

Happy

Elated

Excited

Joyous

Confused

Angry

Frustrated

Sad

Fear

Surprised

Contempt

Disgust

Distressed

Playful

## WHO WE ARE

Expressions are a part of our everyday lives. They help us interpret life as it goes on around us each and every day and is a direct connection to relationships we have with loved ones, family, co-workers and strangers.

## ATTITUDE

Expressions represent in our eyes, face and body language how we are feeling, or in some cases, how we *want* others to *perceive* we are feeling. They can tell us someone is friendly or approachable, frustrated, angry or sad.

## COMMERCIALISM

Expressions are the cornerstone to interpreting the emotions of the human face and the key message an image is trying to sell. Happy people infer by buying the advertised product or service, you will be happy too!

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Photo ©Jill Flusemann

# expressions

Google the term “expressions”, and you will come up with a wealth of not facial expressions or emotions, but a variety of trademarked software, furniture products, etc all coining the term as their product or service name. The term “expression” brings to mind creativity and exactly what every commercial business wants to convey to the millions of worldwide consumers why *they* are better than all of their competitors. In light of global economic conditions, this is more important than ever as consumers are holding fast to their hard-earned dollars.

Of course, one of the best expressions you will ever want to see is the expression of the client’s face when they see your finished product. Hopefully, it is overfilled with joy, satisfaction and excitement! Where photographing people is concerned, whether the image is for commercial use, portraiture, weddings or other specialties, facial expressions can make or break an image because it is the key component driving the image concept. People’s expressions will light you up, cause confusion, instill anger, tug at your heart and evoke empathy. One way or another, it should draw an emotional reaction from you.

The commercial world of advertising uses your “created” emotional reactions to manipulate you – with the goal that you buy their product or services. Commercial photography is in large part psychology and marketing. For the most part, planning, creativity and foresight to produce an image is required versus shooting what you stumble across when out shooting. I am reminded of one of the most celebrated and “staged” images ever photographed. For years we were led to believe that the famed French photographer, Robert Doisneau had really captured a fantastic candid of a couple sharing a kiss as they passed in front of his waiting camera outside a Paris café. The image is one of Doisneau’s greats. But recently, it was learned the couple in this shot were actually friends of his, who repeatedly upon his direction crossed in front of the café sharing their kiss and warm embrace, while Doisneau himself, sat and shot from the table he was seated at until he felt he had the shot he needed.

Photo © Jill Flusemann

In Doisneau’s defense, it would not be surprising to learn that perhaps on a previous day he had, in fact, witnessed a different couple in a warm embrace sharing a kiss as they walked in a somewhat hurried pace past the café he was seated at. While he did not get “that” shot, he may have made a mental note of it and several days later engaged the help of some friends to re-create the moment. And what is wrong with that? In 1945 when he created the image “Kiss by Hotel de Ville” shortly after the German occupation of France had ended, the streets of Paris were indeed festive and love was once again in the open air. It was time to be French again and that, of course, meant the open displays of affection had returned to the streets of Paris. So what if he “staged” a moment! The fact is he should be commended for staging it so well that no one has ever raised an eyebrow as to it being an authentic candid for all these years. Staged or not, does it really take away from the “truth” of the image? It was an exciting and liberating time to be on the streets of Paris, a time to celebrate and Doisneau’s image captured the spirit of that moment for all the world to *feel* and *share* in (Here is a link for those of you who are not familiar with the photo and also a story about the recent sale of that image for 155,000 Euros - (\$199,315.00)! (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4481789.stm>)

As Bryan has stated in his how-to books, every image is a “lie” and if it succeeds, this lie will be abundantly full of truth! Once you have mastered the art of expressions and understand their importance, you will soon be on the track to making money in stock and commercial photography. Calling upon friends, family members or co-workers to laugh, pout or to be sad or elated upon cue is the first place to start the adventure of creating believable lifestyle images. It is assumed that both you and your subjects will be comfortable working together. However, it is not to be assumed, there will be times when you need a person for a photograph and just can’t round someone up. We will also address working with individuals you don’t know and how to develop a trusting rapport with them to evoke believable expressions.

