

Difference Between Emotions and Feelings

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Emotions and feelings are often spoken of as being one and the same, and it's easy to get them mixed up and confused. Although related, there is a difference between emotions and feelings, and they both serve us in their own unique way.

“Emotions” can be tracked through various brain scanning techniques involving biological systems such as neural structures, chemistry, electric impulses, brain responses etc. Emotions are also understood in physical terms such as body language and observable behavioral patterns. These functions comply with the needs of science that demand measurable, empirical evidence.

Now, if you look up “feelings” in a Western, contemporary psychology reference book, the term is either missing or defined as emotions. The reason for this is “feelings” are abstract. Carl Jung and many others, were very much aware of this difference (they also followed the Vienna schools regarding psychiatry). However, with the pressure of the American Psychoanalytic Associations demanding physical evidence, feelings had to be academically ignored or defined as emotions.

So, why should you be concerned with the difference between emotions and feelings anyway? Because the way you behave in this world, is the end result of your feelings and emotions. Learning the difference can provide you with a better understanding of not only yourself, but of the people around you.

What are Emotions?

According to Carl Jung, **objects draw and invoke emotions**. This is a natural phenomenon, and is essential for human survival. When you encounter an unknown, you may have a range of sensations such as: curiosity or fear. When you give that unknown a name, it becomes a significant symbol of meaning. It is through this process that emotions become attached to every object in the universe. When some object is given a name, it not only becomes a “thing”, it also becomes something of “meaning”. On a daily basis these emotions can be as subtle as: “like”, “dislike” or “ambivalence”. Even a state of ambivalence is nevertheless a state of meaning. Therefore, to put it simply: **Nothing, is ever meaningless**.

Emotions offer the sense of life itself. Emotions deliver the message: “The external world (beyond your body) matters”. It delivers a sense of life as an abstract, metaphysical idea. Art is a solid example of this. A work of art represents the artist's own emotional perspective of life. What you value in life, and the choices you make are the results of your likes and dislikes, understood by their emotional attachment.

Your sense of life is an emotional form, in which your world experience finds value, your reason for existence and defines your relationship with other things that exists. Emotions are an abstract, metaphysical state of mind; they are essential impressions of the world, and your

relationship with it. Emotions establish your attitude toward reality, and provide your drive for all of life's pleasures.

Additionally, these emotions are connected to your biological systems, and are designed to alert you of danger, or to draw you to something pleasurable. If you did not possess emotions, you would carelessly walk right up to a lion in the Savanna wilderness. If starving, you would not have the motivation needed to climb a tree, and pick it's fruit to eat.

Protection of Body Identity Through Emotion.

To illustrate this principle, let's use the encounter with a lion in the Savanna wilderness.

Awareness. You must first be aware of an object's presence. Your awareness of the lion is an emotional eliciting stimulus.

1. **Body Change.** These changes are in the form of innate body signals. In this example it is fight or flight. Adrenaline begins coursing throughout the bloodstream, your muscles are ready for action. Your heart rate and breathing also increases.
2. **Interpretation.** You must interpret the correct reaction in order to preserve your identity. Based upon all the available information in your surroundings, as well as any previous learned knowledge or skill, will you take flight, or will you stay and fight?
3. **Action.** Now you execute your decision.

Change of Context, Change of Emotion.

Imagine the same scenario except now, you are in the zoo, and there are bars between you and the lion. Your sensations may range anywhere from curiosity, to appreciation or admiration over the beauty of the animal. More than likely, fear would not be present. Your new awareness now includes the bars, which provide the emotional idea of separation, and protection.

Protection of Mind Identity Through Emotion.

To illustrate, imagine that you found a love letter in your spouses coat from a co-worker in the office.

1. **Awareness.** You become aware that a life altering situation exists by reading the content of the letter. Your awareness of a "love letter" to your spouse is an emotional eliciting stimulus.
2. **Body Change.** You feel your body react. Adrenaline begins coursing throughout your bloodstream, your muscles tense up for action. Your heart rate and breathing drastically increase. You begin to perspire, and feel sick to your stomach.
3. **Interpretation.** You must interpret the correct reaction in order to preserve your identity. You begin to process the situation cognitively, drawing on all of your knowledge that applies to the moment. You become angry due to the betrayal. Based upon your personal beliefs, life goals, and the degree of importance of the betrayal, you make a decision on how to confront the situation.
4. **Action.** Now you execute your decision.

