**Theories of Emotion**

Does you heart pound because you are afraidor are you afraid because you feel your heart pounding? There are a few theories that attempt to explain our emotional reactions.

**1. James-Lange Theory of Emotion**

This theory suggests that the experience of emotion is awareness of physiological responses to emotion-arousing stimuli. An example of this would be when the sight of someone chasing you*causes* heart-pounding fear. In this case, the perception of the stimulus is said to have caused your heart to pound in turn, creating the emotion of fear.

**2. Canon-Bard Theory of Emotion**

This theory suggests that emotion-arousing stimuli *simultaneously* trigger physiological responses and subjective experience of emotion. An example would be that your heart begins pounding at the same time *as* you experience the fear.

**3. Schachters Two-Factor Theory of Emotion**

The latest theory incorporates the belief that our perceptions, memories and interpretations of events are essential to our experiencing emotion. This theory suggests that to experience emotion one must be physically aroused and be able to *cognitively* *label*the arousal. For example, in one experiment Schacter and Singers injected two groups of college men with adrenaline. Each was then placed in a room with either a very happy person or a very irritated person and each found himself feeling the same. It suggests that arousal can be experienced as very different emotions (happy or irritated) depending on how it is *labeled*and interpreted.

Further studies by such researchers as Robert Zajonc and by Richard Lazarus have suggested that not all emotional responses require conscious thinking. Some emotions such as dislikes and fears cannot be overcome by simply changing our minds. As the text suggests, we may fear things like spiders, earwigs or mice even though we know that they are harmless.