


MOTIVATION & EMOTION

## Nature of emotion



**Reading:**  
Reeve (2018)  
Ch 11  
(pp. 285-312)

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2021

Image source 1

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### Outline

1. What is an emotion?
2. What causes an emotion?
3. How many emotions are there?
4. What good are emotions?
5. Can we control our emotions?
6. Difference between emotion & mood?

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 285) 2

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### Question 1

## What is an emotion?

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**Feeling all the feels**  
Crash Course Psychology #25  
YouTube  
(2:01 mins)  
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/gAMbkJk6gnE?end=121>



Episode 25  
FEELING ALL THE FEELS

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**Emotions and the brain**  
YouTube  
(2:02 mins)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNY0AAUth3g>



The Emotional Brain

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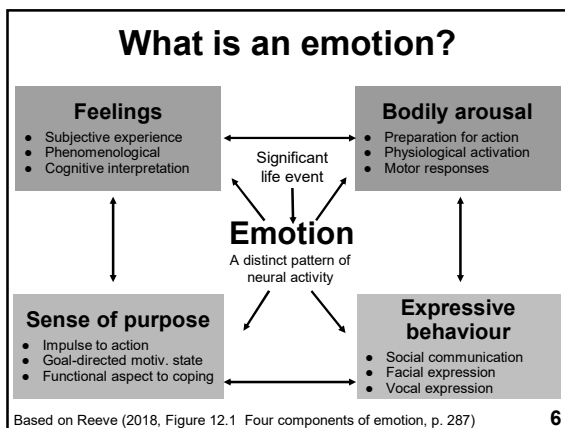
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### Components of emotion

- **Bodily arousal:** Neural (brain), physiological (heart rate, hormones) and bodily (posture, musculature) activation prepares for physically adaptive coping behaviour.
- **Expressive behaviour:** Public expression of private states through facial expressions, voice intonations, gestures, and posture.
- **Sense of purpose:** Goal-directed motivation to do something specific (to cope successfully with the significant life event).
- **Feelings:** Subjectively felt experience that has meaning, personal significance, and levels of intensity and quality.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 287-288) 7

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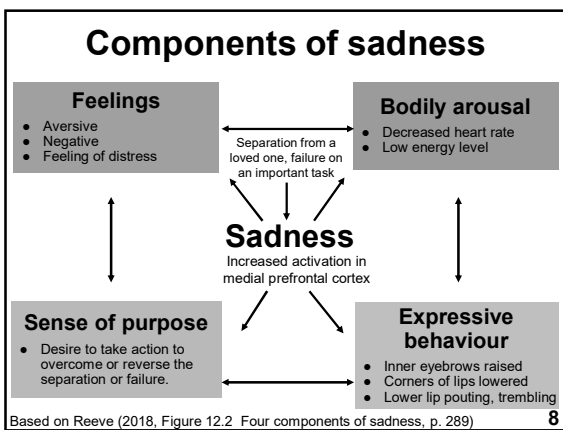
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### Definition of emotion

“short-lived,  
feeling-purposeive-expressive-bodily  
responses  
that help us adapt to ...  
important life events”

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 288) 9

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**Definition of emotion**  
“synchronised brain-based systems  
that coordinate feeling,  
bodily response, purpose,  
and expression  
so as to ready the individual to  
adapt successfully to life  
circumstances”

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 289) **10**

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**Relationship between  
motivation & emotion**

- **Emotion as motivation:** →  
Emotions are one type of motive which  
energises and directs behaviour.
- **Emotion as readout:** ←  
Emotions serve as an ongoing  
“readout” system to indicate how well  
or poorly personal adaptation is going.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 290-291) **11**

