

act. Now we want to explore how you can increase the likelihood that your audience members will feel involved with your proposition and so take the central route in processing what you say. Then, we will explain how to establish your credibility for those whose interest cannot be piqued so that they are likely to agree with you.

## Increasing Audience Involvement through Emotional Appeals

When we are involved with something, we care about it and have an emotional stake in it. **Emotions** are the buildup of action-specific energy.<sup>5</sup> We can see simple examples of this when we observe how people's facial expressions change as they receive good or bad news. Smiling is one way to release our built-up feelings of happiness. Crying is a way to release our built-up feelings of sadness. People who are experiencing the tension associated with any emotion look for a way to release the energy. So as a speaker, if you can involve your audience (give them an emotional stake) in what you are saying, they are more likely to travel a central route and use their energy to listen carefully to your speech. Let's look at how research from Robin Nabi shows you can increase involvement by stimulating both negative and positive emotions in your speeches.<sup>6</sup>

**emotions** the buildup of action-specific energy

### Evoking Negative Emotions

Negative emotions are disquieting, so when people experience them, they look for ways to eliminate them. During your speech, if you can help your audience experience negative emotions, they will be more involved with what you are saying. As a result, they will be motivated to use their energy to listen carefully to you to see if your arguments give them a way to reduce their feelings of discomfort. There are numerous negative emotions that you could tap; in the discussion below, we describe five of the most common.



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*When people are involved with the message, they listen attentively and process using the central route. Emotional appeals create involvement.*

## FEAR

We experience fear when we perceive that we have no control over a situation that threatens us. We may fear physical harm or psychological harm. Fear is reduced when the threat is eliminated or when we escape. If as a speaker you can use examples, stories, and statistics that create fear in your audience, they will be more involved in hearing how your proposal can eliminate the source of their fear or allow them to escape. For example, in a speech whose goal was to convince the audience that they were at risk of developing high blood pressure, the speaker might begin by personalizing the statistics on heart disease.

One out of every three Americans age 18 and older has high blood pressure. It is a primary cause of stroke, heart disease, heart failure, kidney disease, and blindness. It triples a person's chance of developing heart disease, and boosts the chance of stroke seven times and the chance of congestive heart failure six times. Look at the person on your right, look at the person on your left. If they don't get it, chances are, you will. Today, I'd like to convince you that you are at risk for developing high blood pressure.

## GUILT

We feel guilt when we personally violate a moral, ethical, or religious code that we hold dear. Guilt is especially keen in situations where the violation is associated with how we believe we should conduct ourselves in relationship to others. We experience guilt as a gnawing sensation that we have done something wrong. When we feel guilty, we are energized or motivated to “make things right” or to atone for our transgression. As a speaker, you can evoke feelings of guilt in your audience so that they pay attention to your arguments. To be effective, your proposal must provide a way for the audience to repair or atone for the damage their transgression has caused or to avoid future violations. For example, in a speech designed to motivate the audience to take their turn as designated drivers, a speaker might evoke guilt like this:

Have you ever promised your mom that you wouldn't ride in a car with someone who had been drinking? And then turned around and got in the car with your buddy even though you both had had a few? You know that wasn't right. Lying to your mother, putting yourself and your buddy at risk . . . (pause) but what can you do? Well, today I'm going to show you how you can avoid all that guilt, live up to your promises to Mom, and keep both you and your buddy safe.

## SHAME

We feel shame when we have violated a moral code and it is revealed to someone we think highly of. The more egregious our behavior or the more we admire the person who has found out, the more shame we experience. When we feel shame, we are motivated to “redeem” ourselves in the eyes of that person. Likewise, we can be convinced to refrain from doing something in order to avoid feelings of shame. If in your speech you can evoke feelings of shame and then demonstrate how your proposal can either redeem someone after a violation has occurred or prevent feelings of shame, then you can motivate the audience to carefully consider your arguments. For example, in a speech advocating thankfulness, the speaker might use a shame-based approach by quoting the old saying, “I cried because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.”

## ANGER

When we are faced with an obstacle that stands in the way of something we want, we experience anger. We also experience anger when someone demeans us or someone we love. As with all emotions, the intensity of what we feel varies. We can be mildly annoyed, or we can experience a level of anger that short-circuits the reasoning process and leads to blind rage. Speakers who choose to evoke

anger in their audience members must be careful that they don't incite so much anger that reasoning processes are short-circuited. You will recall that in the opening vignette, the speaker left the audience so riled up that instead of using their energy to thoughtfully probe their own beliefs, the audience responded to a rabble-rouser's call and rioted.

