

The Persuasive Influence of Emotion in Cancer Prevention

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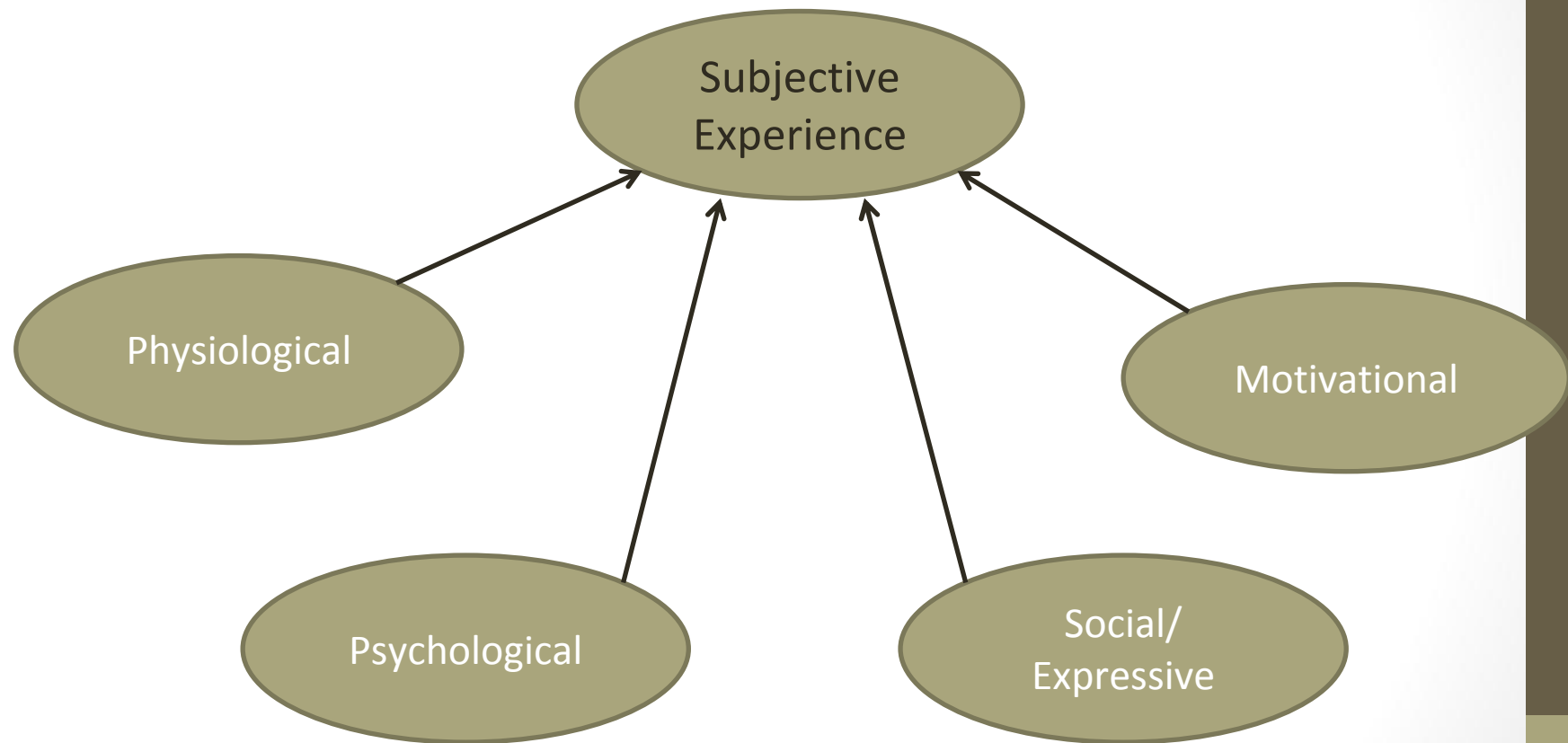
Pennsylvania State University

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- Cancer prevention messages strive to:
 - Reduce risk behaviors
 - Encourage detection behaviors
- Emotions are inevitable.
- Effects:
 - Overwhelm
 - Guide adaptive behavior

What are Emotions?



