

INTRODUCTION

1

The Nature of Hurt Feelings: What Is Intimacy?

It is increasingly apparent that a complete understanding of any emotional process is going to require attention paid to multiple levels of analysis, from the cultural to the behavioral, psychological, experimental, physiological, and molecular.

Coan & Allen (2007, p. 8)

<i>Jays</i>	<i>Hurts</i>
Feeling like breathing in a rainbow of diverse hues that warm a happy heart	Feelings that get to the tippity-top Like a hallowed hole on heavy hearts
And living life simply without falsity So every sentiment flows freely outward	A dive into the deep sea sponge mop All gooey because feelings have no smarts
For eternity, forgetting woes And being heard by someone who listens	I feel radiating pangs that spread out Leaving emptiness in the inner core
Not minding that earth's terrain ages about	Suff'ring means so much that I'd
Now that the moon is the timeless sage	While weeping, wishing I'd suffer no more
When sunlight bursts forth from a florid chest	This seems to be the result of long life
One with nature, and doing its very best	In which I can never be satisfied
Loveable lullaby flows into the universe strife	Spasms of a racing heart breathing

Rhythm's head gently rests on one of Always presuming breath's dis
 many books
 Caressing music with warm tender If vision were bright as love
 looks.
 Thus, joy awaits. Maybe hurt feelings would
 understand me

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This chapter presents and supports a behavioral definition of intimacy in contrast to definitions of intimacy obtained through self-report, paper-and-pencil questionnaires. In no way is this contrast meant to diminish the value of questionnaires. It merely means that there are many ways to define intimacy that lead to different findings, implications, and conclusions. When intimacy is defined as the sharing of joys, hurts, and fears of being hurt, this definition implies also that hurt feelings exist at the foundation of our existence (Cusinato & L'Abate, 2012; L'Abate, 1977, 1986, 1994, 1997, 1999a, 2003, 2005, 2009b; L'Abate, Cusinato, Maino, Colesso, & Scilletta, 2010; L'Abate & Sloan, 1984).

What are hurt feelings, and what is intimacy? In one way or another, and at various intensities and depths, we are all hurt and wounded human beings. We are *needy* of others in the process of wanting to be close and to decrease the load of hurt feelings – that is, in the process of searching for intimacy. We are susceptible and *vulnerable* to being hurt by those we love, as much as we are also *fallible* in hurting those very same ones we love, and who love us (Jones, Kugler, & Adams, 1995; L'Abate, 1999a, 2005).

THE MEANING OF HURT FEELINGS

This chapter, therefore, introduces, elaborates, and expands on three models of hurt feelings defined operationally by a list of related hurtful feelings (Table 1.1), as well as visually by a multilayered-hourglass (Figure 1.1) and funnel-like models (Figure 1.2). The definition of intimacy in close relationships as *the sharing of joys, hurts, and fears of being hurt* seems the only behavioral one available versus many paper-and-pencil, self-report measures of intimacy and close relationships (Collins & Feeney, 2004; Fehr, 2004; Heyman, Feldbau-Kohn, Ehrensaft, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, & O'Leary, 2001; Laurenceau, Rivera, Schaffer, & Pietromonaco, 2004; Mashek & Aron, 2004; Praeger, 1995), including self-attributed intimacy motivation (Craig, Koestner, & Zuroff, 1994). Originally, a paper-and-pencil self-report questionnaire was developed to deal specifically with hurt feelings (Stevens

& L'Abate, 1989), whereas another intimacy questionnaire dealt mostly with hurt feelings (Descountner & Thelen, 1991).

Hurt feelings are a catch-all term covering the subjective experience of traumas, losses, betrayals, rejections, psychological injuries, threats, and dismissals we receive during the course of our lives. The prototype of hurt feelings is crying when sincere, nonmanipulative, and shared with loved ones to produce intimacy (Hastrup, Baker, Kraemer, & Bornstein, 1986; Hendriks, Nelson, Cornelius, & Vingerhoets, 2008; Kraemer & Hastrup, 1983a, 1983b; Lutz, 1999; Nelson, 2008). Crying about hurt feelings without sharing them with loved ones means keeping those feelings inside and allowing them to fester, with negative consequences for the individual and for one's intimate relationships.

Crying in helpless battered children and wives and in assaulted victims of predators is matched by the helplessness of battering parents and male predators themselves, who do not know how to deal with crying and tears (Bugental, 2010). A survey of undergraduates concerning frequency, intensity, antecedents, and consequences of crying supports the interpretation that in some individuals, some families, and perhaps some cultures, crying is viewed as a noxious stimulus, to be avoided, suppressed, and repressed. For instance, additional physical assault during rapes may be more likely to occur when the victim is crying; also witness how many children are abused and even killed to make them stop crying (Bell & L'Abate, undated). Stereotypically, many men perceive crying as a sign of weakness. It is acceptable for women to cry, but not for "real" men.

