

Emotional Granularity – An Effective Strategy to cope with Emotions

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Abstract:

The concept of Emotional Granularity is very much related to the Emotional Intelligence of individuals. But Emotional Granularity is relatively a new concept developed by the Neuro Scientist, Lisa Feldman Barrett, based on her studied on Valence and Arousal of emotions in human beings. Our mind usually has a tendency to avoid feelings which are not favourable to us and accept only those feelings which gives us pleasure or goodness. But this tendency only leads to lessen our emotional intelligence. Here comes the significance of enhancing Emotional Granularity.

Keywords: : Emotional Granularity, Arousal focus, Valence focus.

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Emotional Granularity is the individual's ability to differentiate between the specificity of their emotions. People differ in their level of Emotional granularity. People with advanced or very high level of emotional granularity are able to discriminate their emotions occurring at different stages in life. At the same time, people with low level of granularity can express their emotions only in global terms. They are not able to identify specific emotions. This concept is very much related to the Emotional Intelligence of individuals. But Emotional Granularity is relatively a new concept developed by the Neuro Scientist, Lisa Feldman Barrett, based on her studied on Valence and Arousal of emotions in human beings. From her studies, she concluded that the Valence focus and arousal focus of an individual determines the level of Emotional granularity. Valence focus determines the level of information about pleasure and displeasure contained in the verbal reports of emotional experiences of an individual. Arousal focus referred to the degree to which one emphasizes arousal on representing one's own emotions. It is often seen that is an individual is having a particular level of valence focus; they can differentiate between positive and negative emotions. But a person with a high level of arousal factor is able to differentiate between high and low arousal levels.

According to Feldman Barret, our brains are tuned to make predictions that help in our survival. This means that our brains is capable of making our cognition clear that what is good to us and what is bad related to emotions. It helps in identifying what makes us happy and safe as well as what is painful, sad, and dangerous to us. So we can control even our anxiety level, if we are aware of it. Thus it helps us to become more Emotionally Intelligent. Our mind usually has a tendency to avoid feelings which are not favourable to us and accept only those feelings which gives us pleasure or goodness. But this tendency only leads to lessen our emotional intelligence. What we need to do is to focus both

on positive and negative ones, and work out on the negative ones to convert it into favourable impulses. Also we need to assess the level of negative emotions in us whether it is in low, moderate or high levels. Then only we can make changes, improvise or discard the unneeded ones and promotes the positive emotions.

Some of the positive emotional feelings are Excitement, happiness, pleasure, contentment, gratitude, interest, positivity compassion etc. Negative emotions includes over anxiety, unnecessary worries, over aggression, altering moods, irritability, feeling of boredom, furious and terrified nature etc. Emotional granularity helps us in discriminating the emotions and helps us in managing our emotions properly in accordance with the situation demands. Studies shows that individuals with higher level of Emotional granularity, visits doctors less often, not depend on frequent medications, very low hospitalizations but with well tuned emotional tolerance level and inter personal relationships.

Moreover, Emotional granularity allows us to be take control of our emotions, based on the demands of the environment. It also inculcates flexibility in dealings. It has a major role in reducing the stress and anxiety level by reducing the intensity of negative emotions, and controlling them. If fear is the dominating factor in an individual, by providing appropriate experiences it can be reduced, by inspiring the components of bravery. Cognitive reappraisal can also be employed. Hence, emotional granularity is not an avoidance technique, rather an approach strategy that deals with facing emotions with confidence. It is very much related to the power of resilience. Because here the individual actively facing the emotions irrespective of its nature.

Studies reveal that individuals experiences wide range in Emotional granularity. Since this helps an individual to correctly identified and label the nature of emotions, it is highly beneficial for coping the stress, tensions and

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behavioural and emotional experiences. The word 'emotional' itself means the arousal of subjective and strong emotional feelings. These feelings may be positive or negative such as joyfulness, happiness, empathy, love, anger, sadness, irritation and so on.

