

# I Second That Emotion

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PART 1 WRITING COMPELLING SCENES

With Tina Radcliffe



# It all starts with the writer...

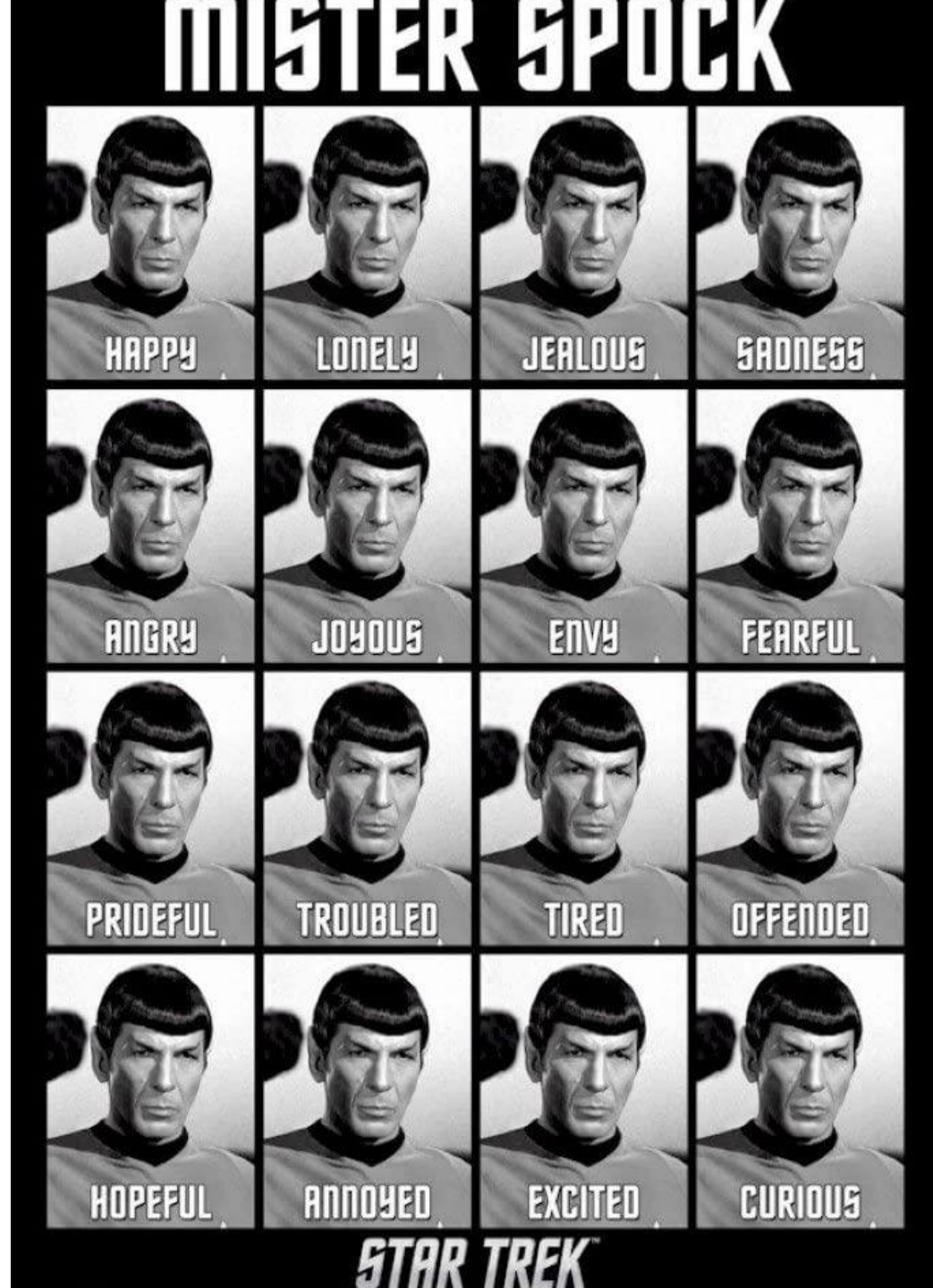
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**No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader.**  
**—Robert Frost**

Stoical characters do not a  
good read make.

