

## GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY II

### *Unit II*

#### EMOTION

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#### DEFINITION

Emotion may be defined as the stirred up state of an organism.

#### PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES IN EMOTION

When we experience an intense emotion we have number of bodily changes. Most of the physiological changes that occur during emotion result from activation of the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system as it prepares the body for emergency action.

The following are the physiological changes that occur during emotion;

1. Blood pressure increases
2. Heart rate increases
3. Respiration becomes more rapid
4. The pupils of the eyes dilate
5. Electrical resistance of the skin decreases
6. Blood sugar level increases to provide more energy
7. Blood becomes about to clot more quickly in case of wounds.
8. Motility of the gastro- intestinal tract decreases or stops entirely. Blood is diverted from the stomach and intestines and sent to the brain and skeletal muscles.
9. The hairs on the skin erect, causing “goose- pimples’

The SYMPATHETIC SYSTEM, gears the organism for energy output. As the emotion subsides, the PARASYMPATHETIC SYSTEM, the energy conserving system takes over and returns the organism to its normal state.

#### THEORIES OF EMOTION

##### I. JAMES – LANGE THEORY OF EMOTION

(felt emotion is the perception of bodily changes)

According to William James and Carl Lange, felt emotion is the perception of bodily changes. They propose the following sequences of events in emotional states.

Step-1 We perceive the situation that will produce emotion.

Step-2 We react to this situation.

Step-3 We notice our reaction.

Our perception of the reaction is the basis for the emotion we experience. Hence the emotional experience occurs after the bodily changes. The bodily changes precede the emotional experience.

Perception of an environmental situation which might result in emotion.

Reaction to the situation with specific patterns of bodily activity.

Perception of bodily changes result in felt emotion.

#### CANNON-BARD THEORY OF EMOTION

[Felt emotion and bodily changes are independent events and occur simultaneously]

According to Walter Cannon and Philip Bard, felt emotion and the bodily reactions are independent of each other and both are triggered simultaneously.

We first experience a potential emotion-producing situation in the environment. Then lower brain areas, such as the hypothalamus, are activated. These lower brain areas send output in two directions.

That is;

1) To the internal bodily organs and external muscles to produce the bodily expressions of emotion and

2) To the cerebral cortex, where the pattern of discharge from the lower brain areas is perceived as felt emotion.

As it has been explained, the bodily changes are not the basis of the felt emotion. They are independent of each other.

Perception of an environmental situation which might result in emotion.

Patterns of activity produced in lower brain areas (hypothalamus).

Patterns of lower brain activity perceived as felt emotion. Patterns of bodily activity expressed in the cerebral cortex as the emotion.

#### SCHACHTER-SINGER THEORY OF EMOTION

[The interpretation of bodily arousal is the felt emotion]

This theory maintains that the emotion we feel is due to our interpretation of an aroused or stirred-up bodily state.

Schachter & Singer argued that bodily states of emotional arousal are much the same for most of the emotion we feel. If there are physiological differences in the body pattern of response people cannot perceive them.

Since the bodily changes are ambiguous any one of emotion can be felt from a stirred-up bodily condition. People are said to have different felt emotions because of the differences in the way they interpret or label the Physiological state.

In other words, given the state of arousal, we experience the emotion that seems appropriate to the situation in which we find ourselves.

The sequence of events in the production of emotional feeling, according to this theory is;

Perception of the emotion-producing situation.

Generalised state of bodily arousal which is perceived.

Interpretation of the reason for the generalized arousal state.

Felt emotion depends on the reasons given for the generalized arousal state.

#### COGNITIVE – APPRAISAL THEORY OF EMOTION

In This Theory, RICHARD LAZARUS and his co-workers says that the emotional we feel result from appraisal or evaluations of information coming from the environment situation and from within the body.

Our appraisal of information depends upon;

- 1) Memories of past encounters with similar situations.
- 2) Dispositions to respond in certain ways. And
- 3) Considerations of consequence of actions that might result from the appraisal state.
- 4) The outcome of the complex appraisal of all this information is the emotion as it is felt.

Reappraisal of emotion-producing situations is an important part of this cognitive theory. Reappraisal is also a way of coping with stressful situations. Reappraisal reduces the intensity of the disturbing emotional feelings which accompany stressful situations.

#### A THEORY OF RELATIONSHIP AMONG EMOTIONS

Robert Plutchik has proposed a descriptive theory that is concerned with primary or basic emotions and the ways they can be mixed together.

In order to show the relationships among emotions, Plutchik assumes that they differ in three ways 1) Intensity, 2) similarity to one another and 3) Polarity or oppositeness.

He uses these three dimensions-intensity, similarity and polarity-to draw a spatial model representing the relationships among emotions.

The eight segments of this model represent eight primary emotions. These primary emotions are derived from evolutionary processes and therefore have adaptive value.

Within each primary-emotion segments the strangest varieties of the emotion are at the top of the segment with progressively weaker varieties toward the bottom.

Finally, the similarities and polarities among the primary emotions are shown by the arrangements of the segments. Emotions that are opposite each other conflict while emotions that are close to each other are complementary.

Since people seldom experience pure emotions, a model of this sort makes it possible to give a good description of mixed end conflicting emotions.