Before defining hurt feelings in particular, feelings or affects in general are defined as self-contained phenomenological experiences that include subjective sensory modalities that may (or may not) be independent of evaluative thoughts or images, what has been called the embodiment of feelings and affects (Ping, Dhillon, & Beilock, 2009). The evaluative part of this definition includes giving a name to a feeling to distinguish one feeling from another, and transforming feelings into emotions (Helm, 2009). Feelings of anger may be different from feelings of fear, just as much as both feelings may be different from sadness (Wierzbicka, 2009a, 2009b). An important differentiation lies in distinguishing feelings as internal intrapsychic experiences from emotions, that is, how feelings are expressed externally: verbally, nonverbally, or even in writing. Feelings, when aroused, can include pleasant and unpleasant sensations and can vary in their intensity.

Consequently, hurt feelings in particular are defined here as *unpleasant, painful, and harmfully subjective affects experienced from objectively aversive or negatively perceived life events*. Sensory modalities may include increase

in blood pressure, heart palpitation, sweating, muscle rigidity, “butterflies in the stomach,” and nonspecific psychosomatic visceral and cerebral sensations that sometimes may be detectable to individuals and sometimes may not be. Some sensations may occur below the level of awareness or below the level of understanding language and knowing how to speak, as in infancy (Glenberg, Webster, Mouilso, Havas, & Lindeman, 2009; Katz, 2009; Wierzbicka, 2009a, 2009b). We are more vulnerable to being hurt by those we love and who love us than by strangers (Fitness & Warburton, 2009). The latter, accidentally or intentionally, can inflict physical wounds with emotional concomitants that inevitably leave hurt feelings festering in us. Those feelings, however, can be alleviated and may even dissipate by sharing them with most intimates, family, and friends (Bersheid & Ammazalorso, 2003; Hardcastle, 1999). When that process is deemed impossible, sharing them with mental health professionals, either verbally, nonverbally, or in writing, may be the next best alternative.

Instead of relying on indirect, paper-and-pencil, self-report questionnaires that constitute the mainstay and mainstream of intimacy research, including fear of intimacy (Firestone & Cutlett, 1999; Firestone & Firestone, 2004; Sherman & Thelen, 1996; Vangelisti & Beck, 2007), a direct observational approach of actual behaviors can be relatively more fruitful theoretically and more relevant preventively and clinically. The operational definition of hurtful terms based on their frequencies of citation in PsycINFO is included in Table 1.1. This table shows how distress and trauma are cited more often than all other equivalent or similar terms, whereas hurts is the least-cited term. So much has been written about feelings included in Table 1.1 that to expand on them individually would make it impossible to write about anything else.

However, the choice of using the lowest common denominator of hurts was consciously made to relate it to its most frequent usage in the population at large and to encompass the widest range of possibly hurtful terms as contained in Table 1.1 as well as additional, possibly relevant terms not contained in that list, such as despair (Shabad 2001) or agony, among other feelings contained in most chapters of this volume.

An examination of similar terms in the King James Bible produced the following results: anguish – 25 matches; bereavement or bereaved – no matches (except for some in other editions); desperation or desperate – 7 matches; devastation or devastated – no matches; distress – 67 matches; grief – 46 matches; hurt – 103 matches; sorrow – 129 matches; suffering – 37 matches; suffer – 227 matches; trauma – no matches; upset – no matches. Sorrow, suffering, suffer, and hurts were mentioned more often than any

other painful terms, with hurts as the closest contextual equivalent for sorrow and suffering.

When the term hurt includes suffering, at least three major sources come to the fore:

1. Bakan's (1968) seminal and extremely influential work, in which his main contribution was to argue for the dichotomy between community and agency rather than for suffering itself, which belongs within the communal rather than agentic realm – a dichotomy that will appear again and again in this volume.
2. Gilbert's (1992) contribution tries "... to explain the basis of human suffering as arising from maladaptive deviations in the expression of our individual humanness" (p. 4). Unfortunately, this definition was related only to internal deviations rather than just representing our overall socialized humanness. Strangely enough, Gilbert not only failed to define what he meant by suffering, but the term – even though present in the title – was not even included in the subject index.
3. Mayerfeld's more recent review (1999) defined suffering as a "disagreeable overall feeling" (p. 14), arguing for happiness and suffering as "absolute, not relative, terms" (p. 34). Mayerfeld's work also differentiated suffering as being "distinct from the frustration of desire" (p. 43) and "from the subjective opinion of suffering" (p. 50), indicating how suffering cannot be conceived as a rational experience but rather as a subjective one.