When we feel anger, we want to strike back at the person or overcome the situation that is thwarting our goals or demeaning us. So in your speeches, if you can rouse your audience's anger and then show how your proposal will enable them to achieve their goals or stop or prevent the demeaning that has occurred, you can motivate them to listen to you and think about what you have said. For example, suppose you want to convince the audience to support a law requiring the active notification of a community when a sex offender is released from prison and living in the neighborhood. You might arouse the audience's anger to get their attention by personalizing the story of Megan Kanka:

She was your little girl, just seven years old, and the light of your world. She had a smile that could bring you to your knees. And she loved puppies. So when that nice man who had moved in down the street invited her in to see his new puppy, she didn't hesitate. But she didn't get the puppy, and you didn't ever see her alive again. He beat her, he raped her, and then he strangled her. He packaged her body in an old toy chest and dumped it in a park. Your seven-year-old princess would never dig in a toy chest again or slip down the slide in that park. And that hurts. But what makes you really angry is, she wasn't his first. But you didn't know that. Because no one bothered to tell you that the guy down the street was likely to kill little girls. The cops knew it. But they couldn't tell you. You, the one who was supposed to keep her safe, didn't know. Angry? You bet. Yeah, he's behind bars again, but you still don't know who's living down the street from you. But you can. There is a law pending before Congress that will require active notification of the community when a known sex offender takes up residence, and today I'm going to tell how you can help to get this passed.<sup>7</sup>

### **SADNESS**

When we fail to achieve a goal or experience a loss or separation, we feel sad. Unlike other negative emotions, whose energy is projected outward, when we feel sad, we tend to withdraw and become isolated. Because sadness, like the other negative emotions, is an unpleasant feeling, we look for ways to end it. This can happen through the actions of others when they notice our withdrawal and try to comfort us. Because we withdraw when we are sad, sadness helps us to focus inward, pondering what has happened and trying to make sense of it. As a result, when we are sad, we are already "looking for answers." So, speeches that help us understand and find answers for what has happened can comfort us and help relieve this unpleasant feeling. For example, after 9/11 many Americans were sad. Yes, they were also afraid and angry, but overlaying it all was profound sadness for those who had been lost, and what had been lost. The questions "Why? Why did they do this? Why do they hate us so?" capture the national melancholy. So when politicians suggest that they understand the answers to these questions and can repair the relationships that led to 9/11, Americans listen and think about what they say.

## **Evoking Positive Emotions**

Just as evoking negative emotions can cause audience members to take a central processes path and think about what you are saying, so too can you increase audience involvement with your proposal by tapping positive emotions. With negative emotions, our goal is to show how our proposal will help the audience to reduce or avoid the feeling. With positive emotions, our goal is to help the audience

sustain or develop the feeling. Five of the positive emotions that can motivate the audience to become involved in listening to your arguments are discussed below.

### **HAPPINESS/JOY**

Happiness or joy is the buildup of positive energy we experience when we accomplish something, when we have a satisfying interaction or relationship, or when we see or possess objects that appeal to us. Think of how you felt when you won that ribbon in grade school, or when you found out that you got an “A” on that volcano project in fourth grade. Think of how you felt when you heard that special someone say “I love you” for the very first time. Or think about that birthday when you received that toy that you had been dreaming about. In each of these cases you were happy, maybe even so happy that you were joyous. As a speaker, if you can show how your proposal will lead your audience members to be happy or joyful, then they are likely to listen and to think about your proposal. For example, suppose that you want to motivate your audience to attend a couples encounter weekend where they will learn how to “rekindle” their relationship with a partner. If you can remind them about how they felt early in the relationship and then prove how the weekend can reignite those feelings, they will listen.

### **PRIDE**

When you experience self-satisfaction and an increase to your self-esteem as the result of something that you have accomplished or that someone you identify with has accomplished, you feel pride. “We’re number one. . . . We’re number one. . .” is the chant of the crowd feeling pride in the accomplishment of “their” team. Whereas happiness is related to feelings of pleasure, pride is related to feelings of self-worth. So, if in your speech you can demonstrate how your proposal will help your audience members to feel good about themselves, they will be more involved in hearing what you have to say. For example, suppose you want to convince your audience to volunteer to work on the newest Habitat for Humanity house being constructed in your community. You might involve them by alluding to the pride they will feel when they see the house they have helped to build standing where there was once a vacant lot.

