

„Anyone can become angry - that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way - this is not easy.“ (Aristotle)

One of the major challenges of people who live in big cities is to deal with their emotions, particularly fear and anger, both of which are the causes for aggressive behavior, violence and different forms of exclusion.

For a long time, aggression has been thought to be a mysterious phenomenon. But as we know today, aggression follows certain rules.

From science we know, that for a mentally healthy person, it is rewarding

- to be socially accepted,
- to receive recognition,
- to feel being part of a group or being loved

To inflict damage or pain on another person, who has not provoked you, is not a worthwhile undertaking!

What we also know is, that the most reliable trigger of aggression is the infliction of physical pain. But what was discovered only recently by modern brain science is, that aggression will also be triggered due to social exclusion and humiliation.

So since aggression always occurs when people are socially rejected (or feel that it is happening), human aggression proves to be a social regulator. However, it can only fulfill this function if three conditions are met:

1. aggressive feelings must be perceived as such by the affected individual
2. the anger must be addressed to the person from whom the disturbance actually originated, (*„...being angry with the right person*)
3. In order to have a regulating effect, aggression must be communicated in a socially acceptable way, i.e. appropriately in dose and method. (*„...to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, in the right way*)

Cultivating Emotional Balance does that - yet on a larger scale, because it covers the so-called Big-7 universal emotions. It is about how to deal with our emotions in a constructive way.

„Destructive Emotions“ was the topic of the Mind & Life Conference of the year 2000 during which this program was created.

The conference was lead by Daniel Goleman, whom many of you know from his classic „Emotional intelligence“. On the fourth day of the conference, the Dalai Lama asked if this was just going to be talk or something was going to happen to improve the emotional life of people around the world. Apparently he looked into the eyes of Paul Ekman a little longer because Paul responded to the request. Paul then drafted Alan Wallace and the two developed this program together with Daniel Goleman, Mark Greenberg and Richard Davidson.

Now what is this program Cultivating Emotional Balance (CEB)?

CEB is a 42h evidence-based, secular emotion regulation and mindfulness program. Its key features, which distinguish it from other mindfulness programs (like MBSR or MBCT) are:

- the cultivation of meaningful ideals and aspirations or intentions. And this has a lot to do with our values.
- The building of attentional and mindfulness skills and
- The development of emotional skills.

Compared to other Mindfulness programs, CEB is for the general public, that is for healthy people, and not for a clinical population.

The goal of CEB is not so much the reduction of stress or depression (MBSR / MBCT) but genuine well-being and fulfillment in life, or something that the Greeks called Eudaimonia.

It is about how to lead a meaningful life in which we can flourish and where we use our potential as a human being.

CEB can be divided into two aspects

- a) the more psychological and scientific aspect and
- b) the more contemplative aspect.

Both aspects are covered in detail in the books "Emotions Revealed" from Paul Ekman and „The Attention Revolution“ from Alan Wallace.

To verify whether this program is working as expected and would have positive effects, a thorough research trial was designed by Ekman and Wallace and run by Margaret Kemeny, who had extensive expertise in such research projects. The results, which were very positive were published in the journal „Emotion“ of the American Psychological Association.

Presently, CEB is taught in the USA, Australia and Brazil at universities, in the health care sector, in law enforcement and in education.

To be emotionally balanced means to be emotionally resilient. That is, we are not stuck, or frozen into an emotional pattern. We are able to respond freshly to situations that are fresh every single time. And, following to Aristotle, our emotional responses to situations are commensurate with the situation itself. We don't exaggerate our emotional responses, we have responses that are appropriate to the situation.

When we think of emotional balance, we can think of it as the icing on the cake. And this is a four-layered cake, if we include the icing.

In order for us to develop greater and greater emotional balance, we must have a clearer and clearer insight into the very nature of our emotions. We need to recognize what are the triggers for our emotions, and, if we decide to express them, what are the consequences. And it **requires also to become** aware of the emotion of others, because we live always in relationships with those around us.

This means that we need to be clearly aware, which is what we call cognitive intelligence. And a cognitive intelligence is something really simple: It is seeing clearly what is there and not seeing clearly what isn't there. In other words we are neither projecting or superimpose

something onto reality which isn't there, nor do we block something that is in plain sight. The first example would be a cognitive hyperactivity and latter a cognitive defect.

So the cultivating of emotional balance must be based upon clear cognizance. And that's why we speak of the emotional balance being the icing on the cake. And the layer that necessarily provides a foundation for emotional balance is the cognitive balance and cognitive intelligence.

But then there is this issue: As we are attending to our emotions and trying to cultivate a greater clarity of observation, the question is how good are our attentional abilities, that is our abilities to stay focused.

To stay focused in a way that doesn't make us tighter and tighter as we sustain our focus. It is not hard to focus intensely for a short period of time. All of us know how to do that. But this is not sustainable over a longer period of time. And this is why we first need to develop a sense of ease, relaxation, even while paying very careful attention.

On the basis of relaxation, we can train the ability to sustain the focus, the stability or the continuity of attention. And based on these two, relaxation and stability, we can finally cultivate the clarity or the vividness of the attention.

Those three, relaxation, stability and clarity of attention is the winning combination for developing an attentional balance.

So if we would like to have sustainable cognitive skills, giving rise to sustainable emotional skills, then the layer beneath the cognitive is the attentional, and that can be cultivated.

And there is one more layer, which is the foundation of this four tiered cake. And this layer is the conative, or conation. So what is conation?

It is the mental process of desire or intention, the will or volition to do something. It has to do with our ideals, with our aspiration, our aims and our values. But simply put, it is the faculty of desiring. Desiring a sip of tea. Desiring to go to war, the desire to fight for civil rights, non-violence or against inequality.

And as we can be unwise in the emotions, that we embrace, we can be cognitively unwise, we can be attentionally unwise and likewise we can be unwise in our desires.

When you reflect on what is happening on the world today and how much unnecessary misery there is in the world, then you come to the conclusion that it stems from not knowing what would really make us happy; and not knowing what makes us really unhappy, in other words conative un-intelligence.

And this has to do with what we really value over the long-term, and based on our values our choices, and decisions.

Thank you very much

- for having the desire and the volition to come
- For giving me your attention the whole time
- For listening clearly without projections
- And for not getting upset when I say something that you think is wrong.