

# Emotional Connections and Learning

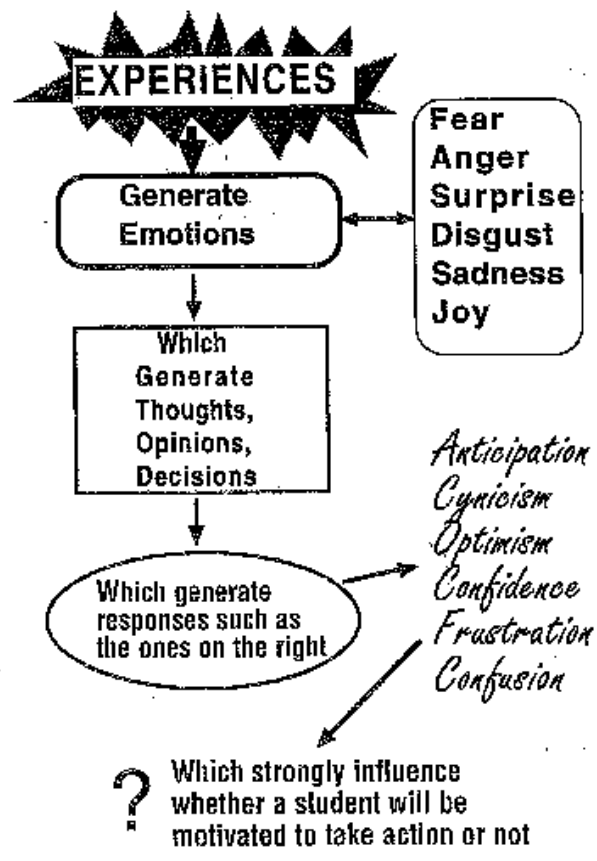
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**“Good learning engages feelings. Far from an add-on, emotions *are* a form of learning.”**

Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*

FIGURE 2  
How Emotional States Affect Learning



Jensen, E. (1998). *Teaching with the Brain In Mind*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

**Emotions include:**

joy, fear, surprise, disgust, anger and sadness

fear and pleasure are the only two emotions that occupy a specific space in the brain

**Scientific ways to measure emotions:**

**autonomic** (sweat glands, heart activity, blood pressure, and gastrointestinal)

**central** (electrical activity of the brain's neurons)

**sensorimotor** (respiration, eye movements, etc.)

**Three important discoveries regarding emotions:**

1. discovery of physical pathways
2. findings about the brain's chemicals involved in emotions
2. **recognition of a link between pathways and chemicals to everyday learning and memory**

## Emotions, Learning and Memory

- emotions drive students
- critical survival lessons are hardwired into our DNA
- feelings keep us from dangerous acts or ill-advised behavior
- daily decisions based on emotions are the rule and not the exception
- emotions help us to make better quality “value-based” decisions
- emotions mediate our meaning
- emotional events receive preferential processing

**No significant learning  
occurs without a  
significant relationship  
(of mutual respect).**

-Comer

## Implications for the classroom:

- ❖ support students with direct-teaching of process
- ❖ hold high expectations
- ❖ triggering emotions randomly is counterproductive
- ❖ extremes of emotion are counter to the school setting
- ❖ lack of emotion is just as dangerous as uncontrolled emotion
- ❖ engage emotions as a part of the learning
  - be a role model
  - create a positive, supportive environment
  - continually remind students of their successes and provide emotional support and positive feedback for their imperfect attempts
  - strive to hear and understand what a child's words and actions are revealing

- use student's interests to maximize student learning
- properly assess a student's ability so that success is possible
- have celebrations
- set up controversy – ex. role playing, debate
- use physical rituals – ex. “dumping box”
- use introspection – journal-writing, self-assessment, goal-setting
- allow dialogue time with partners, groups, etc.
- involve activities to address all modes of learning
- educators need to be able to provide activities that: release stress, increase bonding and give emotions a chance to be expressed

## Resources:

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