



John T. Wood

My sister Carolyn and I, shown in the photo on this page, had been very close for years when her first child, Michelle, was born. I shared Carolyn's delight in the new member of our family, yet I also felt pushed out of her life. Carolyn was so entranced with her daughter that she had little time for me. Phone calls from her, which had been frequent, almost ceased. When I called Carolyn, she often cut our conversation short because it was time to feed Michelle or get her up or change her diaper. Over lunch with my friend Nancy, I complained, "Carolyn never has time for me anymore. I am so angry with her!" "Sounds to me more like you're hurt than angry," Nancy remarked.

What was I feeling? Was it anger or hurt or both? Emotions, or feelings, are part of our lives. We feel happiness, sadness, shame, pride, embarrassment, envy, disappointment, and a host of other emotions. And we communicate to express our emotions. We may express emotions nonverbally (smiling, trembling, blushing) or verbally ("I'm excited," "I feel anxious about the interview"), or both. Sometimes we express emotions through complex verbal messages, such as similes and metaphors (Kovacs, 1990). For instance, you might say, "I feel like a plane that's soaring," or "I am a bomb just waiting to explode."

Although we experience and express feelings, we don't always do so effectively. There are times when we aren't able to identify exactly what we feel, as I wasn't when trying to describe my feelings about Carolyn's reduced time for me. Even when we do recognize our emotions, we aren't always sure how to express them clearly and effectively. Do we want to vent, or do we want another person to comfort us, apologize to us, empathize with us, or behave differently toward us? To communicate well, we need to develop skill in identifying and expressing our emotions.

To open this chapter, we'll discuss *emotional intelligence*, which complements cognitive intelligence. Next, we define emotions and examine different theories that attempt to explain why and how we experience emotions. Then, we explore why we sometimes fail to express our feelings and how we can learn to express them effectively. Finally, we discuss guidelines for communicating emotions in ways that foster our individual growth and the quality of our relationships with others.

Emotional Intelligence

Psychologist Daniel Goleman and his colleagues have recognized a kind of intelligence distinct from the type that standard IQ tests measure. They named it **emotional intelligence**, which is the ability to recognize feelings, to judge which feelings are appropriate in which situations, and to communicate those feelings effectively (Goleman, 1995a; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002; Ciarrochi & Mayer, 2007; Niedenthal, Kraut-Cruher, & Ric, 2006). For example, imagine you are driving and another driver, who has been dangerously tailgating you, whips in front of you, almost hitting the left front panel

on your car. What do you feel? What do you do? You may want to scream some choice words or tailgate the other car to get revenge. It's understandable to feel and do that, but such responses don't show high emotional intelligence. A more emotionally intelligent response would be to take a deep breath and tell yourself to cool down, put on your favorite music, and think about reasons why the person in the other car might be driving this way: Perhaps there's an emergency; perhaps the driver had a flat tire and is making up time to get to a child's soccer game. This is an emotionally intelligent response because it shows awareness of your own feelings and also sensitivity to another's perspective, it calms your anger, it reflects awareness of social norms, and it doesn't lead to danger or undesirable outcomes.

Emotional intelligence is linked to well-being. People who have high emotional intelligence quotients (EQs) are more likely than people with lower EQs to create satisfying relationships, to be comfortable with themselves, to work effectively with others, and to have better overall health (Goleman, 1995a, 1995b, 1998; Goleman et al., 2002; Landa & López-Safor, 2010). Emotional intelligence builds on Carol Saarni's (1990) work, on "emotional competence," which involves awareness of our own emotions, including multiple emotions experienced simultaneously, the ability to recognize and empathize with others' emotions, awareness of the impact of our expression of emotions on others, and sensitivity to cultural rules for expressing emotions.

Emotional intelligence consists of qualities that aren't assessed by standard intelligence tests:

- Being aware of your feelings
- Dealing with emotions without being overcome by them
- Not letting setbacks and disappointments derail you
- Channeling your feelings to assist you in achieving your goals
- Being able to understand how others feel without their spelling it out
- Listening to your feelings and those of others so you can learn from them
- Recognizing social norms for expression of emotions
- Having a strong yet realistic sense of optimism

Emotional intelligence includes more than being in touch with your feelings. You also need skill in expressing them constructively and an ability to recognize how others feel. Because humans are connected to each other, how one person expresses emotions to

Everyday Application

To take a test that helps you assess your emotional intelligence, complete the Everyday Applications activity "What's Your EQ?" at the end of this chapter.

Communication in Everyday Life

Career

Emotional Intelligence and Career Advancement

Researchers (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2002) collected data from 150 firms to learn what distinguishes mediocre employees from superstars. They found that conventional IQ accounts for no more than 25% of success on the job, whether the job is copier repairperson, CEO, or scientist. The greater difference comes from EQ. Furthermore, as jobs become more difficult and higher in company rank, the importance of conventional IQ decreases, and the importance of EQ increases.

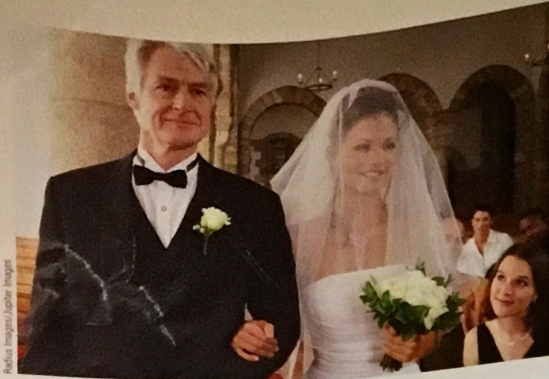
Cognitive abilities, including those measured by IQ tests, are important to getting a job—most people get jobs because they have the necessary cognitive qualifications. But advancement depends on other factors, including EQ, which assesses self-control, initiative, empathy, political savvy, and supportive, cooperative communication.

Several websites offer additional materials on emotional intelligence. One is the Consortium for Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace at <http://www.eiconsortium.org>. This site provides background information on EQ, resources that discuss EQ's relevance to specific topics such as the workplace and parenting, and answers to frequently asked questions about EQ.

Another site is the EQ Institute at <http://eqi.org>. Once you access the site, click on the Emotional Intelligence link, where you will find definitions of EQ, self-tests for EQ, references, and suggestions for college students writing papers on emotional intelligence.

If you would like to learn about criticisms of EQ, read Kevin Murphy's *A Critique of Emotional Intelligence* (2006).





another affects the other person—like catching a cold, says Goleman (2006). If we express anger, others are likely to respond with anger or deference. On the other hand, if we express love or yearning for closeness, others are likely to respond more positively. To illustrate this, let's return to my conversation with Nancy. After we had talked a while, I said, "I think I'll call Carolyn and tell her I resent being pushed out of her life."

"Well, when my friend Penny had a child and was totally preoccupied with him, I felt what I think you're feeling," Nancy disclosed.

"And what did you do?" I asked.
"I told her I missed her."

Missed her? I thought it over. I did miss Carolyn. Telling Carolyn I missed her might open the door to restore our closeness. Telling her I was angry or resentful probably wouldn't enhance our relationship.

