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Beyond Hedonism: Motives for Inhibiting Good Moods and for Maintaining Bad Moods

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Regulation of moods and emotions can be observed at every level of analysis, from the organization of emotion's most basic biological components to the principles guiding persons toward the improvement of their characters and the quest for true happiness. The emphasis of this chapter will fall somewhere between these two extremes, but will tend more toward the latter aspects, centering on the types of mood regulation and on the reasons that can motivate them. There is a greater number of motives for emotional self-control than is usually supposed, including some that can appear quite irrational or self-destructive (although actually these are sometimes quite rational and helpful). I shall try to show how consideration of these motives broadens our understanding of self-regulation and influences our conception of the nature of mood itself. This focus on motives for mood regulation requires that the techniques of mood regulation be neglected—this chapter concentrates on why someone might want to regulate moods and has less to say about the means by which this regulation can be accomplished. I shall, however, try to show how the discussion of motives may usefully be employed to interpret some empirical results I have obtained concerning the effects of mood on autobiographical memory, results that otherwise may seem puzzling.

Mood control is one of those many areas of psychology in which the approaches of experimental psychology are most fruitfully deployed in conjunction with other disciplines and older traditions. As is the case with such topics as group conformity, jury behavior, and altruism, in the realm of affective self-regulation we find that people's behavior cannot be fully

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understood without acknowledging that part of why people do what they do is based on their trying to make themselves better people and to do what is right. Self-control appeared as a virtue in Greek writings of the sixth century B.C., and was well established among the cardinal virtues by the time of Aeschylus; it was fully developed by Plato, continued to evolve with later Greek and Roman culture (e.g., Stoicism), and was incorporated into early Christian doctrine (North, 1966). Called *sophrosyne* by the Greeks and *temperantia* by the Romans and early Christians, this virtue can be translated variously as self-control, self-mastery, moderation, self-knowledge, temperance, or self-restraint. It is well established in Western civilization (to say nothing about non-Western civilizations). Shakespeare's Hamlet praised his friend Horatio for possessing just this Stoic virtue:

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish her election,
S'hath sealed thee for herself. For thou hast been
As one, in suffring all, that suffers nothing,
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, aye, in my heart of hearts,
As I do thee. (*Hamlet*, III, ii, 68–79)

Later in the same scene Shakespeare has the Player King describe the character of one who has not developed this virtue:

Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth but poor validity,
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree
But fall unshaken when they mellow be.
Most necessary 'tis that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy.
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.

(*Hamlet*, III, ii, 198–209)

Some of what we now call the self-regulation of mood can be understood within this older tradition. The approach of the present chapter is assuredly that of an experimental psychologist, but it will occasionally be necessary to relate the topic of mood control to this broader context if we are to appreciate the significance of this psychological phenomenon.

TYPES OF MOOD REGULATION

Let us begin in traditional fashion by making a few simplifying assumptions. In this chapter I shall focus on moods, but much of what I say will apply to the self-regulation of emotions as well. My examples will mix moods and emotions, but I do not want to create the impression that there are no important differences between these two classes of affect. Because my focus is on those aspects of emotions that are most similar to moods—namely their ability to color subsequent experience, thought, and motivation—I shall include emotions where appropriate without noting the extension or dwelling on the distinction.

Let us also accept that moods can be divided into two types: good and bad. (Academic psychologists sometimes substitute the terms “positive” and “negative,” but with no real difference in meaning or improvement in precision as far as I can tell.) These terms encompass a variety of distinguishable moods and categorize them according to whether they are pleasant or not. They simplify by ignoring the large and sometimes important differences that exist between different types of good and bad moods—compare gloominess, irritability, and anxiety; compare the exuberance following achievement, the unburdening of relief, and the perky sociability of cheerfulness. These terms also simplify by eliding the issue of what makes a mood pleasant—irritability would be classed as a bad mood, but occasionally one can enjoy storming about and fuming at the world, and the question of whether such irritability should count as a bad or a good mood is one that will not be addressed here. These are everyday terms, and one reason for not substituting more technical-sounding language is to provide a reminder of their everyday origins and their lack of precision. Their everyday origins may at least provide some reassurance in that the dichotomy between good and bad moods presumably must have some utility in everyday life.

Finally, let us also simplify the options for the self-regulation of mood by dividing them into two categories according to the regulatory goal: Let us say that once in a certain mood one can either try to maintain the present mood or try to inhibit it. This dichotomy ignores variations in the intensity of moods, and it ignores motives to achieve a certain mood that are independent of one's present mood, but it will do for our present purposes.

These dichotomies create a simple 2×2 scheme in which there are four possible types of mood regulation: One can try to eliminate a bad mood, one can try to stay in a good mood, one can try to eliminate a good mood, and one can try to stay in a bad mood. Since good and bad moods can be conceived as distinct states and not as the extremes of a continuum (Diener, Larsen, Levine, & Emmons, 1985), the elimination of one type of mood need not lead to the augmentation of the other type. I wish to pursue this simple scheme despite the limitations I have pointed out, because even this fourfold categorization exceeds by two the number of possibilities usually considered in the current literature. Mood regulation is most often described as consisting of two general strategies: getting out of an existing bad mood, often termed “negative mood repair,” and retaining an existing

good mood, often termed "positive mood maintenance" (e.g., Clark & Isen, 1982). On the topic of negative mood repair there has been an abundance of research (Morris & Reilly, 1987); on the topic of positive mood maintenance there has also been considerable research (e.g., Carlson, Charlin, & Miller, 1988). Thus, in terms of the 2×2 grid of mood-regulatory possibilities (diagramed in Figure 13.1) there is one diagonal that has received virtually all of researchers' attention, whereas the other diagonal, consisting of the inhibition of good moods and the maintenance of bad moods, has been almost entirely neglected.

It is worthwhile to consider the reasons for this emphasis. Good moods, after all, are pleasant, and bad moods are unpleasant, and, all things being equal, why should people not prefer pleasantness to unpleasantness? This is the motive of *hedonism*, and it is certainly one motive influencing the self-regulation of mood. The existence of this motive is probably the chief reason for the emphasis on negative mood repair and positive mood maintenance. An additional reason, though, may be related to the frequency of the four possibilities. If one were to investigate the frequency of the four hypothesized types of mood regulation in everyday life, it would not be surprising if it turned out that the two most studied types were the more common of the four. Although frequency, or percentage of total variance, is not the most important determinant of research priorities, it is not a bad one either, particularly in the early stages of empirical inquiry. So the emphasis on negative mood repair is understandable for these two reasons. But I think there are good reasons to consider the other types of mood regulation as well.

Foremost among these reasons is the wish to avoid misunderstanding the nature of moods themselves. It is common to assume that good and bad moods are essentially pleasant and unpleasant feeling states, and it is this assumption that makes hedonic motives seem especially applicable to the understanding of mood regulation. If bad moods consist simply of displeasure, then they seem about as useful as a toothache, and if good moods consist simply of pleasure, then any hedonic calculus will recommend their acquisition and maintenance. It therefore appears sensible to consider only two basic goals of self-regulation, one in which people try to maintain (or acquire) good moods and another in which they jettison (or avoid) bad ones. But it is a mistake to think of moods simply as feeling states.

		TYPE OF MOOD	
		Good	Bad
GOAL OF REGULATION	Inhibit	Nil	Lots
	Maintain	Lots	Nil

FIGURE 13.1 Amount of research, roughly speaking, devoted to each of four types of mood regulation.

