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## UNIT 3 AFFECTIVE DISTURBANCES

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### 3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After studying this Unit, you will be able to know:

- differences between emotions, mood and affect;
- types of disturbances in emotions, mood and affect;
- disturbances in quality of mood;
- disturbances in the range of emotions;
- disturbances in reactivity of mood and its intensity; and
- disturbances in the appropriateness of mood and affect.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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Cognition, conation and emotions are three important functions of mind. In the previous two Units, we have discussed about the disturbances of cognition and conation. In this Unit, focus is on affective disturbances (disturbances of emotions, mood and affect). Before going into further details, it is important to understand the concept of emotions, mood and affect.

In simple words, emotion refers to a feeling state involving thoughts, physiological changes, and an outward expression or behaviour. **Fish** defines emotion as a stirred up state caused by physiological changes occurring in response to an event, which tends to maintain or abolish the causative event. According to the famous **James Lange** theory of emotions, emotions are the result of self-awareness of the physical and bodily changes in presence of a stimulus. However, in a contrasting view taken by **Cannon and Bard**, emotions is considered having a temporal primacy and the visceral and behavioural changes follow the emotion, e.g. one feels afraid on seeing a lion and then the sympathetic and behavioural changes follow. There is also a two factor theory of emotion, which explains emotions to be a result of two factors: physiological arousal and cognition.

Thus, emotion could be taken as a complex state, which has cognitive, behavioural and physiological components.

Literature describes six basic emotions, which are expressed on face. These include anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. Though these emotions are universal, there are cultural variations in their expression. For example, there may be customary rules in a culture, that determine who can show which emotion to whom and when, or which events are likely to produce a particular emotion.

A feeling is a positive or negative reaction to some experience or an event, and is the subjective experience of emotion. It could be marked but is often transitory. In simple English, the word feeling also refers to an active experience of somatic sensation, like touch or pain, and also the passive subjective experience of emotion.

The terms mood and affect are frequently used in psychiatry in describing the symptomatology of various psychiatric illnesses. In simple English, affect is a broad term, which may cover mood, feeling, attitude, preferences and evaluations. However, in psychiatry, its use is restricted to describing the emotional state, which may be judged by external reactions like laughter, crying, anger or fear. Affect refers to a person's present emotional responsiveness or emotional state as on now. It is a short lived emotional state, which is dynamic and keeps on changing depending on the situation, thought process and the external environment. On the contrast, mood is a pervasive and sustained emotion, which colours the person's perception of the world. Descriptions of mood and affect may be sad, anxious, angry, happy, calm, irritable, etc.

It is possible to objectively know the emotional state and infer about the mood and affect of a person by observation of non-verbal cues like facial expression especially the eyes, gesture, posture, tone of voice, and general appearance. However, this assessment may also be influenced by the emotional state of the examiner.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- Note:** i) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.  
 ii) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this unit.

1) Define emotion, mood and affect.

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2) What is feeling?

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3) What are different emotions?

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## 3.2 TYPES OF DISTURBANCES IN MOOD AND AFFECT

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Disturbances in emotion can occur in terms of quality of mood or affect or in terms of emotional reactivity, intensity (depth) and range of emotional reactions.

Quality or type of mood or affect refers to the kind of emotional state (mood or affect) of a person. This would include normal emotions like happiness, sadness, irritability, anger etc. Abnormal emotional disturbances in quality or type of emotion would include depressed affect or mood, euphoria, elation, ecstasy, etc.

Emotional reactivity refers to the fluctuations in mood that occur in response to changes in environment or external situations. This includes emotional reactions to various emotion laden stimuli. Inappropriate and labile affect and la belle indifference are the disturbances of the reactivity of affect.

Depth refers to ability to convey an emotion or create an impact of the emotional state. Intensity and depth of emotion convey the same meaning.

Range of emotions refers to the various emotions, a person is able to display during an interview session. Range may be restricted as happens in schizophrenia.

### Check Your Progress 2

**Note:** i) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

ii) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this unit.

1) Describe different areas in which disturbances of emotions manifest.

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## 3.3 QUALITY OF MOOD AND AFFECT

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Normal emotions of sadness, happiness, irritability, anger may get exacerbated in different psychiatric illnesses especially the mood disorders, anxiety disorders and certain other illnesses. Elation and depression, seen in mania and depressive disorders, can be understood to be a qualitative and pathological exaggeration of the cheerfulness and unhappiness. This section discusses various abnormal mood states, the disturbance in the quality of mood and affect.

**Euphoria** is an exaggerated feeling of wellbeing a state of excessive unreasonable cheerfulness, which cannot be explained by the real life circumstances. Euphoria is seen in mania, and also in organic states, especially those associated with frontal lobe impairment.

**Elation** refers to a mood state consisting of feelings of joy, euphoria, triumph, and optimism and intense self satisfaction. A related term is **elevated mood**, which refers to an air of confidence and enjoyment, a mood which is more cheerful than normal, but is not pathological. **Expansive mood** is characterized by expression of feelings without

restraint, frequently with an overestimation of reality. Like euphoria elation and expansiveness are also seen in mania and organic brain illness.

