

3. How the emotion is manifested along the different part(s) of the continuum (emotion, mood, trait, disorder)
4. How the emotion relates to the appraisal process (primary and secondary)
5. How each coping style (problem-focused or emotion-focused) is likely to be utilized by an individual experiencing the emotion

Variation: Form groups according to the emotion that was chosen. Share your answers with one another and create a group answer to the questions above. Then discuss as a class.

### Conclusion

It is very important for clinicians to understand and help a client in interpreting expressions of affect, internal feelings, and emotional states. It is also important to help a client recognize and clarify whether the emotional states are primary, secondary, or background. If a client isn't aware of (or minimizes) internal feelings, then the affective expressions are likely to be incongruent with the client's emotional states. In addition, if a client is not fully aware of (or can't interpret) his or her feelings, the client may not be able to describe his or her particular emotional state. In turn, if clients cannot interpret their emotional states, they may be unable to fully explain or understand why they are acting in certain ways. Thus, when a therapist asks, "What seemed to prompt your feeling \_\_\_\_?," a client may answer, "I don't know." It is a therapist's role to help a client find ways to become aware of his or her affective expressions, internal feelings, and emotional states and what they mean. Non-linear thinking is essential in helping a client who is detached in some way from his or her emotional system, or is unaware of how his or her appraisal affects the way that the client feels about something and reacts toward it. In this chapter, we have tried to define each of these elements and how they are linked together.

We next discuss some of the most common emotions encountered in therapy and major issues in working with those emotions, followed by a discussion of linear and nonlinear therapeutic methods of working with client emotions.

### Notes

1. The ethical issues regarding such behavior are discussed later in the book.
2. <http://www.english.hawaii.edu/criticalink/aristotle/terms/catharsis.html>.
3. This is why we strongly argue that therapists avoid becoming too enamored with gimmicks or techniques, but should rather develop their ability to understand how therapists think, especially regarding all of the domains of effective psychotherapy. Gimmicks or techniques are too easily adopted out of context.
4. Over a very long time, amongst specialists in the modern era (e.g., Arnold, 1960; Damasio, 1999; Goleman, 1995; Greenberg, 2004; LeDoux, 1998), there are many different orientations and philosophical issues that a complete grasp of feelings (and emotions) entails. Contemporary society and neuroscience research (see *The Economist*, 2007; Tolson, 2006) have developed a passionate and intriguing search for the relationship between mind and body, looking for an answer to the question of what ultimately determines consciousness. Central to this issue is an understanding of what it is that makes us aware of feelings, emotions, and a sense of self. Damasio (1994, 1999) appeared to strike the philosophical and neurobiological core of the issue of feelings and emotions with his analysis of the relationship between body, emotion, and consciousness. In essence, one of the conclusions he reached is that "the brain knows more than the conscious mind reveals" (Damasio, 1999, p. 42).
5. For example, to flee a situation in fear, it is necessary for the body to secrete adrenalin, increase heart rate and blood pressure, dilate the arteries to accommodate an increase in the flow of blood, and so on. A corresponding set of physiological reactions must occur for a variety of different emotional reactions, and those reactions must and do occur automatically. Upon alert from the amygdala, the thalamus and hypothalamus trigger the appropriate biochemical releases that a particular emotion calls for.

know what happens? All bets are off. When it happens, it becomes a fight or flight situation. And, and for you, it's getting defensive, you know. If, if we just put up our armaments and it's all over. So somehow we've got to get some way to teach you guys this, to soothe things a little bit, to keep things down a little bit. And if you had an agreed-upon strategy to use, that might really be helpful."

Scott:

"Yeah, I could see that."

Jon Carlson:

"You know, you might even benefit from it too because it sounds like you've got a lot of the things and greetings that couples have when relationships go south. There are things like criticism ah, which, you know, that sounds like that's what was called contempt. You look at somebody in a negative way, sounds like that's there. Then you're each defending. You're defensive. You defend your right to do what you're doing even though that, you know, you defend your attitude and you defend your anger. And then there's this stonewall, you put up something where you just won't talk. You remove yourself from one another. And those are the four things that really make a relationship go bad. And if you can learn how to pause, you can have some choices a little bit. So you can choose rather than defending. Maybe you can take a deep breath and you could say, 'So I understand you right, you think we need to have the kids leave us alone so we can talk?' And he'll say, 'That's exactly right.' And you say, 'I agree with you. How should we handle it?' I think there's some real cooperation that you guys show sometimes when you keep your heart rates down."

Scott:

"Yeah. Mine's so fast to go up though."

Jon Carlson:

"Well, that's why I think you need some of this other training. You know, I don't think it's just gonna happen by talking. I think you really gonna have to do some work. You're gonna have to do some training."

We have attempted to briefly discuss how the emotional system (appraisal, expressions of internal feelings, and emotional states) applies to three of the most common emotions processed in therapy. In addition, we have discussed how these emotions are manifested along a continuum from emotion to mood to trait to disorder. In Chapter 11, more sophisticated techniques for working with these emotions is discussed. We now present an exercise in the application of the same approach to other emotions.

### Clinical Exercise: Deconstructing Emotions

Instructions: Choose one of the emotions in the list below.

- Anger
- Pain/hurt
- Shame/guilt
- Happiness

Record what you believe to be the following:

1. Structural characteristics (i.e., expressions of affect, feelings, and emotional state)
2. Schema dynamics (i.e., view of self, others, and life and the world)