

The Value of Negative Emotions and How to Address Them

Techniques for Getting to the
Heart of Change

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A Christian Rationale for Valuing Emotion

- God reveals himself as having emotions
- God created human emotions,
so they belong to him
- Emotions communicate significance;
they are important to proper human functioning
- Christianity is a religion of the heart,
so emotions are central to the salvation
(or soul-healing) process

What is the heart?

According to the Bible and
lay psychology: the heart is
deepest part of a person

It is the focus of Christian
salvation

It includes our emotions and
motivations



What are emotions?

An emotion is a sign

But what is a sign?

A sign is anything
that points to
something else.



Emotions convey information

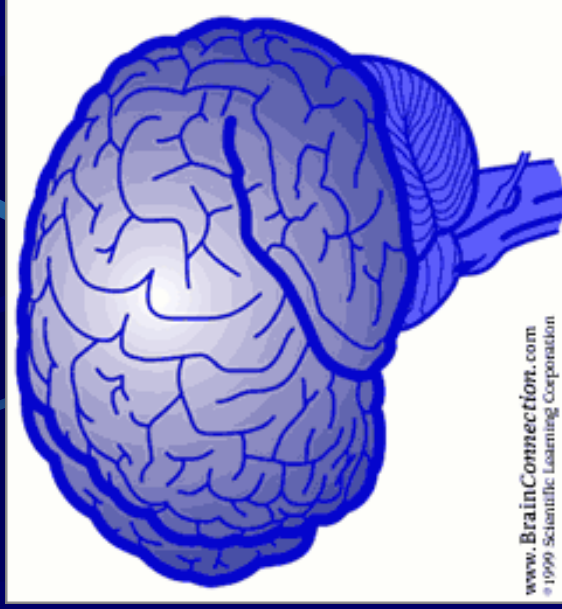
About...

- Good and bad (they are *bivalent*)
- One's *perceptions* about good and bad
- Well-being and ill-being

Emotions are motivational

- Emotions can direct or hinder action
- Emotions are usually related to goals, perceived needs, and concerns in life

Emotions can be stored
in memory...
in the brain.



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Conclusion:
Emotions are always
meaningful

A Redemptive-Historical Model of the Emotions

Creation

- Emotions are good
- The emotion-system develops

Fall

- Emotions are autocentric
- The emotion-system can be damaged

Redemption

- Emotions can be theocentric
- The emotion-system can be healed by Christ

The Redemption of Emotions

Christ's life, death, and resurrection is the basis of human redemption.

On the cross, Christ absorbed and annulled our objective shame and guilt

Through Christ, God's emotions towards humanity changed. On the cross, divine rejection, alienation, uncleanness, anxiety, and despair are mysteriously mixed together with divine love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness.

A primary goal of Christian salvation is having properly functioning emotions.

Strategic Principles in Christian Caringive Therapy



How to Address Negative Emotions

We may need to teach that emotions are created good and meaningful.

1. Consider the book of Job
2. Consider the book of Psalms
3. Consider God's emotions in the Bible
4. Consider Christ (before Lazarus was raised, at Gethsemane, on the cross)
5. God prizes honesty and transparency ("Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," Mt 16:6)

How to Address Negative Emotions

The goal is to reorganize one's emotions in redemptive ways. This involves...

1. Re-experiencing/engaging an emotion now
2. Objectifying the emotion, while feeling it
3. Bringing in other healing considerations to the emotion

How to Address Negative Emotions

Promote authentic emotional expression

1. Everything can/should be expressed to God.
2. Some emotions need to be shared with other humans. This must be weighed carefully.
 - a. Close trusted friends
 - b. Regarding those who have wronged the counselee:
 - * If it is best for the other, and they can benefit from it.

We have no license to share our emotions with people who cannot handle it. It ought not be motivated by revenge.
 - * Some things ought to be shared with perpetrators, whether or not they can benefit from it at the time. But the counselee needs to be ready for this.

How to Address Negative Emotions

Promote emotion regulation

1. By doing emotion work with the person, you are training how to keep emotions engaged, without becoming overwhelmed (seek to promote a “safe emergency”)
2. Emotion regulation allows the person to process the emotion in a healthy, mature way that makes it productive: leading to self-awareness, action, God, psychospiritual growth, repentance, and so on.

How to Address Negative Emotions

Emotion Differentiation

Help counselee distinguish between the good of emotions
and the sinful or damaged side of emotions.

For example...

How to Address Negative Emotions

Emotion Integration

Combine healing emotions with toxic emotions

1. Tie it into the glory of God: “My life is contributing to the glory of God.”
2. Tie it into God’s story: “My story is becoming part of God’s story of healing and glory.”
3. Take it to the cross: “My anxiety was nailed to the cross by God. Now I nail it there by faith and let it go.”
4. Discuss how Christ was affected emotionally by the sufferings of others. Encourage the recognition that Christ was affected “in your case.”

Summary of Christian Emotion-Focused Therapy

LOVERS

1. Lift up your heart
2. Open up your heart to the Lord
3. Verbalize the negative emotion
4. Empty Out the negative emotion
5. Replace the negative emotion with a modified emotion or a new emotion
6. Serve others from a new creation emotion

Christian Therapy Resources



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