

# Emotional Expression: Unlocking the Truth Behind Your Feelings

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## RECOMMENDED CITATION

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In psychology, emotional expression is observable verbal and nonverbal behaviour that communicates emotion. Emotional expression can occur with or without self-awareness. An individual can control such expression, to some extent, and may have deliberate intent in displaying it.

### **Emotional regulation**

Various researchers have highlighted the importance for an individual of being able to successfully regulate emotions. Ways of doing this include cognitive reappraisal -- interpreting a situation in positive terms, and expressive suppression -- masking signs of inner emotional states.

### **Ventilation hypothesis**

#### **Critiques**

In *Expressing Negative Emotions: Healthy Catharsis or Sign of Pathology?*, Milton Spett refers to opponents of the ventilation hypothesis:

In the past year, a number of publications have argued convincingly for a paradigm shift in our view of expressing negative emotions. In *"Expressing Emotion"* (New York: the Guilford Press, 1999), Eileen Kennedy-Moore and Jeanne Watson carefully review the empirical research on the "ventilation hypothesis," the widely-accepted belief that expressing negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, or fear, is good for our mental health, our physical health, and our interpersonal relationships. The authors draw the surprising conclusion that expressing negative emotions tends to increase rather than decrease the emotions, and does not necessarily improve our mental or physical health.

The rest of the article includes these points:

experiencing emotions rather than expressing emotions that can lead to cognitive reappraisal and improved mental and physical health

the most effective therapeutic interventions should include both moderate emotional expression and cognitive reappraisal.