Through the conversation with Nancy, I discovered that anger was a defensive reaction I was using to avoid realizing how vulnerable and hurt I felt. Later that day, I called Carolyn and told her I missed her. Her response was immediate and warm: "I miss you too. I'll be so glad when we get adjusted enough to Michelle that we have time for us again." I was effective in communicating my feelings to Carolyn, thanks to Nancy's insight into emotions and her skill in helping me figure out what I was feeling and how to express it effectively.

Understanding Emotions

Although emotions are basic to human beings and communication, they are difficult to define precisely. Some researchers assert that humans experience two kinds of emotions: some that are based in biology and thus instinctual and universal, and others that we learn in social interaction (Kemper, 1987). Yet, scholars don't agree on which emotions are basic (Izard, 1991; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987; Shaver, Wu, & Schwartz, 1992). Also, many scholars don't find it useful to distinguish between basic emotions and learned emotions (Ekman & Davidson, 1994).

Many scholars think that most or all emotions are socially constructed to a substantial degree. For example, we learn from particular others and the generalized other when to feel gratitude, embarrassment, and so forth. In her 1989 book *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*, Carol Tavris argues that anger is not entirely basic or instinctual. She shows that our ability to experience anger is influenced by social interaction, through which we learn whether and when we are supposed to feel angry.

In many instances, what we feel is not a single emotion but several mingled together, as I felt in the situation with Carolyn. Paul Ekman and Richard Davidson (1994) surveyed research on emotions and concluded that blends of emotion are common. For instance, you might feel both sad and happy at your graduation or both grateful and resentful when someone helps you.

KENNETH Last year, my daughter got married, and I've never felt so many things in one moment. As I walked her down the aisle and took her arm from mine and placed it on the arm of her future husband, I felt sadness and happiness, hope and anxiety about her future, pride in the woman she'd become and her confidence in starting a new life, and loss because we would no longer be her primary family.

We can define **emotions** as our experience and interpretation of internal sensations as they are shaped by physiology, perceptions, language, and social experiences. Although researchers vary in the degree to which they emphasize each of these influences, most people who have studied emotions agree that physiology, perceptions, social experience, and language all play parts in our emotional lives.

Physiological Influences on Emotions

Have you ever felt a knot in your stomach when you got back an exam with a low grade? If so, you experienced a physiological reaction. Early theorists believed that we experience emotion when external stimuli cause physiological changes in us. This is the **organismic view of emotions**, and it is shown in Figure 7.1.

Advanced by philosopher William James and his colleague Carl Lange, the **organismic view**, also called the James-Lange view, asserts that, when we perceive a stimulus, we first respond physiologically, and only after that do we experience emotions (James, 1890; James & Lange, 1922). This perspective assumes that emotions are reflexes that follow both the product and the expression of occurrences in our bodies. For example, Chris Kleinke, Thomas Peterson, and Thomas Rutledge (1998) found that, when people smile, their moods are more positive, and when people frown, their moods are more negative.

James wrote that emotional expression begins with a perception of something, perhaps seeing a gift with your name on it or noticing that someone with a weapon is running toward you. After the perception, James believed, we experience changes in our bodies: We feel a tingle of anticipation on seeing the gift; adrenaline surges when we are approached by someone with a weapon. Finally, said James, we experience emotion: We feel joy at the gift, fear at the aggressor.

The organismic view regards emotions as instinctual responses to physiological arousal caused by external stimuli. James specifically discounted what he called "intellectual mind stuff" (Finkelstein, 1980) as having nothing to do with our perceptions of stimuli and, by extension, our emotions. For James and others who share his view, emotions result from physiological factors that are instinctual and beyond conscious control,

Perceptual Influences on Emotions

James's view of the relationship between bodily states and feelings is no longer widely accepted (Ekman & Davidson, 1994; Frijda, 1986; McLeeme, 2003; Reisenbaum, 1983). Today, most researchers think the physiological influences are less important than other factors in shaping emotions.

The **perceptual view of emotions**, which is also called *appraisal theory*, asserts that subjective perceptions shape what external phenomena mean to us. External objects and events, as well as physiological reactions, have no intrinsic meaning. Instead, they gain meaning only as we attribute significance to them. We might interpret trembling

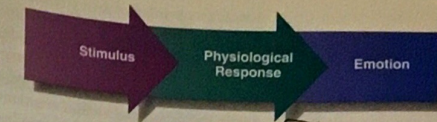


FIGURE 7.1
The Organismic View of Emotions
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hands as a symbol of fear, a raised fist as a threat, and a knot in the stomach as anxiety. Alternatively, we might interpret trembling hands as signifying joy on graduation day. A raised fist as power and racial pride, as it was during the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s; and a knot in the stomach as excitement about receiving a major award. These different interpretations would lead us to define our emotions distinctly. That's the key to the perceptual view of emotions: We act on the basis of our interpretation of phenomena, not the actual phenomena (trembling hands, raised fist, a knot in the stomach). The ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus observed that people are disturbed not by things but by the views we take of them. Buddha observed that we are what we think with our thoughts we make the world. In other words, how we view things leads us to feel disturbed, pleased, sad, joyous, afraid, and so forth. Thus, our perceptions filter our experiences, and it is the filtered experiences that influence what we feel and how we respond.

HARIHAR Buddhism teaches us that our feelings arise not from things themselves but from what we attach to them. In my life, this is true. If I find myself upset about how a conversation is going, I ask myself, "Harihar, what is it that you were expecting to happen? Can you let go of that and enter into what is actually happening here?" That helps me realize and let go of my attachment to certain outcomes of the conversation.

We respond differently to the same phenomenon depending on the meaning we attribute to it. For example, if you earn a low score on a test, you might interpret it as evidence that you are not smart. This interpretation could lead you to feel shame or disappointment or other unpleasant emotions. Conversely, you might view the low score as the result of a tricky or overly rigorous exam, an interpretation that might lead you to feel anger at the teacher or resentment at the situation. Anger is very different from shame. Which one you feel depends on how you perceive the score and the meaning you attribute to it. The perceptual view of emotions does not clearly identify the mechanism by which we interpret emotions. This problem is corrected in the **cognitive labeling view of emotions**, which is similar to the perceptual view but offers better explanation of how we move from experience to interpretation. According to the cognitive labeling view of emotions, the mechanism that allows this is language or symbols. This view claims that our labels for our physiological responses influence how we interpret those responses (Schachter, 1964; our physiological responses influence how we feel may be shaped by how we label our physiological responses. For example, if you feel a knot in your stomach when you see that you received a low grade on an exam, you might label the knot as evidence of anxiety. Thus, what you felt would not result directly from the event itself (the grade). Instead, it would be shaped by how you labeled your physiological response to the event. This view of emotions is represented in Figure 7.3.

I witnessed how our labels for events and our responses to them influence what we feel. When my niece, Michelle, was 2 years old and weighed about 30 pounds, she and my sister Carolyn visited Robbie and me. As they came into our home, our 65-pound dog, Madhi, ran to greet them and started licking Michelle. Immediately, Michelle started crying. I got Madhi to lie down across the room, and Michelle said, "Mommy, Mommy, I'm scared. My heart is going fast because she came after me and made me scared." Carolyn cuddled Michelle and said, "Your heart isn't going fast because you're scared, sweetheart. It's because Madhi surprised you and you were startled. Madhi was telling you how much she loves you. Dogs are our friends."