Moods are better thought of as general frames of mind that include a complex of cognitive and motivational tendencies. Some theory and research have been converging on this view in recent years, but the old ways of thinking are only beginning to change. A mood certainly imparts feelings, but it also entails characteristic assessments of a person's well-being and, thereby, characteristic biases in interpretation, in attention, in motivation, and in action. Good moods may entail judgments that one is safe, that one's goals are not particularly jeopardized, and that one may expect positive outcomes. A person in a good mood may therefore be more inclined to accept risks, to explore new ideas and possibilities, to feel that intense effort is unnecessary, to use heuristics, to think in a broader and more integrated fashion, and to be intuitive and creative. Bad moods, on the other hand, entail a judgment that one's goals are threatened, that problems exist that might not be solved. A person in a bad mood may therefore be more inclined to be cautious, to narrow attentional focus, and to put effort into problem solving, analysis, causal reasoning, and information acquisition (for reviews see Isen, 1987; Schwarz, 1990; Schwarz & Bless, 1991; cf. Beck, 1976; Solomon, 1976).

From this perspective, the important difference between good and bad moods is in the assessment of well-being and in the ways that this assessment colors a person's motives and information processing. Certainly people are capable of facing problems cheerfully and of thinking analytically while happy, and certainly people can be creative while glum. The point is that the person facing a problem while remaining in a good mood does so in a frame of mind that assumes nothing truly bad will happen, whereas one facing the problem in a bad mood does so without such assurance of well-being. It is this difference that tends to create the other motivational and cognitive differences described above.

Viewed in this manner, moods appear as much more than hedonic states; they are perspectives on one's situation in the world and on one's well-being, and they tend to produce ways of thinking that are adapted to that perspective. Such an understanding suggests that there may be times when a good mood is not the most helpful frame of mind to be in—the good mood may be hedonically pleasant but functionally sub-optimal. Likewise, there may be times in which the bad mood may inspire the type of thinking that is called for at a given time, so that the accompanying unpleasantness may be less than the greater unpleasantness that could result from avoiding the bad mood. Thus, focusing on mood's hedonic qualities not only neglects their cognitive and motivational aspects but also eliminates from mood regulation any consideration of a mood's long-term consequences. (It is, of course, by introducing an appreciation of both immediate and longer-term consequences that utilitarians incorporate hedonism into theories of decision making and ethics.) In the following two sections I would like to apply this conception of mood in exploring the motives that may exist for engaging in the two neglected types of mood regulation—inhibiting good moods and maintaining bad moods.

A DOZEN MOTIVES FOR INHIBITING GOOD MOODS

I shall devote the most attention to the various motives that exist for tempering good moods because, of the four types of mood regulation, this is the one that most consistently elicits incredulity in those to whom I propose it. Many people apparently do not think that they ever engage in such an activity. I have found no one, however, who fails to recall an instance when asked to try to do so.

There do, however, appear to be some interesting individual differences with respect to people's awareness of their regulation of good moods. Although many people are initially puzzled by the very question, believe that they never do any such thing, and cannot imagine any reason for doing so, there are nevertheless others who have no hesitation in recalling examples and appear to be well aware of their participation in this type of self-regulation. Some of these latter types react as if they assumed everyone in the world is like they are, whereas others appear to be relieved to learn that they are not the *only* person in the world who sometimes suppresses a good mood. The source of these differences appears to rest in people's beliefs about the nature and significance of moods, some of which may be traced to various cultural traditions.

Having considered numerous examples, it appears that there exist at least a dozen motives for inhibiting good moods (see Table 13.1). I do not claim this list to be comprehensive; I merely claim to illustrate the existence

TABLE 13.1. A Dozen Motives for Inhibiting Good Moods

Four Widely Shared Nonsocial Motives	
1.	To promote realistic thinking.
2.	To avoid distraction and improve concentration.
3.	To motivate oneself to work hard.
4.	To protect oneself against future disappointment.
Four Idiosyncratic Nonsocial Motives	
5.	To prevent bad fortune (if one believes that excessive happiness causes this).
6.	To eliminate bad feelings about the good mood (if one feels undeserving or guilty about the good mood).
7.	To build one's character (if one believes self-denial strengthens character).
8.	To achieve spiritual betterment (if one believes that certain good moods imply undue concern with insignificant matters).
Four Social Motives	
9.	To behave appropriately in a social situation.
10.	To be considerate or respectful of others.
11.	To conceal one's mood from others.
12.	To influence other people's moods.

of some plausible motives for this type of mood regulation and to account for a variety of actual cases. These motives are conceptually distinct, but can and frequently do co-occur. These 12 motives may be grouped into three sets of four. Good moods may bias thinking and distract attention, and wanting to avoid these biases may lead to any of four several widely shared motives for tempering a good mood. Four additional, more idiosyncratic motives appear to exist as well. Finally, good moods also may be informative or influential to others and subject to social conventions. These aspects lead to four social motives for suppressing a good mood that are probably the most powerful of the 12 motives.

Four Widely Shared Nonsocial Motives

One motive for inhibiting good moods is to help oneself think realistically. Good moods are associated with optimism, with assessments of future events in which probabilities of good outcomes are biased upwards and probabilities of bad outcomes are biased downwards. It may feel good to view life from such a perspective, but if one must make important plans and decisions, one courts disaster by making them when in a Pollyannaish frame of mind.

A second motive is to help oneself concentrate. When a person is in a good mood one tends to think about the causes of the good mood and to anticipate good events to come. These thoughts can be distracting and can prevent one from thinking about what one needs to think about. It is worth noting that both of these first two motives exist for eliminating bad moods as well—pessimism and dysphoric rumination can also be undesirable for decision making and work.

A third motive is to keep oneself motivated to work hard. The well-being and contentment of good moods can undermine one's will to strive for achievement—if all is so well, why bother? It seems that we muster the determination to do unpleasant work partly by believing that not doing the work will have bad consequences. The frame of mind that accompanies good moods requires that we believe we are relatively immune from bad consequences, thus undercutting motivation to do the unpleasant work.

A fourth motive is to protect oneself against future disappointment. Bad outcomes seem worse when they are unexpected. Since good moods entail an assumption that bad outcomes are unlikely or trivial so that preparing to avoid or cope with them is unnecessary, the occurrence of a bad outcome when in a good mood catches one unprepared. Furthermore, people may feel foolish if they suffer consequences they could have avoided had they not incorrectly assumed their goals were assured. If they believe that a bad outcome is unlikely and that their goals have been or will be realized, they may enter a good mood; but if they nevertheless do not want to risk the heightened disappointment or feelings of foolishness that would occur if bad outcomes did occur, they may be motivated to inhibit the good mood.

One may see these four motives at work by considering an athlete who has just obtained an advantage over the competition that could allow

the athlete to win. Gaining this advantage puts him (or her) in a good mood, because it is near the end of the competition and it is unlikely that the opponent can recover, so victory will likely result and the goal of years of training and anticipation will be realized—the athlete can “taste the victory.” But the competition is not yet over, and the athlete has all four motives for postponing this good mood. He or she needs to play well to preserve the advantage, and good play is difficult in the glow of certain victory. The confidence of optimism inspires risky strategies and underestimation of the opponent’s resources just when conservative play is called for. Anticipation of celebration, daydreams of adulation, and wishes to share one’s joy with friends all distract from concentrating on the competition’s final moments. The state of mind that the competition is essentially over is inconsistent with all-out effort. To lose the competition after having been so close to winning would certainly make for an extra-bitter defeat. For all these reasons the athlete tries to suppress the good mood until the victory is actually obtained.