Staging or “creating” images tends to be the biggest hurdle to “get over” for many students pursuing commercial photography. Have no fear, whatsoever, as we will help you through this. It requires some work, but once it starts to click, you won’t be able to stop the ideas from rolling out of your mind. Make sure to write them down so you can remember them all later.

*There’s no need to be afraid!  
Always be ready to press the shutter release! My  
friend and co-worker Dee was helping me out  
with some expressions. I know her well and asked  
her to imagine another co-worker in his underwear.  
This was the result. Have some fun and mix  
things up! Spontaneity counts!*



# Anatomy of Expressions

Expressions are either voluntary or involuntary, and at times can be nearly impossible to avoid when they are related to strong emotions - even when you want to hide your feelings. On the other hand, it has often been noted that by voluntarily "faking" an expression, it can in fact, trigger feelings of the real thing.

Faces have a limited range of movement and therefore their interpretation often comes down to very subtle differences. For example, it can be difficult to tell the difference between surprise and fear. Facial structure can also lend to expressions just by a person's natural facial proportions resembling common expressions. The eyes, in particular, create the most obvious and immediate clues to how a person can be feeling or what they are thinking. And don't forget, of course, about non-verbal body language. Some expression indicators can include:

- Eye contact – can regulate conversations, show interest and establishes a connection with others or the person looking at the image
- Lack of eye contact – rudeness, inattentiveness, insecurity
- Nervousness – perspiration, eye contact and stiffness
- Pupil dilation – excitement, pleasure, attraction. Larger pupils can indicate affection while constricted pupils the opposite.
- Proximity – how close subjects are together in an image can convey relationship
- Gestures – movement of the body with hands, arms, body, head, winking, rolling one's eyes, waving, giving a "peace" sign, handshakes, holding hands, kissing, back slapping, high fives, pat on the back, a touch, picking, holding, etc.

Don't lose sight of the fact that different cultures can have different rules for expressions. Some Asian cultures can interpret direct eye contact as competitiveness, which for their culture in most cases, would be inappropriate. Some cultures lower their eyes to show respect but Western cultures interpret this as a lack of self-confidence.

There are seven universally recognized emotions shown through facial expressions: fear, anger, surprise, contempt, disgust, happiness and sadness. These seven expressions tend to be interpreted in the same manner regardless of culture, but do not always indicate the intensity of the emotion which can be culture-driven.



Photo © Jill Flusemann

# Psychology of expressions in the commercial world



Perception and influencing others how to think - Is the glass half full or half empty? Which it is doesn't really matter except to the point of - which do you want people to think? Your concept needs to be illustrated in such a way that clearly influences how people look at it, makes it easy for them to see the light of your vision and ultimately *agree* with your perception. It is the ability to share alternative points of view that will make you successful in commercial work. Presentation is paramount. How do you present yourself and your skills to others?

Patty and Jim make a fantastic pair! I had the pleasure of working with them on 2 of Bryan's on-location stock workshops. In every sense, they are *believable* and spontaneous. If you have the opportunity to work with models, maximize your commercial potential by making sure you work a range of expressions from elated to playful to stressful.



Photos © Jill Flusemann

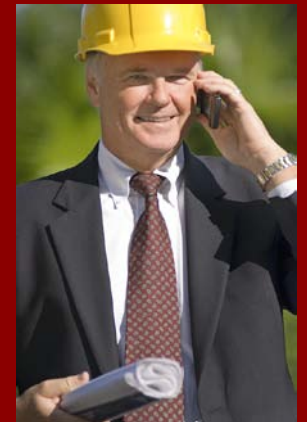
## Psychology of expressions in the commercial world cntd.