FIGURE 7.2
The Perceptual View of Emotions
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Carolyn and I then petted Madhi and let her lick us and said repeatedly, "Oh, Madhi licked me because she loves me. She startled me." Michelle quickly picked up our language and began to laugh, not cry, when Madhi bowled her over. By the end of the day, Michelle and Madhi were fast friends. Before she went to bed that night, Michelle told us, "Madhi makes my heart beat faster because I love her."

What happened here? Madhi's exuberance didn't diminish, nor did Michelle's physiological response. Carolyn and I taught her to interpret Madhi's behavior as friendly and exciting instead of threatening. Michelle's label for her emotion also changed: *scared*.

ARMANO The most important lesson I learned when my family first moved to the United States was that a bad grade on a test is not a judgment that I am stupid. It is a challenge for me to do better. My ESL teacher taught me that. He said if I saw a bad grade as saying I am dumb or a failure that I would never learn English. He taught me to see grades as challenges that I could meet. That attitude made it possible for me not to give up and to keep learning.

There is probably some validity to each view of emotions that we've explored. The organismic view calls our attention to the fact that we do have bodily responses to what happens around us. The perceptual view reminds us that how we perceive external events and the emotions we think are appropriate. Finally, the cognitive labeling view emphasizes the role of language in shaping our interpretation of events, our physiological responses, appropriate emotions, or all three. Each of these models gives us insight into emotions. Yet, none of them is complete, because none adequately accounts for the critical influence of culture in shaping emotions and how we communicate them.

Social Influences on Emotions.

As we learned in Chapter 3, perception is influenced by the culture and the social groups to which we belong. Historian Barbara Rosenwein (1998) calls the groups we identify with "emotional communities" because they teach us how to understand and express emotions. Examples of emotional communities are families, neighborhoods, gangs, monasteries, and religious groups. Schools and workplaces may also be communities we identify with. The society and communities in which we live influence our beliefs about which emotions are good or bad, which emotions we should express or repress, and with whom we can appropriately communicate which emotions. For example, the emotion of shame is emphasized much more in traditional Asian societies than in Western societies. This may explain why 95% of Chinese parents report that their children understand the meaning of shame by age 3, whereas only 10% of American parents report this (Sedgwick, 1995; Shaver et al., 1987; Shaver et al., 1992).

Beginning in the 1970s, some scholars began to advance the **interactive view of emotions**, which proposes that social rules and understandings shape what people feel and how they do or don't express their feelings. Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983, 1990) pioneered in this area by investigating the ways that people experience, control, and express feelings. The interactive view of emotions rests on three key concepts: framing rules, feeling rules, and emotion work.



FIGURE 7.3
The Cognitive Labeling View of Emotions
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Jim Fogarty/Robert Images/Getty Images

Framing Rules Framing rules define the emotional meaning of situations. For instance, Western culture defines funerals as sad and respectful occasions and weddings as joyful events. Within any single culture, however, there are multiple social groups and resulting ways of framing events. For example, many Irish Americans hold wakes when a person dies. A wake is a festive occasion during which people tell stories about the departed person and celebrate his or her life. Other groups define funerals and the receptions following them as somber occasions at which any mirth or festivity would be perceived as disrespectful and inappropriate. During the Jewish practice of sitting *shivah*, family members do not engage others in routine ways such as talking on the phone.

Feeling Rules Feeling rules tell us what we have a right to feel or what we are expected to feel in particular situations. Feeling rules reflect and perpetuate the values of cultures and social groups (Miller, 1993, 1998; Nanda & Warmes, 1998). For example, some cultures view feeling and expressing anger as healthy. Yet the Semai of Malaysia think that being angry brings bad luck and they try to avoid anger (Dentan, 1995; Robarchek & Dentan, 1987). That may be one reason that not a single murder among Semais has ever been recorded! Cultures that emphasize individuality promote the feeling rule that it is appropriate to feel pride in personal accomplishments, whereas cultures that emphasize collectivism teach members that accomplishments grow out of membership in groups and reflect well on those groups, not on individuals (Johnson, 2000). Thus, in

collectivist cultures a feeling rule might be that it is appropriate for a person to feel gratitude to family and community for personal accomplishments.

A number of years ago, I read a newspaper story that shows how feeling rules differ between cultures. American teachers didn't realize that parents and students from collectivist cultures are dismayed when report cards state that students "speak up in class." Because collectivist cultures emphasize the overall community, an individual who stands out may be perceived as showing off and inappropriately calling attention to himself or herself ("Teachers' Words," 2000). All social communities have rules that specify acceptable and unacceptable ways to feel.

Feeling rules are sometimes explicated in terms of rights and duties. The following common phrases highlight the language of duty and rights that infuses feeling rules:

I'm entitled to feel sad.
She should be grateful to me for what I did.
I ought to feel happy my friend got a job.
I have a right to be proud.
I shouldn't feel angry at my father.

Communication in Everyday Life

Diversity

The Social Shaping of Grief

Cultures have distinct framing rules about death (Frijda, 2006; Lofland, 1985; Miller, 1993, 1998). In some African tribes, death is regarded as cause to celebrate a person's passage to a better form of life. Buddhists do not regard the death of a body as the end of a person, because the person is assumed to continue in other forms. In some cultures, people feel deep grief over the loss of cousins to whom they have intense and lasting attachments. In contrast, other cultures define cousins as distant relations whose death seldom provokes deep sadness.

Hochschild perceives a strong connection between feeling rules and social order. She claims that one way a society attempts to control people is through feeling rules that uphold broad social values and structures (1990). For example, teaching people that they should feel pride in their personal accomplishments reinforces the value that Western culture places on individualism and ambition. Teaching people to regard accomplishments as communal, not individual, upholds the value that many non-Western cultures but learned as people internalize the moral values of their cultures.

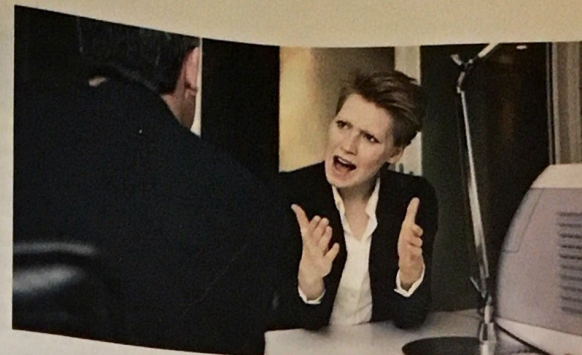
A second way in which feeling rules uphold social structure is by permitting the expression of negative feelings and even by permitting people who have power to express negative emotions in rude or disrespectful ways toward people with limited power. employees have, the more they tend to be targets of others' negative emotional communication. People who have more power may learn they have a right to express anger, isn't acceptable for them to express such emotions. To test the validity of this idea, ask yourself who is the target of more complaints and greater hostility: servers or restaurant managers, flight attendants or pilots, receptionists or CEOs.

Parents differ in how they teach children to deal with feelings. Some parents encourage children to control their inner feelings through **deep acting**, which involves learning what they should and should not feel. For instance, children may be taught that they should feel grateful when given a gift even if they don't like the gift. Many children are taught that they should not feel angry when a sibling takes a toy. Deep acting requires changing how we perceive and label events and phenomena.

