

Emotions Explorer: Theoretical background

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The set of terms presented in Emotions Explorer are based on over four decades of research in evolutionary, clinical and social psychology, which has focused on identifying, categorizing and explaining the variety of human feeling.

Emotions Explorer is based on emotion categorizations that seek to summarize basic emotional experiences. We use the research of Paul Ekman, Carol Izard, James Russell's work on the circumplex model of emotion, and the positive and negative affect research of Watson & Tellegen. (References below.)

The Emotions Explorer first includes the set of very basic emotions, like happiness and anger, which have been observed by evolutionary psychologists to occur in individuals across different cultures and generations, and are biologically hardwired to help humans navigate the outside world (Ekman, 2007; Izard, 1991). Building on this set, the Emotions Explorer includes a list of basic of both positive and negative emotional states individuals typically can experience in daily life. These terms were identified and validated by leading clinical psychologists to understand the extent to which individuals are positively engaged with their environment or negatively agitated and distressed by it (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1998).

Emotions Explorer also encompasses social psychological research looking at the full spectrum of feeling by including terms from the circumplex model of emotion (Russell, 1980; Plutchik & Conte, 1997). In this model, all emotion can be mapped onto two dimensions: the extent to which it is experienced as pleasant (or unpleasant) and the degree to which involves "activation" (or the energy level of the emotion). The circumplex better reflects emotion states that may not be felt so strongly (such as contentment or boredom) but which are important in the context of well-being and performance. In addition to basic emotion states the Emotions Explorer also includes cognitive states which though not explicitly emotional, capture instances of cognitive engagement.

Emotions Explorer then builds on the basic emotion states by also including terms that reflect the complex and social nature of human feelings. Recent psychological theory emphasizes emotions that have a social or moral component, including how we are treated by others, our sense of belongingness, and our need for a just world (Haidt, 2003; Planalp, 1999). Emotions Explorer therefore includes emotion terms that are based around how included or excluded we feel from our personal and professional environments, as well as a set of emotion terms that capture the human tendency to

respond emotionally to moral situations and violations. Finally, Emotions Explorer also reflects recent theory that brings into greater focus positive emotion states like pride and gratitude and the vital role that such positive emotions have in the human potential for growth, change, learning and creativity (Fredrickson, 2003).

Emotions Explorer consists of the following:

Basic emotions (or “affects”)

1. Excited
2. Enthused
3. Happy
4. Powerful
5. Proud
6. Alert
7. Determined
8. Inspired
9. Energetic
10. Sad
11. Guilty
12. Irritated
13. Angry
14. Agitated
15. Scared
16. Nervous
17. Restless
18. Worried
19. Troubled
20. Content
21. Mellow
22. Pleased
23. Calm
24. Relaxed
25. Peaceful
26. Bored
27. Tired
28. Upset

Positive Emotion-states

29. Hopeful
30. Fascinated
31. Delighted
32. Infatuated
33. Amused
34. Wonderful

35. Confident
36. Free
37. Grateful

Moral emotions

38. Persecuted
39. Betrayed
40. Cheated
41. Foolish
42. Remorse
43. Pity
44. Embarrassed
45. Disgusted

Social Emotions

46. Affectionate
47. Loved
48. Kind
49. Generous
50. Amiable
51. Liked
52. Welcome
53. Appreciated
54. Honored
55. Bitter
56. Jealous
57. Rejected
58. Left out

Cognitive states

59. Confused
60. Distracted
61. Intrigued
62. Suspicious
63. Odd

References

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