

*Why are our emotions so difficult to control?
Why do they haunt us in spite of our best efforts?
Why are they so powerful, so stubbornly tenacious?*

Can we ever understand them? Yes, we can!

THE NUTS & BOLTS OF EMOTION

Simplified

By Richard R. Pavak

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20 YFH, Gate 6 Road, Sausalito, CA 94965
Email: shenmaker@msn.com

*By all accounts Reason and Emotion are antagonists.
While there is no 'reason' to the emotions, there is logic,
there is logic and order to emotional interaction and
logic in the way they affect our minds and bodies.*

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1. The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology says this of emotion: *"Probably no other term in psychology shares its non-definability with its frequency of use"*
2. Neither the 2,670 page *Cecil Textbook of Medicine* nor the 4500 page *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* lists the word 'emotion' in their exhaustive indexes despite the immense influence our emotions have on our physical and mental health.
3. There are hundreds of books (dozens of new ones every year) by eminent and not so eminent philosophers and scholars attempting to answer the question posed in 1874 by the renowned philosopher/psychologist William James, *"What is an emotion?"* without agreement as to what they are or where they are located.

Clearly, something is wrong here.

In Preface

When emotion has been investigated in recent years, it has been studied only from two orientations, the biochemical model or the mental model.

The brain reasons, the emotions do not, that much is undisputed. But the emotions do have logic; there is logic to the way in which emotions relate to each other and an order in how they operate. Until now the logic of emotion has been obscured by controversies over the relationship of mind and brain, arguments over the location of emotion (*is emotion located in the brain or in the body*) and by academia's continuing insistence on placing emotion in a subordinate position to reason – which it is not.

We have been taught to view emotion as a *result* rather than a *cause*, but when we examine it carefully we see something quite different. The emotions give every evidence that they are not the brain's lackeys, but are independent causal agents that interface with our bodies and brains, controlling our bodies and our thoughts, and upsetting our lives.

By showing how and why emotions function in the ways that they do and by describing the logic of behavior and the order to the internal relationship of the emotions, *The Nuts & Bolts of Emotion* begins to demystify and make sense of the emotions, perhaps for the first time.

What you will read here is the accumulated thoughts and observations of over three decades of working directly with the emotions. No, not talking about emotion but working them with my hands, drawing emotion out of bodies and observing the actual effects and results of emotion, and recording the changes that occurred after the emotions were discharged. All of the examples given to illustrate points were of actual events, none of them were fabricated.

— Richard R. Pavek

SHEN Therapy is mentioned at several places in the text. SHEN (Specific Human Emotional Nexus) is a hands-on therapy with an exceptional ability to discharge the accumulated emotional trauma we carry inside in a way that is not harmful to others or to ourselves.

PART ONE

EMOTIONAL EPISODES LIFE'S HIDDEN CONTROLLERS

“The emotions are titanic forces which sway the lives of men,¹ driving them to good and evil. They are the most powerful of all human agencies, and have been well described as giants fighting for the bodies and souls of mankind.”

Frontispiece: *The Anatomy of Emotion*, Edward William Lazell, 1929

Our lives are made up of a long series of responses to emotional stimuli. Every response to a life-event starts with a primary emotional reaction; this reaction always precedes any secondary physical response to the life-event. When our emotional reactions – or lack of reactions – to life-events accumulate into clear patterns, we call them ‘behaviors.’ When our emotional reactions to any individual stimulus are beyond normal we call it ‘overreacting’ or ‘inappropriate.’ I should say that those around us call it inappropriate because we are inclined to believe the opposite, at least when in the midst of overreacting.

What causes these behaviors? Labeling them ‘learned responses’ does nothing to illuminate them. And why, if we actually are reasonable people with some degree of intelligence, do we so often inappropriately overreact or under-react? What drives us so? And why is it so painfully hard to change all that?

Whether pleasant or unpleasant, long or short, benign or horrendous, every incident or life-event we experience sparks not just an emotional reaction, but the beginning of an ***Emotional Episode*** comprising a number of interrelated emotions; these emotional episodes almost never end when their precipitating life-event ends; often they are with us all through life. The exceptions are emotional episodes associated with pleasurable life experiences; those seem to end all too quickly for us and so are of little interest to mental health professionals.²

Unfortunately, until the episode is brought to conclusion the emotions contained in these emotional episodes will continue to affect us. We cannot turn these emotions off nor can we decide what, or how much effect they will have on us. Even a seemingly small but personally traumatic schoolyard tragedy may begin a life-long episode that haunts us with shame, fear, loneliness, anger, or other emotions.