Other parents emphasize **surface acting**, which involves controlling the outward expression of emotions rather than controlling feelings. Parents who emphasize surface acting teach children to control their outward behaviors, not necessarily their inner feelings. For example, children learn that they should say "thank you" when they receive a gift and that they should not hit a sibling who takes a toy. Expressing gratitude is emphasized more than being grateful, and refraining from hitting someone who takes a toy is stressed more than being willing to share toys.

Emotion Work The final concept is **emotion work**, which is the effort to generate what we think are appropriate feelings in particular situations. Notice that emotion work concerns our effort to fashion how we feel, not necessarily our success at squelching feelings we think are inappropriate or at generating the feelings we think we should experience.

Although we do emotion work much of the time, we tend to be most aware of engaging in it when we think our feelings are inappropriate in specific situations. For example, you might think it is wrong to feel gleeful when someone you dislike is hurt. Hochschild (1979, 1983) refers to this as "the pinch," which is a discrepancy between what we feel



Oliver Christensen/Getty Images

Everyday Application

To explore the relationship between religion and feeling rules, complete the Everyday Applications activity "Religions and Feeling Rules" at the end of this chapter.

and what we think we should feel. If you feel gleeful about another's bad luck, you might engage in emotion work in an effort to make yourself feel sad.

Typically, what we think we should feel is based on what we've learned from our social groups and the larger culture. Social groups teach us what feelings are appropriate in particular situations. For example, Clifton Scott and Karen Meyers (2005) found that firefighters engage in emotion work to manage feelings such as fear and disgust, which can interfere with controlling damage and providing medical help to victims of fires. Katherine Miller (2007) reports that human service workers engage in emotion work with clients—showing that they notice clients' lives, demonstrating empathy and person-centeredness, and responding in supportive ways.

People who have been socialized in multiple cultures or social communities with different values may be especially vulnerable to feeling "the pinch." Kimberly Gangwish (1999) describes Asian American women as "living in two worlds" in terms of their emotions and how they express them. First-generation Asian American women said they knew that, in the United States, it was acceptable to feel angry and upset, but they couldn't express those feelings because Asian cultures frown on expressing negative emotions.

HUANG In my native country, students are supposed to be respectful of teachers and never speak out in class. It has been hard for me to learn to feel I have a right to ask questions of a professor here. Sometimes I have a question or I do not agree with a professor, but I have to work to tell myself it is okay to assert myself. To me, it still feels disrespectful to speak up.

We do emotion work to suppress or eliminate feelings we think are wrong (for example, feeling happy over the misfortune of someone you dislike). We also engage in emotion work to cultivate feelings we think we should have, such as prodding yourself to feel joy a friend got a job even though you did not. As Donna Vocate (1994) notes, much of our emotion work takes place through self-talk or intrapersonal communication. We try to talk ourselves into feeling what we think is appropriate and out of feeling what we think is inappropriate. In addition, we often talk to friends to figure out whether our feelings are appropriate—

we rely on friends to help us reduce uncertainty about feelings (Heise, 1999; Milardo, 1986).

Framing rules, feeling rules, and emotion work are interrelated (see Figure 7.4). Framing rules that define the emotional meaning of situations lead to feeling rules that tell us what we should feel or have a right to feel in a given context. If we don't feel what our feeling rules designate we should, we may engage in emotion work to squelch inappropriate feelings or to bring about feelings that we think suit the circumstances. We then express our feelings by following rules for appropriate expression of particular emotions in specific contexts.

The interactive view of emotions emphasizes the impact of social factors on how we perceive,

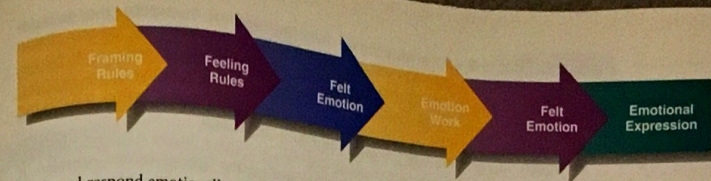


FIGURE 7.4
The Interactive View of Emotions
Cengage Learning

label, and respond emotionally to experiences in our lives. One strength of this model is that it acknowledges cultural differences in feelings and their expression.

Your view of emotions has implications for how much you think you can control what you feel and how you express our feelings in everyday life. If you agree with William James that feelings are instinctual, then you will assume that feelings cannot be managed. Whatever you feel, you feel. That's it. On the other hand, if you accept the interactive view of emotions, you are more likely to think you can analyze your feelings and perhaps change them and your expression of them through emotion work. The interactive view assumes you have some power over what you feel and how you act. If you agree with this perspective, you are more likely to monitor your feelings and to make choices about how to communicate them.

We may not have total control over what we feel, but usually we can exert some control. Furthermore, we can exercise substantial control over how we do or don't express our feelings and to whom we express them. Taking personal responsibility for when, how, and to whom you express feelings is a cornerstone of ethical interpersonal communication (Anderson & Guerrero, 1998; Fridlund, 1994; Philippot & Feldman, 2004).

Obstacles to Communicating Emotions Effectively

Skill in recognizing and expressing emotions is important to interpersonal competence, yet many of us repress feelings or express them inappropriately. Let's consider the reasons why we may not express emotions and ineffective ways of expressing emotions.

Reasons We May Not Express Emotions

Researchers have identified four common reasons people don't communicate their emotions. As we discuss each reason, reflect on whether you rely on it in your own emotional expression.

Social Expectations As we have noted, what we feel and how we express it are influenced by the culture and social groups to which we belong. Gender socialization seems particularly important in shaping feelings and the expression of them. In the United States, men are expected to be more restrained than women in expressing emotions—at least, most emotions (Burgoon & Bacue, 2003; Guerrero et al., 2006b). Men are allowed to express anger, which is often disapproved of in women. Yet, in Italy and other countries, men routinely express a range of emotions dramatically and openly.

In societies that teach men the feeling rule that they should not feel or express a great many emotions, some men may suppress feelings and avoid expressing them. Over time, men who do this may become alienated from their feelings, unable to recognize what they do feel, because society has taught them that they aren't allowed to experience a great many feelings.

Communication in Everyday Life

Insight

The Gift of Fear

Don't ignore your fear. That's the message of Gavin de Becker's book, *The Gift of Fear* (1997). For years, de Becker has worked as a security consultant to celebrities. He notes that many people have been taught to dismiss feelings of fear by labeling them "silly" or "stupid." They invest emotion work in talking themselves out of feeling fear. Big mistake, says de Becker. If you're waiting for an elevator, and when the door opens, you have a strong, fearful reaction to a person in the elevator, what do you do? De Becker says many people try to talk themselves out of the fear with thoughts such as, "There's nothing to be afraid of." Wrong, says de Becker. He advises us to wait for the next elevator. If you have a feeling that someone is lurking in a parking lot, don't dismiss it as paranoia; heed it, and find someone to walk with you. De Becker believes that fear often arises in response to subtle cues in an environment—cues of which we are not consciously aware but to which we respond anyway.

ABE Most of the time, I pretty much keep my feelings to myself like other guys do. But last spring one of my closest friends gave birth to a little girl. When I visited at the hospital and was holding the baby, she told me she wanted me to be her daughter's godfather. That blew me away and the next thing I knew I was crying and telling this little baby that I loved her. It was sort of embarrassing, but not too much. I'm glad none of the guys were with me, though.

