

Lesson 88: Emotional Sobriety

Emotions are no less addictive than drugs, alcohol, food, gambling or anything else that is driven by obsessive and compulsive behaviors. Emotions are triggered by external stimulus as well as internal influences and sometimes the external collides with the internal. Emotions can be pleasant or unpleasant experiences and can act as a strong motivation for the fulfillment of personal desires, the realization of hopes and dreams and the achievement of personal goals. Emotions are not only internally felt; they are externally expressed in a variety of ways. Emotions can be projected at others and can influence the will of others causing them to either cave in under the pressure or to push back with the force of their own free will. Emotions are an essential ingredient in the human experience; however, when they are left to their own devices, they can quickly become a fast moving train that all too often jumps right off the track. Balanced emotions are vital to good health and overall well-being. Unbalanced emotions manifest in an array of physiological symptoms that can lead to a host of diseases. The lesson this week will examine the two sides of the emotional coin as a means to better understand the nature of emotions as well as to describe emotional sobriety.

The ancient Greeks described the manifestations of the emotions as the soul coming out of the body and revealing itself; that it was making an “exit motion.” Over time this manifestation of the soul became known as “e-motion” and was simplified to “emotion.” Emotions are the verbal and non-verbal means that allows you to express your day to day life experiences. As emotions are felt as well as expressed, they can range in feelings from joy all the way down the emotional scale to disparity, hate and anger. If you did not have your emotions as a means with which to express the experiences of your life, you could potentially be better off, as there would be no such thing as a bad mood or the distress that is associated with difficult to manage emotions that are internally felt and externally manifested. As you face the problems you encounter along the path of your life, you may have felt angry or depressed; you may have felt broken up or mentally strained in a relationship; you may have experienced grief as the result of a personal loss; you may have felt anxious; you may have suffered from low self-esteem and did not feel worthy or validated as an individual. You may have suffered from mild to severe panic attacks or fell prey to a host of fears, some that may have become phobias. You may have felt resentment, jealousy, guilt, and despair. You may have experienced boredom or have been lonely or perhaps you withdrew. You may be prone to negative thinking, worry and other obsessive and compulsive behaviors, some that lead to addictions such as drugs and alcohol, as a means of escape.

Emotional stress and tension can arouse high levels of excitement, which in of itself can have physiological manifestations, such as changes in heart and respiration rates as well as changes in blood pressure. Emotional stress and tension can also cause you to feel fatigue to the point of physical exhaustion that is often accompanied or triggered by

feelings of disparity or hopelessness, all of which can cause you to feel sad and even depressed. Emotions that are more intensely felt and experienced from this side of the coin are not only a physiological disruption; they can be mentally draining as well. It becomes difficult to think clearly, as clarity is needed when there are problems to be solved or resolved, but when distortions give way to logic things get can quickly get out of whack. Unbalanced emotions tend to compound the original problem, sometimes even to the point of losing sight of the original problem. When in the midst of such an unstable state of mind and emotional unbalance, not only are you a danger to yourself, you are also a threat to others whom you may be projecting your emotional instability toward, by way of forcing your will on someone else, for the sake of a desired outcome, regardless of whether or not that outcome is actually good for you or the other person involved. This is an act of self-centeredness that is driven by an unbalanced emotionally based demand, declaring that your will, *will* be done in spite of the fact that it may hurt you or someone else in the long run just because you are over-reacting to a situation, circumstance or event that has altered or threatens to alter your reality.