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**Question 2**

**What causes an emotion?**

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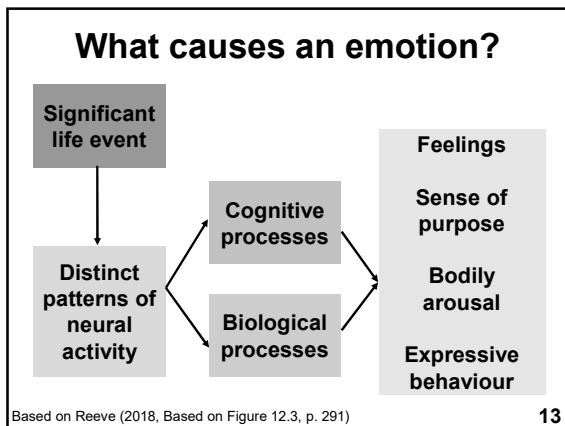
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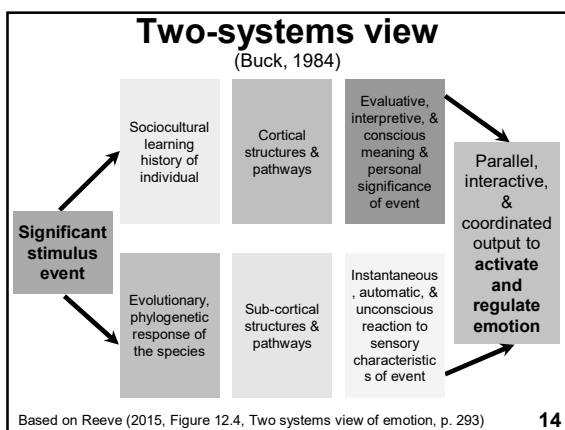
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### Other two-systems views

- The two systems influence one another (Levenson, 1994)
- Some emotions are primarily from the biological system (e.g., fear and anger), whilst other emotions arise from experience, modeling and culture (e.g., gratitude and hope) (Panksepp, 1994)

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 293) **15**

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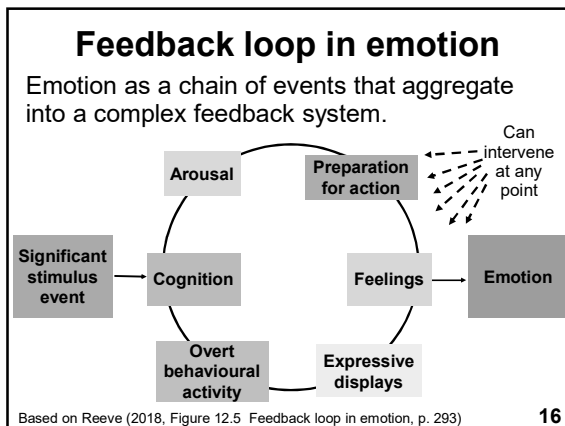
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### What ends an emotion?

- Removal of the significant life event
- Person engages in successful coping behaviour.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 293-294) **17**

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### Biology is causal core of emotion

- Infants  
(Izard, 1989)
- Emotions happen to us  
(Ekman, 1992)
- Genetically-endowed neural circuits  
(Panksepp, 1982, 1994)

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 294-297) **18**

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### Cognitive activity is required for emotion

- Appraisal needed  
(Lazarus, 1984, 1991a,b)
- Specific appraisals  
(good/bad, cope, morality)  
(Scherer, 1994, 1997)
- Attribution  
(Weiner, 1986)

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 294-297)

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### Question 3

How many emotions are there?

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### Meet Riley's Emotions - Inside Out (2015)

YouTube  
(3:08 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puXSw8yrVnl>



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### How many emotions are there?

Biological perspective	Cognitive perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ 2 to 8</li><li>■ Primary emotions (e.g., fear, anger, sadness, disgust, interest, joy)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Unlimited</li><li>■ Stresses complex (secondary, acquired) emotions</li></ul>

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 297-299) 22

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### Basic emotions

Significant life events

Fear	Anger	Dis-gust	Sad-ness	Inter-est	Joy
potential of threat and harm	fighting off threat and harm	rejecting threat and harm	after threat and harm	motive involvement	satis-faction
Response to threat and harm			Response to involvement and satisfaction		

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 294-295) 23

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### Basic emotions criteria

1. Distinct facial expression
2. Distinct pattern of physiology
3. Automatic (unlearned) appraisal
4. Distinct antecedent cause
5. Inescapable (inevitable) activation
6. Presence in other primates
7. Rapid onset
8. Brief duration
9. Distinctive subjective feeling state
10. Distinctive cognition (e.g., thoughts, images)

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 297) 24

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### Basic emotion exclusion reasons

1. Experience-based derivative of a basic emotion (e.g., anxiety is a derivative of fear)
2. Mood (e.g., irritation)
3. Attitudes (e.g., hatred)
4. Personality traits (e.g., hostile)
5. Disorders (e.g., depression)
6. Blends (e.g., love = interest + joy)
7. Aspect of emotion (e.g., a cause (such as homesickness) or consequence (such as avoidance))

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 298)

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### What is an emotion? (Ekman)

YouTube  
(7:35 mins)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaZDLOAg\\_Po](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaZDLOAg_Po)



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### Question 4

What good are the emotions?

