

III. EMOTION AND STRESS

3.1. Emotion

- Defining an emotion is not an easy task. It almost seems as if there are as many definitions of emotions as there are writers on the subject. There is general agreement among scientists who have studied emotions, however, that they involve three major components:
 1. **Physiological components**- This refers to internal bodily changes associated with emotions. Examples include shifts in heart rate, blood pressure, breathing digestion etc.
 2. **Subjective Experience** - This involves the personal experience we label as emotions. It is what it feels like to be angry, sad, happy or elated.
 3. **Emotional Expression** – This refers to outward signs internal bodily reactions. That is, the ways in which emotions are expressed in language, facial expression and gestures etc.
- Emotions are personal. No one can truly share our subjective experiences. Yet we are able to recognize the presence of various emotions in others, and we are able to communicate our own feelings to them as well. This occurs because of the presence of *nonverbal cues*-out-ward, observable signs of others' internal emotional states.
- Several decades of research on nonverbal cues suggests that this kind of communication occurs through several basic channels or paths simultaneously. The most revealing of these consists of facial expressions, eye-contact, body movements and posture, and touching.

Facial expressions

- One of the main ways of showing emotions is through facial expression. It is possible to learn much about others' current moods and feelings from their facial expressions. That is, moods and feelings are often reflected in the face and can be read there from specific expressions. Facial expression is a valuable source of feedback to a speaker and can indicate that others are interested and listening
- It appears that there are six different emotions, which are clearly represented on the face. These are *anger, fear, sadness, disgust, happiness and surprise*. Of course, this in no way implies that we are capable of showing only six different facial expressions.
- Until recently, it was widely assumed that basic facial expressions such as those for happiness, anger, or disgust are universal: they are recognized as indicating specific emotions by persons all over the world.

- However, a recent review of the evidence on this issue (Russel, 1994) suggests that the interpretation of facial expressions may be strongly influenced by cultural factors and that recognition of them may not be as universal as was previously assumed.

Eye contact

- We do often learn much about others feelings from their eyes. Fore example, we interpret a high level of gazing from another as a sign of liking or friendliness. In contrast, if others avoid eye contact with us, we may conclude that they are unfriendly, don't like us, or are shy.
- While a high level of eye contact from others is usually interpreted as a sign of liking or positive feelings, there is one important exception to this general rule. If another person gazes at us continuously and maintains such contact regardless of any actions we perform, she/he can be said to be staring. Staring is often interpreted as a sign of anger or hostility.

Body Language

- Our current mood or emotion is often reflected in the gesture, posture, position, and movement of our body. Together, such non-verbal behaviors are termed as Body Language.
- Gestures tell us a great deal about the emotional state of the other person. For example a nervous interviewee may wring the hands, fidget the fingers by fiddling with objects or hair, wriggle or curl the toes- such involuntary gestures leakage because the true feeling leak out at the edges. Embarrassment is shown by a hand over the mouth, anger by clenched hands, and shame by covering the eyes.
- When we like someone we tend to use more open gestures than when we do not. Open gestures are those which do not create barriers between us and others. Thus crossed arms and crossed legs signal that we are unsure/uneasy/ defensive/ do not like the other person, and are called closed gestures.
- In addition, body posture, the way in which we sit or stand is a good indicator of the way we feel. For example a drooping body posture can show that a person is very depressed, while a taut, upright position might show extreme anxiety.

Touching

- The amount and type of touch which is acceptable varies according to sex and society. But, in general growing evidence indicates that when one person touches another in a manner that is considered acceptable in the current context, positive reactions generally result.

3.4. Some Theories of Emotion

James - Lange Theories (William James and Carl Lange)

- This theory suggests that subjective emotional experiences are actually the result of physiological changes within our bodies (internal changes in the autonomic nervous system or movements of the body. You feel frightened for instance, when making a public speech because you notice that your heart is racing, your mouth is dry and soon.

EVENT ----> AROUSAL ----> INTERPRETATION ----> EMOTION

Cannon - Bard Theory (Walter Cannon and Philip Bard)

- This theory suggests that various emotion provoking events induce simultaneously the subjective experiences we label as emotions and the physiological reactions that accompany them.
- 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.

**EVENT ----> AROUSAL
EVENT ----> EMOTION**

Schachter – Singer Theory (Stanley Schachter & Jerome Singer)

- According to this view, emotion-provoking events produce increased arousal. In response to feelings of arousal, we search the external environment in order to identify the causes of such feelings. The causes we then select play a key role in determining the label we place on our arousal, and so in determining the emotion we experience.
- If we feel aroused after a near-miss in traffic, we'll probably label our emotion as 'fear' or perhaps " anger" If, instead we feel aroused in the presence of an attractive person, we may label our arousal as "attraction" or "love"
- In short, this theory holds that the emotion we feel is due to our interpretation of an aroused or "stirred up" bodily state.