We, human beings are part of the social system in which we exist. So we need to create social as well as emotional connections with the social environment. We usually know to foster or inter and intra personnel intelligences. But what about our Emotional connections? An emotional connection is a bundle of subjective feelings that come together to create a bond between two individuals. As mentioned earlier, emotional means arousal of a particular emotion- may be positive or negative. So Emotional granularity plays a major role in relationship management. We need to be very careful in establishing and keeping relationships with individuals within the society as well as in the family. We need to share only positive emotions to others, which helps in making the relations more sustainable. Without a strong emotional connection, partnership never becomes successful, within the family or within the organization. Through thoughtful and caring communication we can strengthen the bond of emotional connections. For achieving this, we must be vulnerable with each other.

So as discussed earlier, Emotional Granularity is the ability of an individual to place feelings into verbalization with a higher degree of specificity and precision. Low and negative emotional granularity is associated with negative effects and highly vulnerable to low and poor mental health. Studies in this area clearly reveal that negative granularity is often associated with maladaptive behaviour and coping skills while facing problems or adverse emotional experiences, in day to day life. So there is an urgent need to chart out psychological measures for promoting healthier emotion controlling and coping strategies and behaviours. Because people with finely tune behaviours always exhibit higher levels of emotional granularity and intelligence.

Emotional granularity is not just having control over one's emotions. It is the process of experiencing one's own emotions, control them and deliver it in accordance with the situations. Such a person can tolerate, even an emotional experience which turns out to be problematic in nature. Studies show that high levels of emotional granularity have not only had its effect on mental health, but also role in healthy physical life also. Even cancer patients have lesser degree of frustrations, if they know to sustain their emotional balance. Emotional granularity gives our brains more precise tools for handling the problems we face during the course of life. Usually when we are facing a threat or issue, Cortisol level in our blood increases, which stirs up our emotions. But if one is having a higher degree of emotional granularity, the brain may construct a more specific emotion, which leads to the needed action. It assures one that, we can have many choices in front of us. This self confidence reduces the unnecessary surges of the cortisol in the body, keeping one in a relaxed state.

Emotional granularity is often considered as a skill, so we can nurture it through proper training. Emotional and behavioural therapies are there for strengthening the

emotional tolerance and deal with emotional problems. Emotional skills help us in dealing with all adverse situations. Once incorporated, our brain will learn to use it automatically. Emotions form one of the foundations for healthy living, the better the skills, the happier we cope up with life. Evidences show that it improves our mental health also. If an individual is having a high level of emotional granularity, then his stress coping skills, adaptive behaviours and attitudes are always positive in nature. Social and family relations also improve when people are tuned with in accordance to their emotions. So emotional therapies can contribute very much in fostering this concept.

Majority of us are in view that emotions are permanently hardwired in our brains, automatically triggered by situations. But this concept is not right according to Neuro Scientists. We usually perceive emotions mainly based on the experiences we gain during childhood period. So when one perceives a problem or event, experience already in our cognitive structure, triggers. But through proper training, through proper emotional training and rehearsal, we can change our perceptions, which make our brain label accordingly. Also according to Lisa Feldman Barrett, we usually consider two aspects related to emotions, 'what is good to me and what is bad to me'. These are only the two extreme points of the spectrum of emotions. In between these two, a number of sub emotions exist. We must develop skills to find it out in order to make our thinking positive. We should always remember the fact that human brain has immense potential to learn and act upon events. Here comes the importance of holistic perception. So importance should be given to gain new emotional experiences which in turn hone our existing emotional skills.

Scientific research studies show that Emotional granularity has many advantages for leading a sustainable and satisfying life. People with this concept are always more flexible, adaptive, with resilience power, less likely stressed and adjustable to any situations. A person with emotional granularity not only knows different strategies to promote it, but also knows to when and how they are to be applied in life situations. If one strategy fails, they automatically search for substitutes. The brain is tuned in such a way as to incorporate the needed emotions. According to Lisa Feldman Barrett, based on her work, concluded that emotions and thoughts are not separate processes. But the entire brain actively constructs both thoughts and emotions with the help of billions of neurons signalling each other. From this it is clear that, our brain is elastic in nature, flexible and can change with new knowledge.

II. CONCLUSION

So I conclude this paper on assumption that Emotional Granularity is a very important aspect in our day to day life. Because it improves our mental health by positively enhancing cognitive skills, provides us with better coping strategies, lessens the maladaptive behaviours and strengthens relationships. So as educators, it is high time for us to foster our Emotional granularity skills and then imparting it to our learners.

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