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**What good are the emotions?**

Utility of emotion:

**Coping functions**  
→ adapt better to life event

**Social functions**  
→ make social interactions better

Based on Reeve (2019, pp. 299-301) **28**

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**There is no such thing as a bad emotion**

- “Negative” emotions are unpleasant or aversive
- However, there is no such thing as a “bad” emotion
- All emotions serve an adaptive, functional purpose.

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 300) **29**

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**Basic emotion → Life event → Coping function**

Threat or danger → **Fear** → Protect, avoid

Interference with goal pursuit → **Anger** →  
Overcome barriers & restrictions

Spoilt object → **Disgust** → Repulsion

Separation or failure → **Sadness** → Reverse  
the separation or failure

Novelty, need-involvement → **Interest** →  
Explore, take in information

Goal progress & attainment → **Joy** → Sooth,  
play

Based on Reeve (2018, Table 12.2, p. 353) **30**

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### Coping functions of emotion

- Emotions help people deal with fundamental life tasks (such as threat, obstacles, loss, and achievement).
- When encountering a fundamental life task, we have an ingrained, automated way of coping that is generally effective.
- We can learn to cope more effectively, but basic emotional reactions are a good (although sometimes too primitive) start to solving fundamental life tasks.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 299-300)

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### Social functions of emotion

- Communicate our feelings to others: e.g., infants, caregivers.
- Influence how others interact with us: Emotional expressions let others predict how we will respond to them
- Invite and facilitate social interaction: e.g., a social smile says, "I am friendly; I would like us to be friends."
- Create, maintain, & dissolve relationships: e.g., joy brings us together, anger breaks a relationship

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 300-301)

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### Question 5

Can we control our emotions?

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### Emotion regulation

Process in which a person seeks to understand and manage:

- which emotion is experienced
- when it is experienced
- how it is experienced
- how it is expressed publicly

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 299-300) 34

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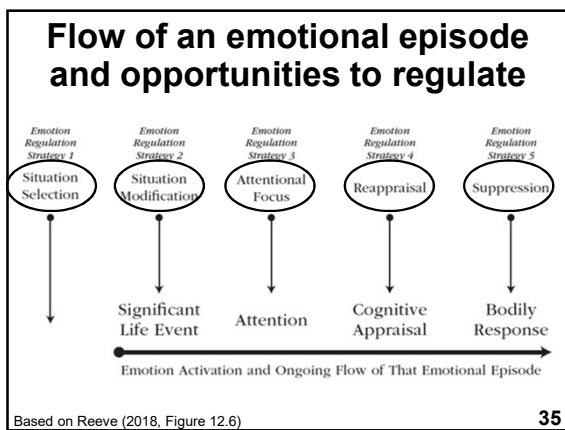
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### Emotion regulation strategies

1. **Situation selection:** taking action to make an emotional experience more or less likely.
2. **Situation modification:** problem-focused coping, efforts to establish control, and searching for social support.
3. **Attentional focus:** redirecting attention within the situation.
4. **Reappraisal:** changing the way one thinks about the situation to modify the emotional impact.
5. **Suppression:** down-regulating one or more of the aspects of emotion (bodily arousal, cognitive, purposive, expressive).

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 304-306) 36

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**Situation selection**

- Taking action to make an emotional experience more or less likely (e.g., Choose what to do, where to go, who to spend time with, which activities to engage, what do to after work, during free time, etc.).
- By selecting one situation over another, we preselect which life events we encounter (e.g., friend → joy; job interview → interest, fear, regret).
- Strategic effort to prevent an emotion from launching (e.g., "If I go there, I'll feel sad. So, I won't go.")

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 304) **37**

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**Situation modification**

- Problem-focused coping - efforts to establish primary control over a situation (e.g., via search for social support).
- Emotion-eliciting events unfold over time  
(e.g., a confrontation with a bully starts with fear, but we can express challenge or appeasement, tell a joke, hurl an insult, bring along a big friend, etc.).  
(e.g., conversations that begin as heated arguments don't have to stay breeding grounds for anger, resentment, and contempt. People can apologise, show concern, offer support, solicit advice, behave in a prosocial rather than antisocial way.)

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 304) **38**

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**Attentional focus**

- Redirect one's attention within the situation.
- There are multiple aspects of an experience one might attend to
- Distraction is a common, effective strategy.
- Rumination increases the intensity and duration of negative emotionality.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 304-305) **39**

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### Reappraisal

- Changing thinking about an emotion-eliciting situation in order to modify its emotional impact.
- Involves changing the meaning of the situation (e.g., If someone bumps into you, you may feel angry, but could reappraise as empathy or pity. Even tragic events (e.g., cancer diagnosis) can be a catalyst to “bring me closer to my loved ones” or “discover the meaning of life”).
- Negative functional reappraisal: Event bad, but not tragic (e.g., “Frustrating to be hassled, but can stand it.”)