Women face different restrictions than men on the feelings society considers it appropriate for them to express. Women are generally taught that anger is unattractive and undesirable in women (Tavris, 1989). Thus, many women are constrained by the feeling rule that they should not feel anger and that, if they do, they should not express it directly. This discourages women from acknowledging legitimate anger and expressing it constructively.

Another feeling rule that is learned by many Western women is to care about others (Eisenberg, 2002; Taylor, 2002). Thus, many women engage in emotion work in an attempt to make themselves feel caring (via deep acting) when they don't naturally feel that way.

Even more often, report researchers, women squelch feelings of jealousy toward friends and feelings of competitiveness in personal and professional relationships. Because most Western women are taught that they should support others, they often feel that they shouldn't experience or express envy or competitiveness. Not being able to express or even acknowledge such feelings can interfere with honest communication in interpersonal relationships.

Self-Protection A second reason we may not express our feelings is that we don't want to give others information that could affect how they perceive or act toward us. We fear that someone will like us less if we say that we feel angry with him or her. We worry that coworkers will lose respect for us if our nonverbal behaviors show that we feel weak or scared. We fear that if we disclose how deeply we feel about another person, she or he will reject us.

We may also restrain expression of feelings, particularly negative ones, because of what is known as the **chilling effect**. When we have a relationship with someone who we perceive as more powerful than us, we may suppress complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction or anger because we fear that the more powerful person could punish us. We might fear a parent will withhold privileges, a supervisor could fire us, or a coach might sideline us. How the other person might use his or her power against us has a chilling effect on our willingness to express our feelings honestly.

Communication in Everyday Life

Diversity

Sugar and Spice and Bullying!

"Sugar and spice and everything nice" is not the whole picture about girls. Recently, scholars' tracking of adolescent girls' bullying (Simmons, 2002, 2004; Underwood, 2003) shows that many young girls engage in social aggression toward other girls, and they do so using distinctly feminine rules for expressing aggression. Unlike physical aggression, which is standard in boys' aggression, social aggression is usually indirect, even covert. It takes forms such as spreading hurtful rumors, social exclusion, and encouraging others to turn against a particular girl. Why do young girls rely on indirect and social strategies of aggression? One reason appears to be that, even at young ages, girls understand that they are supposed to be nice to everyone, so they fear that being overtly mean to others would lead to disapproval or punishment. They're taught to soften their opinions and to accommodate others, particularly males (Berger, 2006; Deveny, 2009). Girls learn not to stand up to boys at school because they fear being called "bitch" (Bennett, Ellison, & Ball, 2010; Deveny, 2009). Instead of learning how to manage anger openly, young girls learn to express it indirectly.

Protecting Others Another reason we often choose not to express feelings is that we fear we could hurt or upset others. Sometimes we make an ethical choice not to express emotions that would hurt another person without achieving any positive outcome. Choosing not to express emotions in some situations or to some people can be constructive and generous, as Tara's commentary illustrates.

TARA My best friend, Fran, is a marriage saver. When I'm really angry with my husband, I vent to her. If there's a really serious problem between me and Al, I talk with him. But a lot of times I'm upset over little stuff. I know what I'm feeling isn't going to last and isn't any serious problem in our marriage, but I may be seething anyway. Letting those feelings out to Fran gets them off my chest without hurting Al or our marriage.

The tendency to restrain emotional expression to protect others is particularly strong in many Asian cultures because they view hurting others as shameful (Johnson, 2000; Min, 1995; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002; Yamamoto, 1995). Traditional Asian cultures also view conflict as damaging to social relationships, so they discourage expressions that might lead to conflict (Johnson, 2000; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002).

Yet, Asians and people of Asian descent are not the only ones who want to protect relationships from tension that can arise from emotional expression. If a friend of yours behaves in ways you consider irresponsible, you may refrain from expressing your disapproval because you don't want to provoke tension between you. Totally open and unrestrained expression of feeling isn't necessarily a good idea. Sometimes it is both wise and kind not to express feelings. It's often not productive to vent minor frustrations and annoyances. If someone we care about is already overburdened with anxiety or emotional problems, we may choose not to express our emotions so that the other person doesn't have to respond to our feelings at the moment. Thus, there can be good reasons not to show or discuss feelings, or not to show or discuss them at a given time.

ISHMAEL Last week, I got rejected by the law school that was my top choice. Normally, I would have gone over to Jason's apartment to hang out with him and let him boost me up. Ever since we met freshman year, we've been tight friends, and we talk about everything in our lives. But right now, Jason's struggling with his own stuff. His mother just got diagnosed with cancer, and his father is out of work. I know we'll talk about my disappointment some time, but I figured it could wait until he gets into a better place.

Ishmael's commentary provides a good example of an instance in which it is more caring not to express feelings. Yet, we would be mistaken to think it's always a good idea to keep feelings to ourselves. Avoiding the expression of negative or upsetting feelings can be harmful if such feelings directly affect relationships with others, or if doing so may threaten our own health. Susan Schmanoff (1987) found that intimacy wanes when a couple's communication consistently lacks emotional disclosures, even unpleasant ones. If not expressing feelings is likely to create barriers in relationships or to cause us serious personal distress, then we should try to find a context and mode of expression that allow us to communicate our emotions. The physical and psychological impact of denying or repressing emotions over the long term can harm you and devastate your relationships (Pennebaker, 1997; Schmanoff, 1987).

Social and Professional Roles A final reason we may not express some feelings is that our roles make it inappropriate. The Queen of England, for example, continually monitors her expression of feelings so that she does not act in ways that are incongruent with her role as the Queen. An attorney or judge who cries when hearing



a sad story from a witness might be perceived as unprofessional. A doctor or nurse who expressed anger toward a patient might be regarded as unprofessional. Police officers and social workers might be judged to be out of line if they express animosity instead of objective detachment when investigating a crime.

When I testify as an expert witness in trials, the attorneys questioning me often try to rattle me with personal attacks, trick questions, or by deliberately twisting what I've said. These are routine, normal tactics in cross-examinations. If I were to respond emotionally—perhaps with

an angry outburst—I would lose credibility with the jury. To be effective in the role of an expert witness, I must restrain highly emotional reactions.

We've identified four common reasons we may not express our emotions. Although we can understand all of them, they are not equally constructive in their consequences. There is no simple rule for when to express feelings. Instead, we must exercise judgment. We have an ethical obligation to make thoughtful choices about whether, when, and how to express our feelings. As a responsible communicator, you should strive to decide when it is necessary, appropriate, and constructive to express your feelings, keeping in mind that you, others, and relationships will be affected by your decision.

Communication in Everyday Life

Career

Emotional Intelligence on the Job

Many business executives think it would be great to have intelligent machines. Just think—if we perfected artificial intelligence, we could have machines that work 24 hours a day without making mistakes, without complaining about the long hours, and without the kinds of emotional needs and problems that cause personnel troubles.

