

FINDING YOUR WAY IN THE EMOTIONAL FOG

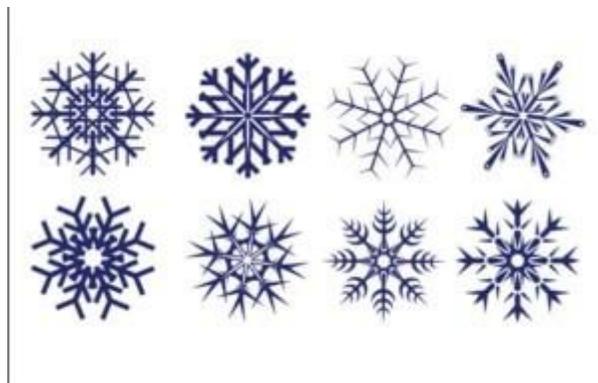


Intent: Dear Reader, in this blog I will describe briefly the efforts I have made to design the "Emotional Compass". At the bottom of this page, I am providing a link to download this useful tool. Simple Instructions are provided below which will guide you in exploring your emotions more effectively. I hope you will find this tool as useful as I have. Greg

ROLE OF EMOTIONS

Our emotions affect every act we perform; every plan we implement; every thought we have. Without emotions we would not have memories. Emotion is the pressure exerted upon our attentions' pen, that fills the tablet of our minds with important marks to be retraced when the need arises. The stronger the emotion wrapped around an event, the clearer the script for our memories to be readily accessed.

*Memories alone have little to do with the **truth** of our experience and have more to do with the emotive impression we have attributed to our experience. Just as each snowflake differs in pattern, shape and density, so it is with our emotive impressions. However, in so much as each snowflake may share similarities to other snowflakes, the impressions of events can share characteristics common to that of others if the experiences have a common developmental event history.*



EMOTIONS AND MOOD

Though the repertoire of Emotions we possess may be similar, they may vary with amplitude, duration and onset activity which defines our mood. You may recall someone from your history or current life routines that has a fluctuating and rapidly changing emotional reactivity. Such individuals seem to suddenly shift in their emotional state without warning. They are often described as "moody".

SHADES OF EMOTION

Now there is a characteristic about our emotions that is important for this blog.

*First, emotions are **dynamic**. They are never fixed at one place very long. It grows in amplitude and wanes. It shifts actively like a clouds shadow glides across the ground on a windy day.*

*The second important point is that **there is no such thing as a pure emotion**. Yes, we are all taught about the primary emotions, but this has very little contribution in understanding the moment to moment variation of emotions we experience. In other words, we can never be only happy, only sad, only scared, etc. I thought about this point often throughout my life. But it was only about 20 years ago that I first began to really grasp what this means as I tried to unravel this mystery.*

Allow me to unfold this package in front of you by using some very clear examples.

Think about a time when you were afraid and angry.

Think about a time when you were sad and angry.

Think about a time when you were scared and happy.

Think about a time when you were embarrassed and sad,

Think about a time when you were embarrassed and scared.

*By now you are probably grasp the point I am making. You see, with each sentence I described two emotions. Each sentence probably struck a particular chord allowing you to access distinctly different memories. This seems to evidence that our **memories** and experiences are not accessed through a singular emotion, but through a unique combination of emotions that weaved the event into a particular address.*

Given the necessity of this potpourri of emotional ingredients, doesn't it just make sense that our emotions are dynamically interacting and not static primary agents?

THE EMOTIONAL PARADOX

Sometimes emotions cast shades in almost a competitive manner. Conflicts in our [#relationships](#) tend to add a "spice" to what would otherwise be a colorless life. Through the Cultural Arts people often find an appreciation in the struggle of contradictory emotional battles. The shared stage of [#love](#) &

hate, [#depression](#) and joy, defeat and triumph appeals to the those that relate to this conflict on a very personal level. Classical music and famous paintings often speak to these inner conflicts where words are anemic to describe.

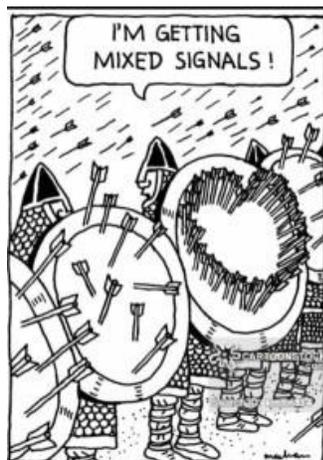
In order to underscore this point, consider the Symphony number 5 of Shostakovich.



from the symphony's opening battle between the lower and the upper strings and its soaring melodies, to the sounds of hopeless oppression and finally to the triumph of the human spirit, Shostakovich brilliantly captures the conflicting moods of a time, place and people.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2014/11/05/361810167/power-and-struggle-in-a-soviet-symphony>)

Just by listening to the opening movement, one can be stirred by the coexistence of joy, pride, sorrow and despair, all at the same moment.



