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Motivation and Emotion

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Motivation and emotion are usually viewed as two psychological features that seemingly share cause-and-effect relationship.

We often see motivation as something that stimulates a person to act and behave to achieve a desired goal, while emotion is the feelings that emerge from the motive or drive itself, from the actions caused by the motive and from the achievement or failure of the desired goal. However, there is more to motivation and emotion than this kind of relationship.

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What is Motivation?

Motivation has been defined in various ways over the years, but a common component of the different definitions is that motivation is a force that energizes, activates and directs behaviour. In 2006, Franken defined motivation as the “arousal, direction and persistence of a person’s behaviour”.

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Most theorists who proposed their own explanation of motivation believe that any learned behaviour cannot be executed unless it is energized. Thus, motivation is important in performing all kinds of behaviour. Also, this means that any changes in motivation reflect on an individual's behaviour.

What is Emotion?

In psychology, emotion refers to the conscious and subjective experience that is characterized by mental states, biological reactions and psychological or physiologic expressions (e.g. facial expressions). The word "emotion" was a 1579 adaptation of the French word "emouvoir" (to stir up).

Emotion is different from "feelings" because feelings subjectively represent emotions, which means that feelings are only private to the person. Also, emotion is distinguished from "mood" based on the period of time that they are present; a mood lasts longer than an emotion. Interchangeably used with emotion, "affect" is the experience of emotion, and is associated with how the emotion is expressed (as seen on facial expressions or hand gestures).

Similarities

Many psychologists believe that the link between motivation and emotion emerged from three reasons. First, the arousal of emotion and motives of motivation both activate or energize behaviour. Second, emotions often go together with motives. The common Latin root word of emotion and motivation, "movere" (to move) seems to imply the said reason. And third, it is typical for basic emotions to possess motivational properties of their own. For example, happiness motivates a person to achieve better performance.

A noticeable similarity between emotion and motivation is that they are both linked to energy or intensity instead of information or direction. Another one is that while cognition seems to be wrapped in "coldness", emotion and motivation are often associated to pressure and heat. Yet another similarity is that both psychological constructs rely on the relationship between an individual and his environment.

Relationship

Theorists such as Thayer, Newman and McClain explained that emotion is related to motivation in such a way that human beings tend to execute things that we hope would lead to happiness, satisfaction and any other positive emotion at some degree. With this said, emotions could be viewed as a reward or punishment for a specific motivated behaviour.

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