Examples like this do not appear to be all that rare. My students frequently report them in conjunction with their school work. Students who score well on the first of a series of final exams, who must complete assignments before departing on much anticipated spring-break adventures, who get accepted to graduate school early in their senior years, who fall in love during midterms—all these report trying to stifle their good moods so that they complete their work satisfactorily. Examples from other domains could be cited just as easily.

The fact that people seem so willing to postpone or do without what is hedonically so pleasant suggests a thorough linkage between the hedonic aspect of mood and the other aspects. After all, why do people not just *feel* good while regulating the other aspects of mood; if moods are essentially feeling states and only contingently related to cognitive and motivational changes, why do people not retain their good feelings while preventing the other changes? One must conclude that they cannot, else they surely would. So the existence of self-regulation of good moods itself suggests tight linkage between the hedonic and the cognitive and motivational aspects of mood.

Four Idiosyncratic Nonsocial Motives

In addition to these four motives for regulation of good moods there exist a number of others that are more idiosyncratic. For one, some people believe that excessive happiness will bring on bad fortune. People arrive at this conclusion via a number of different belief systems, and these seem more prevalent in some cultures than in others. In one variation, people think of events as being partially determined by Fates, gods, or other agents who monitor people’s attitudes and punish them for excessive hubris. Other people seem to think of the good and bad experiences of their lives as though they were being sampled from a barrel without replacement: Each occurrence of a good mood therefore implies that the probability of bad fortune increases, that future suffering will be necessary to “even up the

score." Still others seem to posit a direct causal connection between smugness and bad fortune. For whatever reason, all these people have beliefs that create a motive for convincing themselves that things really are not so good, that the balance has not really tilted so far toward the fortunate, that the "Big Shoe" will not be needing to stomp upon them after all. Engaging in such thinking tends to temper one's good moods. Not all people (in contemporary America) have this motive; many individuals appear to welcome good fortune with no anxieties whatsoever about future bad fortune.

Examples such as these reveal an ambiguity that exists in the definition of mood control. It is sometimes unclear whether to consider a change of mood to be the result of self-regulation or simply to be a sequence of moods, as in the case of the person who first feels content and then becomes anxious about future bad fortune. Is this anxiety self-control or is it just an emotion that has the first emotion as its object? Perhaps a reasonable distinction can be made between this anxiety and any subsequent efforts at true mood regulation it motivates.

Another nonuniversal motive for eliminating a good mood is that one has reservations about having the good mood. This motive entails a variety of subtypes, but all involve rejection of moods on grounds linked to notions of personal responsibility. Sometimes a person believes he or she does not deserve to feel good at a given time or for a given reason. For example, most people are happy to bask in the reflected glory of a team or person with whom they are associated (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976), but I know of people who have inhibited such good moods on the grounds that they really did nothing themselves and therefore do not deserve to feel good about it. Similarly, some people find themselves inhibiting good moods when they think about how their good fortunes were due more to luck than to ability, about there being others who are less fortunate than themselves, or about their happiness having been gained at the expense of someone else. In short, some people, in some circumstances, feel undeserving or guilty about their happiness and are thereby motivated to inhibit the good mood.

A third idiosyncratic motive for regulating good moods is to build one's character. Some people try to build self-discipline and self-control by practicing a mild asceticism, occasionally forcing themselves to work a little harder, to perform some altruistic act, or to deny themselves some comfort. The goal is to strengthen themselves in easy times so as to be prepared for more difficult times. Such people may occasionally deny themselves a good mood for no other reason than the desire to develop character, to keep themselves from getting too "soft." This attitude was well expressed by William James:

Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day. That is, be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points, do every day or two something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it, so that when the hour of dire need draws nigh, it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test. Asceticism of this sort is like the insurance which a man pays on his house and goods.

The tax does him no good at the time, and possibly may never bring him a return. But if the fire *does* come, his having paid it will be his salvation from ruin. So with the man who has daily inured himself to habits of concentrated attention, energetic volition, and self-denial in unnecessary things. He will stand like a tower when everything rocks around him, and when his softer fellow-mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast. (James, 1890/1983, p. 130)

This motive may be more in the spirit of the last century than of the present one—but this, of course, is not a criticism.

A fourth type of idiosyncratic motive for restraining good moods and emotions is related to the previous motive: achieving wisdom, virtue, or spiritual betterment. Such motives derive from philosophical or religious positions concerning the impermanence, insignificance, or distorting effects of moods. In some philosophies such beliefs lead to recommendations to avoid most moods and emotions. The Stoics, for example, believed that virtually all emotions, both positive and negative, were undesirable (cheerfulness and contented tranquility were allowed). The Stoics adopted a perspective that emphasized the impermanence and inconsequentiality of life, the uncontrollability of most events, and the irrelevance of pain and pleasure to reason, virtue, and moral action. They therefore believed that it was foolish to react emotionally either to pleasure and external success or to pain and misfortune. They instead cultivated indifference to these things. The teachings of Epictetus contain many sections in which he urges detachment from emotional disturbances both negative and positive:

If you have received the impression of any pleasure, guard yourself against being carried away by it; but let the thing wait for you, and allow yourself a certain delay on your own part. Then think of both times, of the time when you will enjoy the pleasure, and of the time after the enjoyment of the pleasure when you will repent and will reproach yourself. And set against these things how you will rejoice if you have abstained from the pleasure, and how you will commend yourself. But if it seem to you seasonable to undertake the thing, take care that the charm of it, and the pleasure, and the attraction of it should not conquer you; but set on the other side the consideration how much better it is to be conscious that you have gained this victory. (Hadas, 1961, pp. 96–97)

Stoicism is just one example of the many religions and philosophies that encourage transcendence of and detachment from the concerns that occupy mortals much of the time. Other philosophies urge not so much the avoidance of passion as its moderation. In the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle the avoidance of extreme positive or negative passions is recommended. The primary reason for this moderation is that passions would otherwise threaten to overwhelm the element of reason; as a result, the life of self-control is said not only to be morally superior to the life of hedonism but in the long run also to yield more pleasantness (e.g., Book V of Plato's *Laws*). Moreover, the emphasis of these thinkers was not so much on the inherent value of emotion as it was on the education of

emotion—both philosophers maintained that the hallmark of a virtuous person was harmony between reason and emotion, so that the temperate person not only abstains from excessive pleasure but also enjoys the abstaining (see Book IV of Plato's *Republic* and Book II of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*). So the willful control of mood is something that must be done in achieving virtue; in the virtuous person such control is automatic, the results of well-ingrained habits.

Having described eight nonsocial motives for inhibiting good moods, it can be noted that all of them can function in either adaptive or maladaptive ways. This is most clearly true for the four motives I have called "idiosyncratic." The belief that excessive happiness leads to bad fortune could be of benefit by avoiding unrealistic extremes of optimism, by discouraging conceit, and by preventing unduly short-term perspectives. On the other hand, it could maladaptively create fear of success. Likewise, the avoidance of undeserved good feelings and the quests for character development and enlightened detachment can also be seen as having both benefits and costs. Less obvious is that the four nonidiosyncratic motives also can be dysfunctional as well as functional. There are certainly times when it is wise to curb a good mood to avoid unrealistic expectations, to concentrate on work at hand, to sustain one's motivation, or to avoid future disappointment; but there are also times when these goals can be pursued to excess, with the result that people deprive themselves of pleasant moods for no good reason. That is, there is some basis for the amazement that is often expressed over the idea of inhibiting good moods. People who never let their hopes get up, their concentration be interrupted, their obligations slide, or themselves be exposed to disappointment surely are being overcautious and are unnecessarily missing much of the fun life has to offer.