Measuring Emotions

To what extent did the message make you feel:

AFRAID: 0---1---2---3---4

ANGRY: 0---1---2---3---4

SAD: 0---1---2---3---4

1. Messages may arouse one or more emotions.

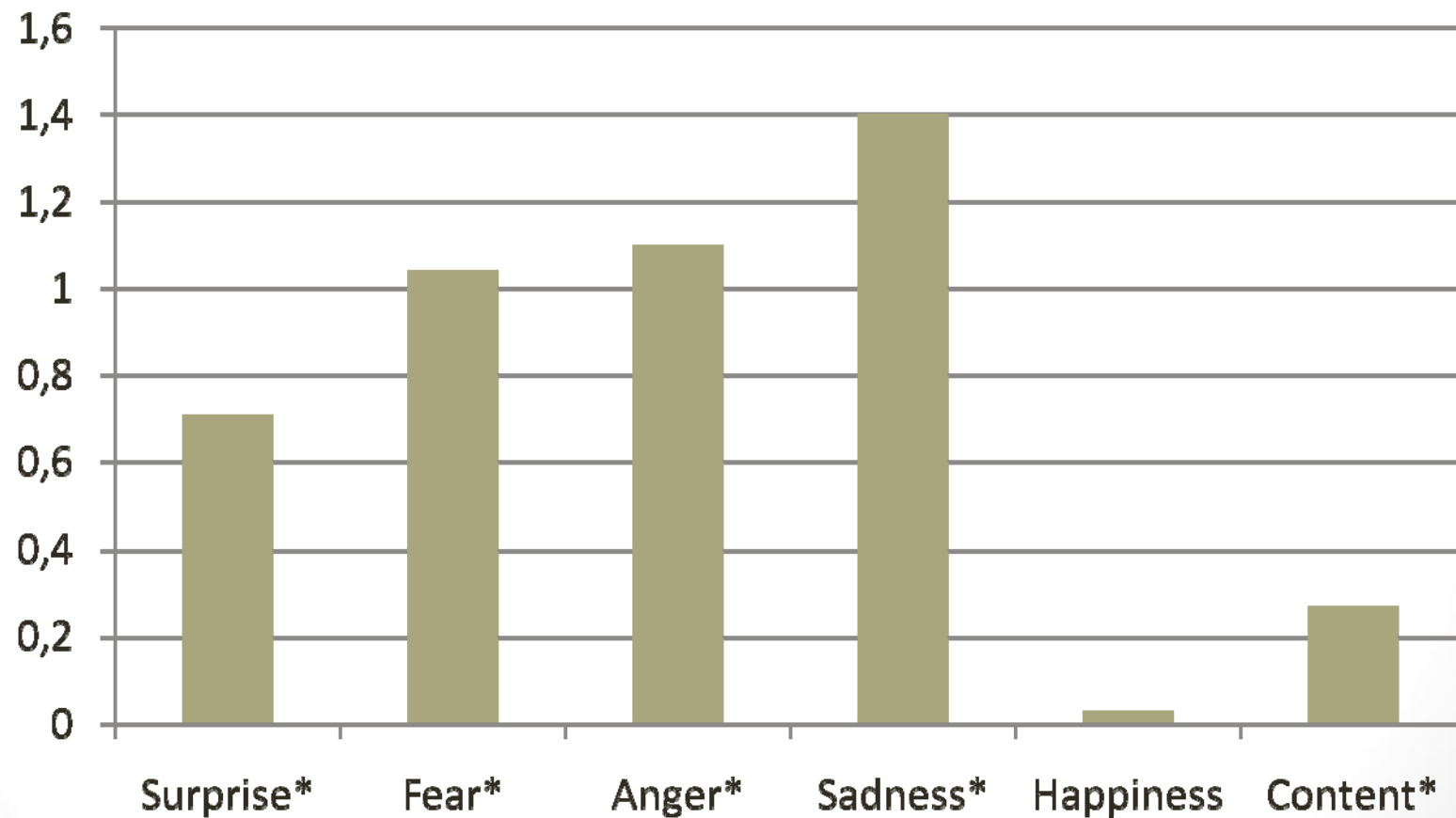
Victor Crawford:

A 30 second PSA

Victor Crawford: Emotional Responses

(Dillard & Nabi, 2006)

Mean Emotional Responses (0-4)



HIV PSAs

(Dillard, Plotnick, et al., 1996: Study 1)

- 31 Public service announcements
- Advocacies:
 - IV drug use is dangerous.
 - AIDS can kill.
 - Multiple sex partners can mean multiple exposures.
- All structured as threat appeals.

HIV PSAs: Emotional Responses

(Dillard, Plotnick, et al., 1996: Study 1)

97%  changes in 2 or more emotions.

75%  changes in 3 or more emotions.

Messages may arouse one or more emotions.

But . . .

. . . they may not be the ones intended by the message designer.

2. Emotions result from cognitive appraisals.

APPRAISAL	EMOTION
Threat	Fear
Offense/ Constraint	Anger
Progress	Happiness

2a. Appraisals are idiosyncratic.

Prior knowledge reduces emotional response.

