

# Understanding Affective States

Lecture 2  
Rev. Dr Sahaya G. Selvam  
[selvam@donbosco.or.tz](mailto:selvam@donbosco.or.tz)



Institute of Youth Studies  
Tangaza University College, Nairobi



## Individual & Group Work

### Individual task:

List some of the emotions that you have experienced in the past 48 hours. Just name them!

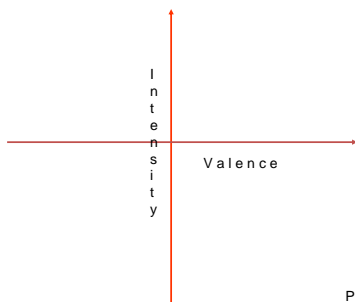
### Group Work:

Sharing the individual lists, identify which of them could be emotions, or feelings, or mood.

Selvam, Positive Psychology, 2014

2

## Dynamics of Affective State Two Dimensions



Selvam, Positive Psychology, 2014

Plutchik, 1980

3

## What are affective states?

- 'Affect' refers to a general class of responses that involve
  - Feeling
  - A significant peripheral physiological component (often involving arousal)
  - Valence (pleasant or unpleasant)
- Affective states can be further divided into more specific
  - Mood(s)
  - Emotions
  - Appetitive states

Selvam, Positive Psychology, 2014

4

## What is an emotion?

'...a kind of shorthand, an abbreviated way to refer to a package of events and processes...**antecedent events**, the **physiological and motor responses**, the **memories, thoughts, images, and information processing**, and the **mobilisation of efforts to cope with the source of emotions**. All of these may be implied when someone says, "He looks angry."

(Ekman, 1989)

Selvam, Positive Psychology, 2014

5

## How many basic emotions?

- [Ekman \(1999\)](#) - six basic emotions: happiness, surprise, fear, anger, disgust, and sadness.
- [Panksepp](#) - four basic emotional systems: fear, seeking, panic, and rage
- Emotions have been a poorly studied subject until recently. Now studied by psychology. Classical Philosophers have looked down upon emotions as weakness – imperfection (Male domination)! No philosophy of emotions! Emotions were studied under aesthetics – not in relation to human nature. Only since 1900 – more interest.

Selvam, Positive Psychology, 2014

6

## Emotion, Feeling, Mood

Examples to make the distinction:

**Mood:** I wake up well enough, I come to the dining, I hear two of my community/family members talk smthg negative about me among themselves; I 'feel' low. I am not even aware what has happened.

**Feeling:** I am in good company during a meal, I feel accepted. We laugh and joke. I 'feel' exuberant.

**Emotion:** I am to give a public lecture. Just before the lecture, I receive the news that my brother has died. I cannot cancel the lecture. I continue with the lecture, I can even afford a smile. But within me, I 'feel' this strong heaviness of heart.

## Emotions & Mood

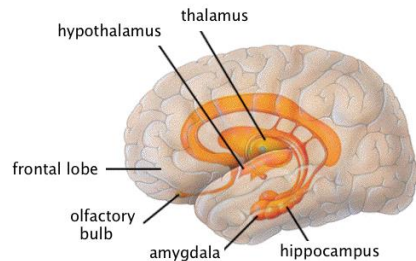
Emotions	Moods
Emotions modulate (bias) action.	Moods modulate cognition.
Emotions are easy to detect, and may be accompanied by visible physical reactions.	Moods are very subjective experiences, accompanied by autonomous bodily functions.
The antecedents that trigger emotional reactions are more perceptible and sudden.	The triggers may be gradual and subtle (weather!)
Emotions & moods often interact.	

Davidson, R.J. (1994). "On emotion, mood, and related affective constructs". In Ekman, P. & Davidson, R.J., *The nature of emotion* (pp.51-55). Oxford: OUP.

## Emotions & Individual Differences (Affective Style)

- The way we process emotion is influenced by gender, genetic makeup and some personality traits.
- The environmental influence on emotional processing is also strong. That is, we learn to process. That is why, the way children deal with emotions is different from that of adults.
- This learning process could be largely determined by early exposure to strong emotional stimuli without accompanying support. Certain way of expressing emotions in a particular context (family) learnt as a child may be difficult in dealing with in another context (school/community) as an adult.

## What is the centre of emotion in the body?



## What is the centre of emotion in the body?

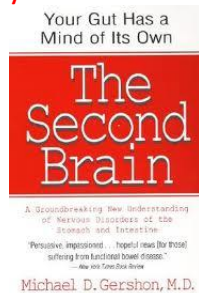
The gut is considered the second brain... and as the centre of emotions.

"What is your gut-level feeling?"

Strong emotions upsetting the digestive system.

Presence of a nexus of neurons around the gut...

This needs more scientific exploration.



## Positive Psychology and Affective States

- Positive Psychology (PP) focusses on positive affect, without neglecting the negative affective experience. (Lectures 11 & 12 will offer samples of this).
- PP examines the correlates of wellbeing and happiness; it explores the substrates of positive affective states (like pleasure, flow, enjoyment, gratification, happiness).
- Next lectures highlight these...