

Embodiment of Sadness and Depression - Gait Patterns Associated with Dysphoric Mood

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To analyze gait patterns associated with sadness and depression. Embodiment theories suggest a reciprocal relationship between bodily expression and the way in which emotions are processed. **Methods:** In Study 1, the gait patterns of 14 inpatients suffering from major depression were compared with those of matched never-depressed participants. In Study 2, we employed musical mood induction to induce sad and positive mood in a sample of 23 undergraduates. A Fourier-based description of walking data served as the basis for the computation of linear classifiers and for the analysis of gait parameters. **Results:** Gait patterns associated with sadness and depression are characterized by reduced walking speed, arm swing, and vertical head movements. Moreover, depressed and sad walkers displayed larger lateral swaying movements of the upper body and a more slumped posture. **Conclusion:** The results of the present study indicate that a specific gait pattern characterizes individuals in dysphoric mood.