

TOK WOK CHEAT SHEET: The emotions

TOK Definition/Explanation:

The word 'emotion' is derived from the Latin verb *movere* meaning 'to move'. In TOK we shall be using it in the broad sense to include such things as feelings, passion and moods. (Van de Lagemaat, 2015: 173)

Key Related Vocabulary:

- ❑ **Primary emotions** - according to psychologists there are six basic or universal emotions which are common to all cultures: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise and disgust
- ❑ **Secondary emotions** - or 'social' emotions. Just as primary colours can be combined to form a wide range of secondary colours, so secondary emotions can be thought of as blends of primary emotions. For example, disappointment is a mixture of sadness and surprise. Commonly mentioned secondary emotions include: admiration, anxiety, awe, despair, embarrassment, envy, gratitude, guilt, jealousy, pity, pride, regret and shame. Secondary emotions are shaped by language and culture. Without language we would probably be unable to distinguish between anxiety, fear and terror, or between irritation, anger and rage.
- ❑ **Emotional contagion** - the tendency for emotions such as anger or fear to spread quickly through a group of people
- ❑ **Negativity bias** - the bias that leads us to focus more on negative things than on positive things
- ❑ **Emotive language** - highly charged language which is designed to arouse people's emotions
- ❑ **Stoicism** - a philosophy of life which advocates the control and subjugation of one's emotions
- ❑ **Apathy** - a state of mind advocated by Stoic philosophers which literally means 'without passion'
- ❑ **Wise nature fallacy** - the fallacious (based on a mistaken belief) assumption that because something is natural it is therefore good.

Key Concepts Explained:

James-Lange theory - (named after William James, 1842-1910 and Carl Lange, 1832-1900, the two psychologists who developed it) according to the James-Lange theory, the emotions are essentially physical in nature, and bodily changes come before, and cause, emotional changes. However, the James-Lange theory ignores the fact that our emotions have a mental as well as a physical aspect. Although emotions are closely connected with our bodies, they can also be affected by our beliefs. This suggests a change in our beliefs can lead to a change in the corresponding emotion. For example, if you think someone has insulted you, you are likely to become angry; but if it turns out to be a misunderstanding, your anger will subside.

Emotional intelligence - Since our emotions look inward as well as outward, they can give us knowledge about ourselves as well as the world. The ability to understand our own and other people's emotions is part of what is known as **emotional intelligence**. This concept has deep historical roots, but it has been popularised in recent years by the American psychologist Daniel Goleman (1946-) who suggests that EQ may be more important for a happy and successful life than IQ.

Related Real Life Situations:

- ❑ [Is architecture an art or a science?](#) Master architect, Daniel Libeskind discusses how emotion can help to shape the human experience of a building.

TOK WOK Cheat Sheet

- ❑ [To what extent is emotion a universal concept?](#) “Insects and other animals might be able to feel fear similar to the way humans do, say scientists, after a study that could one day teach us about our own emotions. To find out whether flies are able to feel emotion, researchers broke down feelings into their smallest blocks, and then tried to find ways of studying whether the flies were exhibiting those behaviours.”
- ❑ [How important to ethical decision making is empathy?](#) The art of imaginatively stepping into another person’s shoes and seeing the world from their perspective is, it would seem, a most valuable and valued twenty-first century asset. Not so, says [Yale psychologist Paul Bloom](#), leading the counter-charge against empathy’s popularity surge. It is, he claims, a poor moral guide, lacking the power to inspire us to act on, say, child poverty or humanitarian disasters.

Related Knowledge Questions:

- ❑ What role, if any, do the emotions play in the pursuit of mathematical knowledge?
- ❑ Do the arts provoke emotions or purge them?
- ❑ How does the expression of emotions vary across cultures and how can this cause misunderstanding?
- ❑ How can emotional prejudices bias scientific research?
- ❑ Is ethics more a matter of the heart than the head?
- ❑ Why is difficult to imagine and predict our own emotional behaviour?

Brief overview of how this WOK is used in Areas of Knowledge:

HOW/WHEN DOES IT HELP CREATE KNOWLEDGE?	WHY/WHEN SHOULD WE BE WARY OF USING IT TO CREATE KNOWLEDGE?
Emotions are relevant to the search for knowledge because they provide us with the energy to engage in intellectual activity. For example, what often sustains people in their work is the <i>passion</i> for their subject.	We typically judge risks by consulting our feelings rather than statistics. Many people are scared of flying but you are much more likely to die in a car on the way to the airport than you are in a plane. Therefore, how do you explain the irrational fear of flying?
The psychologist, Antonio Damasio’s (1944-) speculates that emotions help us to make rational decisions about things by narrowing down our options so that we can choose between a manageable number of them. They are a positive source of knowledge which contributes actively to our understanding of the world.	Four of the primary emotions mentioned earlier are negative (sadness, fear, anger, disgust) and only one is positive (happiness). This suggests that our emotions are biased towards the negative. There are many examples of <i>negativity bias</i> . For example, students are more upset by bad grades than they are pleased by good ones!
Some people claim to know that just as we can come to know facts through thinking about the world, so we can come to know values through feelings. For example, it could be argued that gratitude alerts us to kindness, anger or injustice, pity to suffering, guilt to wrong-doing, and disgust to perversion.	We should be careful about blindly trusting emotions as a source of moral knowledge. To trust them on the grounds that they are natural would be to commit what we might call the <i>wise nature fallacy</i> . Just because something is natural does not mean that it is good.

TOK WOK Cheat Sheet