

Emotion Regulation

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Definition of Emotion

- emotion is *a response of a complex system that is designed to prepare an organism to respond to environmental stimuli that have evolutionary significance*

Features of Emotion

- Emotions are *brief, lasting seconds to minutes* (Ekman, 1992)
- Other terms, including *mood, affect, or even personality* (Barlow, 2002) are used to refer to longer-lasting states
- The fact that emotion is brief suggests that one way to cope with painful emotions is simply to wait for the natural decay process to take place

components of emotion

- subjective experience is simply one of several components of emotion
- The others are behavioral (purposeful behavior, facial expression, nonverbal postures), physiological, and cognitive components
- The fact that emotion is a multiple-component phenomenon has several clinical implications
 - because the components are linked, changes in one component have the potential to produce changes in another
 - Second, the degree of synchrony of the emotion's components is often clinically important
 - Desynchrony is often adaptive and often the clinician strives to help the patient achieve it. One example is to experience despair without acting on it
 - An example is purposely having the thought "I can't get out of bed" while simultaneously moving the needed muscles to get out of bed

What Is Emotion Regulation?

- We define emotion regulation as ability in coping with experience or processing emotions
- Emotion regulation may include any coping strategy (problematic or adaptive) that the individual uses when confronted with an unwanted intensity of emotion.
- effective emotion regulation clearly plays an important role both in clinical problem areas and in daily life

Unuseful Emotion Regulation skills

- Experiential or Emotional Avoidance
 - The term “experiential avoidance” represents efforts to control or alter the form, frequency, or situational sensitivity of thoughts, feelings, and sensations, even when doing so causes behavioral harm (Hayes et al., 1996).
 - rumination
 - Suppression
 - Psychological inflexibility

common emotional myths

- “Some emotions are really stupid,”
- “Painful emotions are the result of a bad attitude,”
- “If others don’t approve of my feelings, I shouldn’t feel the way I do” (Linehan, 1993a).

Understand your Own Patterns of Emotional Reactions

- There are several ways to assist yourself understanding **your** patterns of emotional reactions
 - conduct regular functional analyses of emotionally evocative situations
 - Such an analysis would also emphasize the consequences associated with the experience of the emotion or its expression
 - **you** might also self-monitor emotional reactions by
 - recording the contextual features associated with such instances as a means for understanding how the emotion came about (i.e., the antecedents),
 - how it was expressed (e.g., verbally, overt motor behaviors),
 - what other behaviors accompanied the emotions (e.g., thoughts, physiological sensations, other overt actions),
 - and the consequences of the emotional reaction and its expression

Learn to Label your Emotions

- The accurate labeling of emotions can facilitate effective emotion regulation
 - Some studies have found that the act of labeling emotions itself (without any other instructed emotion regulation strategies) can attenuate activity in areas of the limbic system involved in emotional responding
- *Self-labeling training:*
 - (a) an identification of the events that occasioned the emotional experience;
 - (b) a description of the nature of the emotion, such as quality, intensity, and the physical sensations or thoughts that accompany it;
 - (c) a delineation of types of behaviors that might be used to express the emotion;
 - (d) the types of other behaviors that the emotion might occasion (Linehan, 1993a).

Modifying and Selecting Alternative Situations

- One way to assist clients with emotion regulation is to help them develop strategies either to avoid or to change situations that occasion particular emotional states.

Modifying Cognitive Appraisals

- *cognitive reappraisal largely involves*
- (a) *modifying appraisals of the magnitude or possible outcomes of the stressor or emotionally evocative situation (i.e., appraising the situation as being less catastrophic or threatening and as more manageable),*
- (b) *modifying appraisals of one's ability to cope with or manage the situation (i.e., self-efficacy beliefs), or combining these two approaches*

checking the facts(DBT)

- This skill involves a few key steps:
- (a) identifying and describing the situation eliciting the emotional state,
- (b) describing interpretations and appraisals of the situation,
- (c) considering alternative interpretations and appraisals,
- (d) thinking about what type of threat is associated with the situation and evaluating the probability that the threat will occur, and
- (e) thinking through the worst case scenario (i.e., the catastrophe) and the probability that this will occur.