

A detailed microscopic image of neurons, showing several large multipolar neurons with prominent cell bodies and numerous branching dendrites. The image is colorized with a blue and purple palette, giving it a futuristic or scientific appearance. The axons of the neurons are visible, some extending across the frame. The background is dark, making the glowing blue and purple structures stand out.

NEUROSCIENCE COURSE
MODULE 6

Module 6 :

EXPRESSION AND PERCEPTION OF EMOTIONS

They are annoyed, in a good mood, angry, happy, miserable, sad, confused, surprised, lost... Generally, we do not need to talk to someone to know what state of mind they are in. Some people can read the feelings and emotions of those around them perfectly, whereas others can only do so if they are guided.

The same is true for facial expressions. Some people let everything show on their face, whereas others seem completely insensitive to what is happening around them. Expressing and decoding emotions are just as complex as learning a language.

Emotion theorists generally recognize a certain number of common characteristics: emotions are intentional, they are directed towards objects in one's environment (including oneself). However, is this phenomenological description supported by scientific studies and philosophical analysis of expression of emotions?

What makes something an expression of emotion and how is such expression linked to other aspects of psychology and human behavior? A popular belief is that expression of emotion serves to communicate the emotional state of the person expressing it. Indeed, the facial expression of an emotion is often considered as the paradigmatic case in which other people's psychological states are manifested to us.

Upon closer examination, we realize that emotions are at once a form of language and memory. We refer to them as language because they convey sensations that we cannot (or perhaps do not want to) communicate. Emotions are a form of memory because they arise based on emotions previously experienced.

When watching a romantic comedy, for example, some people will have tears in their eyes, but not necessarily for the same reasons. Some will feel positive emotions because they remember romantic moments they have experienced themselves. Others will cry tears of sadness because the events described in the film will remind them of moments spent with a partner who has died or who left them.

Thus, emotions are not static. When faced with the same event, one group might laugh until they cry, another might burst into tears, and another might have a panic attack. These inexplicable differences lead us to ask several questions: what are emotions? Where do they originate from? And what makes us react and why?

The origin and psychophysiology of emotions

Before we consider the origin of emotions, we need to define what they are. However, this is possibly the most difficult task of all. Many researchers agree that it is impossible not only to characterize them, but also to determine their origin. The reason for this is simple: emotions result from several factors and are always unique.

"In the beginning was emotion", Louis Ferdinand Céline wrote. This extremely simplistic statement is nevertheless true. Our modern life and everything we currently possess depend solely on emotions. The need to speak, draw, communicate and construct the world as it is: all of these are born out of emotions.

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Feeling sadness at not being able to feed one's children or rage at having to fight to get more in order to arouse feelings of fear, respect or love in others: everything we do, from the first day of life until our last breath, rests solely on emotions.

Everyone perceives emotions in their own way and has their own vision of the world, but the existence of every human being is controlled by their emotions. This is why it is so difficult to define this term. However, researchers have managed to agree on one basic principle: that emotion is always subjective!

★ Rediscovery of emotions

After having occupied an important position in philosophy and medicine in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, interest in emotions and their impacts on how humans function gradually declined. From the 19th century onwards, many scientists perceived the human body as nothing more than a machine, a synchronized device that could be adjusted to the millimeter and that was therefore controllable.

At the time, it was believed that humans were able to control their emotions and ignore their impulses and urges. Thus, only weak beings allowed themselves to get carried away by these. It was not until the mid-20th century that there was a strong revival of interest in emotions and their place in everyday life. However, the first cognitive theories concerning emotions did not emerge until the early 1980s.

★ From moral deviancy to a natural process: what are emotions today?

The definitions are extremely varied. Thus, emotion could be considered as:

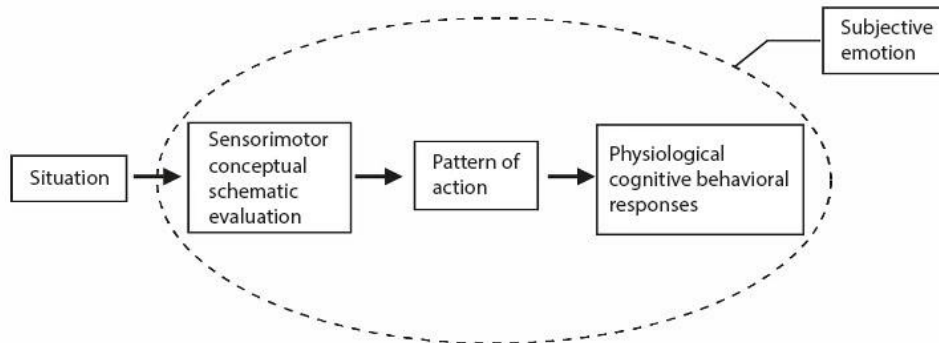
- ▶ a spontaneous and very often uncontrolled reaction of the body to some kind of stimulus. This is made up of three components : one that is physiological and hidden (which is still described as the *subjective experience* component), one that is public (the *public behavioral* component) and one that involves cognitive evaluation of stimulations or situations ;
- ▶ a universal process that is common to the majority of living beings. Humans are not the only creatures to feel emotions ; animals do too. All animals can feel fear, joy, stress and anger. It is difficult to say if a goldfish is happy, but its stress and fear are relatively visible if you are used to observing it. Nowadays, only primary emotions are scientifically considered to be emotions; that is, emotions that are easy for anyone to detect. These are fear, joy, sadness, anger, surprise and disgust. These emotions are automatic and difficult to control. They are also described as *reflex* emotions. More complex emotions are ones we choose whether to feel or not (such as pity, affection, jealousy and guilt).

Psychologically speaking, emotions are also defined as “constellations of highly intense responses that comprise typical physiological and subjective expressive manifestations that are usually accompanied by characteristic patterns of action and take place as a break in continuity in relation to the process that was ongoing in the subject when they surfaced”.

For over a century, the connection between emotional states and psychophysiological activity has been at the heart of the study of behavior. For decades, theorists have debated the psychophysiology of human emotions, focusing on several questions in the process. Physiological responses to emotional stimuli were mainly relevant to psychology. However, emotions have recently attracted

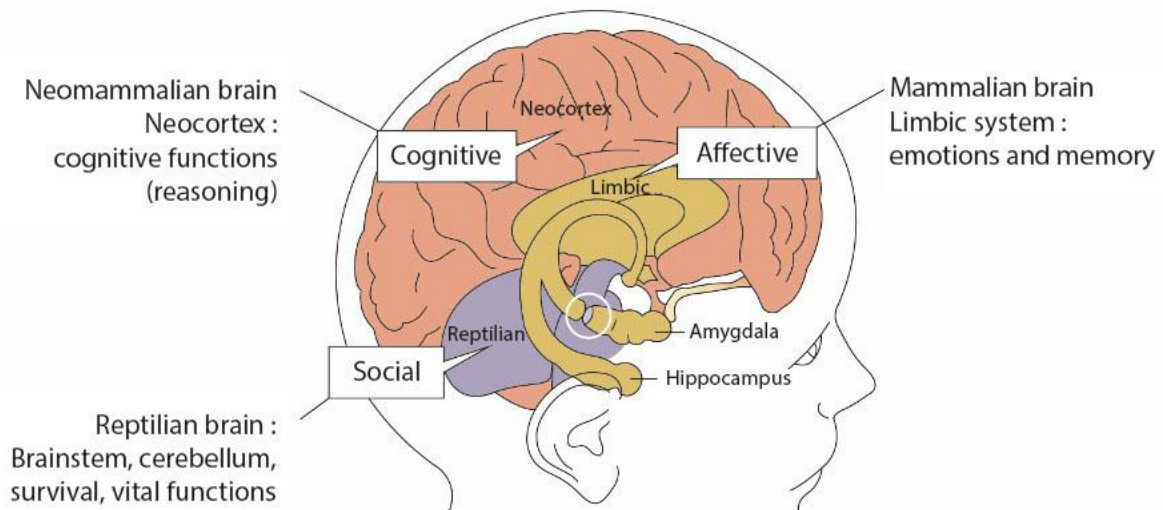
attention in other scientific domains, such as neuroscience, product development and experience design, and IT.

Origin of emotions



From a purely psychological perspective, emotions are spontaneous. As such, it would be difficult to determine their origin. There is no quintessential stimulus because what will cause one person to feel contempt could cause another to laugh. Thus, whether or not an emotion arises will depend on the education the subject has received, their sociocultural environment and their personal preferences.

Nevertheless, emotions do have a physiological origin. They develop in the limbic system and the orbitofrontal cortex.



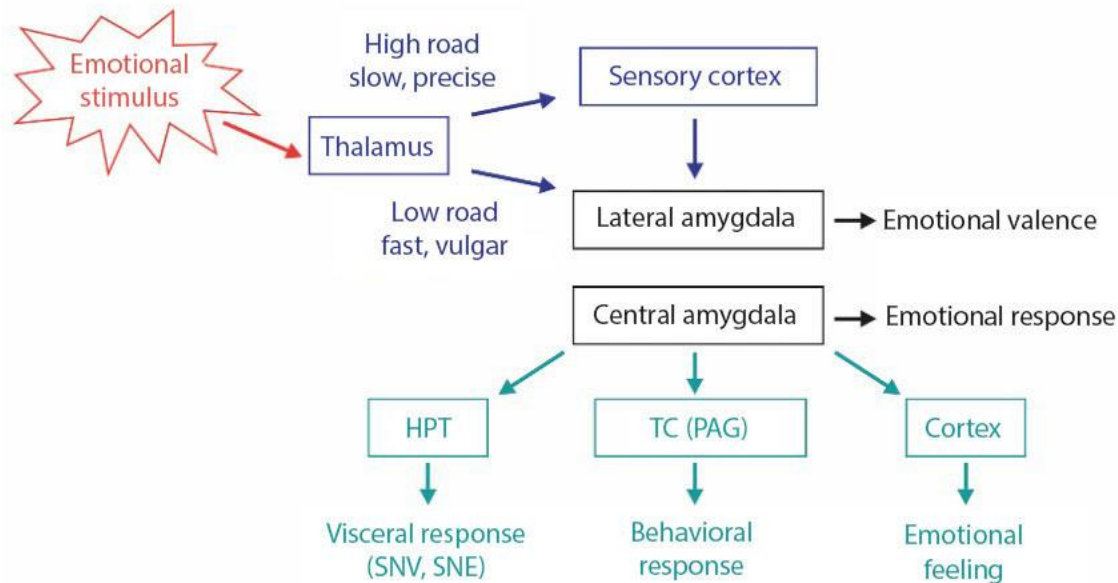
★ Limbic system

The thalamus acts as a relay station for sensory information. The amygdala attributes emotional valence to each stimulus and triggers the emotional reaction. The hypothalamus deals with the physiological response to each stimulus, as well as the regulation of the different bodily functions. These primarily include eating, sleeping and heat regulation. The hippocampus is responsible for memorization, and the basal ganglia control movements.