Another example in music is the memorable work of Hector Berlioz, in Symphony Fantastic. In the 3rd movement, you are attending a Ball, where the music invites joy and fellowship dynamically. But as the music continues a background theme representing a longing for a missing companion, become skillfully interwoven. This soon becomes the overwhelming theme as the attended Ball gets muted into a weak background, evidencing feelings of loss overpowering the joyful setting.

How many of us have "been there, done that, got the T-shirt"? After a loss or heartbreak, you attend a joyous event, but the element of sorrow seems woven into the experience.

There seems to be limitless combinations of emotional interplay in life, it is no wonder that so many times we feel so confused about what we really feel.

This became the puzzle that really captured my interest. I wanted to discover a way to represent the dynamic interplay of emotions through a more concrete way.

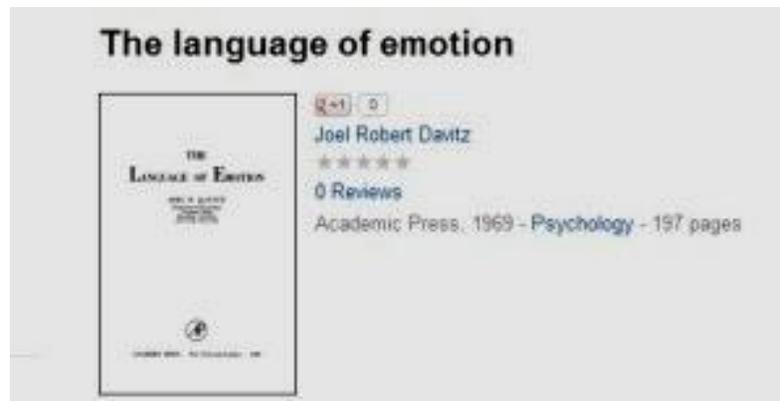
I needed to represent this activity more clearly in order to explore it more effectively. Then it hit me.

"Emotion is more like a shade in the experience... or a shadow..and mixed with routine mood states could overlap, and shift and change..Just like the shaded reflection of the moon. The emotion states could overlap each other, while equally having the capacity to shift through this type of model.



OK, so after deciding to use a rounded model for my base design, next was to decide where to assign the emotions; how to provide an address (xyz) for the spectrum with limited distortion to the group as it is localized to a region on a spherical object?

Then I remembered data about comparing emotions I had once found in the book titled "Language of Emotions" , by [Joel Davitz, PhD](#).



I was able to find the resource and then factor in the data provided by Joel Davitz, PhD. where he discussed descriptive terms used to label emotions. He explored how emotional experiences correlated with self-reports of a large population sample, based upon particular emotionally charged situations.

For example, let's say you stood in front of a large crowd and delivered an eloquent talk. But about halfway through the talk, you happened to look down and saw your fly was open or blouse undone. Now, given this situation, how would you describe your feelings and what word would I use to label this feeling?

Well, I know I would be uncomfortable; feel like moving away from the crowd, and feel heightened energy. In a survey provided, it seems many people agreed with these terms. The more agreement; the stronger the correlation and the more confidence one could have in the common experience. There was a also a strong agreement that "embarrassment "is a great label for this experienced emotion.

Dr. Joel Datvitz worked with this type of research extensively and provided a variety of situations that yielded a high degree of agreement with identified terms. He then summarized his findings by sorting terms in the most commonly described categories. They are as follows:

Category : Subtype

Movement: Toward, Against, Away Energy High, Med, Low

Comfort: Comfort, Discomfort

Security: Tension, Enhancement, Confidence

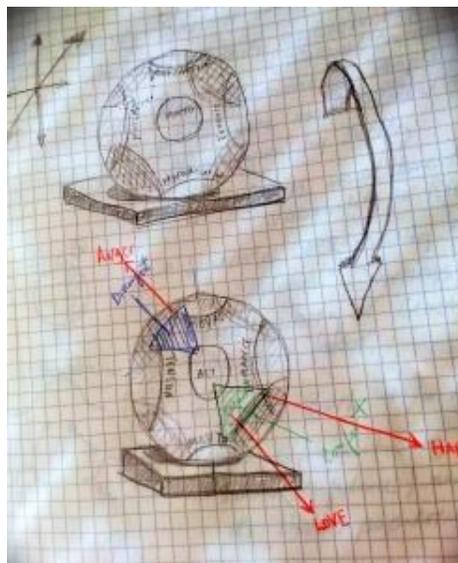
Dr, Davitz them listed the 50 most commonly agreed terms for each situation, and compared them to agreed experiences of the study subjects.