—Tina Radcliffe



# The Essential Theories of Emotion in Fiction

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## 1. The Michael Hauge Conundrum.

"The primary goal of storytelling is to elicit emotion. You must create an emotional experience for the audience."  
The Six Stage Structure is the foundation to creating that emotional experience.

## 2. Shelly Thacker's Big Bang Emotion Theory.

This is a magnificently clear and simple theory. **Emotion on every page.** Review each page of your manuscript with a red pen and underline the emotion. If there is no emotion, you must create it.

# The Essential Theories of Emotion in Fiction- cont'

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## **3. Vince Mooney's Universal Laws of RPP.**

Mooney tells us, "Based on my research, I believe that the way to sell more books (or get your books published in the first place) is to enhance the page-by-page 'reading experience.' One way to quantify this experience is by the use of a Rewards-Per-Page index."

## **4. Newton's Third Law of Physics (as applied to fiction).**

"For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction."

# The Why of Emotions

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“Your goal as a writer is to elicit the maximum amount of emotion. Emotionally involve the reader and force them to turn the page.”

-Michael Hauge

To elicit emotion you must understand emotion.

Once you understand emotion you will be able to easily transition your writing from telling into showing and deeper level of connection with your reader.

# The Basic Emotions

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The job of emotions is to **communicate response** and to **organize our next action**.

- Fear
- Joy
- Love
- Sadness
- Surprise
- Anger

# Fear

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**Horror:** Alarm, shock, fear, fright, horror, terror, panic, hysteria, mortification

**Nervousness:** Anxiety, nervousness, tenseness, uneasiness, apprehension, worry, distress, dread

Fear is the primary emotion. Horror and Nervousness are the secondary emotions. The rest are tertiary emotions,)

# Joy

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**Cheerfulness:** Amusement, bliss, cheerfulness, gaiety, glee, jolliness, joviality, joy, delight, enjoyment, gladness, happiness, jubilation, elation, satisfaction, ecstasy, euphoria

**Zest:** Enthusiasm, zeal, zest, excitement, thrill, exhilaration

**Contentment:** Contentment, pleasure

**Pride:** Pride, triumph

**Optimism:** Eagerness, hope, optimism

**Enthrallment:** Enthrallment, rapture

# Love

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**Affection:** Adoration, affection, love, fondness, liking, attraction, caring, tenderness, compassion, sentimentality

**Lust:** Arousal, desire, lust, passion, infatuation

**Longing:** longing

(Love is the basic emotion: Affection, Lust & Longing are secondary emotions. The rest are tertiary emotions.)

# Sadness

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**Sadness:** Agony, suffering, hurt, anguish

**Disappointment:** Depression, despair, hopelessness, gloom, glumness, sadness, unhappiness, grief, sorrow, woe, misery, melancholy

**Shame:** Guilt, shame, regret, remorse

**Neglect:** Alienation, isolation, neglect, loneliness, rejection, homesickness, defeat, dejection, insecurity, embarrassment, humiliation, insult

**Sympathy:** Pity, sympathy

# Surprise

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**Surprise:** Amazement, surprise, astonishment

# Anger

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**Irritation:** Aggravation, irritation, agitation, annoyance, grouchiness, grumpiness

Exasperation: Exasperation, frustration

**Rage:** Anger, rage, outrage, fury, wrath, hostility, ferocity, bitterness, hate, loathing, scorn, spite, vengefulness, dislike, resentment

**Disgust:** Disgust, revulsion, contempt

**Envy:** Envy, Jealousy

**Torment:** torment

Emotions are all about Stimulus and Response.

In order to be triggered, there must be an emotional identity or connection to the stimulus.

**You must CARE about the stimulus.**

Trigger = Stimulus

Reaction = Response

# The How of Emotions

# The Four Ways to Respond Emotionally

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Feel the correct emotion and show the appropriate response.

Feel or show the right emotion but with an inappropriate intensity.

Feel the right emotion but show it the wrong way.

Feel the wrong emotion.

