

Transcription of Vol.1.2: Physiological Dimensions of Emotion

[Slide: 1] "Holistic Emotive Practices Vol.1 Part 2: Physiological Dimensions of Emotions"

Hello and welcome to Part 2 of the first series on Holistic Emotive Practices.

This is Brian McPherson. In this presentation I will discuss the physiological dimensions of emotions as defined and used in Holistic Emotive Practices, or HEP, for short.

[Slide: 2] "HEP Requires Clear and Concise Identification of Emotional States"

In order to use HEP you must be able to identify your mood or emotional state in an unambiguous way. How you use HEP, that is the words you choose to emote, depends on how you feel. If you cannot recognize and classify your emotions or mood, you cannot take advantage of the power of HEP. Fortunately, that task is not as hard as it may sound.

[Slide: 3] "HEP does not Require the Identification of Specific Emotions, such as Happiness, Sadness, Anger, etc"

HEP does not employ any of the dozens of words used to signify a specific emotion such as joy, fear, disgust, or anger, or any of the other numerous terms associated with a particular emotion.

[Slide: 4] "Rather HEP Requires the Identification of Physiological Markers of Emotions"

Instead HEP works with terms that describe the physiology of emotions. It is necessary to use emotion physiology in HEP because the connections between speech and emotions is physiologically based. Physiology may sound like a difficult topic to grasp, but instead of complicating the classification of emotions, the use of emotion physiology actually simplifies our task, by breaking down our emotional experience into a small number of easily understand concepts.

[Slide: 5] "Physiology of Emotions: Three Dimensions –Arousal, Pleasure, Control"

Science has identified three physiological dimensions of emotions. We have an emotional arousal system based mainly in the brainstem and consisting chiefly of autonomic functions. Emotions also connect to our pleasure regulation system, based primarily in the limbic system located in the mid-brain. The control system of emotions resides, for the most part, in the cortex.

[Slide: 6] "Emotional Arousal/Excitement Ranges from Low to High Measured by Heart Rate, Blood Pressure"

We can measure emotional arousal with various physiological measures, the most common being heart rate and blood pressure. HEP does not require you to make such measurements, but only that you recognize your arousal level. In other words, you must know whether you are very excited or very relaxed or somewhere in between.

[Slide: 7] “Emotional Pleasure Ranges from Unpleasant to Enjoyable Most Salient Dimension”

The pleasure dimension of emotion is the most identifiable aspect of emotions. We can differentiate between our pleasant experiences and unpleasant ones most readily, and for the purposes of HEP and the physiological dimension of emotional pleasure, that is all that is necessary.

[Slide: 8] “Emotional Control Ranges from External to Internal Occurs on a Cognitive Level”

The control dimension of emotion is sometimes referred to by the term “locus of control.” This view employs a broad look at emotional control that distinguishes internal, or personal control of a situation from external control, or the feeling that you are not calling the shots, but under the influence or control of an outside force.

We can break down internal, personal control of emotions into different levels. Sometimes we feel in control in a focused way, other times our control is more diffuse. Control can also be confident or laid back. I get into a more detailed analysis of control in a subsequent presentation, but for now it suffices to look at the issue of control from the perspective of whether we feel in control or we feel that someone or something else, such as a fixed schedule, controls us.

[Slide: 9] “Evolution of the Triune Brain Reptilian Brain, Mammalian Brain, Primate Brain”

I want to take some time to discuss some of the corroborating evidence concerning the three physiological dimensions of emotions. It doesn't deal directly with HEP, but it does give support to the scientific basis underlying HEP.

If you look at the brain in evolutionary terms, broadly speaking you see three distinct stages. The oldest stage harkens back to the evolution of reptiles. This part of the brain roughly corresponds to the brain stem, which controls emotion arousal.

The next stage of brain development, the mammalian brain, saw the development of the limbic system and oldest parts of the cortex. These structures control the emotional reward system that modulates the pleasure dimension of emotion.

The most recent brain evolution is the part of the cortex I've identified as the primate brain, also called the neo-mammalian brain. The feelings of emotional control reside in this part of the brain.

[Slide: 10] “Three Types of Behavior Instinctual, Learned through reinforcement, Self-learned through fresh thinking”

Along with the division of the brain into three evolutionary portions you can look at the three types of recognized human behavior. We act through one of these three ways. We can do things in an instinctual way that is hard-wired through our genetic code. We can also learn to act through reinforcement; that

is we will repeat a behavior that results in a positive outcome. Finally, we can act in a self-learned way by thinking through a problem and coming up with a novel approach.

Although the neural circuitry underlying all types of behavior is widely distributed across the brain, each of these three types of behaviors corresponds most strongly to one emotional dimension. Instincts have the greatest influence on the arousal dimension. Instincts swing us into action for shelter, food, and reproducing. Pleasure plays a greater role in learned behavior than either arousal or control. We learn to do things that bring us gratification. Finally, self-learned behavior connects to the control dimension more than the other two dimensions. If we can teach ourselves something we control our environment.

[Slide: 11] “Emotions versus Moods Emotions – intense, infrequent Moods – in background, ubiquitous

So far I have only talked about emotions, but I need to expand the view to include moods. HEP can work with emotions, but it also plays well with moods. Both emotions and moods can be described using the three dimensions of emotions that I have outlined in this talk. It is true that emotions differ from moods. Emotions tend to be more intense than moods, but less frequent. That is, moods are with us pretty much all the time, but usually in the background, whereas we experience emotions on an infrequent intermittent basis but in a more noticeable manner. In HEP we do not have to distinguish between the moods and emotions.

[Slide: 12] “Primary Goal in HEP: Identify Your Current Emotion/Mood vis-a-vis the Three Dimension of Emotions”

What we do have to do to use HEP is identify our current emotion or mood in terms of the three dimensions of emotion.

[Slide: 13] “Answer three questions: How relaxed/aroused do I feel? How unpleasant/pleasant do I feel? Do I feel in control of my physical, emotional, and/or mental environment?”

To put it another way you have to ask yourself these three questions. How relaxed or aroused do I feel? How unpleasant or pleasant do I feel? And do I feel in control of my physical, emotional, and/or mental environment? If you can answer these, then you are ready to use HEP.

[Slide: 14]

This concludes the discussion of emotions and HEP. Part 3 of this series continues with a talk about the physiology of speech.

Thanks for listening.