My Personal Sketchbook-

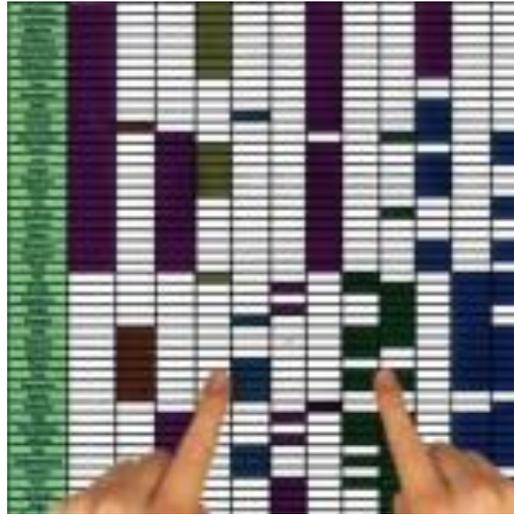
Knowing that what I really needed was a way to transform his data into three axis (x, y, z), I compiled his data and used the most clear & most commonly agreed descriptions of these emotions.

For example, I grouped data from Movement and Energy and sorted them on a radial spectrum. This gave me the first and second axis. I then did the same with comfort and Energy level. I compiled a sort and then gave the data weight (based on strength of agreement). After summarizing the data, I was ready to plot respective address each emotion had in relation to other emotions.

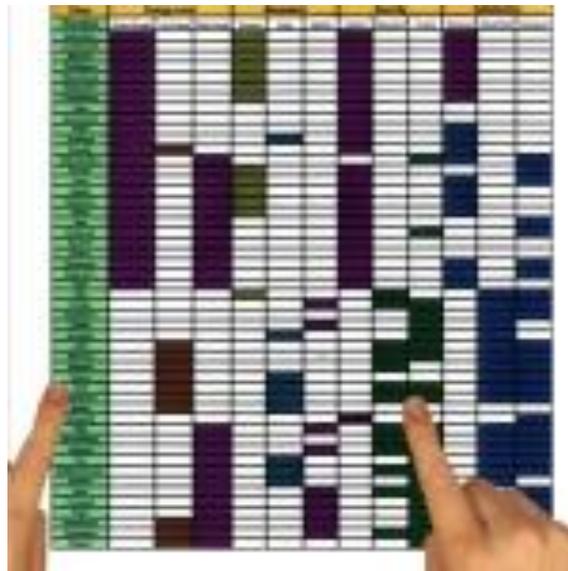
This provided a fascinating presentation of emotions based on energy, movement (social) and comfort level.



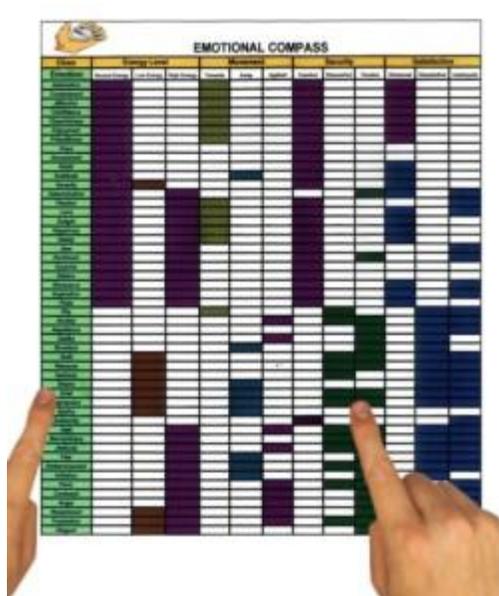
Now since you need at least two categories to narrow down the emotions list, let's choose "Discomfort" in the Security column.



3. Now we are ready to list possible emotions that are tagged as "Movement Away" and "Discomfort".



Look to the left edge column. The first emotion we see with both tags is "grief". The next is "depression", and so on. As you continue down the list you will see other possible emotions that are tagged similarly.



I hope you will benefit from this tool as I have.

Greg