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The diagram below describes how the amygdala manages emotions.



★ Orbitofrontal cortex

Scientists are not always able to provide a detailed explanation of the different functions of this area of the brain. Many functions remain unknown, but overall, the orbitofrontal cortex controls and manages emotions. The activations in this area correlate with the subjective emotional experience of affective stimuli. Damage or injury impair learning linked to emotions, emotional behavior and the subjective emotional state.

People with damage to the orbitofrontal cortex can also be less sensitive to rewards, as shown by their reduced subjective emotional feelings, their impaired social and emotional behavior and their difficulties processing facial expressions and the expression in people's voices.

To understand the functions of this area, it is useful to dwell on the effects caused by damage to the orbitofrontal cortex. The symptoms observed in each individual case include:

- ◆ vulgar language (unjustified);
- ◆ a complete lack of empathy which causes issues with socialization;
- ◆ uncontrolled sexual behavior (hypersexuality);
- ◆ dependency issues (drugs, alcohol, etc.);
- ◆ unjustified development of criminal behavior.

Importance of emotions

What is the importance of emotions? Socialization is impossible without emotions. Furthermore, some emotions, such as fear and stress, are vital and can save lives. Some reactions (for example

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fleeing in the event of danger) are only possible if the individual initially feels a sense of fear when faced with a danger or a threatening situation. Emotions are important in the sense that they make it possible to analyze and study the reactions to adopt when faced with a concrete event.

The ability to express, read, understand and identify emotions is known as 'emotional intelligence'. It refers to the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as those of others. Generally, emotional intelligence is said to encompass certain skills:

- ▶ emotional awareness, or the ability to identify and name one's own emotions;
- ▶ the ability to exploit these emotions and apply them to tasks like reflection and problem solving;
- ▶ the ability to manage one's emotions, which involves both regulating one's own emotions if necessary and helping others to do the same.

★ Example

An individual finds themselves in a building that is engulfed in flames. They know they are in danger and are aware of the fact they could die, but for some incomprehensible reason, they do not hurry to leave the building. They might stay where they are to finish a task they consider to be important or help other people, but not deem it necessary to leave, themselves.

This individual might seem courageous to those around them. However, if they are incapable of feeling an emotion of true fear, it is not impossible that they will end up dying in this fire.

Indeed, the body's reactions are closely linked to the emotions felt. The inability to perceive these sensations prevents the body from making decisions that sometimes prove vital. To return to the previous example, the individual will not try to escape, even if the danger is immense. As they are unable to appreciate the true extent of the danger, they will also not be able to make the decisions that are required in an emergency.

A large part of learning that takes place in childhood, and even in adulthood, rests solely on the emotions felt. We learn to be afraid of dangers, out of fear of putting our life at risk unnecessarily. We learn to reach out to others and socialize to feel the pleasure of being together. We also learn to understand the people who make up our immediate circle. Being able to decipher emotions facilitates integration into the group. In fact, understanding emotions represents the first means of communication.

At birth, children mainly pay attention to the faces of those around them and, from the end of the first month, they are able to recognize a few basic emotions. At the age of 3 months, they are not only able to decode emotions, but also reproduce them. They start to smile, and even laugh. From the age of 5 months, real interaction can be observed. Children are no longer content to only read or express their own emotions; they now react to those of the people around them.

A study conducted by Ross Flom on a group of babies aged from 3.5 to 5 months showed that the oldest children tended to laugh when shown a smiling face, even if they hear crying in the background. At the same time, if they see a sad face, the baby will be inclined to cry, even if they hear laughter in the background.

Ways of expressing emotions

Despite being expressed in a reflective manner; emotions are not innate. As previously mentioned, children gradually learn to recognize and copy them. The way children express emotions is therefore closely linked to the social environment in which they grow up. This means that the ways adults express emotions mimic the models assimilated in childhood and adolescence.

This does not mean that the expression of emotions remains static; far from it. It evolves considerably with time. Only one value remains unchanged: the sociocultural environment. At every age, it conditions the individual's reaction. As such, it would probably be appropriate to deal with this subject by studying techniques that aim to teach individuals (whether children or adults) to express these emotions.

★ Understanding and decoding the world around us

Let's begin by asking two questions that are disturbing and somewhat unhealthy, or that would at least be perceived as such by the majority of people:

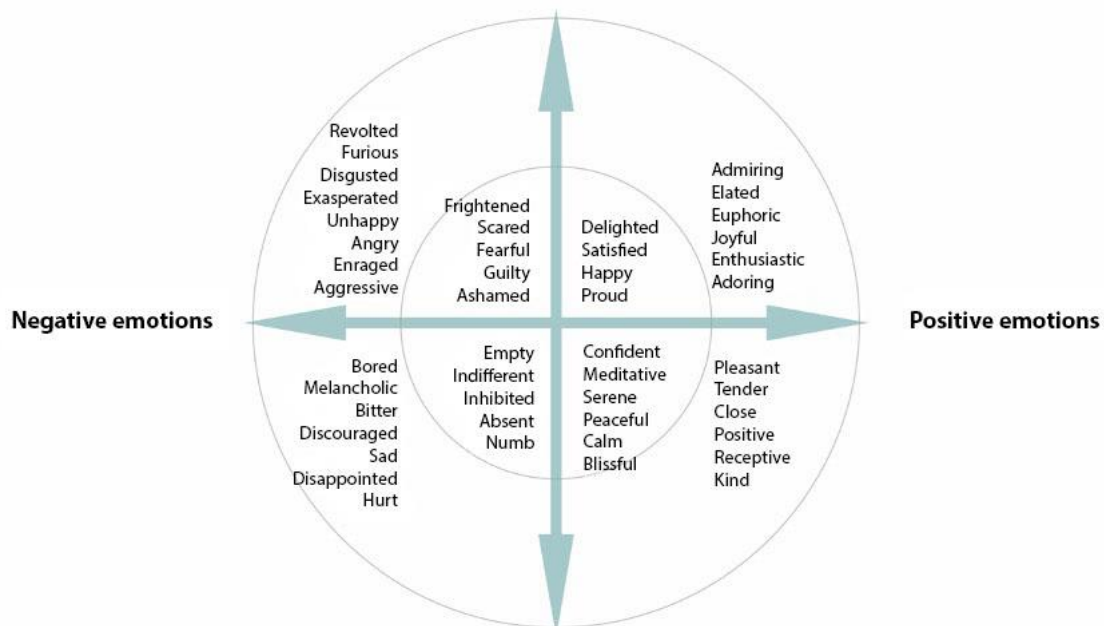
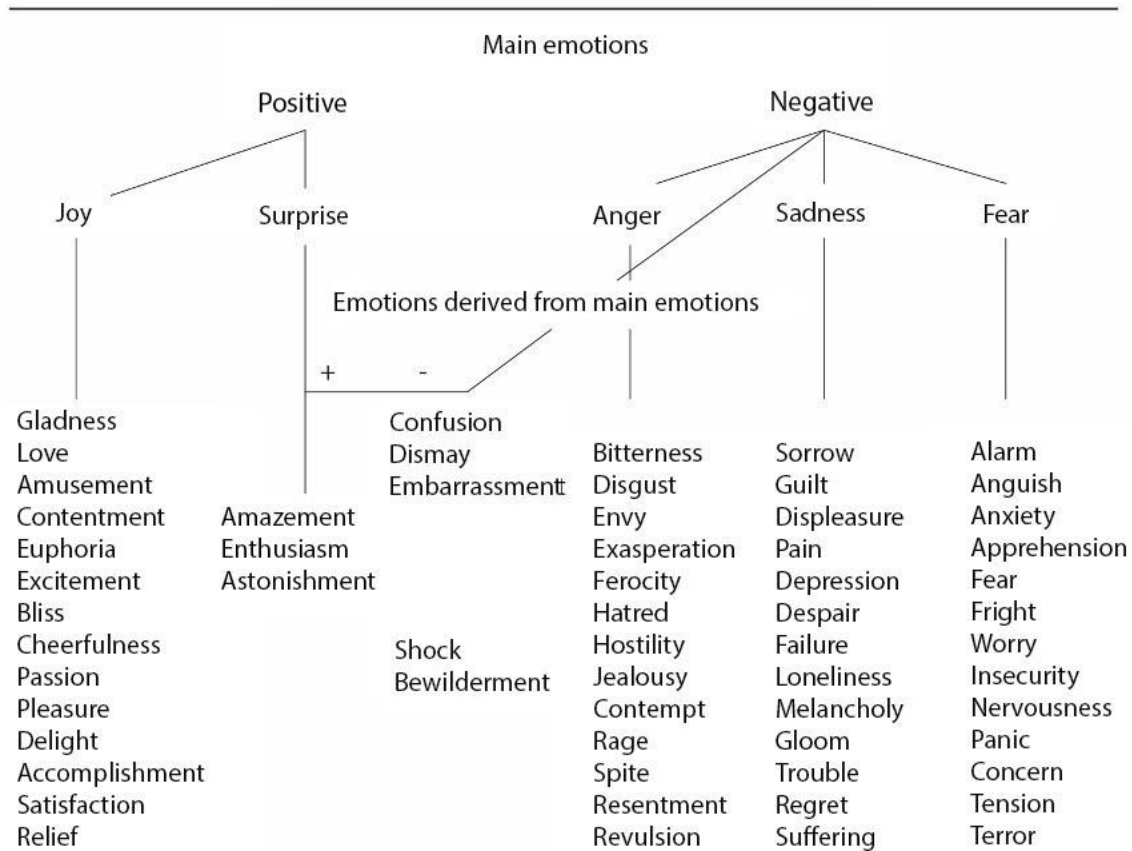
- What would you feel if you watched a human being decapitated: anger, sadness, desperation, joy?
- How would you react if, upon entering a room, you found a human head on the table? Would you be surprised? Sad? Scared?

