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## MODULE 42

# Experienced Emotion

### Module Preview

Carroll Izard has identified 10 basic emotions, most of which are present in infancy. This module examines three human emotions in detail: fear, anger, and happiness. Although we seem biologically predisposed to acquire some fears, what we learn through experience best explains the variety of human fears.

Anger is most often aroused by frustrating or insulting acts that seem willful, unjustified, and avoidable. Expressing anger may be temporarily calming, but in the long run, it can actually arouse more anger.

Happiness boosts people's perceptions of the world and their willingness to help others. However, even significant good events seldom increase happiness for long, a fact explained by the adaptation-level and relative deprivation principles.

### Module Guide

#### Introduction

- ▶ Exercises: The Affect Grid; Brief Measures of Positive and Negative Affect—The PANAS Scale; Individual Differences in Emotional Complexity; The Disgust Scale; Envy and Jealousy
- ▶ Lectures: Elevation—A New Positive Emotion
- ▶ Exercise/Project: The Affect Intensity Measure
- ▶ Project: The Relationship Between Affect and Personality Traits
- ▶ Instructor Video Tool Kit: *The Development of Disgust*

42-1. *Name several basic emotions, and describe two dimensions psychologists use to differentiate emotions.*

Carroll Izard's investigations identified 10 basic emotions: joy, interest-excitement, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shame, and guilt. Although other researchers argue for additional emotions, Izard contends that other emotions are combinations of these 10. When psychologists have asked people to report their experiences of different emotions, all seem to place emotions along the dimensions of pleasant/positive versus unpleasant/negative (the emotion's *valence*) and high versus low *arousal*. On the valence and arousal dimensions, *terrified* is more frightened than *afraid*, and *delighted* is happier than *happy*.

## Fear

- ▶ Lectures: The Amygdala and Fear; Scared to Death
- ▶ Exercise: What Do You Fear?
- ▶ Instructor Video Tool Kit: *Do Body Smells Reveal Fear and Happiness?*

### 42-2. *State two ways we learn our fears, and discuss some biological components of fear.*

Fear is often an adaptive response. Fear of enemies binds people together, and fear of injury protects us from harm. What we learn through experience best explains the variety of human fears. Through conditioning (associating emotions with specific situations) and observation (watching others display fear in response to certain events or surroundings), the short list of naturally painful and frightening events multiplies into a long list of human fears.

We seem biologically prepared to learn some fears faster than others. We quickly learn to fear snakes, spiders, and cliffs, but we are less predisposed to fear cars, electricity, bombs, and global climate change. A key to fear-learning lies in the amygdala, a limbic system neural center deep in the brain. If people suffer amygdala damage, they may consciously remember a threatening event but show no emotional effect of it. Individual differences in fearfulness are partly genetic.

Some fears fall outside the average range. These *phobias* are intense fears of specific objects or situations.

## Anger

- ▶ Exercise: The Anger Discomfort Scale
- ▶ Lectures: Angry Driving; Do We Need to Vent Our Rage?
- ▶ Exercise/Project: The Multidimensional Anger Inventory
- ▶ Project: Monitoring Anger
- ▶ Video: Program 17 of *Moving Images: Exploring Psychology Through Film: Venting Anger: The Catharsis Hypothesis*
- ▶ Feature Film: *Fried Green Tomatoes* and Expressing Anger
- ▶ Instructor Video Tool Kit: *Rage: One Man's Story and Treatment*; *Rage: One Woman's Story and Treatment*

### 42-3. *Identify some common causes and consequences of anger, and assess the catharsis hypothesis.*

People report that anger is often a response to friends' or loved ones' misdeeds and is especially common when those acts seem willful, unjustified, and avoidable. Blameless annoyances such as foul odors, high temperatures, or a traffic jam can also make us angry.

Although "blowing off steam" may temporarily calm an angry person, it may also amplify underlying hostility, and it may provoke retaliation. The *catharsis* hypothesis maintains that "releasing" aggressive energy through action or fantasy reduces anger. Research has not supported the catharsis hypothesis. Angry outbursts may be reinforcing and therefore habit forming. In contrast, anger expressed as a nonaccusing statement of feeling can benefit relationships by leading to reconciliation rather than retaliation. When reconciliation fails, forgiveness can reduce one's anger and its physical symptoms.

## Happiness

- ▶ Exercises: What Is Satisfying About Satisfying Events?; Happiness Measures; Orientations to Happiness and Life Satisfaction;
- ▶ Lectures: Two Dimensions of Positive Affect; Money and Happiness; Rising Happiness and Freedom of Choice; Laughter
- ▶ Instructor Video Tool Kit: *A Happiness Trait?*; *The Search for Happiness*

### 42-4. *Identify some potential causes and consequences of happiness.*

A good mood boosts people's perceptions of the world and their willingness to help others (the *feel-good, do-good phenomenon*). Mood-boosting experiences make us more likely to give money, pick up someone's dropped papers, volunteer time, and do other good deeds. After decades of focusing on negative emotions, psychologists are now actively exploring the causes and conse-

quences of *subjective well-being* (self-perceived happiness or satisfaction with life).

Positive emotion rises over the early to middle part of most days. Although stressful events trigger bad moods, the gloom nearly always lifts by the next day. Times of elation are similarly hard to sustain and, over the long run, our emotional ups and downs tend to balance. Even significant bad events, such as a serious illness, seldom destroy happiness for long. The surprising reality is that we overestimate the duration of emotions and underestimate our capacity to adapt.

At a basic level, money helps us to avoid misery, but having it is no guarantee of happiness. Sudden increases in wealth such as winning a state lottery only increase happiness in the short term. In the long run, increased affluence hardly affects happiness. For example, during the last four decades, the average U.S. citizen's buying power almost tripled, yet the average American is no happier. More generally, research indicates that economic growth in affluent countries has not boosted morale or social well-being. Ironically, those who strive hardest for wealth tend to experience lower well-being. What matters more is how we feel about what we have.

► Exercises: Adaptation Level; Relative Deprivation

42-5. *Describe two psychological phenomena that help explain the relatively short duration of emotions.*

The *adaptation-level phenomenon* describes our tendency to judge various stimuli relative to those we have previously experienced. If our income or social prestige increases, we may feel initial pleasure. However, we then adapt to this new level of achievement, come to see it as normal, and require something better to give us another surge of happiness.

*Relative deprivation* is the perception that one is worse off relative to those with whom one compares oneself. As people climb the ladder of success, they mostly compare themselves with those who are at or above their current level. This explains why increases in income may do little to increase happiness.

High self-esteem, close friendships or a satisfying marriage, and meaningful religious faith are among the predictors of happiness. Age, gender, parenthood, and physical attractiveness are among the factors unrelated to happiness.