### **RELIEF**

When a threatening situation has been alleviated, we feel the positive emotion of relief. In relief, the emotional energy that is experienced is directed inward, and we relax and put down our guard. Thus, relief is not usually accompanied by overt action. As a speaker, if you want to use relief as a way to motivate audience members to be involved in your arguments, then you will want to combine it with the negative emotion of fear. For example, suppose your goal is to convince the audience that they are not at risk for high blood pressure. You might use the same personalization of statistics that was described in the example of fear appeals, but instead of proving that the audience is at risk, you could promise relief. Your audience would then listen and evaluate whether they believed your arguments in order to experience relief from the fear of high blood pressure.

### **HOPE**

The emotional energy that stems from believing you can beat the odds is called hope. When you yearn for better things, you are feeling hope. Like relief, hope is a positive emotion that has its roots in a difficult or problem situation. Whereas relief causes you to relax and let down your guard, hope energizes you to take action to overcome the situation. Hope empowers. As with relief, hope appeals are usually accompanied by fear appeals. So, you can get audience members to listen to you by showing them how your proposal provides a plan for overcoming a difficult situation. In this problem solution organization, you can embed

both fear and hope appeals. For example, if your proposal is that adopting a low-fat diet will reduce the risk of high blood pressure, you can use the same personalization of statistics that were cited in the example of fear, but change the ending to state: “Today, I’m going to explain to you how you can beat the odds by adopting a low-fat diet.” This offer of hope should influence your audience to listen to and adopt your plan.

### COMPASSION

When we feel selfless concern for the suffering of some other person that energizes us to try to relieve that suffering, we feel compassion. Speakers can evoke audience members’ feeling of compassion by vividly describing the suffering being endured by someone. Then the audience will be motivated to listen to the speaker to see how the speaker’s proposal plans to end that suffering. For example, throughout the sample speech on corneal donations at the end of this chapter, the speaker works to elicit strong feelings of compassion. The introduction invites the audience to imagine themselves as victims of corneal disease. The particular examples depict a wide cross section of people who have been blinded by problems that this proposal can remedy. Even the section transitions echo the theme with the mantra, “No one who has seen the . . . caused solely by corneal . . . can doubt the need or the urgency.” Throughout, this speech uses vivid language to generate feelings of compassion that will allow audience members to seriously consider the proposal that implicitly requires them to acknowledge their own mortality.

As you prepare your speech, especially when you are creating introductions and conclusions and selecting supporting material, you will want to consider how you can use emotional appeals to increase audience members’ involvement with your proposal. In this way, you can influence the likelihood that members of your audience will use the emotional energy that you have generated to use the central processing route. This means that they will listen closely and evaluate your arguments, internalizing what you have said as they make a careful decision. To explore one speaker’s use of emotional appeals, use your Challenge of Effective Speaking CD-ROM to access **Web Resource 14.1: Terrorism and Islam: Maintaining the Faith**. To see a video clip of a student speaker appealing to her audience’s emotions, use your Challenge of Effective Speaking CD-ROM to access the chapter resources for Chapter 14 at the Challenge Web site. Click on “Environmental Racism (1)” in the left-hand menu.



## Cueing Your Audience through Credibility: Demonstrating Goodwill

Although you may try your best to emotionally involve your audience with what you are advocating, not all audience members will choose the central processing route. Some will choose to pay minimal attention to your arguments and will instead use simple cues to decide whether or not to accept your proposal. The most important cue that people use when they process information by the peripheral route is the credibility of the speaker. In Chapter 5 we discussed three characteristics of a speaker (expertise, trustworthiness, and personableness) that audience members pay attention to when evaluating the speaker’s credibility. We also described how, as you were speaking, you could demonstrate being expert, trustworthy, and personable. You may want to go back to Chapter 5 and review our suggestions. A fourth characteristic of credibility is especially important in persuasive settings, influencing whether audience members who are processing the speech on the peripheral route believe what the speaker is advocating. This is called goodwill.