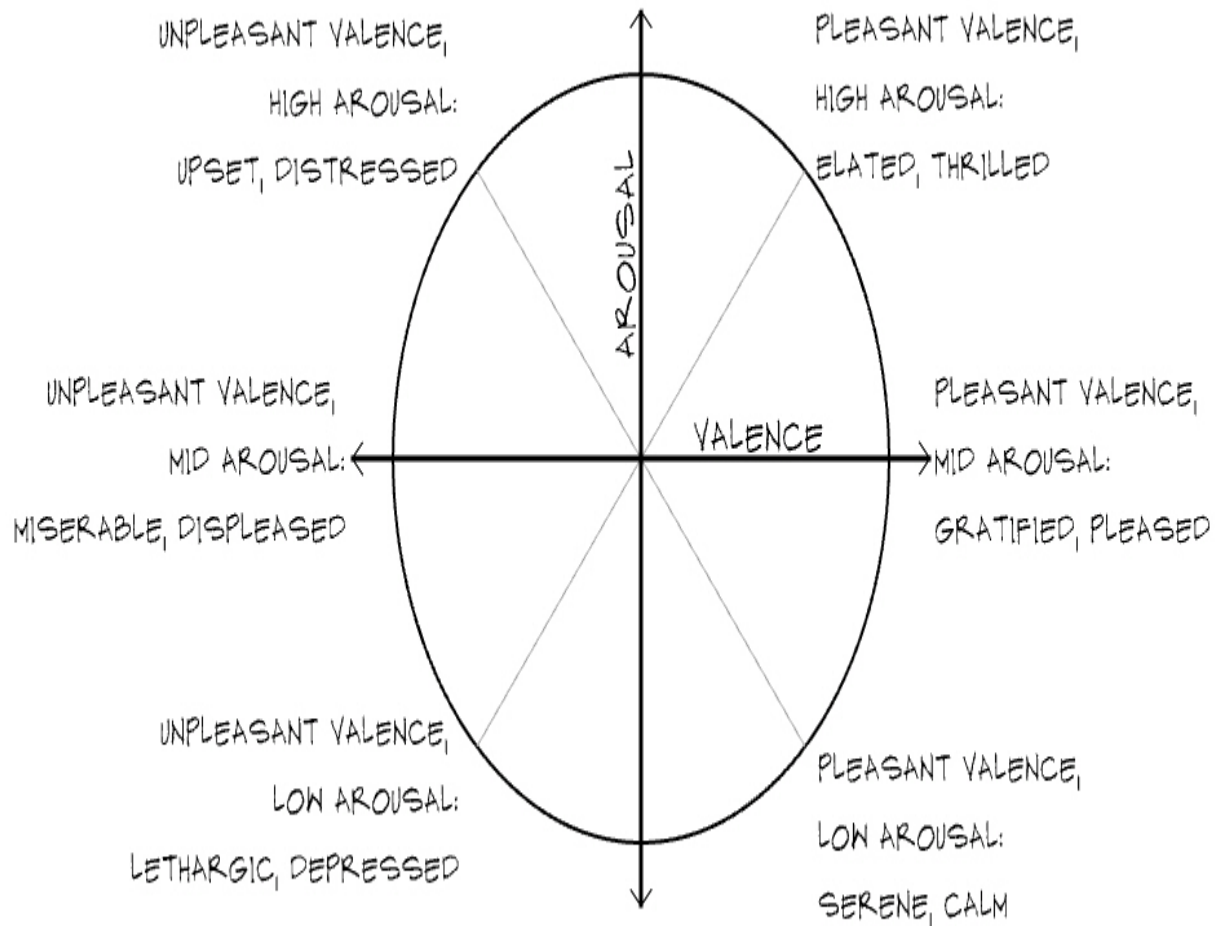


# How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain by Lisa Feldman Barrett

Post by “Godfrey” of April 15, 2021 at 8:29 PM

**Affect** is the general sense of feeling that you experience throughout each day. It is not emotion but a combination of *valence* (pleasant/unpleasant) and *arousal* (calm/agitation).

An affective circumplex describes the relationship between valence and arousal. The horizontal axis represents valence, the vertical axis represents arousal. Distance from the intersection of the two axes represents intensity:



So arousal does not correspond to intensity, distance from the intersection of the two axes does. Also, if I'm not mistaken, LFB uses the word "pain" to describe an interoceptive sensation. She describes aspects of valence as "pleasure/displeasure" or pleasant/unpleasant."

*"...interoception is not a mechanism dedicated to manufacturing affect. Interoception is a fundamental feature of the human nervous system, and why you experience these sensations as affect is one of the great mysteries of science. Interoception did not evolve for you to have*

feelings but to regulate your **body budget**.... Your affective feelings of pleasure and displeasure, and calmness and agitation, are simple summaries of your budgetary state.... Are you overdrawn? Do you need a deposit, and if so, how desperately?

*"When your budget is unbalanced, your affect doesn't instruct you how to act in any specific way, but it prompts your brain to search for explanations. Your brain constantly uses past experience to predict which objects and events will impact your body budget, changing your affect. These objects and events are collectively your affective niche.... Your affective niche includes everything that has any relevance to your body budget in the present moment. Right now, this book is within your affective niche, as are the letters of the alphabet, the ideas you're reading about, any memories that my words bring to mind, the air temperature around you, and any objects, people, and events from your past that impacted your body budget in a similar situation. Anything outside your affective niche is just noise: your brain issues no predictions about it, and you do not notice it."*

*"...In short, you feel what your brain believes. Affect primarily comes from prediction."*

**Interoception** is the sense of the internal state of the body and is a continuous process inside you. *Pleasure and displeasure are universal feelings and come from interoception. They are components of emotion but are not the complete emotional experience. "Any healthy human can experience low-arousal, unpleasant affect. But you cannot experience sadness with all of its cultural meaning, appropriate actions, and other functions of emotion unless you have the concept 'Sadness.'"* Affect does not tell you what sensations mean or what to do about them. You must make them meaningful, and one way to do this is to construct an instance of emotion.

*"...the human brain is anatomically structured so that no decision or action can be free of interoception and affect, no matter what fiction people tell themselves about how rational they are. Your bodily feeling right now will project forward to influence what you will feel and do in the future."*