For most people, these two questions will arouse feelings of anger, sadness and fear all at once. The anger comes from the fact that a human life is being treated so lightly. The feeling of sadness comes from the sense of compassion towards the individual who was decapitated or who saw the head. The sense of fear comes from the fact that we would be afraid to find ourselves in the same situation as this unfortunate individual.

These three basic emotions will give rise in turn to a host of other negative emotions. The diagram below offers a schematic representation of the hierarchy of emotions.

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PRESENTATION OF A HIERARCHY OF EMOTIONS



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Is it possible to have a positive reaction to seeing a decapitated human head? Is it possible to feel absolutely no emotion, whether positive or negative? Can we consider that people who remain unmoved by this kind of act or scene are criminals or psychopaths?

Most people would answer the first two questions with an unequivocal “no”, but the same cannot be said for the last question, the automatic answer to which will be yes. However, this is only because most people do not consider the context. The first question about the decapitation was provocative and automatically results in errors.

The first error is to think that the person being decapitated is alive. The second is to believe that the person decapitating them is doing it out of hatred or contempt for them. The third is to think that the head seen in the room is that of the person whose decapitation was mentioned.

Here’s another question: what image appeared in your mind when you read the first two questions? It seems unnecessary to explain. We live in a world where we feel under permanent threat from terrorism. Everyone who reads those questions will therefore imagine the worst: a poor individual caught by terrorists and whose life is soon to come to an end. Worse still, these terrorists take pleasure from displaying the dead person’s head in a room.

Let’s return to the first two questions, but this time provide the context. If we explain that the decapitation in question is taking place in a laboratory, on the body of a person who chose to leave their body to science, two emotions will immediately disappear: fear and anger.

If we add that the head placed on the table is being studied closely by a group of doctors who are trying to understand how to operate effectively on a dying child, the feeling of sadness will also disappear. Whatever operations and actions are carried out on this head will be completely justified by the objective to be achieved and will not arouse any negative emotion.

This does not categorically mean that all the individuals witnessing this scene will be able to bear it. Intuitively, most will feel a certain degree of anxiety along with a deep sense of melancholy. However, they will justify the experience—and also modify their emotions—due to the fact that it is an obvious necessity. Health professionals themselves would look at it in an even more philosophical way than anyone else.

Although this example is harsh and extremely violent, it shows that a second, equally important factor is linked to how emotions are expressed: the surrounding context.

Cognition and emotions

Is expression of emotions conditioned by the cognitive faculties? It is difficult to find another question that agitates psychologists so much. Everyone agrees that it would not be possible to have emotions without cognitive faculties, but the question is which of the two notions causes the other.

Some people would not be able to feel emotions without using their cognitive faculties. For others, it is their emotions that have led to the development of their cognitive faculties.

At present, we distinguish three main schools of thought:

► The cognitivist school (Mandel, Scherer, Lazarus, Leventhal, Frijda, Kirouac). This places cognitive processes before emotional reactions. Frijda believed that emotions are the obligatory result of

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cognitive processes. As such, the disappearance of the former will automatically lead to that of the latter.

◆ The emotional school (Zajonc, Izard, Tomkins, Green). Their vision can be summed up by the aforementioned quotation from Céline, that “In the beginning was emotion”. Zajonc believed that, despite being closely linked, the affective and cognitive processes remain completely independent from each other. Upon examining the two categories of reactions closely, we notice that:

- ◆ emotional reactions intervene more quickly than cognitive reactions;
- ◆ emotional reactions have a more significant impact overall on the development of the individual in particular and the species in general;
- ◆ emotional reactions are automatic and independent of the individual’s will. As a result, the cognitive functions cannot intervene in the formation of emotions.

◆ The combined school (Cowan, Lewis, Michaelson, Gordon, Scott, Denzin, Hoschild, Kemper). This is based on one simple principle: it is in fact impossible to separate emotional and cognitive reactions because the two are in permanent interaction.

Is it necessary to choose one particular school over the others? Not really! Each of them is reasonable and logical in their own way.

Formation of personality and expression of emotions

Expression of emotions is also dependent on another factor: the personality of the person expressing them. We react in a positive or negative manner based on what we deem to be positive or negative. We have to recognize that the crowd sometimes plays a significant role in this decision.

On a daily basis, however, emotions are both common and unique to every individual, and this judgement varies based on the environment, the context or even the individual’s personality, as well as their age.

Here are some examples of actions:

- ◆ tearing paper;
- ◆ moving the hands like puppets;
- ◆ walking on tiptoe;
- ◆ humming;
- ◆ opening and closing the eyes;
- ◆ yawning.

These actions would leave virtually all adults a little perplexed. The same would be true for adolescents and older children, but things are different with babies. The list above mentions certain

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activities that cause children aged 0 to 6 months to laugh. Expression of emotions evolves with time, and it is up to the people around the child to teach it to decode and express these emotions.

This development can take place through exercises, taking into consideration the evolution of the child's personality.

Exercise

This exercise aims to help the child manage their emotions and deal with those of others around them.

★ Objectives

The objectives of the exercise are as follows:

- To identify the sources of pleasant and unpleasant emotions using the sense organs.
- To decode the different emotions.
- To study the notion of danger and its emotional expression.
- To learn to decode the different emotions in individuals and react to them appropriately.
- To learn to express one's emotions oneself.

★ Elements to take into consideration

At birth, children are overwhelmed by the emotions around them. Gradually, they begin to build their own world, slowly associating the world of signs and that of things.

The development of these processes begins with language (not necessarily oral), then they form their personality in parallel to the influences to which they are subjected. This gradual evolution contributes towards forming a sense of individuality. The formation of personality occurs in several stages:

- From birth to the age of 6 months, children are not aware of their personality. They know they are alive, but they do not yet consider themselves a human being in their own right. When placed in front of a mirror, a child of this age will not recognize itself, it also does not understand the reflection it sees. It thinks it is just an image.
- From the age of 6 months, children start to attach importance to the reflection in the mirror. However, they still cannot decipher that this image is their own. This period lasts until the age of 8 months.
- From the age of 8 months, children realize that the image in the mirror is not just a drawing or moving image. They realize that it is a real human with which they can interact. Nevertheless, they still do not realize that it is them.
- From the age of one, the child finally becomes aware of the person and its body and realizes that the image in the mirror is its own. However, it is not until the age of six that children become fully aware of themselves.

Three elements make up a person's individuality:

- Thoughts: these are forms of interpretation of the individual themselves and their environment/those around them. They are closely linked to the individual's abilities.

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◆ Emotions: these are involuntary sensations and automatic reactions to the influences of the environment.

◆ Behavior: this is the result of the first two factors.

Emotions are classed into two categories:

◆ Affects, which are the emotional sensations themselves: anger, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, etc.

◆ Psychological sensations: these are the physical signals emitted by the body in response to an affect. They include increased heart rate when someone is afraid.

★ Prerequisites for the session

The instructor will need to address the notion of the senses and the five sense organs. They can ask the children to bring a photo, picture or other tool that instils positive emotions.

The instructor can make the children become aware of their relaxed body and what they are feeling at that moment. An activity can also be done in the class on the vocabulary to refer to the different emotions (the main six that will be focused on are joy, fear, anger, sadness, surprise and shame. For each emotion, there is a wide range of related words that suggest a stronger or weaker intensity).

★ Tools

The tools selected must awaken the sense organs. Through sensory experiences, they suggest a shift towards a more symbolized graphic representation (images, recordings, displays, etc.) when possible:

◆ a photograph of the present happy situation and/or a drawing of the object brought;

◆ a set of drawings;

◆ a set of labels for the different emotions (fear, surprise, anger, joy, sadness, shame);

◆ a DVD of noises and different vocal intonations (whispering, loud, shouting);

◆ different fabrics, food items, scents;

◆ a traditional tale (Little Red Riding Hood, The Three Little Pigs).

★ First activity

This involves making the child understand that perception of the senses and emotions is not the same for everyone. By addressing the notions of what is pleasant and unpleasant, the instructor needs to get the child to understand that what it finds pleasant will not necessarily produce the same sensations in its neighbor, friend or parent.

To help the child to differentiate the two concepts, it is important to focus on touch. This is not because touch is the only appropriate sense organ, but because it makes it easier to explain. The instructor can touch the child with different objects and ask it to express the sensations it feels. They can ask them, for example, to put their hands in cold water, then some warm water. They can run their hand along a feather, then along a rough object. With regard to the other sense organs, taste (sweet, salty, bitter, acidic) and sight (nice, not nice) will be used.

Overall, this is an exercise about differentiation and appreciation.

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★ Second activity

Here, the aim is to introduce the child to reading emotions expressed facially. They will be taught to decode the emotions they see on a real face or an image. On the back of each image will be a corresponding label to help the child to keep track of each one easily. If they are decoding the emotions shown on a face in person, the instructor will need to explain to them (if they do not get the answer right) which emotion was correct.

★ Third activity

Here, the instructor encourages the child to express their emotions in relation to the situations experienced. For example, they might be shown an image of themselves in several different situations and asked to share their emotions relating to it. In some cases, the child will be able to show initiative. In other cases, the instructor's assistance will be useful. They might suggest detecting emotions by telling the child a story. The child will need to identify the passages that made them sad, happy or scared.

This exercise can also be adapted to meet the needs of adults or adolescents.