Four Social Motives

There exist additional motives for inhibiting good moods that have a social basis. It is my impression that these social motives are the most widespread of all; even people who do not engage in much emotional self-control are occasionally motivated by these. In describing the social motives one issue of great theoretical import emerges. By their nature, the focus of the social motives is always the *display* of affect, not the *experience* of affect. So one might think that people would try to regulate their appearances while leaving their good moods unaltered. Interestingly, however, this strategy seems not to be possible under many circumstances.

I suspect that the reason for this limitation is not primarily the influence of facial or other peripheral feedback on emotion, but rather is a limitation in attention that makes sense only when one admits the cognitive and motivational aspects of mood. To act one way while feeling another requires attention to two matters: to the mood (and the set of evaluations and motivations that constitute and sustain it); and to the social situation—in particular, to imagining the points of view of the other people present and to conceiving the mood-incongruent behavior that will give them the desired impression. This feat is not impossible, since we occasionally do

pull it off (a fact difficult for the facial feedback hypothesis to explain). The point is that this feat is more difficult than is the alternative of abandoning one's good mood and concentrating solely on the present situation, adopting, if necessary, the mood appropriate to it. Being in the appropriate frame of mind not only prevents the difficulty of divided attention but also reduces the risk of failure due to "leakage" of the good mood (Ekman, 1985). When trying to act one way while feeling another, one must not only devote attention to both activities but also must monitor oneself to prevent expressions of one's mood from slipping into one's performance (Silver, Sabini, & Parrott, 1987). To the extent that the good mood continues, one is handicapped in the social situation by thinking in a mode incongruent with that deemed appropriate. So for these reasons people regulate their moods and not merely their expressions. There is an obvious parallel between this linkage of affective display and hedonic tone and the linkage described earlier of mental bias and hedonic tone. Both cases suggest that hedonic tone is closely tied to the cognitive and motivational components of mood.

The first social motive for inhibiting a good mood is that performing social roles requires control of our appearances and our manner, and there are some social situations in which displaying good moods is socially inappropriate. As Goffman (1959) put it:

The expressive coherence that is required in performances points out a crucial discrepancy between our all-too-human selves and our socialized selves. As human beings we are presumably creatures of variable impulse with moods and energies that change from one moment to the next. As characters put on for an audience, however, we must not be subject to ups and downs. . . . A certain bureaucratization of the spirit is expected so that we can be relied upon to give a perfectly homogeneous performance at every appointed time. (p. 56)

As simple examples, one may consider occasions in which one gets the giggles in church or feels cheerful and sociable when greeting one's rarely seen relatives at a funeral. The moods are pleasant, and it may seem a chore to stifle them, but that is what people do to be appropriate.

A second social motive for inhibiting a good mood is the desire to be considerate or respectful of others. When one is in a great mood and encounters a friend who is feeling despondent or depressed or is weeping, one's first reaction usually must be one of sympathy and concern, of being sensitive to the person's momentary needs (even if one intends eventually to try to cheer up the friend, and even if one believes that the friend's distress is unwarranted). When one wins an award coveted by another, or defeats an opponent in election or sport, or otherwise enjoys success in some area of life in which another is having difficulty, one's display of pleasure must be tempered because of one's desire to avoid humiliating the person, to avoid "rubbing it in," to avoid being perceived as arrogant or as flaunting one's advantage, or to honor obligations to provide consolation. "One should try to behave decently by suppressing all extremes of joy and grief," wrote Plato in the *Laws* (Saunders, 1970, p. 197).

A third social motive for inhibiting a good mood is that display of the mood may not serve one's own strategic interests. If one is trying to attract another by "playing hard to get," the good mood brought on by early signs that the strategy is working might undercut the strategy. Signs of happiness need to be concealed from those who are prone to envy and resentment. Good moods also need to be hidden from others who habitually try to make one feel guilty about one's good fortunes, or who become competitive in the presence of a happy person. In many cultures one must conceal good fortune to avoid "the evil eye" (Schoeck, 1966/1969). Some good moods will cause one to be perceived in a negative way, such as many cases of glee at another's misfortune (*schadenfreude*), and these affects must sometimes be concealed (Parrott, 1991a). In short, there are times when we have reasons for not wanting others to know how fortunate or happy we are, and reducing the intensity of the mood in their presence is often necessary to accomplish this goal.

A fourth social motive rests on the fact that one's own expressions of mood *can influence other people's moods*. This influence can occur in several ways. It is possible that moods can spread to others by simple contagion, causing others to become caught up in the mood. Alternatively, one's mood can influence the moods of others by informing them of one's own affective state and thereby of what an upcoming interaction will be like. If one is going to have a meeting with a person who seems cheerful, one may become more relaxed because one anticipates a fairly pleasant meeting; if one is to meet with someone who seems grouchy, one may become anxious about whether the meeting will go well. These two types of influence can be used strategically, of course. If one is supervising workers whose fear of punishment is inhibiting their productivity, affecting a pleasant demeanor may relax them and cause them to work better. If one's workers have become complacent, a display of irritability may make them more anxious about their situations and induce more motivation and concentration. To the extent that one's good mood is influencing others in an undesirable manner, there exists a motive for dispelling the good mood.

In summary, then, there exist various motives for inhibiting good moods. Despite the dearth of scholarly attention to such mood regulation, and despite what to many seems its intuitive implausibility, consideration of these motives suggests that the inhibition of good moods is not such a rare occurrence. We can now turn our attention to the maintenance of bad moods.

MOTIVES FOR MAINTAINING BAD MOODS

Go—you may call it madness, folly;
 You shall not chase my gloom away.
 There's such a charm in melancholy
 I would not, if I could, be gay.

Samuel Rogers (1814/1936)

The other type of mood regulation that seems somewhat counter-

intuitive is the maintenance of bad moods. Unlike the strategy of inhibiting good moods, which often seems counter-intuitive because of doubt that it ever occurs, people readily believe that bad moods sometimes are maintained—what can seem counter-intuitive is that this activity could ever be helpful. It tends to be perceived either as counterproductive self-indulgence or as masochistic wallowing in miserable affect. As several authors in this volume make clear, such maladaptive patterns do occur; but not all bad-mood maintenance is maladaptive. At least in the case of mild or moderate bad moods, there obviously are times when cheering up oneself seems shortsighted, a denial of real problems that need to be solved. Although we do sometimes decide that our moodiness is mere wallowing, other times we describe it as “working through our problems,” as “coming to terms with events,” as “thinking things through.” What do these phrases mean? The answer again requires one to appreciate the extra-hedonic aspects of moods, as can be shown by considering some of the possible motives. As before, the diversity of possible motives will be characterized by describing a dozen motives, subdivided into the same three categories (see Table 13.2). Since the purpose of these examples is primarily to illustrate the plausibility of this type of self-regulation, no attempt will be made to coordinate these lists into a more formal or comprehensive account of mood regulation.

Four Widely Shared Nonsocial Motives

As the discussion of motives for inhibiting good moods made clear, good and bad moods entail different evaluations of well-being and thereby tend to motivate different information-processing modes. It therefore seems

TABLE 13.2. A Dozen Motives for Maintaining Bad Moods

Four Widely Shared Nonsocial Motives

1. To promote focused, analytical problem solving.
2. To motivate oneself to work hard.
3. To sustain a perspective or motivation needed at a later time.
4. To perceive oneself as having certain qualities.