EVENT ----> AROUSAL ----> REASONING ----> EMOTION

Lazarus Theory

Lazarus Theory states that a thought must come before any emotion or physiological arousal. In other words, you must first think about your situation before you can experience an emotion.

EXAMPLE: You are walking down a dark alley late at night. You hear footsteps behind you and you think it may be a mugger so you begin to tremble, your heart beats faster, and your breathing deepens and at the same time experience fear.



Facial Feedback Theory

According to the facial feedback theory, emotion is the experience of changes in our facial muscles. In other words, when we smile, we then experience pleasure, or happiness. When we frown, we then experience sadness. It is the changes in our facial muscles that cue our brains and provide the basis of our emotions. Just as there are an unlimited number of muscle configurations in our face, so too are there a seemingly unlimited number of emotions.

EXAMPLE: You are walking down a dark alley late at night. You hear footsteps behind you and your eyes widen, your teeth clench and your brain interprets these facial changes as the expression of fear. Therefore you experience the emotion of fear.

EVENT ---> FACIAL CHANGES ---> EMOTION

Stress and Coping

- Stress is an internal state, which can be caused by physical demands on the body (disease conditions, exercise, extremes of temperature, and the like) or by environmental and social situations, which are evaluated as potentially harmful, uncontrollable or exceeding our resources for coping.
- It refers to a challenge to a person's capacity to adapt to inner and outer demands, which may be physiologically arousing and emotionally taxing and call for cognitive or behavioral response.
- In other words, stress can be defined as any circumstances that threaten or are perceived to threaten our well being and that thereby tax our coping abilities.
- The threat may be to our immediate physical safety, our long-range security, our self-esteem, our reputation, our peace of mind, or many other things that we value.
- The experience of feeling threatened depends on what events we notice and how we choose to appraise and interpret them. Events that are stressful for one person may be routine for another.
- Generally, the major factors that influence our subjective appraisals of potentially stressful events are **familiarity with the challenge**, the **controllability of the events**, and the **predictability of the events**.
- The less familiar you are with a potentially stressful event, the more threatened you are likely to feel. In short, familiarity with a challenge can make yesterday's crisis today's routine. Similarly,

events are usually less stressful when we see them as being under our control. We also prefer predictable stress over surprise packages.

Sources of Stress

- Stress is unavoidable part of life. Events that often lead to stress are called **stressors**. Although they are not entirely independent, the four principal types of stressors are:-

1. Life changes
2. pressure
3. conflict of motives (to be discussed under the chapter "Motivation"
4. frustration(to be discussed under the chapter "Motivation"

1. Life changes/Life events

- Life changes are any noticeable alternations in one's living circumstances that require readjustment. One of the most significant sources of stress is change. Virtually any event that requires someone to make a readjustment can be a stressor. According to researchers, changes in personal relationships, changes at work, so on can be stressful even when the changes are welcomed.

2. Pressure

- Pressure involves expectations or demands that one behave in a certain way. Pressure can be divided into subtypes. You are under pressure to perform when you are expected to execute tasks and responsibilities quickly, efficiently, and successfully. Pressures to conform to other's expectations are also common in our lives. E.g. Military cadets are expected to adhere to their commanders.

Coping with Stress

- Coping consists of all things people do to control, tolerate or reduce the effects of life is stressors-perceived threats, existing problems, or emotional losses. Is not single strategy that applies to all circumstances The techniques people use change over time and circumstance, depending on the nature of the stressor and the particular situation.
- Researchers often distinguish three types of coping strategies:

1. Efforts to change the situation

- Efforts to cope by changing the situation typically involve problem solving. The individual may try to remove the stressor, plan ways of resolving the situation, or seek advice or assistance from others in changing the situation.
- People high in problem solving ability and who have a problem solving orientation (a tendency to define potential problems as challenging and to confront them directly) tend to report less stress and fewer psychological symptoms than other subjects.

2. Efforts to alter one's cognition about the situation

- Coping by changing one's cognition or appraisal of the situation often involves reframing an event mentally to make it seem less threatening.
 - This can be done through turning problems to challenges, losses to unexpected gains, considering experiences as lessons, making social comparisons.
- 3. Efforts to alter the unpleasant emotional consequences of the stress.**
- A third way people cope with stressful situations is by trying to relieve the associated emotional state.
 - This can be done through relaxation, body massage, and physical exercise