Individual differences in ways of expressing emotions

It would not be possible to tackle this theme without going back over a few basic concepts. What are the foundations for the expression of emotions? The first is the sociocultural environment in which the child grows up. The second is the individual's own personality. Then a third factor comes into consideration: sex. It would be tempting to class this in the same category as sociocultural environment, but this would be a mistake.

Does a smile always reflect joy or happiness? Generally, but not in Asian societies. In Japan, for example, a smile very often expresses embarrassment. When someone feels averse to the behavior displayed or question asked by their interlocutor, they smile. As a result, a Westerner will have difficulty interpreting certain expressions correctly when speaking to a Japanese person, and will risk offending them without realizing.

Staying with this same context, it is interesting to note that although the majority of Japanese people smile when they feel embarrassed, they will not necessarily all react in the same way. However, the inhabitants of one region or country are more able to accurately interpret their counterparts' emotions.

What role does sex play? At first sight, it does not. It is important to recognize that some of the differences relating to sex come about as a result of education. Let's consider a few commonly heard remarks: "Why are you crying like a little girl?", "Stop sniveling, boys don't cry", "Control your emotions, you're not a girl" and "I need a man, not a woman who cries all the time". We hear comments like these every day without even paying attention to them, and yet they hold a lot of meaning.

For thousands of years, we have expected men to be strong and to ignore or at least control their fear. Men are not allowed to cry, even if they are sad. Men are the protectors in the family. They are

not allowed to wallow in despair or show signs of sorrow or anxiety; only women and children are permitted to do this. Even here, boys are expected to learn to conceal their emotions once they reach a certain age.

Until the early 20th century, in almost all societies around the world, women received less education than men. From birth, they were prepared to fulfil what was considered their primary function: to be a wife and mother. They learnt to sew, sing, play a musical instrument, paint, cook and write poems. That was all. Meanwhile, boys were educated in exact sciences, literature, philosophy, natural sciences and many other subjects.

This approach that was followed for thousands of years ended up creating clear differences between how men and women perceive and express emotions. Women are more attentive and decode emotions better than men. They also display better control over their emotions.

Emotional development

The differences can only be understood by studying the different stages of emotional development. Harris, Pons and Doudin believe that emotional development takes place in three main stages, which are each divided into nine phases.

★ First stage

This begins at the age of 2 and finishes around the age of 5. During this period, the child gradually learns to understand basic emotions. They then move on to classifying more complex emotions. This involves, for example, being able to distinguish shame from guilt or pride from sudden joy.

From the age of 3, or 3.5 years for some, children establish cause-and-effect relationships between events and emotional reactions. For example, bad news will lead to sadness or anger. From the age of 4 or 4.5 years (or in some cases 5 years), children become aware of the fact that memories can also provoke emotions. Remembering how a parent refused to buy the toy they desperately wanted will cause a feeling of sadness.

★ Second stage

This begins at the age of 4 to 5 years and finishes at 8 to 9 years. Just like the previous stage, it is divided into three sub-classes. From 4 to 5 years, to 6 to 7 years, children become aware of the impact of desires. They finally realize that, even if two human beings experience identical emotions, they may adopt different attitudes based on their desires.

From the age of 6 to 7 years, they learn to appreciate the role played by knowledge or beliefs in relation to emotions (for example, thinking one has lost something causes a feeling of sadness). Children are able to distinguish between the appearance and reality of an emotion (for example, feigning or hiding an emotion). The third stage can be considered an extension of this learning process.

★ Third stage

This begins at the age of 8 to 9 years and lasts until 11 to 12 years. This prepubescent stage is particularly complex. At the beginning (8 to 9 years), the child starts to accept the emotional

repercussions of its actions (for example, feeling proud after having done something praiseworthy, or feeling embarrassed after making a mistake).

The next phase (9 to 10 years) is where the child becomes aware of the fact that it is able to feel two completely contradictory emotions. At the age of 11 to 12 years, it finally takes full control of its emotions. It is now able to get itself out of a difficult emotional state by drawing on positive memories.

The notion of emotional capital

Gendron defines this concept as “the set of emotional competencies that constitutes a resource inherent to the person that is useful for personal, professional and organizational development, that contributes towards social cohesion and has personal, economic impacts”.

This concept takes conative and cognitive aspects into consideration. Emotional capital is not a given. Aptitudes are acquired over time and the subject needs to hone them. Thus, emotional capital will only develop if the individual’s sociocultural environment is conducive to it.

Emotional capital is not a static principle. It varies with the individual and based on their perception of this capital. Good emotional management increases the potential for emotional capital. In some domains, like education or marketing, excellent mastery of emotional capital is vital. It is important to note that emotional capital can also have a negative or even damaging impact on individuals’ health.

Studies conducted by Izard and Abe in the late 1990s showed that children who constantly suffer from negative emotions (humiliation, threats, contempt, etc.) develop a feeling of discomfort that increases the sensation of unease. This in turn can have consequences on the individual’s physical state.

As such, children should be surrounded by positive emotions as much as possible from infancy to adolescence. In practice, this means that the people around them need to support and encourage them and motivate them to see the positive side of any problems they face.

It is probably due to the importance of these positive influences that specialists like Ottavia Albanese and Ilaria Grazzani Gavazzi have given the following definition of emotional capital: “Positive experience and the emotions that result from it can represent a protective factor because they help to boost the mood by predisposing the subject to taking creative action and because they constitute a form of reserve that can be used in critical moments, a resource to help tackle negative situations.”

Gendron follows the same logic, emphasizing its importance for good psychological and physical development. She also adds that “the absence of emotional capital in a student can be responsible for imbalances and tensions and constitute a weakness that disrupts learning [...]”.

The teaching of emotional faculties helps children not only to control their emotions, but also to socialize without difficulty.

★ The crucial importance of developing emotional intelligence in children

Children of today are the adults of tomorrow. Many violent or desperate acts could have been avoided if the adults who committed them had received good emotional support during childhood.

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How does a good emotional balance contribute towards normal development? The answer is simple: it offers the child the opportunity to understand themselves. The better grasp they have of their own personality, the easier they will find it to understand those of others. From a very early age, children need to be able to:

- understand and accept their emotions;
- get a precise idea of their own needs and learn to defend their interests;
- not fear their emotions and not be afraid to express them, whatever they may be;
- not be afraid to use their imagination;
- not deny their own personality in order to be liked by those around them;
- express their fantasies without fear.

To summarize, children need to be able to accept their own personality without fearing how others may judge them, regardless of the situation they are in. By acquiring this independence as quickly as possible, they will be able to establish and construct healthy relationships with those around them.

The importance of this balance is seen primarily throughout children's time at school. Children who constantly need support in order to make progress can prove to be a real nightmare for their teacher. Indeed, their success is closely linked to external factors. The slightest imbalance will have disastrous consequences on their ability to learn.

Worse still, these children are afraid to take risks because they fear doing the 'wrong thing' or getting told off if they make a mistake more than anything. This constant fear of failure prevents them from thinking outside the box and ends up turning them into fragile individuals who lack self-confidence. As time passes and they get older, the situation will only get worse.

★ How to improve emotional potential

We have a duty to support children in all circumstances. However, this support must not be blind or unconditional. Children can only learn to control their impulses and emotions if they become aware not only of their own limits, but also of those they need to maintain with the people around them.

This means that parents and teachers need to provide assistance and support to children as long as they respect social rules, and withdraw them when they deviate from them. Children must realise that respect for themselves depends on that of others. To achieve this, they must learn not only to express their emotions, but also to read and analyze those of their interlocutors.

★ Analyzing differences

For the moment, we will not dwell on differences that result from children's sociocultural environment or education and instead limit our attention to differences due to sex. As previously mentioned, social differences between the two sexes exist in all societies around the world.

Over time, these have had repercussions on the emotional behavior of both sexes. Nowadays, many things have changed. However, even if girls are no longer as disadvantaged in relation to boys as they were in the past, we still note emotional divergences between the sexes.

Studies conducted on children in French-speaking Switzerland have shown that this emotional diversity exists from a very early age. The results are noteworthy.

Case study

The study focuses on a group of children with different backgrounds and sociocultural environments. The researchers selected a total of 12 children: six boys and six girls. They employed an exploratory research methodology using interviews, in order to focus on the qualitative aspect over the quantitative aspect. This explains the low number of participants.

The principle behind the information gathering is relatively simple. It is based on an interview containing two basic questions: one about joy and the other on anger. First, the children are asked to describe the moment in their day they considered to be a true moment of joy. Gradually, they are encouraged to go into detail and share more varied emotions. Then the same is done for anger.

During the experiment, the researchers took care not to interrupt the students and gave them the opportunity to express themselves freely, and in the finest detail. The results of these analyses were then classed in several tables.

★ Emotion: joy

Table 1: Situations that gave rise to joy in participants

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	[...] when I was outside with my friends, and I was playing hide and seek.	Playing; friends
2	[...] When I'm good. [...] I do my worksheets [...] I do it on my own.	Good; on my own
3	[...] when we can do drawing [...] at break [...] when I break the rules [...] I can do something else [...] with others.	Break; activities
4	[...] played with A, C and E.	Playing
5	At break and then at the youth club [...] I like it [...] because we do work [...] and then at break I play with my little cousin [...] be with my classmates.	Break; youth club Playing; being with others
6	When no one hates me, when no one annoys me, when people play with me [...] with C, M and C.	Not being disturbed; playing
Boys	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	Yes. [...] When I'm working [...] when it's just, well, I'm happy. [...] I'm with someone [...] At break [...] playing with someone.	Doing good work; being with someone; break; playing

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2	<i>Yes. Well, when I'm doing drawing [...] crafts [...] when I'm playing [...] With D, he's my friend.</i>	Drawing; crafts; playing; being with a friend
3	<i>Yes. [...] I'm very happy when the homework is easy-peasy.</i>	Easy homework
4	<i>Yes. When I'm playing [...] with I and C.</i>	Playing with classmates
5	<i>Yes. When I'm playing with D. When I'm with D.</i>	Playing and being with a particular person
6	<i>[...] Yes. Every day. [...] homework, when I'm reading, drawing.</i>	Doing homework; reading; drawing

Both girls and boys enjoy moments of play and entertainment. However, the latter experience greater pleasure in these moments if they are in the company of their friends and classmates. Girls appreciate the process of play for what it is, regardless of whether they are in a group or not.