On the other side of the emotional coin are the feelings that express the joy of living life, expressed in laughter and expressed as bliss, happiness and, of course, being in a good mood and feeling emotionally balanced. Emotions give the business of human life dimension and depth and can enrich your life experiences. Emotions can be felt on many levels. Some people feel emotions stronger than others. As the feeling of love can run very deep, so can the feelings of hate and anger run equally as deep. Your emotions can quickly become like a roller coaster ride when your life gets out of balance. Externally influenced events can feel like the proverbial rug has been pulled out from under you, throwing you for a mental and emotional loop. The extent of the emotions you feel can easily diminish the quality of your life experiences and even threaten the well-being of your existence. As extreme emotional highs and lows are not healthy nor are they in the best interest of your overall well being, attaining and maintaining emotional sobriety is essential to the quality of your present and future life experiences. Like it or not, emotions exist within you; they are there to be felt and experienced because they do, in fact, serve a very valuable purpose at this stage of the human evolution, thus it is equally unhealthy to suppress them or repress them. What is healthy is to learn how to feel and express your emotions without allowing them to become weapons of personal self-destruction that you not only project at yourself, but is wrongly projected at others as well.

The starting point along the path to emotional sobriety begins with the realization that a situation, circumstance or event has caused your life to become unmanageable to the extent that you are powerless over whatever has altered your reality. There is a wide gap of definition between being powerless and being responsible. Events can happen in life that may be unforeseen and are unexpected; they are the result of the actions or influences of other people, places or things that adversely affect your reality. These

conditions in life are not always avoidable and not everything that occurs in your life is your fault. If in all honesty you can say that what occurred did so by no cause of your own external or internal influence, your responsibility began the moment the event occurred, because how you emotionally react to the event will either lessen the degree of its intensity in your reality or your emotional reactions will make matters worse. If you intentionally or unintentionally caused the problem, you are responsible to examine your role and avoid blaming yourself, as no one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes; life is, after all, a learning experience. Even intentional actions can be no more than an error in judgment due to the lack of possessing the right information at the right time, which is usually attributed to distorted perceptions, limiting or disabling beliefs, dysfunctional thinking and unrealistic expectations that may stem from a variety of environmental influences, such as from your family, culture or religion. These experiences are not necessarily right or wrong, good or bad, as much as they are opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.

Emotional sobriety involves a cognitive process which means becoming consciously aware of how you react to the adversities of life. This is accomplished by being aware of your own thoughts, by examining your own beliefs, by re-evaluating your expectations, not just of yourself, but of others and even places and things. Self-introspection is both necessary and beneficial because your thoughts may be based on a painful or difficult past experience from which you formed certain limiting or disabling beliefs that have actually distorted your perceptions. As the matter of perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, feelings and expectations are circular in motion, in that they feed into one another, your entire reality or an aspect of your reality can be skewed, depending on the lenses you are viewing it through, including how you view yourself.

As thoughts and words do become things, they will either induce undesirable situations, circumstances or events or they will be associated with them in some manner of speaking. Nonetheless, your emotional state of being will correspond to whatever is going on in your reality, regardless of its cause and will, in all likelihood, compound the situation at hand if your negative emotions are permitted to be the driving force. Any state of mind you think, believe, perceive or expect yourself into by intention will eventually become the very thing you will experience in your reality that will be supported by corresponding emotions. But because the human condition is so complex, it is often difficult to know which came first, the chicken or the egg as it relates to which came first, the emotions or the event. This is a cognitive process that should be explored as a means to discern the root cause, that is, if the root cause is clearly discernible, as sometimes it is not for any number of reasons. The root cause of some life events or even behaviors can be hidden in the layers of past life experiences and sometimes they are hidden in the long forgotten memories of your present life experiences.

Consequently, they may not surface easily, although they may continue to appear as archetypal images each time they rise up from the depths of your psyche and will have to

be deciphered as to their significance or relevancy. In such cases, well-intended cognitive processing will not be nearly as helpful because the root cause may not be revealed. In a situation such as this, the problem is what it is and may have to be accepted as opposed to being resolved unless you choose to undergo hypnosis. However, undergoing hypnosis by a practitioner who is not well trained in past life regression as well as spirit releasement therapy may ultimately do you more harm than good, or at the very least will accomplish little on your behalf.