Once hurt feelings are defined behaviorally, one must define them accurately and comprehensibly. Here, however, a major distinction must be made between the *experience* of feeling hurts at the internal, subjectively receptive input side versus the external *expression* of hurts at the visible and objective output side that constitutes emotions (L'Abate, 1997, 2005). Feelings of whatever kind may remain dormant inside an organism unless they are elicited by self or by external others and events (Barrett, Mesquita, Ochsner, & Gross, 2007; Coan & Allen, 2007; Goldie, 2009; Rumbaugh & Washburn, 2003). Emotions, on the other hand, are visible externally when expressed, shown, and shared. When hurt feelings are not experienced and expressed, they cannot be shared and tend to remain inside, influencing the organism and festering in toxic and deleterious ways, containing the *unconscious* (De Giacomo, L'Abate, Pennebaker, & Rumbaugh, 2010). In some cases, the expression of hurt feelings is unacceptable and denied in

their importance, as in self-silencing, especially in women (Jack, 1987, 1991, 2001; Jack & Dill, 1992).

Caprara and Cervone (2000, pp. 284–310) were exemplary among the few in emphasizing this distinction. Eventually, the emotion research community has acknowledged the importance of this distinction by devoting a whole issue of its premier journal to it (Reisenzein & Doring, 2009), as well as mentioning it in an important chapter (Barrett et al., 2007). This distinction will appear repeatedly throughout the course of this volume, the hope being that this frequency might counterbalance in some ways the still persistent failure to differentiate between feelings and emotions. The former is incorrectly equated with the latter, uniting them together as one entity. Feelings and emotions constitute two completely different processes. Without this differentiation, circularity remains as the only alternative, such as in “Emotion elicits the social sharing of emotion” (Rime, 2009a). Would it not be more specific and clearer to admit that “[c]ertain feelings elicit their social sharing as emotions”? Not all feelings emerge and transform themselves into emotions. Some feelings are kept inside and are not expressed and, therefore, not shared, without any resolution as to their toxic, internal existence (Clore & Huntsinger, 2009; Jack, 1987, 1991, 2001; Jack & Dill, 1992).

The overall term used to include whatever feelings are experienced internally by the self is *emotionality*, the condition of experiencing feelings of any kind. Whether and how those feelings are expressed and perhaps shared with others as emotions remains an important aspect of emotion theory and theorizing (Gross, 2007; Lewis, Haviland-Jones, Barrett, 2008). There may be a limit to the number of hurt feelings we can experience, but there is a myriad ways in which those feelings can be expressed outwardly to become emotions. Because the general literature on how emotions are expressed is so incredibly large, to the point of being unmanageable theoretically and empirically, this volume will attempt to concentrate specifically on the internal, subjective experience of hurt feelings in particular rather than just their overall outward expression as emotions.

Emotionality includes the experience of joys as well as of hurt feelings and of fears of being hurt. Hence, three feelings must be considered here: *joys*, *hurts*, and *fears* of being hurt. However, we need a model of how feelings in general are experienced before focusing particularly on those three feelings. Consequently, an hourglass model was constructed (1) to understand the process of experiencing feelings, that is, of *emotionality*.

This hourglass model demonstrates how two principles of equifinality and equipotentiality surround the whole Figure 1.1 in both upward

TABLE 1.1. *PsycINFO search for related terms to denote painful feelings*

Feeling	Frequency
Anguish	595
Bereavement	4,241
Desperation	193
Devastation	201
Distress	25,719
Grief	9,617
Hurts	50
Sorrow	588
Suffering	19,132
Trauma	26,450
Upset	1,238

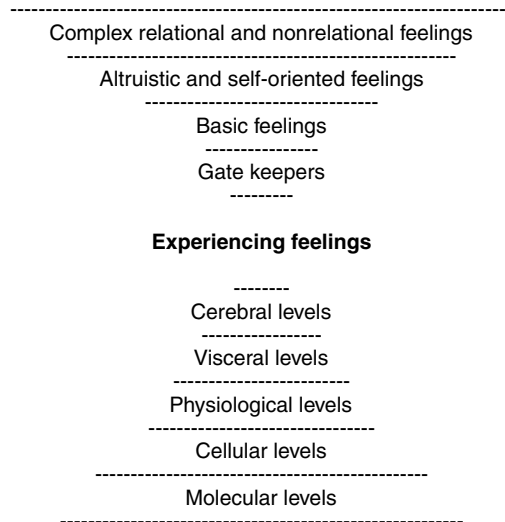


FIGURE 1.1. An hourglass model of emotionality as the basis of our existence and experience.

and downward directions (L'Abate, 2005). In the lower half of the model, from the molecular level upward, biological foundations are necessary to understand how feelings in general culminate and are experienced leading toward their equifinality in their experience (Panksepp, 1998a, 1998b). From this equifinal experience, there is an upward expansion and developmental equipotentiality of more refined and more complex feelings, as

shown in the upper half of the model. In the lower part of the hourglass model (Figure 1.1), biological levels underlie the experience of hurt feeling.