Breaktime is also a moment that both sexes enjoy. They feel happy and enjoy all the activities that take place during this time. However, one factor for happiness is not shared by all children: academic success. For girls, this is an event like any other; it is not devoid of importance, but they do not consider it to be of paramount importance. Boys, on the other hand, take sincere, immense pleasure in being the best; academic success gives them unparalleled satisfaction.

Table 2: Reasons for joy

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	<i>Because I was playing hide and seek and they hadn't found me, it was so funny. [...] I saved the gang.</i>	Playing; funny; winning
2	<i>Because I had learnt something.</i>	Learning
3	<i>[...] because I break the rules [...] because there are lots of times when I can do something [...] Because sometimes we can fool around at break.</i>	Breaking the rules; activities; fooling around
4	<i>[...] Because mum let me.</i>	Permission to play with friends
5	<i>[...] Because we do work and I like doing work [...] because I like school a lot, we do a lot of work, we do a lot of things [...] we play.</i>	Working; playing

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6	<i>Because I like it when someone plays with me, and I like it when no one disturbs me or hits me.</i>	Playing; not being disturbed
Boys	Verbatim	Key words/ideas
1	<i>Because it means I'm not on my own.</i>	Being with someone
2	<i>Because I like doing cr... I like crafts.</i>	Crafts
3	<i>Because I finish and put my hand up.</i>	Finishing work
4	<i>[...] I play.</i>	Playing
5	<i>Because I go to school [...] actually I'm with D, and I'm with him in class too.</i>	Going to school; being with classmates
6	<i>When I do my homework [...] do tests.</i>	Doing homework and tests

Overall, all the children feel comfortable at school and they enjoy carrying out all the tasks given to them. The interesting activities were common to both sexes, but girls were the only ones to mention the following concepts: laughing, winning, breaking rules, fooling around, not being disturbed and getting permission to do something special.

► **Table 3: Perception of joy and sensations experienced when it arises**

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	<i>[...] it's something that makes people happy [...] When I'm not feeling joyful, it's because we don't know what to do, we're not playing, we're angry... [...] Good for the heart.</i>	Happy; good for the heart
2	<i>When we go to Europa-Park. [...] Good.</i>	Entertainment; good
3	<i>It's when I feel happiness [...] that means when for example we do something and then afterwards we're pleased. [...] my body feels all warm.</i>	Happiness; pleased; warm
4	<i>It's being happy. It's being pleased, for example when it's your birthday. [...] You can feel your eyes crying.</i>	Happy; pleased; special occasion; crying

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5	<i>Joy is not being annoyed [...] I feel that I'm thinking of my mum and all my family.</i>	Not being annoyed; thinking about family
6	<i>Joy is something that's good, something that's very important to us. It's something we won't forget. [...] I'm just happy.</i>	Good; important; unforgettable; happy
Boys	Verbatim	Key words/ideas
1	<i>I don't know, it's difficult to explain. [...] good.</i>	Difficult to explain; good
2	<i>[...] good.</i>	Good
3	<i>Joy is when I have friends and they lend me their Lego and I lend them mine, when they lend me new toys and I lend them mine too.</i>	Friends; sharing
4	<i>[...] good.</i>	Good
5	<i>[...] straight after I just want to play.</i>	Wanting to play
6	<i>I don't know. I'm pleased.</i>	Difficult to explain; pleased

This table helps to understand how children perceive joy. Overall, how do they define this notion and what do they feel physically and psychologically? The researchers focus on the synonyms that the children use for "joyful". For girls, "pleased" and "happy" are most popular. Boys, as paradoxical as it might seem, rarely use them.

Then comes the expression "good". Both sexes use it freely. Girls, however, had their own variation of this, "good for the heart". The third expression is used frequently by boys but virtually never by girls: "difficult to explain".

► **Table 4: Transmitting the feeling of joy to others and reasons for doing it**

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	<i>Yes. To C [...] M, D, and E. [...] Because I like them.</i>	People they like
2	<i>Yes. To the teacher.</i>	To the teacher
3	<i>Yes. To my friends. [...] who are kind to me.</i>	Friends
4	<i>Not really. [...] No. Because it's my secret.</i>	Secret

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5	<i>Yes, to my mum and to my family and also my little cousin. [...] Because they listen to me and the other people never listen to me.</i>	Family; listening
6	<i>No. [...] Because I always forget.</i>	Forget to talk about it
Boys	Verbatim	Key words/ideas
1	<i>No.</i>	No
2	<i>Yes [...] to D.</i>	Friends
3	<i>No.</i>	No
4	<i>No.</i>	No
5	<i>Um, no.</i>	No
6	<i>Yes. [...] to E. [...] Because he's my friend.</i>	Friends

Overall, the children enjoy sharing their happiness with their friends. However, boys tend to keep their emotions for themselves. Four of the six boys involved in the experiment did not show them. The situation is different with girls. They tend to open up to everyone. In addition to their friends, they also share their joy with those around them (teacher and family). They only rarely keep this emotion to themselves and, even if this does happen, it is very often because they simply forgot to mention it.

Table 5: Abilities to decode and understand others' emotions

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	<i>Yes. [...] Because all they did was laugh. And they played with me.</i>	Laughing; playing with
2	<i>I don't know.</i>	Difficult to notice
3	<i>Yes. [...] Because afterwards they're all red [...]</i>	Blushing
4	<i>[...] because they explained it to me.</i>	Explanation
5	<i>Yes. [...] Because I saw them playing so much, they were smiling [...] Then some weren't happy so after they said that they could play with someone else and they played with someone.</i>	Playing; smiling
6	<i>[...] sometimes. [...] they play with someone and they're very pleased. [...] He smiles, he's pleased, sometimes he laughs.</i>	Playing; pleased; smiling; laughing
Boys	Verbatim	Key words/ideas

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1	<i>Yes. [...] He told me once that, that he felt joyful.</i>	Someone told him
2	<i>Yes. [...] he feels joyful. [...] he's drawing something. [...]</i>	Drawing
3	<i>Yes. [...] Because I have a face like you [...] I don't know.</i>	You can see it; difficult to notice
4	<i>Yes [...] because I can see [...] I can see their face.</i>	You can see it
5	<i>Um yes, some [...] D. A. [...] I saw them smile.</i>	Smiling
6	<i>Yes [...] because they play with me.</i>	Playing

The analysis shows that children are generally able to perceive others' positive emotions. However, a clear trend can be observed: girls are far more attentive than boys with regard to decoding others' emotions.

★ Emotion: Anger

► Table 1: Situations causing anger

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	<i>C had done something silly. [...] I knew that the teacher was going to tell her off. [...] when M cried, because D had said that, that annoyed me. I was angry with D.</i>	Telling off; crying; annoying; angry
2	<i>When someone hits me.</i>	Being hit
3	<i>[...] there are other girls who don't want to be my friends [...] she doesn't come with me [...] I don't have any friends anymore.</i>	Loneliness
4	<i>[...] when someone hits me.</i>	Being hit
5	<i>When C annoys me.</i>	Being annoyed
6	<i>When C kicks me at break sometimes.</i>	Being kicked
Boys	Verbatim	Key words/ideas
1	<i>When I make mistakes and I can't...</i>	Making mistakes
2	<i>With S. [...] He went in the bin and took out some dirty bread. [...] he didn't want to stop.</i>	Others doing silly things and being disobedient
3	<i>[...] he called me a little baby.</i>	Being insulted

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4	<i>When I annoys me.</i>	Being annoyed
5	<i>[...] he punches us.</i>	Being punched
6	<i>Never.</i>	Never

Here, the differences are very clear. Girls are generally angry when they are victims of physical (getting kicked or hit by their classmates) or psychological violence (threats of all kinds, for example getting told off). These inconveniences only hurt a small minority of boys. On the other hand, they become angry when they or others make mistakes. In the same vein, they do not appreciate being insulted.

Table 2: Reasons for anger

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	<i>Because it hurt C's feelings.</i>	Compassion
2
3	<i>[...] I'm on my own and I stay by myself.</i>	Loneliness
4	<i>Because S hit me and he said Romy Rodgi.</i>	Being hit and insulted
5	<i>Because I don't like it when people annoy me [...].</i>	Being annoyed
6	<i>Because I don't like it when people do that to me.</i>	Having to suffer something you don't like
Boys	Verbatim	Key words/ideas
1	<i>Because I don't want people to annoy me [...] he annoys me all the time.</i>	Being annoyed
2	<i>[...] he always comes over to me.</i>	Being harassed
3	<i>He insulted me [...].</i>	Being insulted
4	<i>[...] annoys me.</i>	Being annoyed
5	<i>[...] punches me.</i>	Being punched
6	<i>Never.</i>	Never

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More than anything, boys hate to be annoyed. Most of the boys complained about this, whereas the girls did not really seem bothered. However, girls hate to be harassed or insulted, but this sentiment is shared with boys.

Overall, neither sex appreciates being put under psychological pressure. However, only girls mentioned that they hate witnessing violence being committed against their friends or acquaintances.