**A SIGNAL will mark when an emotion begins and ends.**

What are signals?

- Facial expression
- Musculoskeletal response (physical)
- Autonomic Response (unconscious bodily functions)
- The impulse to make a noise



## FEAR What are the signals?

Facial expression

Musculoskeletal response (physical)

Autonomic Response (unconscious bodily functions)

The impulse to make a noise

- Wide eyes
- Tense muscles
- Increased blood flow
- Increased respiration
- Paleness or flushing or alternating
- Relaxation of bladder
- Dry mouth
- Scream



Remember that signals don't tell us the source of the emotion, but it can usually be figured out by the context.

## ANGER What are the signals?

Facial expression

Musculoskeletal response (physical)

Autonomic Response (unconscious bodily functions)

The impulse to make a noise

- Increased blood flow
- Increased respiration
- Muscles tense
- Skin perspires
- Eyebrows pulled down and together while eyes are simultaneously pushed open
- Slight thrusting forward of the body



Remember that signals don't tell us the source of the emotion, but it can usually be figured out by the context.

# All About Sensory/Emotional Triggers

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## **What is a sensory / emotional trigger?**

A sensory/emotional trigger is a stimulus that triggers an emotional response.

## **The ‘why’ of sensory / emotional triggers.**

Using S.E.T is similar to method acting for writers.

“Method acting is technique of acting in which an actor aspires to complete emotional identification with a part.” - Wikipedia

# Harnessing Sensory Emotional Triggers

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In order to write three-dimensional characters with emotion, the writer must know how to elicit emotions and that is easier if you are aware of your emotional triggers.

The other reason to understand sensory emotional triggers is because in a typical writing day, we have to quickly transition roles in order to utilize our precious writing time.

That means moving from the agony of doing the monthly bills to the ecstasy of an emotionally intimate moment between your protagonists. Or perhaps you must transition from calming a crying two-year old to an intense, high stakes suspense scene. And have you ever had to move from an unfortunate disagreement with someone dear to you, right smack into the light, comedy of your current WIP?

Discovering your sensory/emotional triggers will move you quickly into another emotional response as needed.

Decide which of the basic emotions you need to elicit, and which secondary or tertiary emotions most closely connect you to a trigger.

There's no point wasting time on rage if the closest you have ever come is exasperation.

Get as close as you can. If you cannot feel the emotional response, neither will your reader.

# 9 Ways to Turn on the Emotion Switch aka 9 Types of Triggers

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1. **Auto appraisers** -Fight or flight. The millisecond autonomic nervous system response
2. **Reflective Appraisal**-Stop. Think. Evaluate.
3. **The memory of past emotional experience**- Phobias and fears (spiders, snakes, planes, heights, abandonment)
4. **Imagination** -What you think will happen.
5. **Talking about a past emotional event**-Stirring up emotions.
6. **Empathy**- The ability to understand and share another's emotional response.
7. **Other's instructing us what to be emotional about-Stoicism** or inherited fear are examples.
8. **Violation of social norms**-repugnant behavior which depends on your social norms (can range from slurping soup in public, to deviant behavior.)
9. **Voluntarily assuming the appearance of emotion**-Evidence suggests that changing your emotional facial expression and/or stance DOES change your emotion. So if you are mad and you smile, you might alleviate your anger

# What Are Your Sensory Triggers?

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Sensory triggers are used to elicit emotional responses. Which type of sensory writer are you?

- Visual- You cry at sappy commercials.
- Auditory –Music is your sensory trigger & you have a writing playlist. Music triggers emotional responses.
- Tactile-Touch is what triggers your senses. The tactile items in your writing space are very important.
- Scent –You set the scene. You're a candle burning writer. You are triggered by scents.
- Taste- Food feeds your writing soul. Each flavor triggers a different emotional response. The taste of fresh basil transports you to...

## How to Trigger Sensory/Emotional Responses

Sometimes just closing your eyes and allowing your mind to recapture an event in full sensory display will allow us to trigger the emotional response we need to channel.

Other times we must use props (music, videos, candles, perfume, herbs & seasonings) to trigger emotional response.



