

Deconstructing and Reconstructing Emotions: A Transformative Coaching Tool from New

Emotion Research



Nicolò F. Bernardi



Jim Gavin

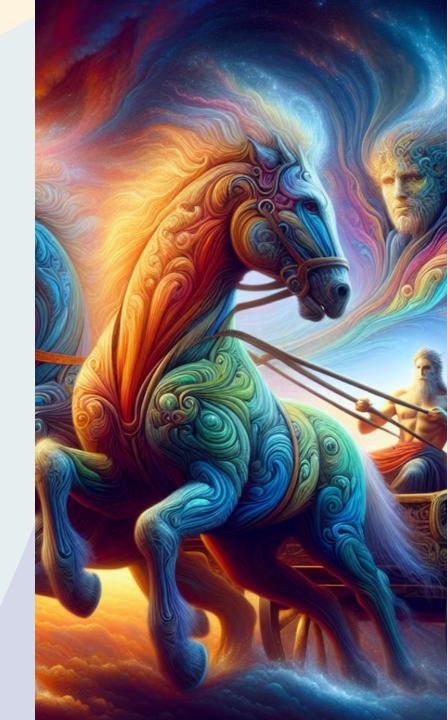






Myths about emotions

- Hard-wired into the brain
- Based on "ancient" and "mammalian" brain circuitries
- Already present at birth
- Universally experienced, expressed and recognized
- Triggered by internal or external events



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HOW EMOTIONS ARE MADE



The Secret Life of the Brain

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The theory of constructed emotion: an active inference account of interoception and categorization

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Abstrac

The science of emotion has been using folk psychology categories derived from philosophy to search for the brain basis of emotion. The last two decades of neuroscience research have brought us to the brink of a paradigm shift in understanding the workings of the brain, however, setting the stage to revolutionize our understanding of what emotions are and how they work. In this article, we begin with the structure and function of the brain, and from there deduce what the biological basis of emotions might be. The answer is a brain-based, computational account called the theory of constructed emotion.



Constructing emotions

Categorizing experiences

Grouping bodily
experiences,
context, memories,
and predictions

Social construction

Deriving categories from shared cultural "recipes"

Unconscious Process

Automatic
categorization gives
rise to sense of
emotions
"happening to me"



A new view of emotions

No Fundamental Distinction

The brain doesn't distinguish between emotions or between thoughts and emotions.

Variation Is the Norm

Different cultures construct emotions differently.

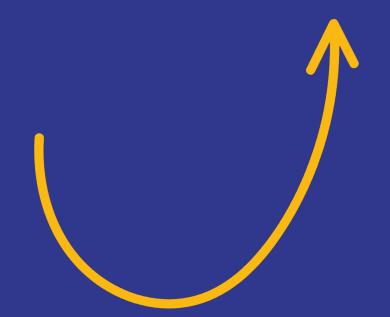
Each of us constructs emotions differently depending on goals and context.



Constructing emotions: A novel coaching tool

1 - Deconstruction

Breaking down a challenging emotion into its structural components.



3 - Reconstruction

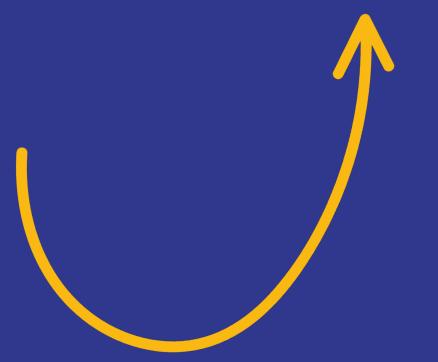
Re-assembling the components of the experience into a different and goal-aligned emotion.

2 - Landing in the body

Exploring the whole range of experiences at the level of body sensations.

1 - Deconstruction

- Topic
- Goal for the session
- Emotions
- Meaning
- Function of the emotion
- Predictions
- Memories



3 - Reconstruction

- Vision of success
- Link to body sensations
- Meaning
- Function of the emotion
- Predictions
- Memories
- Action step
- Learnings

2 - Landing in the body

- Initial pattern of sensations
- Dynamic change of sensations
- Other sensations

Try a brief version!

Think about a challenge you're facing these days...

1 – How does this situation make you feel?

2 – What is that like in your body? ...mindfully observe it for a bit...

3 – What's helpful about what you are sensing?

A demonstration





Key takeaways

- 1. Emotions aren't hardwired, they're constructed categories
- 2. What we call distinct emotions are social realities, not physical ones
- 3. Construction = opportunity for reconstruction
- 4. Body sensations are foundational
- 5. Three-step process: Deconstruct → Process as body sensations → Reconstruct

Please join us after the session for a lively discussion, feedback and Q&A!