Four Idiosyncratic Nonsocial Motives

5. To punish self, atone for guilt.
6. To prepare for or prevent future bad fortune.
7. To explore ramifications of negative worldview.
8. To prevent worse moods.

Four Social Motives

9. To aid in empathizing with others.
10. To communicate one's needs for help, support, or special consideration.
11. To lodge protest, aggress, or take vengeance.
12. To influence others' moods and behavior.

plausible that bad moods are useful when an assumption of threatened well-being and the analytical thinking it motivates may be fruitfully applied to making sense of one's confusions or to solving one's problems. Maintaining bad moods under such circumstances may be more rational than denying real problems in order to cheer up oneself. Furthermore, allowing oneself to brood over life's tragic or mysterious aspects is more conducive to profundity than is seeking constant cheerfulness.

It is worth noting that earlier ages acknowledged these useful aspects of bad moods. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance much was written about *melancholy*, which was considered to have both favorable and unfavorable aspects (Harré, 1986). Unfavorable was its creation of sadness, remorse, envy, and lethargy, but favorable was its ability to sustain various intellectual functions and produce genius. In 1586 Bright wrote that "melancholie breedeth a jelousie of doubt in that they [melancholics] take in deliberation, and causeth them to be more exact and curious in pondering the very moments of things—the vehemence of their affection, once raised . . . carrieth them . . . into the depths of what they take pleasure to intermeddle in" (Bright, 1586, p. 130, quoted by Harré, 1986, p. 224). During the Renaissance, techniques for cultivating melancholy were developed for the benefit of those who aspired to genius.

A second motive for maintaining a bad mood is that such a mood may motivate one to work hard, at least when the mood's intensity is not too severe. Even when it is entirely realistic to expect that one will succeed in a task, approaching the task in a mood of blissful self-confidence can result in sitting back and anticipating a reward that becomes increasingly less likely as the hours pass without any work being done. It may be necessary to focus less on the reward than on the humiliation that would follow failure, to stir up some anxiety, to motivate oneself to take one's feet off the desk and put one's work on it. Once in such an anxious mood, a person may well be motivated to maintain it rather than to "repair" it at the earliest opportunity.

A third motive is to sustain a state of mind that would otherwise be forgotten or difficult to restore when it becomes needed. A common use of this motive is to maintain anger toward a person whom one expects to encounter later on. If the anger will facilitate a desirable manner of confrontation, if it will keep facts and reasoning readily in mind, one may choose to cultivate the anger so as to be willing and able to perform when the time arrives. The existence of such a motive suggests limitations in people's ability to restore a preexisting mood quickly and at will. It also suggests a linkage between moods and memory for facts and reasons.

A fourth motive stems from a mood's having significance for the person having the mood. Moods may have various types of significance. Because moods and emotions tend to originate from thoughts and evaluations that are habitual and difficult to control (Parrott & Sabini, 1989), they can serve as indices of a person's true character, values, and beliefs. If a person's friend moves away and that person does not feel sad, it may suggest that their friendship did not mean all that much. If friends or relatives must endure a period of hardship and one is able to enjoy oneself

anyway, it may suggest an undesired self-centeredness in oneself. One may be motivated to disprove such conclusions by cultivating and maintaining a bad mood, thereby proving to oneself that one has certain desired qualities. A bad mood may thereby serve as a marker of respect, as a sign of loyalty, as proof of love or of having proper priorities.

Four Idiosyncratic Nonsocial Motives

Other motives for maintaining bad moods are not so widely shared. Rather than explore the entire menagerie of neuroses, I shall briefly describe four motives that illustrate the ways in which less prevalent belief systems can construe bad moods as being useful. One motive is self-punishment. For some, self-anger and guilt can constitute atonement for wrongdoing. Maintaining such a mood is seen as a way of giving oneself what one deserves. Sometimes there is a belief that such punishments will lead to a better future, say by providing incentives to act better in the future or by motivating work that will produce self-improvement (as per motive 2 above). Other times people maintain the bad mood to prevent themselves from straying from their goal of making amends—good moods are postponed as a reward for good behavior. Such motives suggest an internalized parent administering punishment.

Another motive is to prepare for or prevent future bad fortune. Some people believe that they will be better able to cope with future bad fortune if they imagine it in advance to the point of suffering through it. The strategy is to face the future confident that one cannot be surprised by the unfamiliar and that one can handle the worst. Other people believe that worry actually prevents bad events from occurring. Some people appear to believe that misfortune is more likely if people are not mindful of its possibility; they therefore believe that worry makes misfortune less likely. Others believe that bad events are “sent” to teach us lessons, and therefore try to preempt bad events by learning the lessons in advance, self-inducing whatever anguish the lesson might entail to gain some control over its timing and magnitude.

A third idiosyncratic motive is to “try on” a negative worldview. Even if one intellectually believes it is irrational to hold such a view, one may feel a need to explore it experientially. A bad mood for such a person may be maintained as a way of trying out ideas by actually living them.

A final motive worth mentioning is that bad moods are often seen as preventing worse moods. For many this motive is related to the common clinical observation that bad moods often serve important ego defensive functions, protecting self-esteem, albeit in a suboptimal fashion (see Solomon, 1976). People become angry so as to avoid becoming sad; they construe facts so as to direct anger at others rather than at themselves; they reject others to relieve their fears of being rejected themselves. Such unpleasant emotions are maintained because they are perceived as being less unpleasant than the emotions that would otherwise occur. For other people maintenance of bad moods stems from beliefs that bad moods have

a hydraulic quality, that their abatement will only cause the moods to “build up” and return later in an even more unpleasant manner.

Four Social Motives

Bad moods can perform various social functions as well. As was the case with the social motives for inhibiting good moods, these social functions often have more to do with the display of moods than with their experience. At least one exception to this rule appears to exist among the motives for maintaining bad moods, however. In order to help someone who is unhappy, it is often helpful to induce a similar bad mood in oneself so as to be able to empathize with the unhappy person’s point of view. Unless one is already quite familiar from previous experience with the sort of situation afflicting the unhappy person, placing oneself in a similar mental state is sometimes the best way to appreciate his or her plight. Maintaining such a bad mood may also make it easier to behave in the appropriate manner (as discussed under motive 10 for inhibiting a good mood) and may promote a sense of solidarity with the unhappy person (a social motive related to motive 4 above).

A second social motive for maintaining a bad mood is to let others know that one is unhappy. As mentioned previously, there are social roles that require the display of a somber or angry mood. In addition, acting like one is in a bad mood can cause one to obtain desirable attention from others, as well as sympathy, aid, and exemption from normal duties. Display of a bad mood can even serve to test whether another person cares enough to provide one with such comforts. The prospect of obtaining such rewards may motivate an individual to maintain a bad mood long enough to display it before the right audience.

Bad moods not only place such demands on others but they broadcast one’s negative assessment of the present state of affairs, and can also make one unpleasant to be around. As such, they have considerable potential for aggressive use. Maintaining bad moods may therefore be motivated by a desire to protest one’s treatment by others until one’s grievances are redressed, or as a way of punishing others and obtaining revenge. Maintenance of a bad mood may also serve as a means of disobedience, or of asserting one’s independence from those who are trying to cheer up oneself.

Finally, as discussed in the section on inhibiting good moods, one’s expressions of mood can influence other people’s moods and behavior. The various purposes described in that section of this chapter suggest a twelfth motive for maintaining a bad mood. Together, these dozen motives suggest that there are a variety of reasons why it may often seem helpful to maintain bad moods.

