed individual goes through three phases.

Stressful Life Events

Catastrophic Events: Catastrophic events like earthquakes, combat stress, and floods lead individuals to become depressed, sleepless, and anxious.

Significant Life Changes

The death of a loved one, a divorce, a loss of job, or a promotion may leave individuals vulnerable to disease.

Daily Hassles

Rush hour traffic, long lines, job stress, and becoming burnt-out are the most significant sources of stress and can damage health.

Personality Types

Type A is a term used for competitive, hard-driving, impatient, verbally aggressive, and anger-prone people. Type B refers to easygoing, relaxed people (Friedman and Rosenman, 1974).

Type A personalities are more likely to develop coronary heart disease. The critical factor has been found to be anger: Lack of anger control is greatest factor in Type A's development of heart disease.

Pessimism and Heart Disease

Pessimistic adult men are twice as likely to develop heart disease over a 10-year period (Kubzansky et al., 2001).

Stress and Colds

People with the highest life stress scores were also the most vulnerable when exposed to an experimental cold virus.

Coping with Stress

Reducing stress by changing events that cause stress or by changing how we react to stress is called problem-focused coping.

Emotion-focused coping is when we cannot change a stressful situation, and we respond by attending to our own emotional needs.

Social Support

Supportive family members, marriage partners, and close friends help people cope with stress. Their immune functioning calms the cardiovascular system and lowers blood pressure.

Managing Stress Effects

Having a sense of control, an optimistic explanatory style, and social support can reduce stress and improve health.

Aerobic Exercise

Can aerobic exercise boost spirits? Many studies suggest that aerobic exercise can elevate mood and well-being because aerobic exercise raises energy, increases self-confidence, and lowers tension, depression, and anxiety.

Biofeedback, Relaxation, and Meditation

Biofeedback systems use electronic devices to inform people about their physiological responses and gives them the chance to bring their response to a healthier range. Relaxation and meditation have similar effects in reducing tension and anxiety.

Life-Style Modification

Modifying a Type-A lifestyle (especially anger reactions) may reduce the recurrence of heart attacks.

Spirituality & Faith Communities

Regular religious attendance has been a reliable predictor of a longer life span with a reduced risk of dying. Some variables:

Healthy Behaviors (less smoking, drinking)
Social Support (faith communities, marriage)
Positive Emotions (optimism, hope); Less Stress and Anxiety