Expressions are illustrated through gesture, body language, posture, facial expression, eye contact, a person's clothing and hairstyle, their environment, living decor and even architecture. In commercials tone of voice, volume, speaking style, voice quality and rhythm can be key indicators of excitement, stress or a variety of other emotions. While words, whether in text or verbally spoken are a driving communication factor, our minds look at both the nonverbal indicators as well as the verbal communication tactics. What is the person's body language saying? It helps support our judgment as our brains simultaneously process all the cues. It is the combination of these elements that our minds use to determine a final assessment of what is being shown to us. Pay attention to details. A person's physique, height, weight, hair, skin color, gender and clothing all send us indicators that can conflict with the overall concept. If you look at two women dressed in the exact same dark business suit with white blouse, would you look at the two women the same way if one was wearing glasses, minimal makeup with her hair professionally pulled back at the base of the back of her head and the other woman is sprouting a severe, spiky Mohawk from the top of her head, is covered in visible tattoos and is wearing a nose ring? I would think not. Depending on the message or underlying concept, all of these cues should be considered when creating the image in your mind. Use the supporting or conflicting nonverbal cues to emphasize your concepts and the emotional response you are trying to achieve. Cartoon artists use expressions to convey emotion to animation of everything from computers to cars to animals, flowers, vegetables or you name it to give the character a lifelike, human quality with emotions and feelings. Learning how to use the emotions you bring out in other people to your advantage is the mark of a successful commercial photographer.

What does this mean exactly? Is taller better? Putting public speakers on podiums, promoting high-heeled shoes and posture – some research has indicated that height can influence the impact of a taller person's message as stronger than someone shorter. Is tanner skin perceived as more healthy? Generally, yes. If you watch "Dancing With the Stars" did you notice from week 1 to week 2 how their unbelievable tans suddenly appeared? Is happiness the ultimate goal? In commercial stock photography, the answer to this last question is almost always a resounding and definite YES!!! The vast majority of stock photography uses happy concepts. The pursuit of happiness...from the US Constitution to the advertiser's mantra...it is what we as human beings strive for. It is what drives us and sets our goals. What makes each one of us happy? For some people, it may be a sense of accomplishment, a job well done or completing a project. The list is endless and is as unique as each and every one of us, for we are all different and what drives me may not be the same thing that drives each one of you. The psychology of commercialism is, in a very real sense, stereotypical. To promote "happy" to the masses, the image should reflect the perfect universally happy family doing the happy feel-good activities or a businessman or woman succeeding by climbing mountains. This is beginning to change a little, however, in recent years. The market is oversaturated with perfect, happy images. Consumers are trying to break the mold about how their business can stand out amongst the rest of the cookie-cutter ads. The new trend is "edgy" – different, non-sensical, darker, yet powerful with impact. The degree of intensity will vary from client to client, and some may balk at the "edgy" trend, still demanding the safe route. In the end, it is up to each of us as photographers to provide the variety of trends if we want to maximize our earning potential.

Collectively the range of universally recognized expressions indicated earlier in this lesson are the very expressions found on the faces of more than 90% of all lifestyle images made for stock! And in case you didn't know, it is the face of happiness/laughter/joy that sells the most in the world of lifestyle images. Contentment is reserved for portraits. Stock agencies rarely want "contented" subjects since contentment signifies a goal has been achieved, you want for nothing more - and if you want for nothing more, then you might as well be dead. At least that is the attitude towards contentment on Madison Avenue, and on Madison Avenue, you cannot sell products to "dead" people. What is "Madison Avenue"? The term "Madison Avenue" is often used in advertising, as Madison Avenue in New York became identified with advertising agencies after their explosive growth in the 1920s. Today many of the agencies have migrated to other areas in the city, but the term is still used to describe the agency business as a whole and large, New York-based agencies in particular. Sure, it would be great to see each of the expressions you are trying to convey in some context e.g. a *joyous* bride with the church in the background, or a *confused* businessman looking at his plane ticket in an airport or an *angry* teenager looking at a dent in his car in a mall parking lot, but for now, what I am really after is to see how good you are at drawing out expressions from your subject. Keep the concept simple and let the focus of it be the subject's emotional expression.. As the course progresses, you will have ample opportunity to shoot these same subjects in an actual work or play environment where both the subject and the surroundings connect to the overall emotion of the scene.

