

The Emotion Systems

Anxious

Signal Function: 1) threat or danger; 2) activation in readiness to accomplish a challenge (i.e., life vitality in response to new challenges).

Relationship Function: draws protective response from others; turns off the anger system in other people.

Brain Integration Function: turns on all brain systems; disruptive to integrated functioning.

Sad

Signal Function: 1) value: something of value has been lost or might be lost; protect something.

Relationship Function: draws nurturance from others; serves to acquire love.

Brain Integration Function: turns off all brain systems; prompts quietude and reflection

Anger

Signal Function: protect through aggression – 3 levels: Levels 1 & 2 “you hurt me, so I hurt you” with anger being the top level of “I hurt you.” Level 3 is “the reason you hurt me is because I care about you... but you don’t care about me,” and this hurts. Anger is designed for use with the predator who is going to severely hurt us, so anger is a very violent emotion capable of causing great harm. It is too violent for the family or social group. In the family and social group anger needs to be translated into either of the other two levels; Level 2: “you hurt me” (sad) or Level 3: “I care about you (happy-love-social bonding)... and you don’t care about me,” and processed through either of these social channels.

Relationship Function: 1) provokes submissive response (anxiety) in others, or 2) provokes anger (“you hurt me, so I hurt you” → “you hurt me, so I hurt you”). Anger turns off both relationship systems of Attachment (we no longer care about the other person) and Psychological Connection (we no longer feel with the other person feels, i.e., we no feel empathy for the pain we are inflicting on the other person). Turning off of both relationship systems allows us to say and do very hurtful things to other people, which we may later regret when we are no longer angry and the relationship systems reactivate.

Brain Integration Function: Anger integrates all brain systems except the relationship systems, which anger turns off. Anger also turns off the emotional systems of anxiety and sadness (weak emotions). The integrated functioning of the other brain systems and the absence of weak emotions provides the experience of power and confident self-assertion.

Happy

Signal Function: value; go toward the source of happy, it is nurturing; gives direction.

Relationship Function: social bonding; contagious emotion; spreads from brain to brain and promotes social bonding; communicates dominance through relaxed brain state (i.e., the happy-relaxed brain does not perceive there to be any threat, it is dominant-secure).

Brain Integration Function: integrates all brain systems functioning.