► **Table 3: Perception of anger and the sensations felt when it arises**

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	<i>[...] someone who said a nasty word to me, and I'm fed up of him saying that and he told the teacher I hit him [...] it hurt my feelings.</i>	Hurt feelings
2	<i>When I'm angry [...] I feel sad.</i>	Being angry; sadness
3	<i>[...] after you feel angry and sad. [...] You have no heart.</i>	Being angry; being sad; no heart
4	<i>When you're very angry and you don't like what people are doing and they wouldn't like it being done to them [...] I feel sad. [...] My heart pounds. [...] I could cry.</i>	Being angry; being sad/crying; heart pounding
5	<i>[...] get annoyed a lot and don't like people who aren't nice to us. [...] I want to shout, I don't like it.</i>	Getting annoyed; hating; wanting to shout
6	<i>[...] something I don't like at all [...] I can feel that it will be okay in a little while.</i>	Not liking; reversible emotion
Boys	Verbatim	Key words/ideas
1	<i>[...] you don't feel good [...] sadness.</i>	Not good; sadness
2	<i>[...] hurt [...] I'm annoyed [...] it hurts [...] my stomach.</i>	Hurt; annoyed; stomach pain
3	<i>[...] I grabbed him by the neck [...] that makes me angry and it hurts everywhere.</i>	Wanting to hit someone; hurting everywhere
4	<i>[...] I hit him.</i>	Wanting to hit someone
5	<i>Angry [...] not good at all so I go to my room.</i>	Angry; not good; wanting to be alone

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6	<i>Angry [...] nothing.</i>	Angry; nothing special
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Here, girls very often tend to associate sadness with anger. They mention feeling a sensation of discomfort and distress. The third cause of anger that leads to sadness and discomfort is physical pain. Boys also mention a feeling of discomfort.

The reaction to anger is however different in boys and girls. The former want to punch something, hurt the person back or be alone. Girls, meanwhile, are inclined to cry, hold a grudge, want to yell back, or feel physical suffering (for example heart palpitations).

Table 4: Transmitting the feeling of anger to others and reasons for doing it

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	<i>Yes, to C and D.</i>	To classmates
2
3	<i>No. [...] because then everyone worries.</i>	Not wanting to worry others
4
5	<i>To my mum, my brother and sister. [...] because they always listen to me.</i>	Family listen
6	<i>[...] I tell the teacher [...] she can help me.</i>	Person who can help
Boys	Verbatim	Key words/ideas
1	<i>No.</i>	No
2	<i>Um no, otherwise S will know [...] I don't want to [...] otherwise he'll hit me.</i>	Fear of consequences
3	<i>Yes [...] D hit me at my parents' house [...] because D lives just next door to me.</i>	Family; possibility of acting
4	<i>Yes, to C and my family.</i>	Friends; family
5	<i>No.</i>	No
6

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Neither boys nor girls seek to share their anger; the proportions are essentially equal in this case. Only a minority of the children (two girls and one boy) are ready to do so. Very often, they only share this emotion when they are forced to. A certain number explain that this refusal is due to wanting to protect others' emotional state in order not to make them angry or worried.

Table 5: Ability to decode and understand others' emotions

Girls	Verbatim (translated)	Key words/ideas
1	<i>[...] I saw them getting angry with each other. [...] saying nasty things to each other.</i>	Getting angry and saying nasty things to each other
2	<i>If someone else hits him. [...] When a boy hits the other boy.</i>	Hitting
3	<i>[...] you can see it. Mimes: puts her fists in front of her face, closes her eyes, frowns and closes her mouth.</i>	You can recognize when someone is angry
4	<i>[...] you can see it. [...] if my friend is crying [...] she gives me a hug, I stroke her head [...] she stops straight away.</i>	Visible; crying; comforting
5	<i>[...] they're not smiling [...] when they're all alone and they're sulking [...] I can go and tell them [...] that they can play with someone.</i>	Not smiling; loneliness; sulking
6	<i>[...] the person [...] says he annoyed her. [...] When their face looks a bit like a monster's.</i>	Being annoyed; grimace
Boys	Verbatim	Key words/ideas
1	<i>I can see it on their face. Mimes: frowns and looks down.</i>	Visible
2	<i>[...] he's angry [...] he doesn't give me things to play with [...] you can't see it.</i>	Angry; doesn't let me borrow things; can't see it
3	<i>Because I can see his face (frowns) [...] sad [...] if someone's crying [...] if someone hits someone else.</i>	Visible; sad
4	<i>I don't know [...] their face and the way they talk.</i>	Difficult to know; visible
5	<i>[...] their mouth is upside down and they're angry and you can see because they go (angry face).</i>	Visible

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6	No. [...] some people stamp their feet when they're angry. [...] they move.	Difficult to know; agitation
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As with joy, girls and boys are able to decode feelings of anger in others. However, studies show that girls are much better at doing this. They pay more attention to the facial expressions the individual displays and the actions they engage in, whereas boys focus much more on the individual's direct reactions. Girls, for example, concentrate on reactions like a bad mood, or the fact that the subject is sulking or wants to be comforted or supported, whereas boys focus on the fact that the subject no longer wants to share their toys with them or speak to them.

★ Results of the study

Overall, the conclusions drawn in this study are the same as what we observe in everyday life: men and women behave differently in many situations.

First of all, men are less capable of reading and decoding the emotions of those around them correctly. They also struggle to express their own emotions sometimes. Unlike women, men prefer to hold in their emotions.

Second, anger and all its related emotions are experienced differently by the sexes. Men immediately externalize their feelings, or at least have a strong desire to do so. In contrast, women withdraw into themselves and dwell on the problem.

This difference in approach has consequences on the way the sexes manage and settle these emotions. The majority of men tend to attack their opponent head-on and tell them what is on their mind once and for all. Women are more inclined to start rumors to get revenge on the person who was the cause of their anger.

Lastly, joy and all its related emotions are also perceived in different ways. Although men and women do not have any difficulty sharing their happiness, women are more likely to do so. In addition, unlike men, who generally share it with their closest friends and their family at most, women let themselves get swept up in it freely: they share their joy with everyone around them in the broadest sense of the word.

★ Summary tables

Joy	Girls		Boys	
	Key words/ideas	Frequency	Key words/ideas	Frequency
Situation	Playing	3/6	Schoolwork/success	3/6
	Friends	2/6	Friends	4/6
	Good	1/6	Break	1/6
	Alone	1/6	Playing	4/6
	Break	2/6	Activities	2/6
	Activities	2/6		
	Not being disturbed	1/6		

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Reasons	Playing 3/6 Funny 1/6 Winning 1/6 Work 2/6 Disobeying/breaking rules 1/6 Activities 1/6 Fooling around 1/6 Having permission 1/6 Not being disturbed 1/6	Playing 1/6 Activities 1/6 Being with someone 2/6 Work/school 3/6
Definition and feeling towards it	Happy 3/6 Good for the heart 1/6 Special occasion 2/6 Good 2/6 Happiness 1/6 Pleased 2/6 Warmth 1/6 Crying 1/6 Not being bothered 1/6 Thinking about family 1/6 Important 1/6 Unforgettable 1/6	Difficult to explain 2/6 Good 3/6 When you have friends 1/6 Sharing 1/6 Wanting to play 1/6 Pleased 1/6
Transmission/sharing	With people they like 1/6 With the teacher 1/6 Friends 1/6 Secret 1/6 Family 1/6 Listening 1/6 Forget to talk about it 1/6	No Friends 4/6 Friends 2/6
Understanding the emotions felt by others	Laughing 2/6 Playing 3/6 Difficult to see 1/6 Blushing 1/6 Prior explanation 1/6 Smiling 2/6 Pleased 1/6	Prior explanation 1/6 Drawing 1/6 You can see it 2/6 Difficult to see 1/6 Smiling 1/6 Playing 1/6

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Anger	Girls		Boys	
	Key words/ideas	Frequency	Key words/ideas	Frequency
Situation	Telling off Crying Being annoyed/disturbed Getting angry Being hit Loneliness	1/6 1/6 2/6 1/6 3/6 1/6	Making mistakes Others disobeying/breaking rules + being silly Being insulted Being annoyed Being hit Never	1/6 1/6 1/6 1/6 1/6 1/6
Reasons	Compassion Isolation Being hit/insulted Being annoyed Suffering something No response	1/6 1/6 1/6 2/6 1/6 1/6	Being annoyed Harassment Being insulted/hit Never	2/6 1/6 2/6 1/6
Definition and feeling towards it	Hurts your feelings Being angry/annoyed Sad/crying No heart Heart pounding Hating Wanting to shout Not liking Quickly reversible emotion	1/6 4/6 3/6 1/6 1/6 1/6 1/6 1/6 1/6	Not good/feeling bad Sad Being annoyed/angry Hurting somewhere Wanting to hit someone Wanting to be alone Nothing special	3/6 1/6 3/6 2/6 1/6 1/6 1/6
Transmission/sharing	To classmates Not wanting to worry Family listening People there to help No answer	1/6 1/6 1/6 2/6	No Fear of consequences Families Possibility to act Friends No answer	2/6 1/6 2/6 1/6 1/6 1/6
Understanding the emotions felt by others	Being angry Saying nasty things to each other Hitting each other	1/6 1/6 1/6 2/6	You can see it Being angry Not lending things You can't see it	4/6 1/6 1/6 1/6

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	You can see it	1/6	Sad	1/6
	Crying	1/6	Difficult to know	2/6
	Needing comfort	1/6	Lots of agitation	1/6
	No smile	1/6		
	Solitude	1/6		
	Sulking	1/6		
	Being annoyed	1/6		
	Grimacing			

Overall, women are more open and free with their emotions, and also more stable than men. When their emotional capital is balanced, it is important to recognize that they are very often stronger emotionally than men.

Ways of expressing emotions

We laugh when we are happy, cry when we are sad, curse when we are angry and are perplexed when we are surprised. This is theory, what seems logical. We can still describe these reactions as primary. However, as previously mentioned, not all individuals have the same emotional attitude. This is due to the fact that we do not communicate in the same way.

Does communication = language = emotion? It might seem strange to try to draw parallels between these apparently different notions, but this would be incorrect. In reality, emotions are a form of non-verbal language. When two people who do not speak the same language try to communicate, one or both of them laughing will help to decrease the tension between them (if there were any) and put them at ease. As such, we can only analyze the ways of expressing emotions by focusing on language.

★ Emotions and non-verbal language

Emotions and non-verbal language: this is probably the first association that comes to mind when we talk about emotions. As reactions are primarily spontaneous, it is normal to expect that individuals will not be able to express them verbally. This is not entirely false.

In most cases, emotional reactions are physical reactions above all. We notice a change in the individual's gestures, facial expressions, bodily posture and sometimes even physical state.