THE NATURE OF MOOD REGULATION

Discussion of the two less-studied types of mood regulation provides a new context in which to examine the two better-known varieties: maintaining

good moods and eliminating bad moods. These two types may now be seen as having more to recommend them than mere hedonism. Good moods might also be maintained to preserve an integrative, creative mode of thought, to slack off a bit in one's work or to enjoy a vacation, to explore novel ideas and strategies without worry about risks, to help motivate oneself to take a risk, to be socially appropriate, to impress others with one's self-confidence, to cause others to be more relaxed, to make oneself more attractive to others, and so forth. Bad moods might also be inhibited to avoid exaggerated pessimism, to end fruitless rumination when there is nothing constructive one can do, to avoid being a burden to others, to make oneself more attractive to others, to reward or relax others, to achieve the benefits of a mild bad mood (when one's bad mood has become excessive), and so forth.

The price of considering four types of mood regulation rather than just two is that it is no longer so simple to predict what type of mood regulation people will undertake. In either a good or a bad mood there will be two competing options, each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. The decision as to which strategy to undertake should (ideally) follow from consideration of the costs and benefits of each strategy as it applies to the current situation.

This proposal, of course, is not new, nor is it unique to the domain of mood regulation. Some of the principles involved have already been worked out by other researchers in the area of coping with stress, for example. Consider the literature on the usefulness of denial as an ego defense (which is, after all, related to mood regulation). Denial has traditionally been considered to be inherently maladaptive, since it distorts reality and does nothing to prepare a person to face similar threats in the future. The large number of empirical studies reviewed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), however, fails to show any decisive support for its maladaptiveness; a nearly equal number of studies show denial to be adaptive, to be maladaptive, and to have mixed effects. The reason, most likely, is that denial has both costs and benefits, so the adaptiveness of this defense depends on how and in what situation it is employed. When there is nothing constructive that can be done about a situation, denial offers the advantage of alleviating distress while not producing much harm. Patients undergoing surgery, for example, cannot do much to ensure that their operation goes well, and it turns out that those who cope by denying the seriousness of the procedure have fewer complications and are discharged sooner than do those who concern themselves with all the details of their operation and are vigilant to all their symptoms (Cohen & Lazarus, 1983). When constructive efforts can be taken, however, denial can maladaptively obstruct such efforts.

Likewise with moods. A bad mood may be worth its unpleasantness if it engenders processes that lead to benefit. It is this type of situation that gets labeled "working through problems." If the rumination is of no use, and especially if a good mood would bring benefits, the bad mood might as well be abandoned. Such bad moods are the ones that are perceived as "wallowing." A good mood's hedonic qualities are always nice, and if the

mood engenders benefit or at least carries no cost it is well to maintain it; but if it prevents more adaptive coping, then it is best eliminated, or perhaps postponed for a more propitious time.

This discussion of cost-benefit analysis leads to the question of whether people actually go through such calculations. Occasionally, at least, people do. An (extreme) example of such deliberation on the part of a great artist engaged in creative work may be found in a letter written by the English poet and artist William Blake to the poet William Hayley on 26 November 1800. Blake had been working on a frieze for Hayley's new library, which depicted the heads of a series of poets, and was reporting his progress on this work and on another printing project depicting a sailor named "Little Tom." A portion of this letter is reproduced below:

Dear Sir,

Absorbed by the poets Milton, Homer, Camoens, Ercilla, Ariosto, and Spenser, whose physiognomies have been my delightful study, *Little Tom* has been of late unattended to. . . . We mean to begin printing again to-morrow. Time flies very fast and very merrily. I sometimes try to be miserable that I may do more work, but find it is a foolish experiment. Happinesses have wings and wheels; miseries are leaden legged, and their whole employment is to clip the wings and to take off the wheels of our chariots. We determine, therefore, to be happy and do all that we can, tho' not all that we would. . . . Your affectionate, enthusiastic, hope-fostered visionary, William Blake. (Keynes, 1969, pp. 806–807)

This letter, obviously written in a good mood, shows Blake analyzing the costs and benefits of that mood and its alternative, feeling "miserable." Blake acknowledges that he would get more done if he were miserable, but he reports that, having tried it, the added productivity was not worth it. He is a bit vague about the costs of misery, but it seems that the work produced in a state of misery lacked the imagination (alluded to by metaphors of flight and chariots) of the work done more slowly while merry. Blake thought through his strategies of mood regulation quite deliberately and actually experimented with different solutions before deciding what worked best. His is admittedly an extreme case, and as such it serves nicely to illustrate two aspects of regulatory decision making.

One respect in which Blake's case is extreme is the extent of his knowledge of the costs and benefits of different moods. On many occasions it is difficult or impossible to know exactly what effect a certain mood will have in a certain situation. Blake's situation was fairly stable over time; it concerned a task that was well understood and free of uncertainties; it was fairly free of social factors that create unpredictable complexities. As a result he could actually experiment and determine which mood promoted the most satisfactory result.

Contrast this situation with that of one who is upset because of conflicts in a romantic relationship. Sometimes maintaining such bad moods leads to insights about the relationship and about how to alter important approaches to life, whereas other times it leads only to wasted time, lost

opportunities, and unproductive self-pity. Which will occur depends on many particular features of the situation, of the mood, and of the possibilities for regulating it. In retrospect it is usually clear which strategy would have been best: If one's brooding led to the realization that one had become the pawn of a manipulative other and to plans that broke oneself free and led to tremendous personal growth, then we decide we were "working through our problems"; if we merely sulked for several days before realizing that we were being childish, then we decide we were "wallowing." But that is retrospective analysis, and the issue we seek to address is the prospective one—given the bad mood, what should one do? And the answer is: Sometimes we do not know for sure. Will more brooding continue to lead nowhere, or will we reach insight? Have we considered enough perspectives, or should we continue turning things over? Unlike Blake's case, experimentation is not always possible and an algorithmic solution is impractical or impossible. We are forced to make a decision on incomplete information, and heuristics must be used. Popular wisdom contains maxims to guide the choice—"It's no use crying over spilled milk," "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again"—but a correct choice is not guaranteed.

Another respect in which Blake's case is extreme is the extent to which his deliberation might be called a "controlled" cognitive process, as opposed to an "automatic" cognitive process. It has been widely assumed that mood regulation is of a controlled nature like Blake's, requiring attention and cognitive resources (e.g., Clark & Isen, 1982; Morris & Reilly, 1987). This assumption makes sense in a clinical context, where "self-control" and "self-management" refer to the control of problematic responses that have become well established and must be disrupted and replaced with new patterns that are the result of deliberate planning (Kanfer & Karoly, 1982). It may also make sense to distinguish conceptually between effortful coping and automatized adaptive behavior (Cohen & Lazarus, 1983). Nevertheless, a great deal of mood control occurs by habit, automatically, without much or any conscious deliberation.

Regulatory strategies that begin as controlled and conscious may, with repetition, become well-learned habits that automatically spring into use in certain contexts. There may have been a time when one had to discover that it was fruitless to ruminate about how one would have enjoyed the milk one just spilled, but with experience one develops a category for "minor losses about which nothing can be done," and this category becomes associated with action tendencies to shift one's attention away from the loss and onto another subject, and the resulting "production system" can operate automatically so that when we later drop our ice cream cone on the sidewalk we can quite naturally move on to our next activity without deliberating about self-control strategies. If quizzed later we might have no awareness that we engaged in self-control at all, although we may well believe that it was a good thing to have done (consciousness and intentionality not being the same thing).

