

# AN EMOTION IS NOT A DISEASE

Jon Burras

*Imagine* living in a world without feelings. Highs and lows are discouraged. Public display of emotion is suspicious. Staying the same, day in and day out, becomes the national theme. Does this sound like a plot from a George Orwell novel? Quite the contrary. This is the culture that we are creating.

The dominance of the rational brain began around five thousand years ago. Alphabets emerged. Words, Newtonian philosophy, Cartesian world views and "rational knowledge as power" began to take center stage. Rational and logical thought surfaced as the dominant reference point.

Rational thinking has been invaluable in our understanding of our world. Science and allopathic Western medicine are offshoots of this type of thinking. The advancement in medicine, technology and space exploration are a direct by-product of the rise of our cognitive thought process. This is just a small sample of the gifts the rational mind has brought us.

While "rationalization" has its place, this way of experiencing our Western world has albeit taking over like a runaway mold in a steamy shower. We begin in grade school to sharpen our rational thinking brain, tune it up in high school and cement it in place during our college years. By the time we enter into the job market all we know is how to be rational.

While this might seem normal (at least to rational-minded dominant people), this way of perceiving our world is completely out of balance. There are some people who would not know what to do with an emotion if it hit them along side their rational head. We live in a completely imbalanced world because we have sacrificed our emotional world and have escaped into our thinking world. The age of information and technology have only added more fuel to this fire. We are expected to be emotionally balanced by the time we enter into adulthood yet most people receive little or no training on how to access and express their emotions. Is it any surprise when someone "goes postal" or another "road rage" shooting shows up on the nightly news?

The rational brain does not like emotions. This higher neo-cortex fears emotional involvement because it has little control or understanding of emotions. Just as "*kryptonite*" is lethal to some superheroes, emotions are deadly to the rational brain. In fact, our intellectual gray matter has declared war on our sensory and emotional experiences. The rational brain is suspicious and threatened by emotions. Our primal nature is being squeezed out of us by a brain out of control.

Emotions are not a disease, as our higher brain would want us to believe. Emotions are nature's gift to us and have a definite purpose and function. Emotions are energy. "E-motion" means "energy in motion." Whether it is grief, sadness or joy, emotions are supposed to flow or be in motion until completion. When our emotions flow and are released completely we dissipate excess energy. By releasing this stored up energy we return back to balance or "homeostasis." When our emotions are not allowed to be released we store this energy within our body.

For instance, when a friend or loved one dies or is seriously hurt our natural response is to grieve. Grieving is nature's gift to release the energy of loss. All of our losses, from the

largest to the seemingly insignificant, need to be grieved. By grieving we allow the flow of energy to continue outward to be released.

But the rational brain often will not allow this to happen. Our higher thinking brain believes that to express any emotion is a sign of weakness or vulnerability. A brain that requires control fears emotions. The thinking brain requires control and order at all times. Perhaps emotions were at a highly alert status while one was a child. It did not feel safe to feel all of this. Hence, escaping into the world of rationalization became the way to hide.

Translated into a Judeo-Christian culture, many of our emotions have been labeled as taboo. Anger is one such example. In many religious traditions, anger has been characterized as a "sin" and the expression of anger is thought to provide one an "E" ticket ride straight to the fires of hell. Our higher brain, responsible for the development of institutions like religion, has labeled emotions such as anger as being "bad" or "evil." In fact, our rational, logical culture has categorized all emotions as either "good" emotions or "bad" emotions. We are encouraged to express the "good" emotions while discouraged to have anything to do with the so-called "bad" emotions. According to this black or white thinking created by our rational brain, you are either a good person if you express happiness and joy and considered weak or evil if you express grief or anger.

But again, all emotions are forms of energy. All emotions have a purpose which nature gave us. Expression of emotions, in a skilled fashion, is the cornerstone of health.