**Ecstasy** is a calm exalted state of feeling of happiness. It is different from the morbid cheerful mood or elation. Ecstasy may occur in mental illnesses or in abnormality of personality. Ecstatic mood has also been described in patients with exalted delusion in schizophrenia. It can also be seen in healthy populations at times of profound religious experience or occasions of deep emotions like after childbirth.

**Depression** is a feeling of dejection which colours all thought and activity. It could be a normal reactive unhappiness or morbid unpleasant mood, which is present all the time for a number of days, indicating a depressive disorder. Patients may complain of feeling low, sad, dejected, and gloomy. Pervasive and persistent depressed mood is a characteristic of depressive illness. Depressive mood can also be presenting symptoms in a range of psychiatric illnesses like obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia and panic disorder where it is secondary to the primary psychopathology.

**Anxiety** is an unpleasant emotion characterized by apprehension in anticipation of a danger (external or internal), accompanied by a feeling of impending doom. It has also been described as fear of unknown. Patient may complain of feeling stressed and tense. Sometimes, autonomic symptoms of anxiety like palpitations, sweating, difficulty breathing may be accompanying. Anxiety is the presenting symptom in anxiety disorders, but can be one of the symptoms in most of psychiatric illnesses.

**Irritability** is a mood state of abnormal or excessive excitability with easily triggered anger, annoyance and impatience. Irritability may be seen in depression, dysthymia, mania, mixed affective illness and schizophrenia and many of the personality disorders.

**Perplexity** is a bewildered or puzzled state of mind, that may be seen in anxiety, delirium and emerging schizophrenia.

Morbid surprise may be seen in latah, a culture bound syndrome, seen in Malaysia, in which there occurs an exaggerated startle response, accompanied by multiple echo phenomena like echolalia, echopraxia and echomimia.

**Check Your Progress 3**

**Note:** i) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

ii) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this unit.

1) How do euphoria, elation and ecstasy differ from each other?

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2) How would you define irritability? What are the illnesses, in which irritable mood is seen?

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3) What is perplexity?

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### 3.4 DISTURBANCES IN THE RANGE OF MOOD AND AFFECT

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A normal person shows a range of emotions in response to various situations. These emotions would include happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear and disgust. This range may get restricted in illnesses like schizophrenia.

**Restricted or constricted affect** refers to reduction in the range of emotions displayed by a person. It is a characteristic of schizophrenia and is a milder form of inadequacy of affect.

**Blunted affect** is a disturbance of affect, characterized by severe reduction in the range of emotions and is manifested as lack of emotional sensitivity. The person may appear socially awkward. Blunting of affect is a feature of schizophrenia.

**Flat affect or flattening of affect** refers to a limitation of the usual range of emotional expression expressed usually by facial and bodily gestures. The person does not show much affect in any direction, though whatever is expressed, is appropriate in that direction. Flattening of affect is seen in schizophrenia.

Blunting and flattening of affect are sometimes used interchangeably in literature to refer to an unchanging facial expression, decreased spontaneous movements, poverty of expressive gesture, , poor eye contact, affective unresponsivity and lack of vocal inflection. Thus it is not a single feature, but a composite of a number of observable characteristics.

**Check Your Progress 4**

*Note:* i) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

ii) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are different disturbances in the range of emotions?

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2) How does constricted affect differ from blunted and flat affect.?

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### 3.5 DISTURBANCES IN THE REACTIVITY AND INTENSITY OF MOOD AND AFFECT

This refers to abnormalities in emotional reactivity to various external situations or environmental changes. Disturbances in reactivity include inappropriate affect, incongruous affect, lability, apathy, la belle indifference.

**Inappropriate affect** refers to the affective expression which is out of harmony with the idea, thought, speech or the environmental situation. For example, a patient may react to sad news with laughter or describe a happy memory with a sad face. Inappropriate affect is a feature of schizophrenia.

**Labile affect** is characterized by rapid and abrupt changes in the affective expression, unrelated to external stimuli. Lability involves both an intensification of emotions and instability in persistence of the emotional state, associated with dramatic changes from one extreme to other. Thus the emotional reaction is inappropriate in the context. Lability is seen in mania and organic psychiatric disorders.

**Incongruous affect** refers to misdirection of emotions; an indifferent event may produce a severe emotional outburst, while an event that may objectively appear to be emotionally charged, but does not lead to any emotional response. For example, a person may start crying loudly over a loss of a ten rupees note, but may not show any emotional reaction, while giving details of his mother's death. Incongruous affect is seen in schizophrenia.

**La belle indifference** is an inappropriate attitude of calmness or lack of concern about one's disability or illness. La belle indifference is a result of dissociation of affect and has been classically described as a feature of conversion disorder, where a patient does not show any significant emotional response to the disability with which she is presenting.