Different people develop different habits of self-control; it becomes part of their character. It is possible that such mood regulation may have a certain rigidity, or may sometimes be less adaptive than would a strategy

born of careful deliberation, but in many contexts the speed and effortlessness of automatization outweigh the costs. "The more of the details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism, the more our higher powers of mind will be set free for their own proper work" wrote William James (1890–1983, p. 126).

In summary, good and bad moods carry advantages and disadvantages that vary according to the context. Their effective management requires sensitivity to the needs of the current situation. Strategies for mood regulation may be conscious and effortful, but they also may have been so well practiced as to become second nature. Not all situations permit certainty as to the optimal strategy, and in such situations we may expect to observe individual differences in heuristics and habits.

AN APPLICATION: MOOD AND MEMORY

One reason why researchers have become interested in mood control is that it pertains to so many topics in psychology. A great many activities impact mood, so each of them can serve as a mechanism of mood regulation. Appreciating the motives for mood regulation can therefore contribute to understanding in many domains of psychology. Already ideas about mood regulation have been applied to research on such topics as helping behavior, information acquisition, self-indulgence, alcohol usage, distraction, social comparison, attributional bias, and affiliation (Morris & Reilly, 1987). I would like to apply the present perspective to a domain in which mood regulation has only begun to be recognized: the effect of mood on memory.

There exists a large literature in contemporary psychology demonstrating the occurrence of memory biases that are congruent with mood. The bias that seems to occur most reliably favors the recall of material that is affectively valenced so as to be similar to the person's current affective state. This recall bias is usually termed *mood congruence* (Blaney, 1986). It is usually explained in terms of the network theory of affect (Bower, 1981; Singer & Salovey, 1988), although there are other theoretical bases for predicting mood congruent memory bias as well (Blaney, 1986; Isen, 1987). What is most characteristic of the network theory is that it depicts mood congruence as an automatic result of associational links between the affective content of stored material and the present mood of the person. The mood state is said to activate or prime material in memory that is associated with it, with the result that such material is brought to consciousness more readily.

An example of research obtaining such results may be provided by the author's own work. Subjects were asked to induce moods in themselves using a musical induction technique developed by Sutherland, Newman, and Rachman (1982) and subsequently employed by numerous other researchers (Clark, 1983). Subjects were told that the purpose of the experiment was to study the effects of mood and that they would be asked to get themselves into either a cheerful or a sad mood for a portion of the experiment. They were told that they would be left alone for about eight

minutes to listen to music that was evocative of either a cheerful or a sad mood, and that they could use any technique for altering their mood that they wished while listening to this music. Most subjects succeeded in altering their moods as requested. While in the requested mood the subjects were asked to recall the first three events that came to mind from their high school years. The subjects' written descriptions of these memories were later rated by independent judges for positive and negative content on 1 to 7 scales. (For present purposes these data will be combined to produce a single "affect rating," by taking the difference between the ratings of positive and negative content.) The results, shown in Figure 13.2, were entirely consistent with the predictions of the network theory of affect. On all three memories the subjects in happy moods tended to recall memories that were more positive than did subjects in sad moods, although the difference was statistically significant only for the first memory (Parrott & Sabini, 1990, Exp. 3). This effect does not seem to be due to the subjects' efforts to maintain their moods for the experimenter; when subjects are told that they can cease sustaining their moods prior to being given the memory task, mood congruent recall is nevertheless obtained (Parrott, 1991b).

In other experiments, however, we have obtained an entirely different pattern of results. In one field study, students in a large psychology class who had just received their grades on an exam were given the same memory task given in the previous experiment, to recall three memories from their high school years. The memories were later compared by dividing them into two groups: memories from students who had done better on the exam than they had expected, and those from students who had done worse than they had expected. As shown in Figure 13.3, the unhappy subjects' first memory tended to be *more positive* than that recalled by the happy subjects, the reverse of what the network theory of affect would predict. This phe-

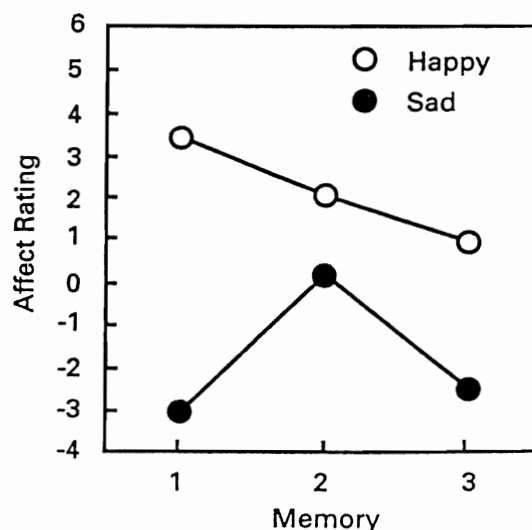


FIGURE 13.2 Mean affective content of the first three autobiographical memories recalled by subjects who had cooperated in placing themselves in either a happy or a sad mood.

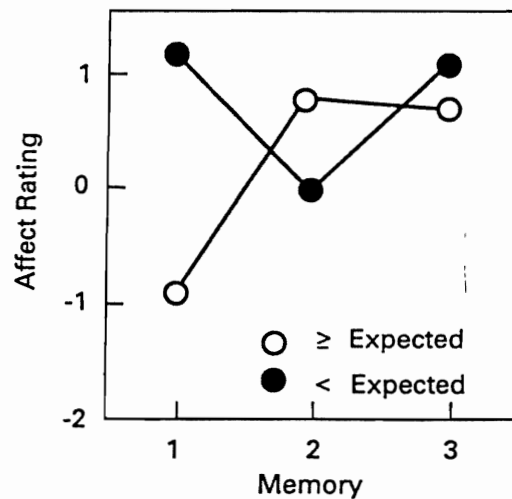


FIGURE 13.3 Mean affective content of the first three autobiographical memories recalled by subjects who had just received an exam grade that was better or worse than had been expected.

nomenon may be called *mood incongruent memory* (Parrott & Sabini, 1990, Exp. 1).

The phenomenon has been replicated in a variety of contexts. One study took advantage of the fact that people tend to feel happier on sunny rather than on cloudy days. College students entering a university library building were asked to recall an event from high school. Those queried on sunny days tended to recall less pleasant memories than those queried on cloudy days. Another study was conducted as a true randomized experiment in the laboratory, and, like the experiment that produced mood congruent recall, used happy and sad music to manipulate moods. The difference was that in this experiment subjects were not told to alter their moods or even told that the experiment was in any way concerned with moods. Instead, the subjects were informed that the experiment concerned judgments of music and that their task was simply to sit and listen. Under these conditions the results were very similar to the exam study: The first memory recalled by sad subjects (those hearing sad music) tended to be more pleasant than that of the happy subjects (those hearing happy music); there were no significant differences for the second and third memories. A fourth study was identical to the previous one except that subjects were asked for memories from the past week of their life, not from their high school years. Again, mood incongruent recall occurred on the first memory, with no differences on subsequent memories (Parrott & Sabini, 1990).

None of the studies reported so far make clear whether mood incongruent recall is due to the behavior of sad subjects, happy subjects, or both, because all the studies lack the necessary baseline control condition with which to make this determination. At present, preliminary analysis of an experiment that included such a control condition suggests that incongruent recall occurs in both the happy and sad conditions. In a replication of the laboratory experiments a third group was included in which subjects

heard no music as all. Comparisons of the memories (from high school) recalled by all three groups of subjects show that mood incongruent recall occurs in both happy subjects and in sad subjects (see Figure 13.4).