The upward process of equifinality and equipotentiality does not end at the intermediate level of experiencing feelings. There is a downward, reverse process occurring according to the principle of synthetic integration that includes both upward and downward processes – interactionism and reductionism, respectively (Capitelli, Guerra, L'Abate, & Rumbaugh, 2009). Levels in the upper half of Figure 1.1 feedback downward to the equifinal experience of feelings, that is, to emotionality. How we experience feelings at their various levels of the upper half of the figure influences directly the experience of feelings underlying biological levels. From that experience at higher levels, there is a downward, equipotent process effecting biological levels, as discussed in Chapter 7 of this volume.

Therefore, the experience of feelings functions to direct circularly both upward and downward processes of equifinality and equipotentiality. Both upward and downward processes indicate how emotionality – the experience of feelings in general – is crucial to our survival, let alone our enjoyment. We are all emotional human beings. However, individual differences in how we experience and express feelings into emotions makes the whole enterprise worth all that has been performed on this topic, in the last half-century and earlier, since Darwin's days and even before him.

A MULTILAYERED FUNNEL MODEL OF JOYS, HURTS, AND THEIR DERIVATIVES

The upper part of Figure 1.1 is expanded in Figure 1.2. Consequently, if we were willing to accept, approach, and include emotionality, composed by both joyful and hurt feelings, as the essence of our existence, even provisionally, then a model (Figure 1.2) different from those offered by previous theorists would be proposed. This model is in keeping with Tomkins's (1962, 1963) original amplification view. In Figure 1.2, hurtful and joyful feelings can be visualized via an upright vertical funnel starting at the base with hurts and joys and enlarging and expanding upward to the top, with supraordinate levels stemming from bottom-most hurts and joys. The visual model presented in Figure 1.2 needs further verbal elaboration because it includes different levels of feelings that do in fact belong together experientially and empirically.

Hurtful and joyful feelings exist at the narrow bottom of the funnel-like figure where activation/deactivation, pleasantness/unpleasantness,

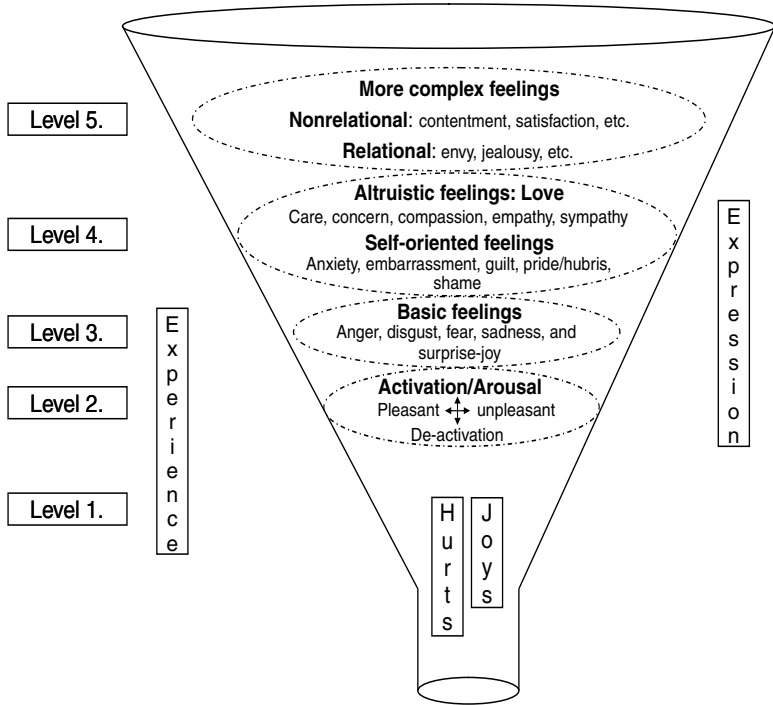


FIGURE 1.2. A funnel model of hurt feelings and their derivatives.

as well as intensity or powerfulness/ powerlessness serve as gatekeepers, either allowing or not allowing hurt feelings to enter awareness and influence basic feelings of anger, sadness, disgust, fear, joy, and surprise. From this primary level emerge more complex levels of feelings. This model is being evaluated with two series of written practice exercises deriving from the list of hurt feelings and from their antecedent sources (Eleonora Maino, personal communication, July 15, 2008, research in progress). Implications and limitations of this model are discussed for its further expansion to underlying biological factors, gender, individual, and cultural differences, as shown in Figure 1.1 and elaborated in other chapters of this volume.

Visually, therefore, hurts and joys are included in the narrow base of the funnel-like model (Figure 1.2) drawn under three dimensions of activation, pleasure, and intensity. The third dimension of intensity is missing from this figure because it was difficult to draw it there. This visual difficulty should not in any way diminish the importance of this third dimension.