Looking at the angry or sad face of the person to whom we are speaking, we do not need to ask them what they are feeling. If we have not done anything to put them in this state, we immediately focus on the origins of their emotions. As Kirouac stated, verbal language "cannot provide a full expression of the human experience as it is unable to make subtle distinctions between emotions". Body language sometimes says more about the emotions felt by individuals than words.

★ Emotions and verbal language

Although expression of emotions is mainly physical, we can also agree on the fact that they can be perceived in verbal language. The voice of someone who is furious, even if they manage to remain calm, reflects their emotions. Intonation, inflections, volume and the speed of speech are just as

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telling as any physical reaction. Indeed, it is surprising that many definitions omit this aspect. Speech plays a decisive role in communication in general and social interactions in particular.

This may be partly due to the fact that conventional psychology limits its area of study to the individual's general skills, without taking care to dwell on their individual performance or interactions. We tend to perceive non-verbal language as the only form that is able to convey emotional information. Verbal language is relegated to expressing cognitive information.

★ Emotions, written language and art

This aspect is even more overlooked than verbal language. However, any graphologist will confirm that an individual's writing very often says a great deal about their emotional state. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that this decoding is only possible for specialists. The average person is not able to identify nervousness in someone's writing. However, they will be able to do so in the content of the writing itself.

The final form of expression, and probably the most popular, is art. It is important to emphasize that art is not always synonymous with masterpieces or professional-quality artwork.

★ Example

Form a group of a dozen or around twenty people (adolescents, adults or a mix of both) and give each of them a sheet of paper. Next, ask them to draw themselves angry, then happy, then sad, and finally scared. The drawings can be just sketches. Next, mix up the sheets of paper and give one to each person and ask them to match the emotion to the drawing.

Even if these people come from different backgrounds and would be unable to communicate amongst themselves in the same language, it is extremely unlikely that they will struggle to interpret the different participants' drawings. They will be able to represent the four emotions without needing to be a fantastic artist.

This means of expression is even more effective if it is possible to introduce children to it from a very early age. Once they are able to hold a pencil and understand simple instructions, initiation to basic exercises can begin.

★ Example

Give the child a sheet of paper and three colored pencils. Tell them that they need to draw a line on the sheet of paper based on the emotions they detect. A different color needs to be attributed to each emotion so the child does not have to choose themselves. If they are older than 4-5 years, the approach can be freer. It is beneficial to give them freedom of action and choice. For younger children, three basic emotions are sufficient: joy, anger and sadness.

Once they have explained the principle, the instructor or adult starts to read a story or text in which it is easy to decode all these emotions. They may need to help the child to locate the passages in the story to which they need to pay attention. The key is that the child is able to select the right color. The level of complexity of the task will be increased gradually, moving from lines to circles, then to basic drawings, and so on.

It goes without saying that art is not the only means of emotional expression. All forms of art can be used. The educator or therapist will select the appropriate one based on the individual's age and preferences.

There is no reason to prioritize one form of expression over another. It is beneficial for parents, educators and specialists to introduce children to all forms of expression. They may not use them every day, but they offer them a broader scope of action.

Differentiating emotions: appraisal theories

Although real interest in emotions emerged in the early 20th century, it wasn't until the 1980s when there was an explosion in studies and research on the topic of emotions and their consequences on everyday life. This sudden attention was partly due to the development of IT, but it also enabled cognitive sciences to evolve.

Appraisal theories emerged when researchers started to analyze the position occupied by emotions within the cognitive system more closely. Shackman, Maxwell and Davidson consider that they occupy a privileged position in how the nervous system functions. Indeed, virtually all the nerve functions are subject to or connected with emotions in some way.

What is appraisal theory? In psychology, it is a theory that states that "emotions are extracted from our evaluations (appraisals or estimates) of events that cause specific reactions in different people".

Indeed, the evaluation of any situation in which an individual finds themselves triggers an affective or emotional response. When a child at school or an adult at work is bullied, they will feel a permanent sense of unease and discomfort when going there. In children, this discomfort translates as a profound hatred of not only the classmates or teachers who are bullying them, but of school in general. In adults, it can lead to a drop in productivity.

On the other hand, if the ambience is positive, the reaction will be the opposite: the child will like their school and participate actively in the community there, and adults will engage in their work in order to enjoy greater support. As such, it is possible to guess or predict individuals' reactions by being guided by their emotional state. The important aspect of appraisal theory is that it reveals the individual variation in emotional reactions to the same event.

The advantage of appraisal theories is that they encompass all the aspects of this topic. The psychology of personality focuses on emotions. It analyses the processes of appearance and the consequences on personality. However, it never engages in a profound evaluation of the emotional impact. In the same vein, it does not attach any importance to the individual's cognitive responses in a specific situation.

The theories for evaluating emotion propose two approaches: the structural approach and the process model.

✦ The structural approach

The theories that are based on a structural approach "postulates that the way an organism evaluates a stimulus, event or situation determines how an emotion is triggered". Their authors believe that "organisms are constantly exploring their environment, reacting to the relevant stimuli". This is why

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they create a specific set of criteria that are required to underpin the process for cognitive evaluation of emotions.

The structural approach analyzes the relationships between the evaluations and the emotions they cause. It rests on three pillars: relational, cognitive and motivational. Thus:

- ◆ The relational dimension addresses the interactions between the individual and their environment.
- ◆ The motivational dimension deals with the evaluation of the status of objectives. It addresses the aspect that involves evaluating a situation: a person determines how the situation is relevant in relation to their objectives.
- ◆ The cognitive dimension analyzes the evolution of the situation or an individual's relevance for their existence.

This approach ensures that all the individual components involved in the process of evaluating all emotions are analyzed. It studies how and where the evaluation processes differ based on emotions.

Overall, there are two main phases of evaluation:

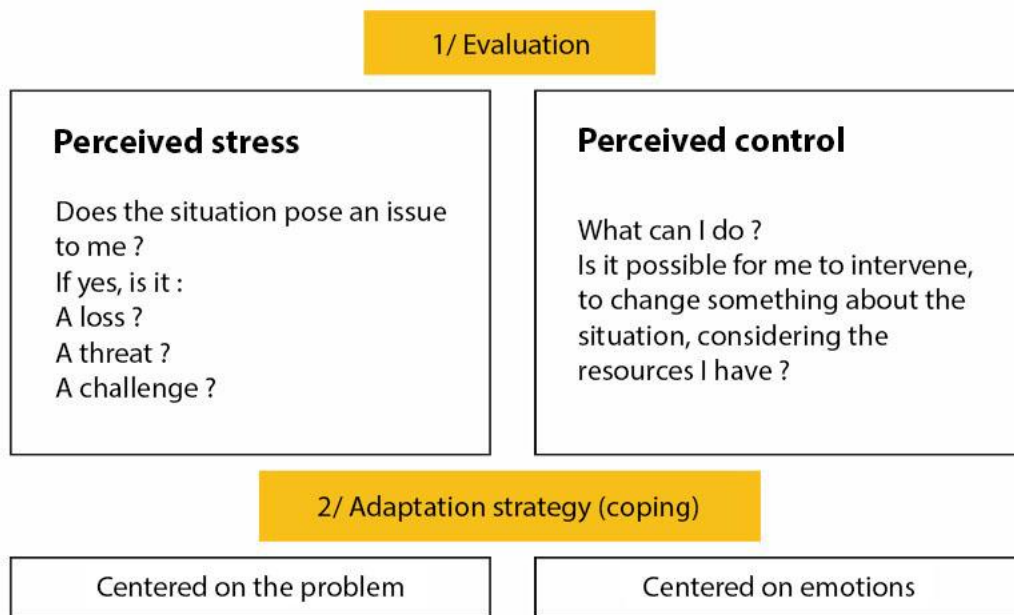
- ◆ **Primary evaluation:** the individual analyzes the two dimensions of a situation. These are motivational congruence and motivational relevance. When the individual is faced with a situation, they ask themselves a question: how does this situation serve my needs? Motivational relevance increases in conjunction with the emotions felt by the subject. If motivational relevance is slow or the individual deems the situation to be incoherent overall, they will be less likely to commit to resolving the problem.
- ◆ **Secondary evaluation:** this focuses on the secondary benefits of the problem. This means that individuals no longer analyze the situation from the perspective of obtaining an immediate and direct advantage. Rather, they try to understand whether they possess enough resources to tackle the situation. In this case, even though the individual will not be able to identify a direct advantage, they will still try to adjust the situation in order to find some benefit in it.

In short, researchers learn to predict the individual's reactions based on their emotional perception of those around them and the situations they might face.

The proponents of this theory include several renowned researchers such as Richard Lazarus, Folkman, Smith, Kirby, Haynes, Sander, Grandjean, Scherer, Siemer, Mauss and Gross.

The schema below is an example of the structural approach. Lazarus is primarily interested in stress and its origins.

LAZARUS AND FOLKMAN'S TRANSACTIONAL MODEL (1980)



★ Process model

Some of the criticisms regularly expressed regarding appraisal theories include its complete inability to perceive the dynamic nature of emotions, and excessive focus on the cognitive aspect while neglecting the truly affective and therefore unpredictable side of emotions. The least we can say is that they are fully justified.

Indeed, the majority of appraisal theories sought to rationalize processes that the individual is not always able to control. Some researchers decided to address the issue from a different angle, but without moving away from the basic principles. Two main theories stood out from the rest: the two-process evaluation model and the multilevel sequential control model.

The first theory was developed by Kirby and Smith. It deepens structural perception by focusing on the individual analysis process for the different emotional stimuli. This theory rests on three pillars:

- ◆ perceptive stimuli;
- ◆ associative processing;
- ◆ reasoning.

Perceptive stimuli are those that every individual identifies in their environment. They may be the emotive facial expressions of another person, sensations of pleasure or even pain. Associative processing, meanwhile, relies on memory, which forms rapid connections and provides evaluation information based on rapidly activated memories associated with the given stimulus. Reasoning is a long, slow but also matured process. It rests on a logical, critical reflection on the stimulus and/or situation. All these components lead to a more profound analysis of emotional phenomena in general.

