



## Leading Emotions

An emotion can be viewed as energy in motion; a neutral energy that adds power to our thoughts. For example, add emotional energy to a frustrating thought and we can quickly feel anger. On the other hand, add emotional energy to a kind thought of someone and we can experience a feeling of compassion.

It's often difficult to get a grip on our emotions because they happen so fast. Scientists have repeatedly confirmed that our emotional reactions show up in brain activity before we even have time to think. We evaluate everything emotionally *as* we perceive it. We think about it *afterward*.

Scientists used to believe that emotions are produced only in the brain. However, sophisticated instruments now show that emotions are the product of an ongoing dialogue between the body and the brain; a combination of feeling sensations, associated mental thoughts and biochemical reactions that shape our emotional experience, in gradations from very pleasant to very painful.

Lastly, emotions trigger many changes in our bodies. For instance every time we feel a stressful emotion approximately 1400 biochemical changes take place.

Psychologists categorize some emotions like love, compassion, appreciation, care and joy as "positive" and others like anger, anxiety, hate, jealousy and sadness as "negative". We can easily tell the difference between positive and negative emotions in our body. Worry may cause muscle tension; anxiety may agitate the stomach. By contrast, love, appreciation, compassion and kindness may calm us, allowing the body's communication systems to flow with greater harmony and efficiency.

We can effectively utilize the amazing power of emotion when we become more aware of which emotions add quality to our lives and which ones don't.

This is not to say that some emotions are bad. And we are not suggesting we should repress our emotions and not ever feel sad or frustrated. *All* of our emotions play an important part in how we experience life. They are like the colors on an artist's palette that we use to paint our picture of life. And, while emotions are often reactions to life's events, it is important to understand that they are choices as well.

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