Hold on a minute, says Dan Davies (2006) in an article published in *Business Leader* magazine. According to Davies, "emotions give us meaning and purpose. They connect us to our community, each other, and if properly motivated, to our work" (p. 6). And emotions also allow humans to come up with ideas, solutions, and plans that are outside of the logic by which machines operate. Davies wisely notes, "it was Luke Skywalker, not R2-D2, and Captain Kirk, not Mr. Spock who, in the end, had the best solutions to the most serious problems" (p. 6).

David Brooks (2009) agrees. He says "Emotions move us toward things and ideas. People without emotions cannot make sensible decisions because they don't know how much anything is worth. People without social emotions like empathy are not objective decision-makers" (p. A23).



The Ineffective Expression of Emotions

We don't always deny or repress our emotions. Sometimes, we are aware of having a particular feeling, and we try to express it, but our effort isn't very successful. We'll look at three of the most common forms of ineffective emotional expression.

Speaking in Generalities

"I feel bad." "I'm happy." "I'm sad." Statements such as these do express emotional states, but they do so ineffectively. Why? Because they are so general and abstract that they don't clearly communicate what the speaker feels. Does "I feel bad" mean the person feels depressed, angry, guilty, ashamed, or anxious? Does "I'm happy" mean the speaker is in love, pleased

with a grade, satisfied at having received a promotion, delighted to be eating chocolate, or excited about an upcoming vacation? When we use general, abstract emotional language, we aren't communicating effectively about what we feel.

Also, our nonverbal repertoire for expressing emotions may be limited. Withdrawing our head and eyes may express a range of sadness, anger, depression, or shame, and thoughtfulness. We are capable of experiencing many, many emotions. Yet, most of us recognize or express only a small number. In *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America's History* (1986), Carol Stearns and Peter Stearns can experience, and they express those emotions whenever they feel something. An acquaintance of mine says, "I'm frustrated" when he is angry, confused, hurt, anxious, disappointed, and so forth. In the example that opened this chapter, I said I felt angry vocabulary restricts our ability to communicate clearly with others (Lama & Eckman, 2009; Saarni, 1999).

Not Owning Feelings Stating feelings in a way that disowns personal responsibility for the feeling is one of the most common obstacles to effective expression of emotions (Proctor, 1991). Our discussion of *I* language and *you* language in Chapter 4 is relevant to learning to express emotions effectively.

"You make me angry" states a feeling (although the word *angry* may be overly general). Yet this statement relies on *you* language, which suggests that somebody other than the speaker is the source or cause of the angry feeling. Others certainly say and do things that affect us; they may even do things to us. But we—not anyone else—decide what their actions mean, and we—not anyone else—are responsible for our feelings.

How could we use *I* language to revise the statement, "You make me angry"? We could change it to this: "I feel angry when you don't call when you say you will." The statement would be even more effective—clearer and more precise—if the speaker said, "I feel hurt and insecure when you don't call when you say you will." And the statement would be still more effective if it included information about what the speaker wants from the other person: "I feel hurt and insecure when you don't call when you say you will. Would you be willing to call if we agree that it's okay for calls to be short sometimes?" This statement accepts responsibility for a feeling, communicates clearly what is felt, and offers a solution that could help the relationship.

Counterfeit Emotional Language

A third ineffective form of emotional communication is relying on **counterfeit emotional language**. This is language that seems to express emotions but does not actually describe what a person is feeling. For example, shouting "Why can't you leave me alone?" certainly reveals that the speaker is feeling something, but it doesn't describe what she or he is feeling. Is it anger at the particular person, frustration at being interrupted,

Everyday Application

To practice using emotional vocabulary effectively, complete the Everyday Applications activity "Enlarging Your Emotional Vocabulary" at the end of this chapter.

Communication in Everyday Life

Career

What the ####!*! is going on at this ***@#!!! company?**

Foul language seems pervasive these days. The former White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel is infamous for it as is Jon Stewart. But in the workplace, foul language can interfere with success. Only 10% of business owners in a national survey think cursing on the job is justified. But how do you stop it? Jim O'Connor has a suggestion: Hire CussControl, the company he founded to do interventions in organizations. O'Connor says that swearing marks employees as not being in control of their emotions, so his approach is to teach them how to figure out why they are swearing and then address the root cause of their emotions (Stafford, 2009).



Everyday Application

To practice translating counterfeit emotional language into language that describes feelings accurately, complete the Everyday Applications activity "Avoiding Counterfeit Emotional Language" at the end of this chapter.

stress at having to meet a deadline, or the need for time alone? We can't tell what feeling the speaker is experiencing from what he or she said.

Effective communicators provide clear descriptions of their feelings and the connection between their feelings and others' behaviors. "I feel frustrated because when I'm working and you walk in, I lose my train of thought" is a more constructive statement than "Why can't you leave me alone?" The first statement communicates what is troubling you and states that it is situation-specific.

It's also unproductive not to explain feelings. "That's just how I feel" doesn't tell a person how her or his behavior is related to your feelings or what you would like her or him to do. Sometimes, we say, "That's just how I feel" because we haven't really figured out why we feel as we do or what we want from another person. In such cases, we should take responsibility for understanding what's going on inside ourselves before we ask others to understand. Only when you can identify situations and your emotional reactions to them can you communicate clearly to others (Planalp, 1997).

Another form of counterfeit emotional language uses feeling words but really expresses thoughts: "I feel this discussion is getting sidetracked." The perception that a discussion is going off on a tangent is a thought, not a feeling. Maybe the speaker feels frustrated that the discussion seems to be wandering, but that feeling is not communicated by the statement.

The three types of ineffective emotional communication we've considered give us insight into some of the more common ways we may evade—consciously or not—clear and honest communication about our feelings. In the final section of this chapter, we consider specific ways to communicate our feelings effectively and constructively, and to respond sensitively to others' communication about their emotions.

Guidelines for Communicating Emotions Effectively

What we've explored so far in this chapter suggests several guidelines for becoming skilled at communicating our feelings. In this section, we extend our discussion to identify six guidelines for effective communication of emotions. This process is summarized in Figure 7.5.

Identify Your Emotions

Before you can communicate emotions effectively, you must be able to identify what you feel. As we have seen, this isn't always easy. For reasons we've discussed, people may be alienated from their emotions or unclear about what they feel, especially if they are experiencing multiple emotions at once. To become more aware of your emotions, give mindful attention to your inner self. Just as we can learn to ignore our feelings, we can teach ourselves to notice and heed them.

Sometimes, identifying our emotions requires us to sort out complex mixtures of feelings. For example, we sometimes feel both anxious and hopeful. To recognize only that you feel hopeful is to overlook the anxiety. To realize only that you feel anxious is to ignore the hope you also feel. Recognizing the existence of both feelings allows you to tune in to your self and to communicate accurately to others what you are experiencing.

When sorting out intermingled feelings, it's useful to identify the primary or main feeling—the one or ones that are dominant in the moment. Doing this allows you to communicate clearly to others what is most important in your emotional state. Think back to

the example that opened this chapter. I had said I felt angry that Carolyn didn't seem to have time for me. I did feel anger, but that wasn't my primary emotion. Hurt was the dominant feeling, and it was the one I communicated to Carolyn. This gave her an understanding of what I felt that was more accurate than if I'd told her I felt angry.