As life goes on we are subject to an increasing number of these unfinished emotional episodes that alter our judgment and modify our responses to emerging situations, affecting our behavior far beyond what we might think. Because of this, and because of their intensity, these unresolved emotions have more power over our present-day lives than the thoughts and emotions generated by current events in our lives. *We cannot be spontaneous or truly empowered while we are still engaged in one or more of these old, disempowering emotional episodes.*

¹ And women, too, of course — Lazell wrote this long before the days of literary equality.

² The term *Mental Health Professional* is, in my opinion, a serious error in description; the proper term should be ‘*Emotional Health Professional*,’ because few of their clients suffer from problems that are truly mental disorders; their clients’ problems are usually emotional – and emotion, as will be shown, is **not** mental.

Emotional episodes do not rest dormant inside us; they are continually active, sometimes just below the surface of our awareness, sometimes deeper, unrecognized but still actively present within us. Most often we are unaware of them until they flower into view as outbursts of emotion long after their initiating life-events have ended. When they do rise to the surface, they are almost never recognized for what they really are; the controlling undercurrent of our lives. We think we are spontaneously responding to a current situation when in fact the major thrust of our response is toward the long forgotten life-event, and our reactions appear to be overblown or just plain weird. Unless the triggering activates a clear memory of the original event, our current behavior will bewilder all around us and leave us ineffectually floundering in the current situation.

Many years ago, the German psychologist Fritz Perls stated that emotions have a gestalt (a life-cycle) which must be fully experienced before the emotion can be completed and stop affecting the body and clouding the mind. He claimed that, until finished, the physical and behavioral fallout continues in some form.

Whether we are aware of them or not, these emotional drivers, hidden well below conscious awareness, are the forces that create our personalities, our behavior patterns, and our approach to life. A single traumatic emotional episode can have a tremendous effect on our lives.

The Effects of a single traumatic Emotional Episode

The most vividly painful emotional episode I can recall having was when I was a first grader in a split class, half first grade and half second. Always the first to finish my assignment, I would quickly become absorbed in the much more interesting lessons being taught to the second graders.

One day the teacher assigned the second-graders a home project: collect as many samples of cloth as possible and bring them to class to share. Great idea! I loved it. I even thought of a way to improve it. Excitedly I raised my hand. When I told the teacher my plan she brought me tumbling to earth with, *“Just pay attention to your work Dickey, you’re in the first grade, not the second!”*

I was mortified. My head swam, my vision turned red and tunneled down to a small spot; I could not speak. Embarrassed almost beyond bearing, I went home in disgrace unable to tell my parents of my overwhelming shame. For a full month I would wait in the hall outside the classroom stalling, while my classmates reminded me that it was time for class. I waited until the very last bell when, heart pounding, I would creep into the room to disappear among the coats in the cloakroom along the side. I did not want to be seen. Then, when the teacher called the class to order I would slink to my desk, stare at my pencils, and half-heartedly do my work. I never again spoke up in that class unless I was asked.

For years afterward the memory often returned, always twisting my gut with shame, always burning my ears until when I was in my 50’s and, finally, it was SHENned out of me.

I am certain that I do not know all the many ways this event affected me, but I do remember that, months later when our class picture was taken months later, not wanting the camera to see me. And I know that I never was first in my grade after that, and much later, in spite of outstanding grades on my entrance exams and much encouragement from the University advisors, I would not go on to college.

This single traumatic emotional episode had continued to affect my academic choices and decisions throughout my life. I can still see shadows of that trauma in the ways that I relate to people today.

But who stopped me from sticking my neck out after that first grade incident? It was not the teacher that caused my distress or any of my later teachers – *it was me.*

While I wasn’t consciously aware of it, the lingering emotional pain I felt when I was reprimanded for speaking up with a good idea was so great that it made me fear ever doing it again. So I didn’t. Not for a long, long time and then not so as to make me really stick out and be noticed.