What could produce such a phenomenon? The pattern of results rules out a large number of potential explanations (see Parrott & Sabini, 1990). One explanation that remains plausible and is consistent with the theme of this chapter is that mood incongruent recall occurs when people are trying to inhibit their moods. Numerous reviewers of the literature on mood and memory have noted that automatic activation of mood congruent associations is unlikely to be the only process that mediates the effect of mood on memory (e.g., Blaney, 1986; Bower, 1981; Clark & Isen, 1982; Ingram, 1984; Singer & Salovey, 1988). If it were, a never-ending feedback cycle might occur in which mood distorted memory, which then amplified mood and so on. These authors have all posited some process that serves to regulate moods, in particular, that unhappy subjects will try to override their mood congruent tendencies and recall pleasant memories in an effort to repair their bad moods.

It seems reasonable to expect that recalling mood incongruent memories might indeed counter one's mood; it would bring to mind material that was inconsistent with one's current frame of mind and that could start one thinking in different terms. Any type of recalled material could have this effect, even recall of words from a list or episodes from a story one had read, since the content would suggest a different mood; but one might well expect autobiographical memories to be particularly effective for this purpose. Episodes from one's own life not only contain incongruent material but also demonstrate that such events once occurred to oneself and may suggest that they can occur again. Moreover, because autobiographical events are about the self, their recall can have further cognitive and motivational effects that are themselves constituent of mood. That autobio-

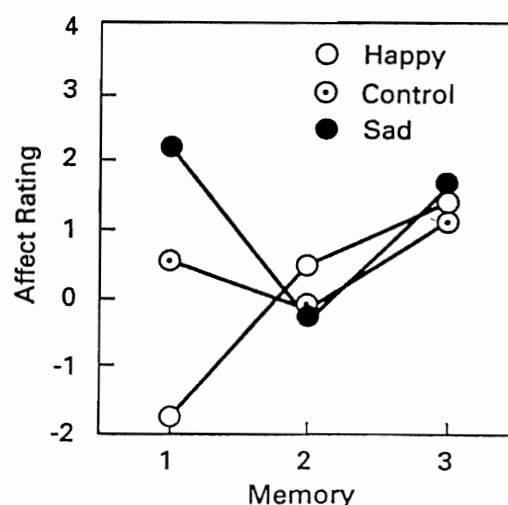


FIGURE 13.4 Mean affective content of the first three autobiographical memories recalled by subjects who had just listened to happy, sad, or no music.

graphical memories are capable of influencing mood is suggested by their occasional use as a method of mood induction—a number of studies have successfully altered subjects' moods by inducing subjects to recall pleasant or unpleasant experiences from their own lives (Blaney, 1986).

On the other hand, the data are inconsistent in two important respects with the predictions of those authors who have suggested that people's efforts at mood repair ought sometimes to counteract the effects of automatic activation of mood congruent associations. First, if the mood incongruent recall was due to mood regulation, then it seems to have been the case that regulation was undertaken by subjects in good moods as well as in bad. This implication is entirely inconsistent with the predictions of the reviewers cited, all of whom propose only hedonic motives for mood regulation. As the present chapter has emphasized, however, ample motives exist for tempering good moods, at least under some circumstances or when maintaining some beliefs. What needs to be shown is that the experimental situations yielding mood incongruent recall were of the type that would have made inhibiting good moods preferable to maintaining them. Several plausible accounts can be suggested, although it must be pointed out that these accounts are *post hoc* and require experimental test. For example, subjects in all the experiments believed themselves to be undertaking activities that would have required concentration and balanced judgment. The exam field study took place during a college class, the "sunshine" field study recruited students heading into the university library, and the laboratory experiments led subjects to expect that they would be making judgments of music and providing norms to be used in other experiments. Furthermore, in all of the laboratory experiments the subjects had reason to expect further interactions with the experimenter, and the businesslike demeanor appropriate in such an interaction may have motivated suppression of good moods (for discussion and evidence regarding such social motives see chapter 3 in this volume by Wegner & Erber). Either of these aspects may have motivated regulation of good moods.

It is also necessary to consider why mood incongruent recall was not observed in the dozens of other published investigations of mood and memory. Several reasons are apparent. Foremost is the fact that most mood inductions enlist the subjects' cooperation in altering the mood. Subjects are often told that their moods are the object of study and are often asked to cooperate in altering their moods. Subjects in such an experiment have every reason to suspend any efforts at mood regulation that they might ordinarily have taken—they have in a sense "donated their mood to science"! Even in experiments that do not explicitly enlist subjects' cooperation it may be that repeated questioning about moods leads subjects to suspect that their moods are relevant to the study, and cooperative subjects may suspend self-regulation as a result. So one reason for the lack of findings of mood incongruent recall may be subjects' cooperation in mood maintenance. Another reason may be that most memory tasks do not present the opportunity for mood regulation afforded by autobiographical recall. Since most studies have not used autobiographical recall, mood incongruence is less likely to occur. A final reason may be related to the finding

that mood incongruent recall does not seem to occur on every memory recalled—in the studies reported here it only occurred on the first memory. Since many articles do not distinguish memories by serial position and report only the average of all the subjects' memories, the occurrence of mood incongruent recall would be obscured.

A second discrepancy between prior predictions of mood incongruent recall and the present data rests in the widespread assertion that mood regulation should be a conscious, controlled process. In several experiments obtaining mood incongruence the author asked subjects who had just completed the experiment why they recalled the memories they did, and they virtually never reported that they were trying to regulate their moods. Instead, they reported that they recalled the most important events, or events they had been thinking about recently, or just that the events were the first to pop into mind. According to the widespread view, this lack of awareness of mood regulation should suggest that mood regulation probably was not the reason for the mood incongruent recall. As suggested in this chapter, however, this need not be the case. It seems quite plausible that the years of self-discipline and coping that precede the arrival of most young people at a university are sufficient to ingrain habits of mood regulation, and that dim awareness, if any, is required for them to shift attention to mood incongruent memories.

There is as yet no evidence that firmly establishes mood regulation to be responsible for mood incongruent memory. What we have at the moment is the phenomenon of mood incongruent recall, evidence contradicting the most prominent alternative hypotheses, and arguments for the plausibility of the mood regulation hypothesis. Obtaining more direct tests of the mood regulation hypothesis is a very desirable empirical objective.

SUMMARY

If moods and emotions were assumed merely to be pleasant or unpleasant feeling states—as they still commonly are—then their regulation would be a straightforward matter of maintaining good moods and repairing bad moods. The approach to mood regulation advanced in this chapter has its source in a different conception of mood, however. It was argued that moods inherently involve a complex of cognitive and motivational tendencies as well as hedonic qualities, and this conception of mood implies an altogether different and much more complex understanding of why moods are regulated.

This view was developed by focusing on the two neglected types of mood regulation: the inhibition of good moods and the maintenance of bad moods. Describing a dozen motives for each type of regulation made several conclusions apparent: that such regulation is not at all uncommon, that it need not be at all irrational, and that similar motives also exist for the two better-known forms of mood regulation. This analysis suggests that the complex properties of moods are evaluated with respect to their suit-

ability for the task at hand. The decision to maintain or alter a mood is most rationally based on an analysis of its costs and benefits.

Both this general framework for understanding mood regulation and the lists of specific motives are proposed as hypotheses that need further investigation, but this chapter has demonstrated that they are not without support. They follow plausibly from numerous instances of everyday self-regulation; they are consistent with ideas long part of our culture; and they may explain some recent research demonstrating mood incongruent recall. All of which suggests that it is well worth considering an approach to mood regulation that goes beyond hedonism.

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