Acceptance requires a different cognitive process that is based solely on your conscious willingness to accept that something unidentifiable lies at the root of the problem and, therefore, cannot be easily resolved. This also means that your emotions will have to correspond to that necessary level of acceptance, which for some people is far easier said than done, especially if the need for acceptance is attributed to a personal loss of some kind. In this case, acceptance will have to come by way of working through the five stages of grief. For many people, acceptance of a situation, circumstance or event that is in some way out of their control and has made their life unmanageable is no easy feat and may require some form of outside help as a means of actually getting to that difficult place of mental and emotional acceptance, as self-help often has its mental and emotional limits. There are many avenues of relief, such as cognitive behavior therapy or support groups, counseling, energy healing and many others worthy of investigation, as there are many paths to overcoming the adversities of life. Past life regression therapy as well as spirit releasement therapy is becoming more and more widely accepted in conventional psychological and psychiatric therapy sessions as practitioners are finding it more difficult to isolate or disregard the interconnectedness of body, mind and spirit. Many conventionally trained doctors and licensed practitioners are adding the study of metaphysics into their professional repertoires out of necessity.

The physiological aspects of highly aroused negative emotions is the disruption of the body's normal biological functioning which puts the body in an unnatural state of disease that can range from experiencing a bad headache, to tremors, to an unsafe increase in heart rate and respiratory rate, to an increase in blood pressure, vomiting, stomach disorders, physical pain anywhere in the body, eating disorders, insomnia and a whole litany of other disorders that when prolonged can become medically problematic. The neuronal effects are no less threatening to the physical body. As the brain is not a respecter of experiences, it does not make distinctions in terms of your desirable or undesirable experiences. Its primary function is to record and map out instructions to the various parts of the brain in response to your experiences, regardless of what they are or why they occurred, as well as to transmit signals to the cells, organs, muscles and even into the bones of your body to direct them as to how they too should respond to your experiences. Basically, the brain retains memory, thus, the information that relates to your current mental state of mind is recorded and is played back every time you encounter a threatening situation of a like-kind that you will find yourself automatically

responding too mentally and emotionally, and the same goes with your cells. The memories of past experiences and associated behaviors are stored in receptor cells and are acted on habitually in present and future events. So it is crucial to the proper functioning of the parts of your brain that serves in your best interest to be very aware of what mental and emotional instructions you are allowing your brain to map too and transmit throughout the whole of your body. Emotional sobriety will afford the brain an opportunity to rewire certain neuronal pathways and in some cases the brain will actually create a brand new neural circuitry as the result of having established new habits of mental and emotional behaviors.

Emotions and behaviors go hand in hand; where there is one; there will definitely be the other. Emotional sobriety is not just based on what you cognitively think, believe, perceive or expect, but rather it is really about what you do in response to your thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and expectations. The actions you take will set the stage for how you will experience your reality, which can trigger another round of upsetting emotions. When your behaviors are based on the experience of a past history that was not pleasant, desirable or favorable, things are not going to go well in your current reality nor is it likely to be much better in your future reality. Of all the emotions experienced on the lower end of the emotional scale, fear is the most potent and the most dangerous to every aspect of your being, as fear not only unbalances your emotions, it adversely affects your mental state of mind and eventually becomes a threat to you physically and even spiritually. Fear has a way of breaking down every aspect of your being. Now, this is not to say that fear is not necessary because it is, but only when it is for the purpose of alerting you to a potential danger in your environment, whatever that may be. But even how you react to the impending danger can escalate your fear, thus making a dangerous situation that much worse. Fear becomes an issue when it threatens to undermine your efforts to attain your desired measure of personal success, whether it is the experience of love in a relationship, dreams realized or goals achieved. Fear is also no respecter of persons; it can have a crippling affect to the point where it can become a very debilitating factor in your life. It will stop you dead in your tracks and will contribute to a host of physiological effects that are not the least bit pleasant. Emotional sobriety is the key to avoiding the unpleasant and potentially devastating effects from the emotion of fear. When you are maintaining emotional sobriety, fear possess no threat to you, but the moment you let go of your emotional sobriety, fear will get a toe hold in the door and it will begin to wreak havoc on you and adversely affect your reality. The more you fear something occurring in your life, the more you draw the vibration of that energy to you and the less you feel in control of yourself and your reality. Fear is not just an emotional downhill slide; it is a mental downhill slide as well. The bottom is generally described as being in a darkened pit of disparity, which opens the door wide to depression as well as a host of other crippling maladies.