**Apathy** is different from the dissociation of affect. Apathy refers to emotional indifference, often with a sense of futility. It may manifest as a lack of motivation. Apathy may be seen in schizophrenia, chronic cannabis abuse, socially deprived situations like, in prisons.

### 3.6 DISTURBANCES IN INTENSITY OF MOOD AND AFFECT

There can be a loss of feeling especially in patients with depression. The patient describes it as subjective experience of loss of feelings that were formerly present. On an objective assessment, one may not find any abnormality. The loss of feeling may refer to all emotions like sadness, joy, anger, fear, etc. A mother may say that she does not get any feeling while hugging her children. Patients presenting with depersonalization or derealisation may also give similar complaints.

**Anhedonia** refers to loss of capacity to experience pleasure. This is a result of diminution of the emotions. There is a complete loss of ability to enjoy anything in life or get satisfaction from the everyday events or objects. Anhedonia has been typically described

in depression. It is also one of the negative symptoms described in schizophrenia, where it manifests mainly in the social context, with inability to experience pleasure in social relationships.

Euphoria, elation, depressed mood and ecstasy are also disturbances in the intensity of emotional expression with the respective emotions are being expressed intensely.

Similarly intensification of anger, fear and surprise can be seen. The fear as seen in phobias is a disturbance of intensity of emotions. The morbid surprise as described in a previous section in this chapter is also a disturbance of intensity of emotions.

**Check Your Progress 5**

**Note:** i) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

ii) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is inappropriate affect? In which illnesses it is seen?

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2) How do apathy and anhedonia differ from each other?

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3) Describe disturbances in intensity of emotions.

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**3.7 LET US SUM UP**

Emotion refers to a feeling state involving thoughts, physiological changes, and an outward expression or behaviour. Different emotions include anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. Mood is an emotional state which lasts for some time, and colours the subjective experiences. Affect refers to the emotional state at a particular moment of time. Disturbances in emotion can occur in terms of quality of mood or affect or in terms of emotional reactivity, intensity (depth) and range of emotional reactions. Euphoria and elation are seen in mania. Blunting of affect and inappropriate affect are characteristic of schizophrenia.

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## 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Emotion refers to a feeling state involving thoughts, physiological changes, and an outward expression or behaviour. Affect refers to a person's present emotional responsiveness or emotional state as on now. Mood is a pervasive and sustained emotion, which colours the person's perception of the world.
- 2) A feeling is a positive or negative reaction to some experience or an event, and is the subjective experience of emotion. It is often transitory.
- 3) There are six basic emotions, which are expressed on face. These include anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. These emotions are universal, but there is cultural variations in their expression.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Disturbances in emotion can occur in terms of quality of mood or affect or in terms of emotional reactivity, intensity (depth) and range of emotional reactions.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Euphoria is an exaggerated feeling of wellbeing a state of excessive unreasonable cheerfulness, which cannot be explained by the real life circumstances. Elation refers to a mood state consisting of feelings of joy, euphoria, triumph, and optimism and intense self-satisfaction. Ecstasy is a calm exalted state of feeling of happiness.
- 2) Irritability is a mood state of abnormal or excessive excitability with easily triggered anger, annoyance and impatience. It may be seen in depression, dysthymia, mania, mixed affective illness and schizophrenia and personality disorders.
- 3) Perplexity is a bewildered or puzzled state of mind, that may be observed in anxiety, delirium and emerging schizophrenia.

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Different disturbances in the range of emotions would include happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear and disgust. This range may get restricted in illnesses like schizophrenia.
- 2) Constricted affect refers to reduction in the range of emotions displayed by a person. While as, blunted affect is a disturbance of affect, characterized by severe reduction in the range of emotions and is manifested as lack of emotional sensitivity. The person may appear socially awkward.

### Check Your Progress 5

- 1) Inappropriate affect refers to the affective expression which is out of harmony with the idea, thought, speech or the environmental situation. Inappropriate affect can be seen in schizophrenia.
- 2) Apathy refers to emotional indifference, often with a sense of futility. It may manifest as a lack of motivation. While as, anhedonia refers to loss of capacity to experience pleasure. There is a complete loss of ability to enjoy anything in life or get satisfaction from the everyday events or objects.

- 3) The disturbances can be a loss of feeling especially in patients with depression. The loss of feeling may refer to all emotions like sadness, joy, anger, fear, etc. Patients presenting with depersonalization or derealisation may also give similar complaints.

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### **3.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS**

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- 1) Describe various disturbances of affect seen in schizophrenia
- 2) Describe the affective disturbances seen in mania
- 3) Write a short note on the concept of emotions.

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### **3.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES**

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- Casey P, Kelly B (2007). *Fish's Clinical Psychopathology*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Gaskell: London.
- Oyebode F (2009) *Sims' Symptoms of Mind*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Saunders Elsevier: Edinburgh.
- Sadock BJ, Sadock VA (2007): *Kaplan & Sadock's Synopsis of Psychiatry: Behavioural Sciences/Clinical Psychiatry*, 10th Edition. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

