

# Tactile-Emotion Synaesthesia

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I just saw this on the great blog 'Neuro Philosophy'.

Two researchers from the Center for Brain and Cognition have found a rare new form of synaesthesia that they have labeled 'tactile-emotion synaesthesia'. They have found two individual cases of patients experiencing specific emotions whenever touching particular textures! The feeling of denim, in one of the cases, caused strong feelings of depression and disgust.

Abstract:

We discuss experiments on two individuals in whom specific textures (e.g., denim, wax, sandpaper, silk, etc.) evoked equally distinct emotions (e.g., depression, embarrassment, relief, and contentment, respectively). The test/retest consistency after 8 months was 100%. A video camera recorded subjects' facial expressions and skin conductance responses (SCR) were monitored as they palpated different textures. Evaluators' ratings significantly correlated with the valence of synesthetes' subjective reports, and SCR was significantly enhanced for negative synesthetic emotions. We suggest this effect arises from increased cross-activation between somatosensory cortex and insula for 'basic' emotions and fronto-limbic hyperactivation for more subtle emotions. It may represent an enhancement of pre-existing evolutionarily primitive interactions between touch and emotions.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18821168>