Emotions are induced by an action and actions induce an emotion, thus they are intricately interwoven which makes the process of separating them sometimes almost impossible. You can influence your own feelings by your own willful actions, just as you can influence your actions by your feelings. Actions induce a change in an emotional state. The question is, what emotional state do you wish to be in and what actions are you willing to take to attain that emotional state and, furthermore, what actions are you willing to take to maintain your emotional sobriety. If you are not minding your own emotional shop, you are likely to be caught off guard when life poses a challenge, throws an obstacle in your path or presents you with a problem that you may or may not have anticipated or desired for that matter. The longer you can remain emotionally balanced, the better equipped you will be to not only face life's challenges but to cognitively deal with them in a productive and positive manner that ultimately will serve in your best interest. However, the road to emotional sobriety is not a destination that is easily arrived at nor is it likely to be an overnight success. For most people it is an ongoing learning process that over the course of time builds up a solid foundation so that when the winds of change blow through your mental house, your emotional walls will not come tumbling down around you.

The Serenity Prayer is widely accepted in 12-step recovery programs: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. Acceptance is both powerful and transformative, but arriving at such a liberating mindset is easier said than done, especially when there is heart-based pain involved or any disappointment where strong emotions are attached to the condition that cannot be changed, at least not without affecting your will forcefully on someone or something. The wisdom to know the difference is essential because if you project your emotions on others or force your will upon them, it is very likely that you will not be happy with the results. So it is right smack in the face of an adversity that taking a time out or a time away from the situation, circumstance or event affords you an opportunity to catch your breath and reassess how you really feel about what is going on in your reality. Now this is not to say that you should not feel, suppress or repress your feelings, but it is to say that you might want to consider giving yourself an opportunity to dispel your emotions in a safe environment. There are situations in life that can be extremely painful, which can make it very hard to cross over the bridge of acceptance. Anyone who has been through a divorce or the breakup of a relationship they did not want, or suffered an extreme personal loss, will attest to the intensity of the pain felt under such circumstances. A major shift in your environment can trigger an avalanche of strong emotions that can be very difficult to overcome, if for no other reason than the simple fact that you actually do feel what you feel. A personal loss, such as a relationship, is just that, it is a loss that not only shifted your reality into an abyss of heartbreak and emotional pain, but depending on the circumstances, you may be completely powerless to change the course of its direction. Thus, acceptance, as well as

the need to move on with your life can be challenging to say the least, especially when the road ahead is full of uncertainties and you do not have a clear sense of direction.

When a personal loss of any kind has dramatically altered your reality, there is the potential to experience grief, which is a natural human reaction that should be experienced within a reasonable frame of time, lest you fall prey to long lasting effects such as depression. The cognitive act of processing deeper levels of grief may require you to work your way through all five of its stages. The first step is denial, which is refusing to admit that the situation is what it is. Shock, numbness and even panic may take hold of your senses, as well as acute anxiety and even fear. The severity of these feelings and sensations are relative to your mental state of mind and emotional imbalance. The greater your emotional imbalance, the more severe these sensations are likely to be experienced and externally expressed.