Change of Context, Change of Emotion.

Now, imagine that you discover that the letter was in fact given to your spouse by a distraught co-worker, who found it in their spouses coat. Your interpretation of the meaning of the letter has now changed. Anger gives way to relief.

Your sense of identity is physical but at the same time mental. Both of the above example illustrate how emotions serve as a trigger to ensure survival of self, but it is the second example that illustrates a far more important point.

You have a sense of mental identity in the form of unchanging beliefs that you identify with. It is this cluster of ideas that are essential in order to preserve your sense of "self". It is the: "who you are" in the world that you must protect at all costs.

As a spouse living in a particular culture and economic environment, you must preserve the dignity of self as defined by that culture. Dignity comes in the form of an Authentic state of wholeness, with all its frailties and inadequacies. Regardless of the errors you make in life, you must maintain a sense of a single self.

Finally, **emotions are intense but temporary**. To have them be any other way would be far too stressful on your body! The constant stress would eventually lead to some very serious physical, and mental ailments.

What are Feelings?

As the objects in your world induce emotions within you, they are collected in the subconscious and begin to accumulate. This is especially so when similar events are repeatedly experienced. Ultimately they form a final emotional conclusion about life, how to live it, and more importantly, how to survive physically and mentally in a world of chaos. When this happens a feeling is born. In this way, **emotions serve as a sort of, "Feelings Factory"**.

Once feelings are established, they often feed back into your emotions to produce the appropriate result to insure survivability.

Imagine you observe your child approaching an electrical outlet with a paperclip in hand. Your *sustained feeling of love* for your child, will generate the *temporary emotion of fear*, and you quickly act by yelling "No!" and swatting your child's hand away from the outlet. Perhaps your child responds with surprise and anger, and defiantly attempts to insert the paperclip into the outlet again. Your *sustained feeling of love* for your child, may generate the *temporary emotion of anger* because your child is expressing stubbornness, and disrespect to your attempts at preserving his or her life.

Here is another example. Imagine that a professional snake handler offers you an opportunity to hold a snake. You may project the "Joy", of touching the snake, because you really want the experience and the sensations that go along with it. However, you have difficulty moving past the "Fear", of potentially getting bit. Your solution? To approach the situation with great caution. Caution is a sustainable feeling that is the balance point between two temporary, emotional potentialities. Namely, that of "Fear", and "Joy".

Feelings are products of emotions. But unlike short term, intense emotions, feelings are: **low-key, stable and sustained over time.**

The Differences of Emotions and Feelings in a Nutshell:

Feelings:	Emotions:
Feelings tell us “how to live.”	Emotions tell us what we “like” and “dislike.”
Feelings state: “There is a right and wrong way to be.”	Emotions state: “There are good and bad actions.”
Feelings state: “your emotions matter.”	Emotions state: “The external world matters.”
Feelings establish our long term attitude toward reality.	Emotions establish our initial attitude toward reality.
Feelings alert us to anticipated dangers and prepares us for action.	Emotion alert us to immediate dangers and prepares us for action
Feelings ensure long-term survival of self. (body and mind.)	Emotions ensure immediate survival of self. (body and mind.)
Feelings are Low-key but Sustainable.	Emotions are Intense but Temporary.
Happiness: is a feeling.	Joy: is an emotion.
Worry: is a feeling.	Fear: is an emotion.
Contentment: is a feeling.	Enthusiasm: is an emotion.
Bitterness: is a feeling.	Anger: is an emotion.
Love: is a feeling.	Lust: is an emotion.
Depression: is a feeling.	Sadness: is an emotion.

What Does This All Mean For You Personally?

The difference between emotions and feelings is crucial to your personal growth. If you are dissatisfied in your life, know that there is really nothing wrong with you, and there is nothing to fix. Rather, there is only something to discover about yourself. Authentic Systems can aid you in that discovery. The uniqueness of your feelings can provide you with a new understanding, that can lead to many positive changes for you.