

Men and Their Emotions: An Introduction

Men have feelings too!

According to the article, *Contrary to Popular Belief, Men Have Emotions Too*, males are no less of an emotional creature than females. However, I believe that men who learn how to manage their emotions will become more Christ-like.

So this next series of posts will outline what I believe are the various emotions God Buddies must understand as godly men.

First let's define our emotions.

Emotions Defined

According to Wikipedia, the word "Emotion" is defined as *"biological states associated with the nervous system brought on by neurophysiological changes variously associated with thoughts, feelings, behavioral responses, and a degree of pleasure or displeasure."*

It was adapted from the French word *émouvoir*, which means "to stir up".

Wikipedia goes on that, from a purely mechanistic perspective,

“Emotions can be defined as a positive or negative experience that is associated with a particular pattern of physiological activity.”

In other words, emotions are a biological reaction and state of mind deriving from our circumstances, mood, or relationships with others.

So before we learn to manage these biological reactions, we need to know about the types of emotions.

Exactly How Many Emotions?

The theory of emotions has dominated discussions from Ancient Greece to the beginning of the twentieth century. Some of the greatest classical philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and others understood emotions to involve our feelings.

But there is confusion about how many emotions we have.

As early as the 4th century B.C., Aristotle attempted to identify the core emotions in humans when he proposed 14 distinct **facial expressions**: fear, confidence, anger, friendship, calm, enmity, shame, shamelessness, pity, kindness, envy, indignation, emulation, and contempt.

The first-century collection of Chinese texts called the *Book of Rites* also gave the set of “basic” or “primary” emotions or the seven ‘**feelings of men**’ as joy, anger, sadness, fear,

love, disliking, and liking.

In 1872, Charles Darwin theorized that emotions were **innate and evolved with a functional purpose** in his publication, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. While he did not fully define them, Darwin's short-list included five: fear, anger, sadness, happiness, and love.

In 1890, American philosopher and psychologist, William James proposed just four basic emotions: fear, grief, love, and rage, based on **bodily reactions**.

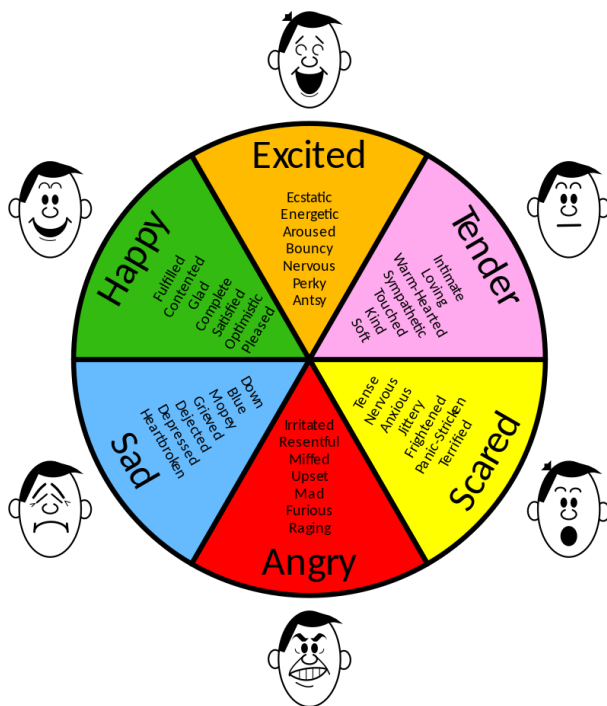


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Nearly a century later, Robert Plutchick, professor emeritus at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, grouped emotions into **four pairs of polar opposites** (joy-sadness, anger-fear, trust-distrust, surprise-anticipation). He later expanded those into a wheel-like diagram with eight derivative emotions

that overlapped and bled into the next like hues on a color wheel to form secondary and complementary emotional “colors.”

In 1988, American psychologist and professor Paul Ekman expanded the list of basic emotions with **positive and negative emotions** by including Amusement, Contempt, Contentment, Embarrassment, Excitement, Guilt, Pride in achievement, Relief, Satisfaction, Sensory pleasure, and Shame.

More recent research by the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology at the University of Glasgow suggests the range of human emotion comes back to only **four “basic” emotions**: happy, sad, afraid/surprised, and angry/disgusted.

So regardless of the actual number, my point is that most men are not even sure how many emotions they have, much less know how to manage them!

Gender Differences

I won't go into detail but we all know that neuroscience proves women and men's brains are different. However, most generally agree that women express their emotions more openly and verbally than men.

But this is based on socialized gender roles and not biology. You know, Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus theory.

There is also the nature vs nurture debate about whether a person's genes or the environment determine behavior

throughout a person's life.

All that said, men feel the same level and intensity of feelings but we process our emotions differently. We tend to either suppress or over-express our emotions, especially with anger, which men tend to express outwardly, particularly toward strangers.

Again, is this a social construct?

The List of Emotions

After reading several articles about the various types of emotions, here is the list that I believe is the most difficult for men to manage:

1. Anger
2. Fear (especially of fear of failure)
3. Sadness
4. Happiness
5. Pridefulness (Ego & Power)
6. Guilt (Shame)
7. Anxiety
8. Boredom (Aloneness)

For this entire series, I hope to format the posts in 3-parts: the emotion, the reaction, and the response. I will define the emotion, describe its environmental and physiological reaction, and then provide some biblical context to suggest the appropriate response.

So stay tuned to the next several posts to learn more about each of these emotions and some guidance about how we can learn to control and respond to them as we grow into more godly men.

Up Next: Why We Need to Manage Our Emotions