## My Sensory/Emotional Triggers

I am primarily a visual responder. Here are my methods to elicit sensory/triggers and their associated emotional responses.

These triggers are highly subjective and while these examples work for me, they may not produce the same, if any response from you.

**Fear:** To elicit fear, I move to terror and panic. I am able to quickly recall an event in my childhood. **(this is a memory response)** The one time I came home from elementary school and the back door was locked. No one was home. There is an empty, almost deathly starkness to an east coast winter. The wind was howling that day, and the sky was overcast. I was cold and panicked thinking my family was missing.

**Joy:** I move to amusement (actually on the floor laughing) in 0.5 seconds by watching the paintball scene in [Failure to Launch](#).



## My Sensory/Emotional Triggers continued

**Love:** Based on a very visual trigger.

The kiss in [North and South](#).



Or maybe just Richard Armitage...

## My Sensory/Emotional Triggers continued

**Sadness:** Prepare to cry-the music video to The Titanic. This is using music to trigger a response. [Titanic, My Heart Will Go On.](#)

**Surprise:** This one is much harder but not impossible. The psychological thriller from 2004, [The Forgotten](#), had so many gasp moments.

**Anger:** Probably the most difficult for me of the 'why can't we all play nice' nature. Righteous indignation and getting my hackles stirred up, is as close as I am going to be able to trigger. A Few Good Men, [You Can't Handle the Truth Scene.](#)



# Sensory/Emotional Triggers

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NOTE! Triggers should be just that. **Instant.**

Press that trigger and BAM!! the emotional response is elicited.

If you have to work to stir up that response you haven't found your trigger.

## **Warning!**

Don't trigger an emotional response that will be so overwhelmingly powerful you are unable to write, perhaps due to a personal situation you have not resolved or worked through yet, such as extreme sadness, fear, shame or anger.

Triggers can elicit a PTSD response that you don't want.

1. FEAR-(Horror, Nervousness)
  2. JOY-(Cheerfulness, Zest, Contentment, Pride, Optimism, Enthrallment)
  3. LOVE-(Affection, Lust, Longing)
  4. SADNESS- (Sadness, Disappointment, Shame, Neglect, Sympathy)
  5. SURPRISE- (Surprise)
  6. ANGER-(Irritation, Rage, Disgust, Envy, Torment)
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## What Are Your Sensory Emotional Triggers?

# Techniques to regulate or control emotional response

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## BACKTRACKING

It's the process of going in reverse to evaluate the escalation of emotion.

The opposite of husband argues with his wife, the wife hollers at her kid, the kid kicks the dog.

## AWARENESS

Being aware of what the mind is doing.

Learn to be attentive to stimulus triggers and responses.

Knowing when your buttons are being pushed.

# Techniques to regulate or control emotional response-continued

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## ONLOOKER APPROACH

View the situation from the viewpoint of an onlooker.

This only works when you are at the level of being able to step back from responding. Or someone helps you do this.

What would xx do?

## MAKE CHOICES

Reappraise the situation and choose to interrupt emotions. Requires a high level of self-awareness.

# THE 24 HOUR EMOTION CHALLENGE

Trigger = Stimulus

Reaction = Response

## SIGNALS

- Facial expression
- Musculoskeletal response
- Autonomic Response
- The impulse to make a noise

What if you purposed to assess your emotional responses for 24 hours?

I'm suggesting a writer's social experiment which is not unlike deconstructing a novel.

In each situation you are in for the next 24 hours purposely evaluate your emotional response.

Here are sample triggers:

Cut off in traffic-> emotional response is\_\_\_\_\_?

Sarcastic and rude clerk in grocery store-> emotional response is\_\_\_\_\_?

Barista who remembers your name at Starbucks ->your emotional response is\_\_\_\_\_?

Waitress who brings you dessert and doesn't charge you-> emotional response is\_\_\_\_\_?

The point here is to get you to think in terms of stimulus and response at all times, which will be the foundation for adding layered and believable emotion into your stories.

# Resources

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1. Emotions Revealed by Paul Ekman
2. Emotions in Social Psychology by W. Parrott

QUESTIONS?