*Keep it real  
and above all  
believable!*



Photos © Jill Flusemann



## How to evoke expressions with your subjects

- **Respect.** It goes without saying, you can attract more flies with honey than water. Well, without respect, you will not achieve this either. Be considerate! Remember, the people you are photographing are helping you out. Don't ask them to do anything you would not do yourself. Continually speak with your subjects comfortably with an even tone of voice. Compliment them and treat them professionally. If you are working with children or animals – it goes without saying, patience will need to be involved. If you are working with athletes or dancers – make sure they are comfortable and above all else, do *not* have them repeat an action that could promote injury. Allow them time to stay warm and stretched. Causing an injury to do you a favor does not promote their respect of you either. The same may apply to models in high heels. Ask periodically if they need to take a break, or get something to drink as standing still on four-inch stilettos can take its toll quickly. In the end, treating everyone you shoot with respect builds trusting relationships and can lead to great referrals, but most importantly better images.
- **Confidence.** Whether you know what you are doing or not, telling a customer or model this does not improve their respect of your skills. Remember my comment on presentation being paramount? Unless experienced themselves in modeling, chances are they will never know the raging questions and uncertainty that can be going through your head about “what do I now”. Present yourself like you are confident in what you are doing. Try to avoid frustration showing at all costs. Looking at the camera LCD and grimacing doesn't escape the model who is watching you shoot since they are most likely facing the camera. Act like a professional and you'll achieve that status all the more quickly!
- **Rapport.** Without a doubt, building a comfortable relationship with your models, whether you know them or not, will be critical toward successful, believable and outstanding images. Rapport establishes a sense of trust, confidence and participation where people can express themselves freely. We learn that eye contact is the most common way to build a rapport, but matching your body language and voice tonality and speech patterns can also be influential. This does *not* mean you should mimic them or make it obvious. Just notice how it becomes more comfortable when you are able to skillfully observe and align your posture and speaking with others. Do not overlook the sense of trust developed by a non-threatening simple and short touching gesture. Asking the person if it is ok to simply “fix” a wardrobe wrinkle or move a strand of hair hanging over their face done *professionally, respectfully* and in a *non-threatening way* can develop a sense of trust and allow them to relax. Caution and common sense are to be used here of course, and this may not always be appropriate. Just keep it in your toolkit of tricks when it could be appropriate and useful in building a rapport since most people would not allow you to touch them without a certain amount of trust. This can simply be a bridge-building exercise to establishing a better rapport.
- **Direction.** Now that you have hopefully gained a level of trust with your subject, what are you going to do? Like your image is to direct consumers' minds where you want them to, you need to direct your subjects where you want them. You will need to use your communication skills, not just as a photographer, but with your model to put them at ease and direct them toward what the image goal is. Explain how you want to use visuals or feelings to bring out stronger viewer emotions to your image's concept. For your subjects, it may be their first time modeling, and for some of you your first time directing someone. Go through what kind of impressions you are trying to make with them. Ask them if they have a memory of a similar situation to the concept or feeling and ask them to call on the emotions of that time for the image. People can use any of their senses to tie to an event whether that be a smell, sight or sound. Build the experience and recreate it in their mind. This will help convey realism and believability.
- **Involve them.** Last but not least – involve your subject in your image. Not all projects or time may dictate this as an option, but talk to your models. Ask them if there is a way they ever wanted to be photographed and once past the “deer in headlights” moment of sudden shock that they actually have input in a situation they may be completely new to (being a model), people can often-times come up with brilliant ideas themselves and the end results, as they came up with the idea, engages them. Suddenly they are having fun, can be natural and spontaneous and *believable*.

## Believable vs not

Photos © Jill Flusemann

Is it important for an emotional expression to be real to be believable? Actors are expected to be believable. Theme acting is a common acting tool. Actors try to feel the actual emotion they are portraying for achievable results. Remember when I said faking an emotion can lead to feelings of the real thing? This is because physiological and chemical reactions to the emotion “kick in” and the expressions become more believable. It is more difficult to portray believable negative emotions than positive ones.

