



Should I follow my feelings? How individual differences in following feelings influence affective well-being, experience, and responsiveness [☆]

Karen Gasper ^{*}, Kosha D. Bramesfeld

Department of Psychology, 437 Moore Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802, USA

Available online 21 November 2005

Abstract

Individuals high in the propensity to follow their feelings notice their feelings and use the information provided by their feelings. We investigate the hypothesis that following feelings is a multidimensional, rather than a unidimensional, construct. We reasoned that people follow their positive feelings because these feelings signal the presence of rewards that should be approached and follow their negative feelings because these feelings signal the presence of threats that should be avoided. Because approach and avoidance stem from independent motivational systems, we hypothesized and found that following positive feelings and following negative feelings are separable dimensions. In part 1, we developed a measure, called the Following Affective States Test (FAST), to assess these dimensions and provided psychometric data supporting its adequacy. In part 2, we continued to validate the scale and found that this new conceptualization clarifies the debate concerning whether following feelings is psychologically beneficial. In part 3, we tested the utility of the FAST by demonstrating that it predicts the degree to which individuals notice, react to, and use positive and negative affective information.

© 2005 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Affect; Well-being; Individual differences; Emotional awareness; Emotional intelligence

[☆] We thank Margaret Akselrod, Heather Suders, Kim Nguyen, Meagan Jennsen, Katherine Pollock, Traci Frye, Hiroko Makiyama, Randolph Pfaff, and Lana Wilk, for their help in data collection. Also, we thank Stephanie Shields, Aaron Pincus, Brigitta Gasper, and the reviewers for their comments on an earlier version of the manuscript.

^{*} Corresponding author. Fax: +1 814 863 7002.
E-mail address: kxg20@psu.edu (K. Gasper).

1. Introduction

Charles H. Cooley wrote, “There can be no final test of the self except the way we feel” (Cooley, 1902, p. 172). He believed that feelings were the final test of the self because they guide thoughts, decisions, and actions. However, people differ in the extent to which they follow their feelings, which refers to the propensity to notice one’s feelings (e.g., Sue noticed that she felt anxious about the stock market) and use those feelings to direct actions (e.g., Because of this anxiety, she decided not to invest in it). In this paper, we use research on the purpose and function of affective states to examine why people follow their feelings. We then use this research to question an existing assumption within the literature: specifically, that following feelings is a unitary construct, in which people high in the propensity to follow their feelings follow all of their feelings. Instead, we propose and test the idea that people differ in the extent to which they are dispositionally prone to follow their positive and their negative feelings. We hypothesize that this multidimensional conceptualization of following feelings will clarify the ongoing debates concerning whether following feelings: (a) is psychologically beneficial and (b) predicts noticing, responding to, and using situational affective cues.

This paper has three parts. In part 1, we examine the structure of following feelings and argue that following feelings may be a multidimensional construct. In the process, we develop a new scale, the Following Affective States Test (FAST). In part 2, we further validate this scale and examine the hypothesis that this new conceptualization clarifies the association between following feelings and psychological functioning. Finally, in part 3, we test the applicability of this conceptualization by demonstrating that the FAST is useful in identifying the degree to which individuals notice, respond to, and use situational affective cues. We begin by first discussing why we believe that a new conceptualization of following feelings is needed.

1.1. Is following feelings a unitary construct?

Since the late 1980s, numerous researchers have been interested in identifying people high in the tendency to follow their feelings, because this dimension may represent a critical aspect of emotional experience. One of the earliest measures of this construct, the private self-conscious scale (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975), assessed the tendency to focus inward on both feelings and thoughts. Since then, several measures have been developed to specifically examine the tendency to focus on and follow one’s feelings. Three common measures include: (1) the emotional attention subscale of the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (e.g., I pay a lot of attention to how I feel; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995), (2) the faith in intuition subscale of the Rational–Experiential Inventory (e.g., I trust my initial feelings about people; Epstein, Pacini, Denes-Raj, & Heier, 1996), and (3) the mood monitoring subscale of the mood awareness scale (e.g., I often evaluate my mood; Swinkels & Giuliano, 1995). These measures were created as part of a larger endeavor to assess general differences in aspects of emotional experience, of which following feelings was just one type of difference. Because the focus was on emotionality in general, the measures assessed general emotional states (e.g., moods, emotions, and feelings) rather than valenced states (e.g., positive vs. negative feelings). This developmental trajectory resulted in measures of following feelings containing

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات