

Evolutionary Psychology: Why Our Emotions Drive Us

Authored by
mohammad looti

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Motivations direct and energize behavior, while emotions provide the affective component to motivation, positive or negative. In the early 1970s, Paul Ekman and colleagues began a line of research that suggests that many emotions are universal. He found evidence that humans share at least five basic emotions: fear, sadness, happiness, anger, and disgust. Social emotions evidently evolved to motivate social behaviors that were adaptive in the EEA. For example, spite seems to work against the individual but it can establish an individual's reputation as someone to be feared. Shame and pride can motivate behaviors that help one maintain one's standing in a community, and self-esteem is one's estimate of one's status.

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