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The second theory, that of sequential control, also rests on three main pillars. It would be appropriate to refer to them as processing levels. They are:

- the innate or sensorimotor level;
- the learned or schematic level;
- the conscious or conceptual level.

Each of these processing levels has a check system composed of several phases:

- checks of relevance, which analyze all the new elements and their impact on the objectives;
- checks of implication, which focus on the favorable aspects of the objective as well as the speed at which this must be achieved;
- checks of coping potential, which manage the objective but also the power with which this management is ensured;
- checks of normative significance, which analyze the compatibility of the objectives with the established standards.

Unlike the previous theory, this one is extremely specific and limits its area of study to the processes that unfold in a restricted environment.

Link between culture and the perception of others' emotions

The following is a situation that everyone has experienced before at least once. You enter a room without saying a word. Suddenly, someone (an acquaintance, family member or simply a stranger) comes over and asks you a banal question: "Are you OK?" You haven't said a word or even complained. How has this person detected this feeling of worry in you?

Not everyone possesses this ability. As mentioned a little earlier, it is closely linked to the individual's education and the sociocultural environment in which they grew up. It will also depend on their sex, because this has a significant impact on individuals' faculties. We will focus on the sociocultural aspect.

In general, when we consider the sociocultural environment, we limit ourselves to studying the individual's immediate environment, from birth to adulthood. This is a logical but somewhat flawed approach. It does not take into consideration the different evolutionary factors to which the subject might be exposed. The following example illustrates this well.

Several people are talking in an online chat. Let's limit the group of participants to five people. Three of these people have never been outside of their home country. Of these, one received a relatively liberal, open education and the other two received a classical education. Of these two individuals, one lives with a partner who comes from abroad.

The remaining two individuals have travelled: one emigrated and has been living in the country for several years, and the other is a globetrotter who has faced diverse and varied situations. Let us suppose that all these people have relatively similar personalities: will they have the same emotional

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reaction to a situation, especially if this event concerns an act that takes place abroad or with a foreigner?

The answer is no. The emotional faculties develop based on the situations to which the individual has been exposed. As a result, someone who has travelled throughout their life or for a good part of their life will have a completely different perception from someone who has never left their home country. In the same vein, someone who lives with a foreigner will have a different perception from someone who has only lived with individuals who are part of their own culture.

Despite never having travelled, the person with a foreign partner will have been exposed not only to their traditional culture, but also to a foreign culture. As such, they will be more able to interpret the emotional reactions of their partner's compatriots.

The individual who received a liberal education will be inclined to understand others, but it is questionable whether they will always succeed. The expat who lives in another country will find themselves in roughly the same situation as the person who lives with a foreign partner. However, their reactions will be similar to those of the globetrotter because, like the latter, they will be directly influenced by a foreign culture.

Exercises to improve one's image

The foundations for perception and expression of emotions are laid in early childhood. However, it is possible to make adjustments to or improve one's emotional state through certain exercises.

✦ Exercise 1: To manage one's emotions

Imagine a situation that makes you feel furious and fill in the following table:

EMOTIONS: Describe the range of emotions you felt.	THOUGHTS: What kinds of thoughts did you have?	PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS: How did your body react?	BEHAVIORS: What did you do?
Frustration at Fred's refusal to agree on a compromise, and anger about the decision made by the regional manager to fire him.	Fred and the regional manager should have taken a few minutes to calm down before talking about the situation in more detail.	My stomach was in knots and I was sweating.	I left the room after telling them that I didn't want to stay and watch them make catastrophic decisions.

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Imagine a situation that makes you sad or feel a sense of despair and fill in the following table:

EMOTIONS: Describe the range of emotions you felt.	THOUGHTS: What kinds of thoughts did you have?	PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS: How did your body react?	BEHAVIORS: What did you do?

Imagine a frightening situation, then fill in the following table:

EMOTIONS: Describe the range of emotions you felt.	THOUGHTS: What kinds of thoughts did you have?	PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS: How did your body react?	BEHAVIORS: What did you do?

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★ Exercise 2 – The art of controlling oneself and learning to listen to others

Impatience is not a basic emotion. However, people who are unable to focus their attention on others will also be unable to decipher the emotions of those around them. Thus, the aim of this exercise is to teach individuals to direct their attention towards others. It is relatively simple.

Every now and then, when you are with acquaintances or friends, try to be quiet and listen to them talk. The topic of their discussion doesn't matter. The exercise involves listening to them attentively, retaining as many details as possible, without being tempted to interrupt them by asking questions.

★ Exercise 3 – Learning to understand and manage your emotions

Very often, we come under pressure from the negative emotions of those around us because we are unable to assess and understand our own affective sensations. This exercise is particularly beneficial for controlling your level of stress at work.

Think of a complex situation, whether at home or at work, then visualize two scenarios: one in which you receive total, unconditional support from everyone around you and another in which nobody pays attention. Then, answer the following questions.

➤ Scenario 1 – with unconditional support from everyone

What did the other people say to you? (Specify): _____

What were your impressions?

(List as many emotional and physical reactions as you can):

How did this reaction help you to manage the stressors you felt?

When might having the same reaction be less helpful to you?

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★ Scenario 2 – without any support from those around you

What did the other people say to you? (Specify): _____

What were your impressions? (List as many emotional and physical reactions as you can):

How did this reaction add to the stressors you felt?

When might having the same reaction be more helpful to you?

Once you have completed the questionnaire, analyze your reactions in both cases attentively and determine which situation will allow you to assert yourself better.

★ Exercise 4 – Learning to perceive differences

The aim of this exercise is to learn to manage your negative emotions and control your stress. To succeed, the individual must be able to understand the emotional perception of the people around them. This exercise draws somewhat on the principles of appraisal theories.

By understanding the environment we are in and mastering our own emotions, we can anticipate and avoid all situations that might have unpleasant emotional consequences.

Answer the following questions.

Think of a situation where you had to support someone close to you (friend, colleague or family member) who was going through a period of emotional distress. Can you remember if there was anything specific about this distress? If yes, describe it.

What specific techniques did you use to help them get back on their feet? Would you have used this same technique to support other friends and acquaintances? If no, explain why you decided to take this particular, individualized approach.

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What signals given out by this friend, colleague or family member encouraged you to use this specific approach rather than any other?

Did you achieve all the objectives you set yourself? Do you think you could have adopted a different approach to the one you used? If yes, which?

★ Exercise 5 – Opening up to others by asking precise, clear questions

There are two broad types of questions: open and closed questions. Closed questions are those to which the answer can only be yes or no. These are to be avoided. Understanding those around us involves paying attention to all the details that make up their emotional personality. To do this, you need to ask open questions, i.e., questions that encourage the individual to say more about their motivations and expectations.

Train yourself to only ask open questions for a day (or longer if necessary). Pay close attention to the answers and then take care to analyze them and draw the appropriate conclusions.

★ Exercise 6 – Developing empathy

This exercise will be extremely helpful for people who struggle to decipher the emotions of those around them.

The participant needs to pay attention to the state the people around them are in. Whenever someone they are close to finds themselves in a state of distress, the participant should take care to observe and listen to them. Then, they should isolate themselves to try to relive all the difficult moments experienced by this person in detail. The aim is to learn to understand others' feelings and emotions.

★ Exercise 7 (for children) – Learning to grade emotions

The aim of this exercise is to teach children to pay attention to what really matters. It involves classifying adjectives based on their emotional impact.

◆ Emotion - joy

Order these adjectives from weakest to strongest.

Happy	Peaceful	Pleased	Joyous	Satisfied	Fulfilled	Overexcited
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Emotion - anger

Order these adjectives from weakest to strongest.

Furious	Irritated	Exasperated	Hateful	Tense	Annoyed	Unhappy	Beside oneself
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Exercise 8

This exercise teaches children to give their own definition of emotions. It is to be done with a friend or acquaintance.

For me, if...	... was a COLOR, it would be...	... was an ANIMAL, it would be...	... was an ACTION, it would be...	... was a SONG, it would be...	... was an EXPRESSION, it would be...
anger...					
joy...					
fear...					
sadness...					
shame...					
surprise...					

Exercise 9 – Learning to understand emotions

Like the previous exercise, this is to be done with a friend.

Analyze the following emotions and feelings and sort them in the table below.

Jealousy - Mistrust - Joy - Hatred - Fear - Satisfaction – Love - Admiration - Anger – Cheerfulness - Anxiety - Affection - Suffering - Calmness - Confidence - Fragility

Positive emotions that make you happy	Negative emotions that make you unhappy	Emotions that can make you happy or unhappy

The exercises you choose will depend on your objective and the participant's state.

Conclusion

At the end of the 19th century, Lange, when discussing emotions, declared: “It can be said without exaggeration that, scientifically, we understand absolutely nothing about emotions, and that we do not have a shadow of a theory regarding the nature of emotions in general or any emotion in particular.”

Several decades later, another researcher, Frijda, stated: “Thus, there is no real theory of emotions. By ‘real theory of emotions’, I mean a theory of the human organism, or the biological systems in general, within which emotion has a place of its own among other components like information processing and adaptation.”

The least we can say, even at the sight of all the studies carried out in these areas to this day, is that both researchers were completely correct. There is arguably no other domain in cognitive science that is more complex to deal with than emotions. This complexity is not only apparent when studying cognitive sciences, but also in everyday life.

It is not always easy to understand the emotional state of those close to us, or even our own emotional state. This is no doubt why many researchers have tried to understand and analyze these phenomena for four decades already.

Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that a large proportion of the acts we perform are carried out under the influence of emotions. Among these acts, we can include our choice of partner, housing, career, place of residence, clothing style, diet, and the number of children we have, if any.

Understanding and mastering our emotions facilitates understanding of the emotions and feelings of others, with the direct consequence being a better perception of our own life and that of those around us. Children are initiated into this idea from birth in order to improve their social skills. These traits are improved in adults to help them to hone their adaptability.

Researchers have now managed to grasp the immensity of this topic and the studies conducted are becoming gradually more in-depth. Nevertheless, much remains to be done. This topic is particularly interesting when connected with developments in information technology.