Choose Whether and How to Express Emotions

Once you know what you feel, you'll want to consider how to express your emotions. The first choice facing you is whether you want to communicate your emotion to particular people. As we noted in the previous section, sometimes it is both wise and compassionate not to tell someone what you feel. You may decide that would not accomplish anything positive. This is not the case, because tension between people can foster growth in individuals and relationships.

We may also decide not to communicate emotions because we prefer to keep some of our feelings private. This is a reasonable choice if the feelings we keep to ourselves are not ones that other people need to know in order to understand us and to be in satisfying relationships with us. We don't have a responsibility to bare our feelings to everyone, nor are we required to disclose all our feelings, even to our intimates.

If you decide you do want to communicate your emotions, then you should assess the different ways you might do that and select the one that seems likely to be most effective. Four guidelines can help you decide how to express emotions. First, evaluate your current state. If you are really upset, you may not be able to express yourself clearly may say things we don't mean. Remember that communication is irreversible—we cannot for us to cleanse our minds and bodies of anger. Thus, if you are really angry, you may want to wait until you've cooled down so that you can discuss your feelings more fruitfully.

The second step is to decide to whom you want to express your feelings. Often, we want to communicate our emotions to the people they concern—the person with whom we are upset or whose understanding we seek. Yet, sometimes we don't want to talk to the person who is the target of our feelings. You might be too upset to talk productively, or you might not think the person can help you. In cases such as these, it may be useful to find someone else to whom you can safely express your feelings without harming the person about whom you have them.

BOB When I didn't get a promotion, I was ready to blow my top. But I knew better than to blow it around my boss or anyone at the company. Nope, I said I was sick and left for the day and called a friend who works at home. We met for lunch, and she let me just blow off steam with her in a place that wouldn't hurt me on the job.

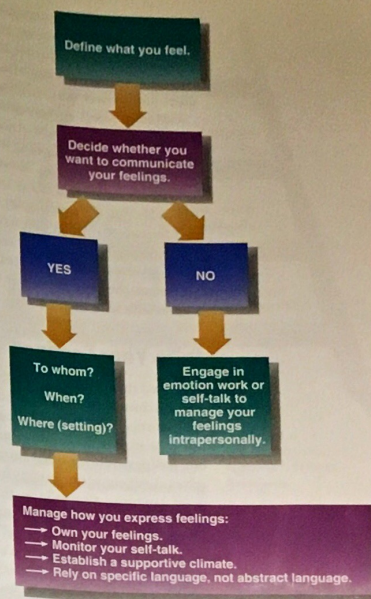


FIGURE 7.5
Effective Communication of Emotions
Cengage Learning

Next, select an appropriate time to discuss feelings. Most of us are able to listen and respond skillfully when we are not preoccupied, defensive, stressed, rushed, or tired. Generally, it's not productive to launch a discussion of feelings when we lack the time or energy to focus on the conversation. It may be better to defer discussion until you and the other person have the psychological and physical resources to engage mindfully.

Finally, select an appropriate setting for discussing feelings. Many feelings can be expressed well in a variety of settings. For instance, it would be appropriate to tell a friend you felt happy while strolling with him through a shopping mall, walking on campus, or in a private conversation. However, it might not be constructive to tell a friend you feel angry or disappointed in her in a public setting. Doing so could make the other person feel as though she's on display, which might arouse defensiveness, making it less likely that the two of you can have a constructive, honest online than in face-to-face communication. However, some people really dislike communicating about personal topics online. So, before choosing to discuss emotions in cyberspace, make sure the other person is comfortable with that.

Own Your Feelings

We noted the importance of owning your emotions in Chapter 4 and again in this chapter's discussion of ineffective ways of communicating feelings. Owning your feelings is so important to effective communication that the guideline bears repeating: Using *I* language to express feelings reminds us that we—not anyone else—have responsibility for our feelings. When we rely on *you* language ("You hurt me"), we risk misleading ourselves about our accountability for our emotions.

I language also reduces the potential for defensiveness by focusing on specific behaviors that we would like changed ("I feel hurt when you interrupt me") instead of criticizing another's basic self ("You are so rude"). Criticisms of specific behaviors are less likely to threaten a person's self-concept than criticisms of our personality or self (Cupach & Carlson, 2002). Thus, when we use *I* language to describe how we feel when another behaves in particular ways, the other person is more able to listen thoughtfully and respond sensitively to our expression of emotion.

Monitor Your Self-Talk

A fourth guideline is to monitor your self-talk. You'll recall from Chapter 2 that the ways we communicate with ourselves affect how we feel and act. **Self-talk** is communication with ourselves. We engage in self-talk when we do emotion work. We might say, "I shouldn't feel angry" or "I don't want to come across as a wimp by showing how much that hurt." Thus, we may talk ourselves out of or into feelings and out of or into ways of expressing feelings.

Psychologist Martin Seligman (1990) believes that "our thoughts are not merely reactions to events; they change what ensues" (p. 9). In other words, the thoughts we communicate to ourselves affect what happens in our lives. Self-talk can work for us or against us, depending on whether we manage it or it manages us. This point is stressed by Tom Rusk and Natalie Rusk in their book *Mind Traps* (1988). They point out that many people have self-defeating ideas that get in the way of their effectiveness and happiness. According to the Rusks, unless we learn to manage our feelings effectively, we cannot change patterns of behavior that leave us stuck in ruts, which can become self-fulfilling prophecies. Tuning in to your self-talk and learning to monitor it helps you manage your emotions.

Adopt a Rational-Emotive Approach to Feelings

Monitoring your self-talk allows you to appreciate the connections between thoughts and feelings. As Sally Planalp and Julie Fitness (2000) point out, "Cognition relies on emotion, emotion relies on cognition" (p. 732). Thus, how we think about feelings affects our feelings. The relationship between thoughts and feelings led a therapist named Albert Ellis to develop the **rational-emotive approach to feelings**. Ellis was known for his dramatic style and for pushing, pushing, pushing his clients. He firmly believed that people whom many clinicians diagnosed as neurotic were not neurotic but only suffering from irrational thinking. He often described this as stupid thinking on the part of smart people (Ellis, 1962; Ellis & Harper, 1975; Seligman, 1990).

The rational-emotive approach to feelings uses rational thinking and self-talk to challenge the debilitating thoughts about emotions that undermine healthy self-concepts and relationships. The rational-emotive approach to feelings proceeds through four steps, as shown in Figure 7.6.

The first step is to monitor your emotional reactions to events and experiences that distress you. Notice what's happening in your body; notice your nonverbal behavior. Does your stomach tighten? Are you clenching your teeth? Is your heart racing? Do you feel nauseated?

The second step is to identify the events and situations to which you have unpleasant responses. Look for commonalities between situations. For example, perhaps you notice that your heart races and your palms get clammy when you talk with professors, supervisors, and academic advisers, but you don't have these physiological responses when you interact with friends, coworkers, or people whom you supervise. You label your emotions as insecurity in the former cases and security in the latter ones. One commonality between the situations in which you feel insecure is the greater power of the other person. This could suggest that you feel insecure when talking with someone who has more power than you.