As far as photographic images are concerned, expressions are more easily recognizable when static, photographed and intentionally posed versus spontaneous real-life, real-time expressions. The observed expression is then interpreted along with the situational cues and triggers an emotional response. When the situational cues are missing, recognition decreases considerably. Believability consists of the accurate perception of realism, the possibility or experiencing the emotions and the similarity of the representation to the real world.

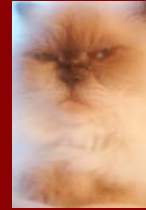
Authenticity of emotion is recognized around subtle differences primarily in the muscle activity around a person's eyes. Research has shown deliberately posed expressions contain more irregularities than true emotion. In the end, what matters is - if you look at the image either you believe it or you don't.





## Not limited to people

Don't forget, animals can be remarkably expressive and used for strong emotional connections to humor, sadness, anger or love. In the commercial arena when it comes to these type of images, keep in mind they must be photographed well, look professional and above all not look like snapshots. These pictures of my former cat BeBe are not stock-worthy, but are shown just to show you how expressive animals can be and this is not to be overlooked to express emotional concepts.



## *Let's take a look at some examples*



This is a perfect example of what you will undoubtedly experience as you begin to work with models who are most likely modeling for the first time, especially the younger they are. The expression is not believable and overdramatized. Overdramatization is not bad - but it has to be done on the right shot and done well to be successful. This was not. However, interact with the model and give them a frame of a real situation they can "put" themselves into to loosen up and produce better images.

Also pay attention to your model. Here my model, a daughter of a co-worker, had braces with orange rubber bands. This may be problematic. While you've successfully solicited a willing participant to help you, do *not* lose sight of the details. If your model has acne that means you will spend time in photoshop cleaning it up. Take the time to clearly communicate with your model ahead of time wardrobe, grooming and makeup expectations. Time is money and your time is better spent shooting images than in photoshop later.

You've already met Dee, one of the most expressive people I know. She has a million and one expressions on command and a spectacular personality to go with them. Her expression demonstrated here could easily convey alarm, fear or distress but you very clearly and immediately recognize she is *not* happy! Her arresting eyes and supporting facial expressions from the clenched, pouting mouth to furrowed brow and wide eyes express concern. This could be a great expression for use with security systems, constipation or other medical products or the stress of daily life is driving you crazy. The use possibilities are only limited to a person's creativity providing it is BELIEVABLE which this is. In the insert photo, the gesture of rubbing her neck combined with the dull eye expression and mouth puckered as though she were about to blow out a frustrating sigh convey her feelings of tiredness and frustration.





# Examples

## Corbis and Getty examples

It's important you do your research. Get into the habit of going online to Corbis and Getty Images to see when you type in your concept what are the first images that appear in their library. Use these to brainstorm ideas, but take a look at the entire image. Is the image a Rights Managed or Royalty-Free image? Is it a Premier, Standard or Value classification. Make sure to note on Corbis' rankings, higher levels of creativity and outside the box thinking is what earns images a higher ranking which translates into higher royalties for you as they are priced accordingly. How does the expression support the image concept and message? How do the expressions relate to the image backgrounds and entire scene? How believable are they? Could they serve multiple messages? When you look at an image break it down from the concept behind it, the staging, lighting and supporting composition, background, models, appearance, point of view and of course the expressions. Soon you may find yourself walking into a store and doing this with the display images you come across. Taking on this frame of mind is a great study tool to put you on the fast-track to understanding commercial imagery. Tuck away images in your mind that impress you, then brainstorm how you can represent a concept differently in your own fantastic creative way. Once the ideas start rolling, you may not be able to stop them!

Now let's study the top Corbis and Getty images from the seven recognizable emotional expressions mentioned earlier in this lesson: joy/happiness, fear, anger, surprise, contempt, disgust, and sadness. These are the top images that appear upon entering the expression keyword.