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 305) **40**

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### Suppression

- Down-regulation of emotional experience (including feeling, bodily activation, sense of purpose, or expression).
- Mostly involves “do nots” (e.g., do not laugh at the politically incorrect joke, do not show anger at the boss, do not cry at the sad movie, do not show fear during the job interview).
- Blunt strategy which tends to backfire - usually produces more, not less of the emotion.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 305-306) **41**

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### Lie detection – Lie to me trailer

YouTube  
(2:07 mins)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVG5AwZph-s>



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**Question 6**

**What is the difference between emotion and mood?**

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**What is the difference between emotion & mood?**

Criteria	<u>Emotions</u>	<u>Moods</u>
Antecedents	Significant life events	Ill-defined
Action-Specificity	Specific	Influence cognition
Time course	Short-lived	Long-lived

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 306)

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**Mood**

- Mood and affect are synonyms.
- Mild, long-lasting, everyday, low-level, general way of feeling.
- Positive affect and negative affect are independent ways of feeling.

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 306) 45

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### Mood

<p><b>Positive affect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasurable engagement</li> <li>• Reward-driven, appetitive</li> <li>• Approach behaviour</li> <li>• Dopaminergic pathways</li> </ul>	<p><b>Negative affect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unpleasant engagement</li> <li>• Punishment-driven, aversive</li> <li>• Withdrawal behaviour</li> <li>• Serotonergic &amp; noradrenergic pathways</li> </ul>
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Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 307-308) 46

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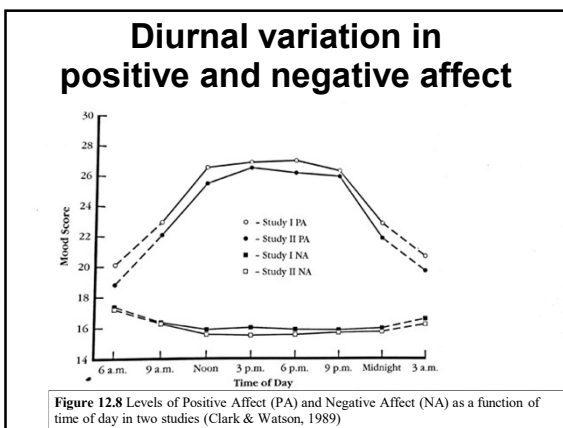
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### Positive affect

Everyday, low-level, general state of feeling good.

Benefits of feeling good:

- Prosocial behaviour
- Creativity
- Decision-making efficiency
- Sociability
- Persistence in the face of failure

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 309-310) 48

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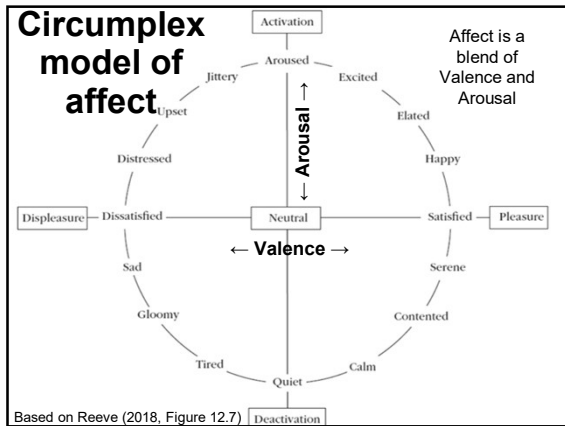
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### Summary

- **What is emotion?** feeling, body, motivational, expressive
- **Where do emotions come from?** Life events activate neural circuits in the sub-cortical brain, causing biological and cognitive response
- **How many emotions are there?** Biological: small set of core emotions; Cognitive: many more emotions
- **What good are emotions?** Emotions help us cope, communicate, and adapt
- **Can we control our emotions?** Emotions are often automatic, but we can learn to self-regulate. What works best is a flexible, situation-specific, and situationally-sensitive intervention effort.
- **Emotion vs. mood?** Emotion is short-lasting; mood is longer-lasting

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### References

- Clark, L. A., Watson, D., & Leeka, J. (1989). Diurnal variation in the positive affects. *Motivation and Emotion*, 13(3), 205-234. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00995536>
- Reeve, J. (2015). *Understanding motivation and emotion* (6th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
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