The emotional pain I carried became an endless undercurrent shaping my life.

EMOTIONALLY EMBEDDED BEHAVIOR

The ongoing emotional episode carries within itself all the frustrated actions and behaviors we developed when the episode began.

Every emotional episode contains within itself all the ineffectual reactions and behavioral patterns we adopted in the original event.

Therefore, reactivating an emotional episode also reactivates the old attitudes and behaviors which will be no more effective now than they were before. However they now have become obstinate.

These old defenses embroil us in a new emotional episode that is tied to the original one and it all becomes blurred; we are unable to recognize that we are responsible for what we are doing now, in this new event. We are driven by what happened long, long ago. Of course, nothing gets resolved and we find ourselves even more frustrated than before.

We may find ourselves reverting to childhood, wanting to hide, run to our room and cry, stamp our foot or hear ourselves screaming out, “I hate you! I hate you!” or feel powerless and hopeless and refuse to act or speak – just like we did long, long ago.

SEEING WHAT ISN'T THERE: THE WOMEN WITH EVIL FACES

It is not a problem to establish that the house we see exists, or the car, or the tree, but what about the person we see coming towards us. Are they threatening? Peaceful? Why was Pollyanna Pollyanna? How did Joe Btfsplk become Joe Btfsplk³ and not another Pollyanna? Jo's and Pollyanna's outlooks on life to come were different because each of them had a different emotional path through life. All of us view the 'reality' of the world around us through emotional filters created by the perceptions of reality that we made in the past. Each of us 'saw' reality differently as it unfolded in the past and what we think we observe now is twisted by the filters created by those earlier emotional experiences. It is amazing how these lingering emotions transform what we see around us.

I will never forget being in a Gestalt training workshop many years ago when my heart began pounding for no reason that I could tell. But I did recognize that something emotional was coming up and told the leader. She decided that it was my time to "work." She asked me go around the circle and make a certain statement (which I have long since forgotten) to each person in turn. As I did a most extraordinary and frightening thing happened. As I circled the group, repeating the statement to each man and woman in turn, the faces of the women began to slowly change into the faces of witches, faces of pure evil. Not the men's faces, only the women's.

I was terrified but kept on. By the time I finished I felt I was surrounded by a circle of evil-faced women, all full of hate, intent on doing me harm. Deciding that I had, "Done enough for the day," the leader halted the exercise and I sat down, frozen, unable to speak about what I was experiencing.

Long after the group was dismissed, I remained in the room, huddled against the wall, still in terror. It took about an hour for my fear to subside and for me to return to a more objective sense of present reality and to realize that the women in the group were not really evil or terrifying, that it was some ancient fear rising to the surface, overpowering my reason and affecting what I thought I was seeing.

Were the women in the circle actually witches? Of course not! Did they really have evil faces? No, some old lingering fear deep from my past had awakened and was distorting my sight, my sense of objective reality in a way I would not have believed possible. Ultimately I worked through the hidden fear that had affected all my relationships with women without my knowing it.

But during that episode, I was completely overwhelmed by the previously unknown and unacknowledged terror that I was still carrying inside me.

³ Joe Btfsplk was a cartoon character in the comic strip, Li'l Abner. Joe was a little fellow who was doomed to disaster, never able to shake off the black cloud over his head that followed him everywhere he went.

WRITING OUR 'LIFE-SCRIPTS' SETTING OUR DESTINIES

I do not believe in destiny, karma, or fate, whatever you wish to call it – I am convinced that the bulk of our destinies are not imposed on us; most of our life-scripts were and are self written.

It is clear from my work with SHEN that long ago in the past we outlined the way life would treat us, now and in the future. We do this by making decisions, most often as very young children, about how our lives will be. These 'life scripts,' as they are often called, were always written during an intense, heavily charged early-life emotional episode when we were too young to fully comprehend the reality of the events we were caught up in.

A well known example of life script writing is that of the father who goes off to war after telling his daughter that he will come back to her. Later the father is killed in battle and the girl, unable to comprehend the idea of her father dying in battle, feels abandoned and decides that men can't be trusted and will abandon her. Even after she had grown up and knows why her father didn't return and mentally understands the impact his dying had on her life, she still responds to her subconscious pain, and, oblivious to all the warning signs, repeatedly chooses an endless string of mates who promise fidelity but then leave, thus fulfilling her childhood prophecy.

