

INTEROCEPTION



Sit back and close your eyes. What do you feel inside your body?

- Is your heart beating fast or slow?
- Are you breathing deeply or shallowly?
- Do you have to go to the bathroom?
- Are your muscles tense or loose?
- How does your stomach feel?

How do most people notice these feelings?

Interoception (the eighth sensory system) helps us feel or sense the inside of our bodies.

How does the interoceptive system work?

Little receptors are found in many of our internal organs and tissues. These receptors gather information from the insides of our bodies and send it to the brain.

What messages does the interoceptive system send to the brain?

These messages allow us to feel sensations such as hunger, fullness, pain, nausea, need for the toilet, itch, tickle and body temperature. In addition, this system helps us to feel our emotions.



How is interoception connected to our emotions?

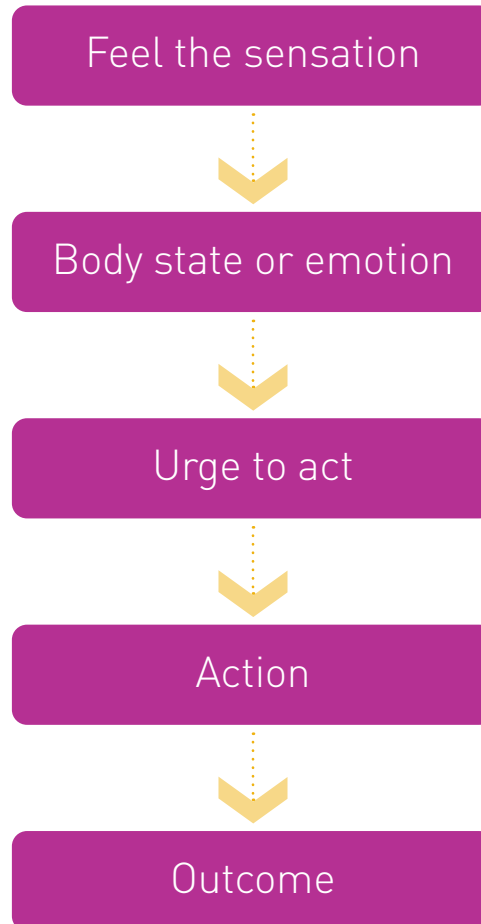
Usually every emotion is felt differently within the body. For example, before speaking in public, the heart might race, breathing may change and the stomach might feel "fluttery". These sensations let us know that we feel nervous. Without clearly feeling these sensations, it is difficult to identify emotions with clarity.

How does interoception influence self-regulation?

When the interoceptive system is working well, the sensations alert us that our internal balance is off and motivates us to take action, to do something that will restore balance and help us feel more comfortable. For example, if we feel an itch, we scratch it; if we feel full, we stop eating; if we feel anxious, we seek comfort. Interoception underlies our urge for action. If we feel that our internal balance is off, we are motivated to act, to seek immediate relief from the discomfort caused by the imbalance.



Interoception



Is interoception important for other reasons?

Interoception underlies many important skills, including:

- Decision making
- Social awareness
- Intuition
- Empathy
- Perspective taking
- Self-awareness
- Flexibility of thought
- Problem-solving