

# 09 - 8. Emotions

## 8. Emotions

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Ekman identified 6 primary human emotions – surprise, fear, sadness, anger, happiness and disgust. These are universal, innate and ready-wired responses, also seen in primates to some extent. An emotion has 3 components – 1. Subjective ‘cortical’ experience 2. Physiological ‘visceral’ changes 3. Associated behavioural (‘skeletal’) changes. James-Lange theory of emotions: □ Perception of a stimulus leads to bodily (skeletal and visceral) changes. The peripheral responses send feedback to the cortex via thalamus leading to the perception of the emotion. □ A modification is a facial feedback hypothesis, according to which different facial movements elicit different emotional perceptions. □ But wide repertoires of bodily changes are not available to explain the widely variant emotions perceived. Also, emotional perception occurs faster than that could be explained by a feedback theory. □ Studies on peripheral features of emotions have shown that anger is associated with the maximum rise in temperature, while fear and disgust are associated with a drop in temperature. The increase in heart rate produced by sadness is usually greater than that produced by happiness.

Cannon-Bard theory: On the perception of a stimulus, thalamus coordinates signals to cortex leading to a conscious experience and simultaneously sends signals to hypothalamus leading to physiological changes. The thalamus is considered to be cardinal in the emotional appraisal. Schachter-Singer labelling theory: On the perception of a stimulus, both physiological changes and a conscious experience of general arousal take place simultaneously. This generic arousal is then interpreted to either positive or negative and labelled appropriately according to the situational cues. This is also called jukebox theory or two-factor theory. If an appropriate label is not found, by default, negative appreciation of arousal occurs (e.g. ‘dysphoria’ when experiencing boredom). Lazarus cognitive appraisal theory states that appraisal precedes affective reaction – hence affective primacy cannot be supported. Cognitive appraisal refers to the immediate, intuitive, personal evaluations of a situation that gives an idea of how the individual subjectively experiences their environment. Roseman and Scherer propose eight cognitive appraisal dimensions to distinguish emotional understanding, rather than the traditional two (pleasantness and arousal). A third group of theorists suggest that each emotion is categorised by a unique pattern of cognitive appraisals.

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