## Joy/Happiness

### Corbis



Premium Rights-Managed



Premium Rights-Managed



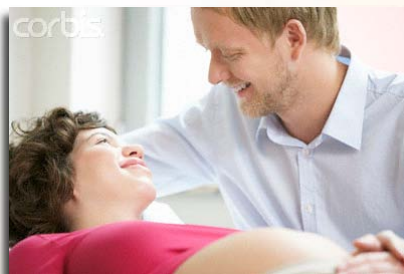
Premium Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Premium Royalty-Free



Premium Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Value Royalty-Free



Value Royalty-Free



# Joy/Happiness Examples

Getty Images



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



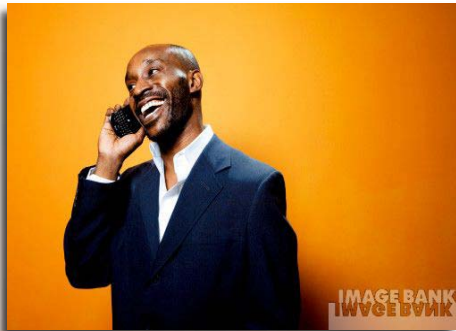
Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



# Fear Examples

## Corbis



Premium Rights-Managed



Premium Rights-Managed



Premium Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Premium Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free

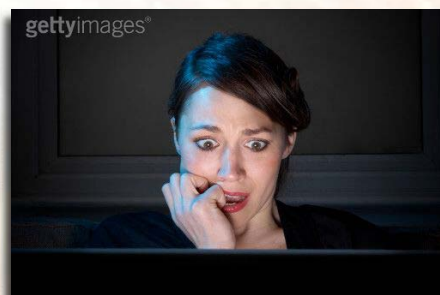


Value Royalty-Free

## Getty Images



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



# Fear Examples

Getty Images



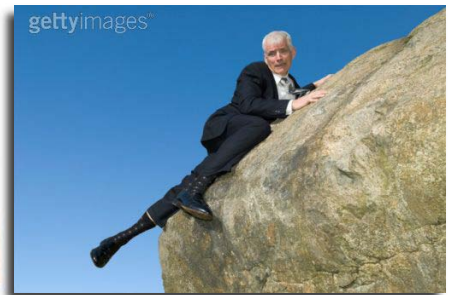
Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free

# Anger Examples

Corbis



Premium Rights-Managed



Premium Rights-Managed



Premium Rights-Managed



Premium Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Premium Royalty-Free



Premium Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free

Getty Images



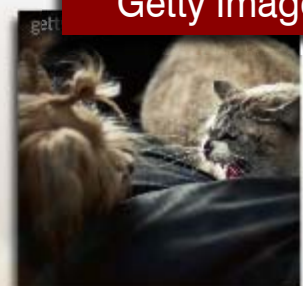
Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



# Anger Examples



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free

# Surprise Examples

## Corbis



Premium Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



# Surprise Examples



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free

## Getty Images



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free

# Contempt Examples

## Corbis



Value Rights-Managed



Value Rights-Managed



Value Rights-Managed



Value Rights-Managed



# Contempt Examples



Value Rights-Managed



Value Rights-Managed



Value Rights-Managed



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed

# Disgust Examples

Corbis



Premium Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Value Rights-Managed



Premium Royalty-Free



Premium Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Value Royalty-Free



# Disgust Examples

Getty Images



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Royalty-Free

# Sadness Examples

Corbis



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Std Rights-Managed



Premium Royalty-Free



Premium Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Std Royalty-Free



Premium Rights-Managed



Premium Royalty-Free



# Sadness Examples

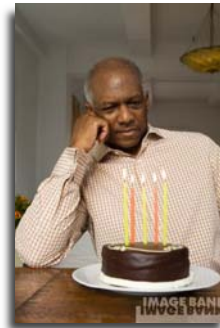
## Getty Images



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Rights-Managed



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free



Royalty-Free

## Summary questions to ask yourself:

- *Is the expression believable?*
- *Does the expression support the concept?*
- *Do the non-verbal cues support the expression or concept?*
- *Is this expression common or can it be done more creatively?*



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