The second stage relates to anger, which is a normal human reaction too, however, how you respond to your anger is where you can easily cross over into the danger zone, even to the point of no return. Harboring the emotion of anger can easily lead to frustration, resentment and hate, neither of which is going to contribute to keeping you emotionally balanced or ease whatever adversity has befallen you. It is okay to feel and to even express all these feelings, but doing so in a fit of rage or with an attitude of revenge is not going to be very productive and will indeed produce some very undesirable results that will make you feel worse than you already do. It is very hard to take back unguarded words and actions once they have been let loose and can be even more emotionally damaging, which will only make it that much harder to work through your grief.

The third stage pertains to bargaining. The human reaction to a personal loss, regardless of how detrimental it is, is to attempt to bargain with the other person involved, which usually involves making promises you will not be able to keep because you are making them under mental and emotional duress. Thus, promising the sun, the moon and the stars to someone in return for something you desire from them is not a realistic expectation of yourself and is one you will surely fail to deliver, if for no other reason than the fact that you have not yet discerned the role you may have played in the situation that brought about the personal loss to begin with, if such is the case. The key at this stage is to take responsibility for your own actions and behaviors, as opposed to striking any bargains, whether with God or anyone else. To bargain is to vow to deliver something in return for whatever it is you desire and just like thoughts and words, vows carry their own vibrational frequency, which means that a result of some kind is going to be expected of you.

The fourth step may find you at the doorstep of depression. It is more than okay to feel very sad about the loss you have suffered, such as it is and it is equally okay to even feel

a little depressed. However, it is not okay to remain in this state for an unreasonable period of time. The sooner you get back into the swing of life, the better you are going to feel. Taking such action will also help you attain emotional balance so that you can work toward attaining and maintaining emotional sobriety. This is not to say that you should not cry for a period of time, because you might need to. Crying not only releases strong emotions, the tears themselves are an internal cleansing system. Tears do for you what you cannot do for yourself, which is to release pent up painful emotions and/or negative energy. However, too much of a good thing has its polar opposite effects. Eventually the flow of your tears will stop, however, you may have to help the healing process along by avoiding feeling sorry for yourself and by avoiding taking on a victim mentality, which is very destructive all unto itself and can cause all sorts of long-lasting psychological damage.

The last and most difficult stage is acceptance. You may find yourself teetering between the stages of denial and acceptance for a period of time. This is just part of the cognitive process. Be kind to yourself because your feelings are what they are and your emotions are going to play a big role in reaching this last stage of accepting whatever it is that has altered your reality. Finding ways to change what can be changed will be challenging enough, nonetheless, there is an opportunity for personal exploration that will lead you on the path to unexpected personal and spiritual growth, but you have to want this for yourself. No one can give this desire to you, it must rise up within you and you have only to act on it. People tend to find success in recovery programs by turning their will over to the care of God as they understand a power that is greater than them. When you can get to the point of releasing the burden that sits heavy on your shoulders and turn the care of it over to something that is more powerful and more knowledgeable than yourself, you can finally move into the safe harbors of acceptance. Many people describe the experience of turning their burdens and their will over to a Higher Power that they may or may not choose to identify as God, as not only shifting into a mental and emotional state of acceptance, but as having a spiritual awakening as the result. The release of the personal burdens and the spiritual benefits derived far outweigh denial, anger, bargaining and depression in favor of finally accepting what cannot be changed and changing what can be changed and then having the wisdom to know the difference. Attaining mental and emotional acceptance is a very liberating personal and spiritual experience.

In closing, we hope that this lesson brought another aspect of emotional well-being into your conscious awareness and that you will integrate this information into the fabric of your reality. You have nothing to lose but have everything to gain, which first and foremost is your own emotional stability. After all, emotional sobriety is priceless. Please feel free to ask questions, make comments or share your own personal experience.

Many Blessings,

Linda, Z and the Collective We

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Recommended Reading:

Codependent No More by Melody Beattie

Emotional Clearing by John Ruskan

Spirit Releasement Therapy by William J. Baldwin, D.D.S., Ph.D.