### **Repression of emotional energy equals disease**

A person who does not know how to wisely release and express his emotions is like a constipated colon. We refer to this as "emotional repression." When you consistently hold back the waves of emotion you are storing all of that emotion inside. This particular emotion might end up in your belly, your heart or between your eyes. Holding back emotions often leads to health issues, from heart attacks, stress, insomnia and cancer. It is easy to spot a rational thinking emotional repressor. He is the one with the wrinkled squinting face, tiny beady eyes and spectacles. He often has a stiff neck and a scowl on his face.

Disease begins when we repress emotions. When we stop the flow of energy through our body we begin to damn up our energetic river. Once our energy flow becomes restricted, our physiology begins to change. Muscles and connective tissue harden and our joints stiffen. Arthritis has a chance to set in. Cancer may begin to emerge. Many diseases are a direct result of not being able to express and release the energy of emotions. The rational mind has a difficult time understanding that a healthy relationship with one's emotions will lead to a healthy body.

In our current allopathic medical system emotions have very little relevance. We are given pills and medications, not to help us release our emotions, but to deaden us from our emotional life. We characterize strong emotions as being medical emergencies. "Emotional breakdowns" occur. These are times when we are overwhelmed by the build-up of emotional energy. These events often become times of crisis rather than times of growth. We are sent to an institution in order to deaden our pain even more.

In a natural world, we ought to be supported, nurtured, and encouraged to grieve our emotions. Depression has been labeled and treated by physicians and psychiatrists as a medical pathology. The holistic model of depression believes that this condition is nothing more than the blockage of the flow of energy. This is a warning sign that the vital flow of energy up the spine and into the base of the neck has been restricted. Muscles are frozen in

fear of letting go. Connective tissue is bonded together. The spinal vertebrae are compressed. Emotions are moving inward and not outward. After all, when was the last time you saw a depressed person even release anger?

Many of our authority figures that we look to for guidance continue to sabotage our emotional life. I have heard one prominent psychologist, while delivering his daily radio address, describe anger as "the most toxic of all emotions." The media continues to discount our emotional world as well. Celebrities are applauded for "keeping it all together" and for being strong after a tragedy. A celebrity or sports figure who displays a strong emotion becomes front-page news. It is ironic how fearful the rational mind is of our emotions.

Even our spiritual leaders have blindly guided us farther and farther away from our natural expression of emotion. We have been encouraged to be calm and centered all of the time. Losing control is attuned to failure. But in a world closely associated with nature, calmness is not the ideal state to achieve. Feeling and expressing all of your emotions, *in a skillful fashion*, is the idealized state. The higher logical brain wants control. Nature desires flow. Unfortunately, our dominant rational brain falsely believes that we are above nature. We are led to believe that we do not have to follow the same rules as nature. We are misguided in our belief that we can control nature. This false belief that we are above nature then becomes the root of most disease.

In a natural world you grieve when you experience loss, sleep when you are tired and eat when you are hungry. You express anger (skillfully) as a way to set a boundary. When living by natural law we practice health and wellness. When we continue to create beliefs and institutions which alienate us from our natural flow of emotional energy, we create our own demise. Emotions are not evil. Most people however, have had little or no training in how to release their emotions and hence, have very little skill with their emotions. One could say that these people are "emotionally illiterate."

It is no mistake that we have been bestowed with all of our emotions. We all received these wonderful gifts. I assure you, nobody was left out. It is our job to learn to understand our emotions and find the most appropriate manner in which to express them. I am sorry *Mr. Rational Mind*, emotional constipation is not an option. While rational thought might have dominated our world the last few hundred years, it has certainly taken its toll on us. Only by coming back into balance with our emotional life will we really begin to harness all that we are capable of.

Emotions are nothing to fear. We have our greatest challenge ahead in learning how to use them. While the rational mind might want to devise a new rocket ship to send into "outer space," our next frontier is essentially going to "inner space." That inner space is the uncharted territory of our emotional world.

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