

What's Intelligent about Emotion?

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Emotions are the link between conscious and sub-conscious. The archived database of the sub-conscious is so voluminous that it would confuse the conscious thinking neuron. Hidden files hold information about dearest memories, darkest fears, deep-rooted to frivolous prejudices, all the values we live and stand for and all the incidental memories that have taught us lessons covered in a folder named 'Experience'. The number of files in use by the processor neurons at any one time is but a minute fraction of the whole.

While making important professional decisions one might have to go against a hidden value (like honesty) nestling deep in the systems folder. The sub-conscious never sleeps and is aware of this anomaly that conflicts with your value system. It sends out a signal in the form of a negative emotion and you find yourself dragging your feet over the decision, unsure about taking action. Prejudices can be powerful enough to have the same effect. On the other hand when our thoughts are in tune with our values we feel energized and happy to act.

This information system is vital to the slow and bumbling thinking brain, giving it just enough information to alert or support it instead of swamping and overwhelming it. Some of us have been taught to disregard feelings and ignore hunches. With practice we have almost perfected this isolation and the wealth of information residing in the sub-conscious is a black-box. It can be accessed and decoded by others who are professionally trained to do so, but we remain clueless and poorer for it.

The new trend is to acknowledge emotion and manage them well, or else they can hijack the thought processes. Regard them as vital and life-saving and learn not to disregard emotions of others. Think of emotions as a fundamental necessity like the air we breathe. When we are starved of air we suspend all other activity and gasp. Similarly, if emotional needs are unmet, the brain becomes subservient to that overriding need and steers all activity towards fulfilling that need even though the conscious brain remains unaware.

In the workplace people gather after fulfilling some of their physiological needs like food and water. Here we encounter the second level of needs -the need to belong, the need for esteem and recognition. If we ignore these in ourselves and others we are surprised at the way people respond. Get smart and exercise empathy to be effective in interpersonal interaction. The intelligence of emotions is the one that teaches us to first lead ourselves and then leads others. The poise of an emotionally regulated person radiates brightly and others look up to him, trust and rely on him, and want to keep working alongside.