

## Personality and Emotions

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PERSONALITY AND EMOTIONS

SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION OF EMOTIONS, WHILE RELATIVELY NEW, HAS MADE GREAT PROGRESS IN RECENT YEARS. THIS FILM IS AN INTRODUCTION INTO THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY.

*This is an age of speed, a nervous age that keeps our emotions stirring.*

*All of us, young or old, schooled or illiterate, are endowed by nature with the ability to live a life filled with many kinds of emotions.*

*But whether we will show them in an uncontrolled outburst, whether we will act in some antisocial way, whether we swallow our upsets or deny them even to ourselves, we cannot do away with them. They are part of our personality.*

*We inherited many confusing and conflicting ideas about emotions, some of which still linger on. But today, people in distress need not conceal their emotional problems anymore, they can find help and counsel from a new group of specialists: psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and the modern religious counselors. In this film, we're not concerned with clinically disordered emotions, but with everyday experiences involving emotions. For these, we must start at the beginning with the newborn child.*

*Welcome young man, welcome to life. For you as for all children, life begins as an emotional experience. Obviously, this new and strange world comes as a shock to you. Though, just one- minute old, you are a personality, with a name, an identity by which we recognize you as an individual. Look at him, this new individual is well equipped for all the physiological functions of living, and for emotional responses to events around him. From his first breath, he is capable of being happy or unhappy and can make others around him happy or unhappy.*

*How he learns to use his inborn capacities will largely depend on what this new world offers him, how he, as a child, will experience his relations with others. For emotions are not learned deliberately like skills or facts. The baby will develop them through living with others, by responding to those who handle him, speak to him, comfort him or provoke him, by reacting emotionally to those he sees and touches, to those whose songs he hears.*

*And so as the child grows, he will learn many new things, some from books and teachers but probably much more from trying, testing, accepting and rejecting, in other words from living with others. From*

*the beginning, the child literally feels his way through life, loving, hating, worrying, trying to find a place for himself in this new world of grownups. From day to day, the basic emotional responses tie in with one new experience after another, with cue after cue, with the child's own responses to new situations and new cues.*

*As an example, an infant experiences a strong emotional shock when the pediatrician gives him his first injection. Several signals may connect with this unpleasant experience, such as the specific odor of the office, the color of the doctor's jacket, the sight of his instruments. Later, when the mother brings the child to a doctor's office, the mere smell of it may provoke the same responses that were part of the earlier experience of pain, and these in turn may release emotional responses of crying and rebelling in defense against the anticipated pain. As the child matures, she can tell herself that the visit to the doctor's office is important for her health. Therefore, she can soothe her responses by reasoning, which means that she has learned to control an emotional reaction through signals given to herself by reasoning.*

*In this daily routine, the child continuously learns about life. Memories of many of his early experiences may fade and seem forgotten, but they are rarely completely erased. Although he may not be conscious of them, they are often operating in his later life, as the forgotten childhood. Where a young infant's drive has been kept low, where parents paid attention to his early requests, the child easily progresses to the next developmental step: exploration, striving to achieve some gratifications by himself. This struggling to achieve gratifications by himself is part of the preparation for later life. But even at the height of achievements, it will be the childhood pattern of his emotional experiences that will largely govern his relations with others. That's why it is so important that he learn to manage emotions honestly as he develops physically.*

*Where did a helpless infant get this capacity for emotions? Just as he could breathe, eat and digest food from the time he opened his eyes, he could also respond with emotions.*

*Let's try to visualize what goes on inside the human body, when pain or danger threatens. The adrenal glands release hormones into the blood. The heart pumps the blood carrying these chemical messengers to all parts of the body. In the liver, they release an emergency ration of stored sugar into the bloodstream. The heartbeat accelerates. The blood pressure goes up. Breathing becomes faster. From this point of view, we may describe emotions as primitive biological reactions to painful or threatening stimulations from outside, intense responses involving the whole body. From the very beginning, the human baby is equipped with this emotional defense set up. As his experiences grow, his emotional responses become more varied.*

*Here is a boy just beginning to explore the world, with curiosity, with eagerness. But the road of exploration is not smooth. He's unable to handle his blocks, and so he's frustrated and disturbed. Sister's too young to help. Here comes Mother. The toy hammer is a good release for his emotional and physical reactions and soon, the blocks are forgotten. Someday, he'll be able to meet such frustrating incidents without crying. From day to day, his play experiences are increasing, not without occasional upsets. These are his sister's crayons, and here's Lynn to claim her right.*

*"Those are mine. You bad, bad boy!"*

*This is a familiar scene and a very significant one. Observe how Lynn use words to express her emotions. That's quite a step forward from crying or hitting.*

"Bad, bad boy."

*Sometimes, grownups find a child's sincere expression of emotions shocking, and so may tend to undermine the child's emotional sincerity.*

"Lynn dear, play with your brother. Come on darling, play with your brother.

- I don't like him!

- Well, Lynn, you don't really mean that. You love your brother, of course.

- I don't want him!

- Oh be nice to Brother, he is our baby.

- Send him away!"

*Lynn is jealous of the baby and shows it. No use telling her that she must love Toby. Right now, she wants to get rid of the baby as competition for Mother's love. Mother's insistence that she must love Toby not only confuses her but increases her jealousy.*

*Another example: this one about learning and unlearning signals that cause emotional upsets. Patsy is scared of dogs, and so is her mother. Patsy's fear is strengthened by the examples of her mother's uneasiness. Whenever she comes out, there is a threatening animal on the street. Gradually, she withdraws from playing outside. One day, her father comes home from the office with a present. She is eager to see it. But out of the box comes... a stuffed dog. No, she doesn't like dogs, not even stuffed dogs! It may take a long time for Patsy to become friendly to dogs, that is to unlearn her fear of dogs.*

*But not all so-called childish upsets are confined to little children. For instance, a youngster may fall back to bed-wetting in protest against a new baby. Another may revert to thumb sucking or nail biting when facing an unpleasant or threatening situation: a new teacher or stern parental demand.*

*Adolescence is an especially sensitive age. Sometimes the fear of new responsibilities makes adolescents act in what we call "a childish manner". These excursions to less mature behavior are often indications that some disappointment or pressure is weighing upon the youngsters. Recognizing this, parents, friends and teachers can help them to overcome their troubles and return to a more mature level. We are getting increasingly aware that the emotional causes sometimes lead to physical discomforts, like in the case of this girl. Taking medicine alone may not cure her, often a confident physician will decide to call upon a psychiatrist or a psychologist, to help them probe deeper in the emotional causes of certain ailment.*

*Strong emotions tend to express themselves even when we try to hide or suppress them. When continuously suppressed, they may go underground and may interfere with bodily functions such as digestion or elimination, or they may disturb the heart and circulation, or give rise to recurrent headaches. Symptoms of such ailments are often called "psychosomatic". Psychosomatic are such physical disturbances that have emotional causes.*

*Up to now we've been discussing mostly emotional upsets, but our satisfactions are emotions too. The natural love of parents for children is one of them, the affection of parents for each other, the stirrings of attraction between the young adults. All these and many more are high points of emotional satisfaction.*

*The study of emotions is a complex subject. This film set out only to create an awareness of this problem by showing that we are all born capable of emotions, that we develop emotionally through living with others, that there is no golden rule or magic formula for emotional maturation, that emotions cannot be denied, only suppressed. If we recognize and accept our emotions, if we learn to channel them to useful purposes, they will become the raw materials for the building of healthy personalities, capable of feeling and therefore of living rich and full lives as useful members of society.*

THE END  
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