The third step is to tune in to your self-talk (Vocate, 1994). Listen to what's happening in your head. What is your *Me* saying? Is it telling you that you shouldn't feel certain emotions ("It's stupid to feel anxious," "Don't be a wimp")? Is it

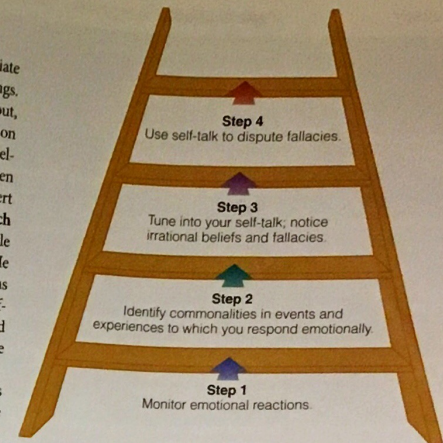


FIGURE 7.6
The Rational-Emotive
Approach to Feelings
Cengage Learning

Communication in Everyday Life

Career

Talking Yourself into—or out of—a Job

Imagine that you have a really important job interview coming up. It's kind of scary to think about, isn't it? Now, imagine that you are someone who is generally anxious in communication situations, and you have a big job interview coming up. That's even scarier.

Research shows that communication anxiety affects people before, during, and after job interviews (Ayres, Keereetaveep, Chen, & Edwards, 1998). People with communication anxiety fuel their anxiety with negative self-talk. In addition, these people create self-fulfilling prophecies that undermine their effectiveness in job interviews. Examples of negative self-talk that impairs interviewing competence are: "There's not a chance I'll get an offer," "I should have stayed home," or "There's no point in being here." When people repeat these messages to themselves before and during interviews, they tend to talk themselves into ineffectiveness.



Fallacy	Typical Effects
Perfectionism	Unrealistically low self-concept Stress Chronic dissatisfaction with self Jealousy and envy of others
Obsession with shoulds	Saps energy for constructive work Can make others defensive Can alienate self from feelings Unrealistic standards set the self up for failure
Oversgeneralization	Perceive one failure as typical of self Generalize inadequacies in some domains to total self
Taking responsibility for others	Thinking you are responsible for others' feelings Guilt for how others feel Deprives others of taking responsibility for selves
Helplessness	Believing that there is nothing you can do to change how you feel Resignation; depression
Fear of catastrophic failure	Extreme negative fantasies and scenarios of what could happen Inability to do things because of what might happen

FIGURE 7.7
Common Fallacies about Emotions
Cengage Learning

a raise, and he gets angry, he might fire me, and then I wouldn't have a job and couldn't stay in school. Without a degree, I have no future." This self-talk exemplifies the fear of catastrophic failure.

How might Tyrone dispute these fallacies? To challenge the perfectionism fallacy, he could say, "True, I'm not perfect, but I'm doing more and better work than the other employees hired at the same time I was." To dispute the fallacy of catastrophic failure, Tyrone might say to himself, "Well, he's not likely to fire me, because I do my job well, and training someone new would be a lot of trouble. And what if he does fire me? It's not like this is the only job in the world. I could get another job pretty fast." Instead of letting debilitating fallacies defeat us, we can use our self-talk to question and challenge the irrational thinking that undermines us.

Respond Sensitively When Others Communicate Emotions

A final guideline is to respond sensitively when others express their feelings to you. Learning to communicate your emotions effectively is only half the process of communicating about emotions. You also want to become skilled in listening and responding to others when they share feelings with you. This skill is important not only in personal relationships, but also in workplace relationships (Kanov, Maitlis, Worline, Dutton, Frost, & Lilus, 2004; Miller, 2007).

When others express feelings, our first tendency may be to respond with general statements, such as "Time heals all wounds," "You shouldn't feel bad," "You'll be fine," or "You'll feel better once you get this into perspective." Although such statements may be intended to provide reassurance, in effect they tell others that they aren't allowed to feel what they are feeling, or that they will be okay (right, normal) once they stop feeling what they are feeling.

telling you to deny your feelings ("Don't let on that you're insecure")? Is it telling you that you should feel something you don't ("You're supposed to feel confident and in command")? We need to identify and challenge debilitating ways of thinking about our emotions, and, by extension, ourselves. These irrational beliefs, or fallacies, hinder our ability to manage and express emotions effectively. Figure 7.7 lists some of the most common fallacies that sabotage realistic appraisals of ourselves and our feelings.

We can use our self-talk to challenge the debilitating fallacies. For example, assume that Tyrone has been working well at his job and thinks his boss should give him a raise. He tunes in to his self-talk (step 3) and hears himself saying, "Well, maybe I shouldn't ask for a raise, because, after all, I have made some mistakes. I could do better." This self-talk reflects the fallacy of perfectionism. Tyrone listens further to himself and hears this message: "If I ask him for

Another common mistake in responding to others' expression of feelings is to try to solve the other person's problem so the feelings will go away. Research suggests that the tendency to try to solve others' problems is more common in men than women (Swain, 1989; Tannen, 1990). Helping another solve a problem may be appreciated, but usually it's not the first support a person needs when she or he is expressing strong emotions. What many people need first is just the freedom to say what they are feeling and have those feelings accepted by others. Probably because of socialization, women are generally more skilled than men at providing solace, comfort, and emotional support (Basow & Gillihan, 2003; MacGeorge, Gillihan, Samter, & Clark, 2003; MacGeorge, Graves, Feng, & Burleson, 2004).

When others express emotions to you, it's supportive to begin by showing you are willing to discuss emotional topics (Steiner-Pappalardo & Gurung, 2002). Next, accept where they are as a starting place (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). You don't have to agree or approve to accept what another is feeling. While listening, it's helpful to interject a few minimal encouragers, which we discussed in Chapter 6. Saying "I understand" or "Go on" conveys that you accept the other person's feelings and want him or her to continue talking. It's appropriate to mention your own experiences briefly to show that you empathize. However, it's not supportive to refocus the conversation on you and your experiences.

Paraphrasing, which we discussed in Chapter 6, is another way to show that you understand what another feels. When you mirror back not just the content but the feeling of what another says, it confirms the other and what he or she feels. "So, it sounds as if you were really surprised by what happened. Is that right?" "What I'm hearing is that you are more hurt than angry. Does that sound right to you?" These examples of paraphrasing listening actively.

The guidelines we've identified may not always make emotional communication easy and comfortable. However, following them will help you understand and express your feelings and respond effectively when others discuss theirs. To practice expressing emotions effectively, and to identify ineffective expressions of emotion, go to your Online Resources for *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters* and complete the activity "Express Emotions Effectively" under the resources for Chapter 7.

Everyday Application

To take a test to measure your anger level, complete the Everyday Applications activity "Managing Anger" at the end of this chapter.

CourseMate

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we explored the complex world of emotions and our communications about them. We considered different views of what's involved in experiencing and expressing emotions. From our review of theories, we learned that emotions have physiological, perceptual, linguistic, and social dimensions. We also examined some of the reasons people don't express feelings or express them ineffectively. The final focus of our attention was on guidelines for effective communication about emotions.

We identified six guidelines that can help us be effective in expressing our feelings and responding to the feelings of others. Because these guidelines are critical to interpersonal communication, we'll close the chapter by restating them:

1. Identify your emotions.
2. Choose how to communicate your emotions.
3. Own your feelings.
4. Monitor your self-talk.
5. Adopt a rational-emotive approach to emotions.
6. Respond sensitively when others communicate emotions.