
EMOTIONS AND THERAPY

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Emotions are important communicated messages that help an individual to adapt better to the environment and to be successful in it. In Communication-Focused Therapy (CFT), as it was developed by the author, important steps are an awareness for the message the emotion represents, identifying it and developing communication patterns to translate the emotion into helpful change.

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Introduction

Emotion is any conscious experience characterized by intense mental activity and a high degree of pleasure or displeasure. It is an ‘e-motion’, meaning it brings about motion into a direction away from the current position. As such, it can be very powerful as a motivator but also in bringing about change in the psychotherapeutic process.

Emotion as Information

To work successfully with the emotions, it is important to see them as information that is meaningful, which also means that it has the potential to bring about change. Since psychotherapy centers to a significant degree on bringing about change, the emotions are important tools in helping people to bring about helpful and adaptive change in the various areas of their lives.

Emotions and Psychotherapy

Emotions are complex. According to some theories, they are states of feeling that result in physical and psychological changes that influence our behavior. However, it is important to remember that even the physiological changes the emotions can bring about are a result of how different areas of the brain decode the information.

Emotions involve different components, such as subjective experience, cognitive processes, expressive behavior, psychophysiological changes, and instrumental behavior.

The experience of an emotion, the processing of a certain type of meaningful information leads to a subjective, conscious experience characterized primarily by psychophysiological expressions, biological reactions, and mental states. It is how the system reacts to a specific set of information pieces, a message, which then creates the phenomenon of an emotion. But it begins with a set of communicated information.

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Changes

Emotions produce different physiological, behavioral and cognitive changes. The original role of emotions was to motivate adaptive behaviors that in the past would have contributed to the survival of humans. The information leading to the experience of an information is a signal to change the status quo, and the physiological and mental reactions it triggers are a program to initiate and support changes, such as running away from a dangerous situation or the enjoyment of creating a piece of art.

Bad Emotions

There are no bad or dysfunctional emotions because they all represent an aggregation of emotion. The important step is how they are communicated, processed and the reactions they elicit.

The Self

How information in the emotions is communicated internally and externally, in conjunction with the other information flows, makes up the sense of self. Thus, all this information has a role to play. It is how humans, or any other organism, communicates information internally and externally which determines how successful this individual is in the world, where success means fulfilling own needs, values and aspirations.

Communication-Focused Therapy

In Communication-Focused Therapy (CFT), as it was developed by the author, important steps are an awareness for the message the emotion represents, identifying it and developing helpful communication patterns to translate the emotion into helpful change. (Haverkamp, 2010, 2012, 2017a, 2017b) This includes also the processing of the emotional information, which is itself a specialized aspect of communication.



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