Message: “2nd-hand smoke harms infants.”

Smokers: guilt?

Non-smokers: anger?

3. To arouse emotions, messages must focus on appraisals.

- Content
- Language
- Images

But, in the HIV data:

66%  change in fear (i.e., not 100%).

4. Emotions can enhance, inhibit, or be unrelated to persuasion (HIV data)

Predictors	Standardized Regression Coefficients on PE	Effect
Surprise	.21*	Enhance
Sadness	.15*	Enhance
Fear	.58*	Enhance
Puzzlement	-.19*	Inhibit
Anger	-.13*	Inhibit
Happiness	.00	None

5a. For emotions to persuade,
they must be:

- Aroused

5b. For emotions to persuade, they must be:

(affect can be message irrelevant)

- Seen as caused by the message.

5c. For emotions to persuade, they must be:

(topic versus advocacy)

- Seen as relevant to the advocacy.

5d. For emotions to persuade, they must be:

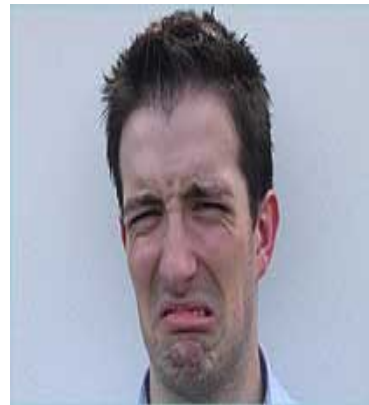
(advocacy can constrain)

- Aligned with the advocacy.

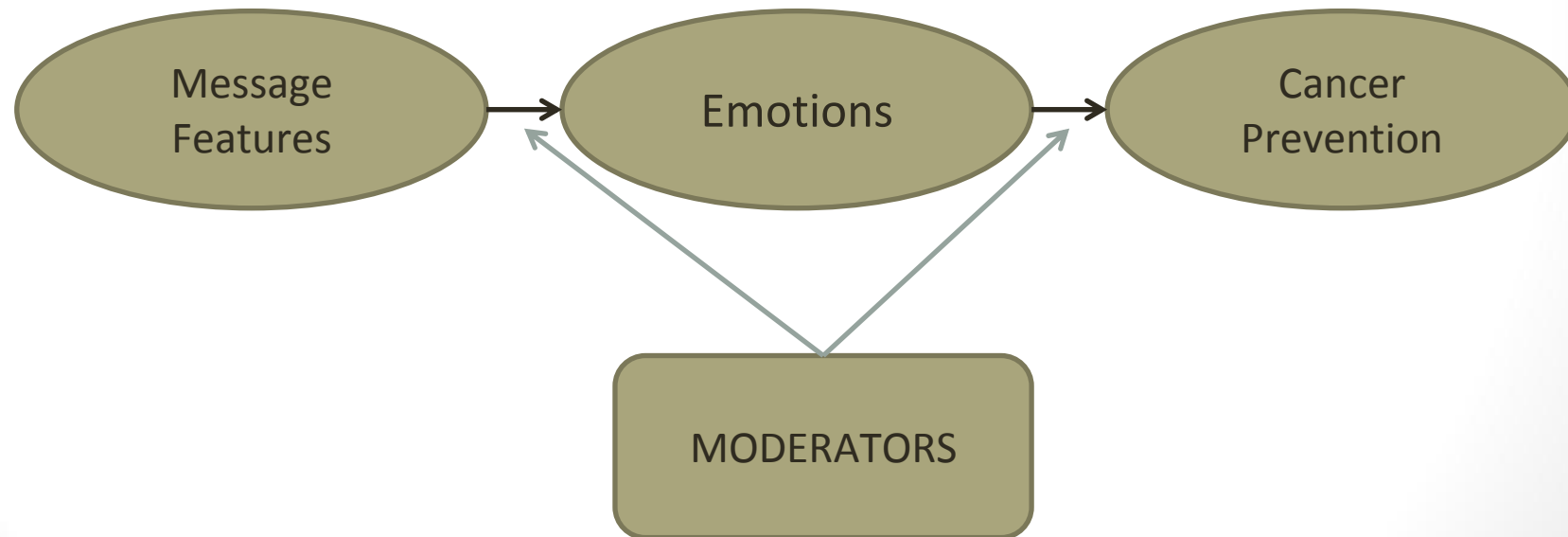
Looking Back: Cognition **versus** Emotion



Looking Forward: Cognition *and* Emotions



Looking Forward: Emotional Persuasion is Complex



“To say that it is possible to persuade without speaking to the passions, is but at best a kind of specious nonsense.”

--George Campbell (1776/1988)