THE FORGOTTEN BABY IN THE BASKET

Some few years ago, a man I had known from a previous SHEN Clinical Skills Seminar in England was attending his second Seminar. He constantly complained of being troubled all his life by never being able to feel joy and never feeling that he had accomplished what he set out to do; satisfaction with anything in his life continually eluded him.

On the fifth day of the course something strange occurred. After lunch we reconvened and he seated himself across from me. He then pointed at three sheets of paper scattered on the floor and said, *“Richard, do you see those papers on the floor?”* Puzzled, I replied, *“Yes, why?”* He enigmatically responded, *“Those are my history papers.”* (All the people in the class had been required to fill out a history of the emotional events in their lives.) *“OK,”* I said wondering what he was getting at and why he wanted me to be aware of them.

Long ago I learned not to try to analyze strange incidents like this because it is better to let them unfold so I said nothing further and neither did he. Shortly afterwards we went back to the tables to do the next SHEN session. He was paired with a younger man who began working at the man’s Solar Plexus, the region in the abdomen where we experience anger and fear. Suddenly the man reared up and, in a deep voice, began demanding, over and over, *“You go get my history papers!”* He was unable to respond to his partner’s requests to lie back down and experience what was happening in his body; he seemed unable to hear the requests at all. As I went to the table I saw that he was glassy eyed; *he was somewhere in the past.*

Looking him straight in the face I said loudly and firmly, *“You cannot get the person you are angry at to hear you by shouting at your partner!”*

Still glassy eyed, he looked at me blankly, stopped shouting and slumped back down on the table. His emotion exhausted, his partner was able to complete the Solar Plexus session and we all returned to the circle to check in.

At this point the man spoke up. “During the session I remembered when I was one year old; my mother put me into a basket and took me into the yard to get some air – and forgot me”. After a pause he went on, “She didn’t remember me until after she went to bed.” After an audible gasp from the rest of the class he matter-of-factly added, *“That’s when I realized I was never going to get what I wanted.”*

I could hardly believe what I was hearing; he had recovered the life script he had written when he was a baby! His self-ordained prophecy had been structuring his entire life.

There was no question in my mind that his life would change – he had completed the bottled up rage he had been carrying for these many years and the emotional episode that had remained stuck for all but a year of his life was finally over. But I did not comment on this because SHEN is not counseling or psychotherapy and because I wished the change to be natural, not borne of my suggestion.

He clearly demonstrated the change later in the day when I saw him go over to his scattered history papers, pick them up without comment, crumple them into a ball, and throw them in the trash!

What a beautiful metaphor - *he threw his history away*. Now he was getting to start over unimpeded by his self-written karma! That evening he left the class with a new look on his face. Three days later the class ended, and he left with new found color in his skin, a smile on his lips and a spring to his step, excited about the next journey in his life.

I saw him six months after the closing of that emotional episode; clearly the change was permanent. He no longer discussed his life in terms of failure and announced that he was feeling joy at appropriate times. He was now a man full of life, not despair.

Why had he changed when the grown woman exemplified above had not been able to change, even after, as an adult, she had come to understand why her father had been unable to return to her?

The key to change is in completing the unfinished emotional episode; the man completed his when the rage boiled up in the SHEN sessions he received, but the woman had not completed hers.

Can the woman overcome the life-script she wrote that still dictates how she chooses her mates? Yes. I have seen it happen many times – but only after the painful life-event has been recalled and re-experienced in its full emotional intensity and the emotion brought to completion.

ACTING OUT THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

We approach new people and events in life expecting them to affect us just as similar people and events in life did in the past, even though they may not be intending to treat us as the earlier ones did. We anticipate. We get our defenses and reactions in place even before anything happens. We begin making countering moves long before there is anything to react to. This leaves those around us (and often ourselves) mystified as to why we acted the way we did.

Some years ago a rather bizarre situation began occurring over and over, one that puzzled and upset me greatly. It was always the same; I would carefully explain an important issue to someone and, when I finished, the person would excitedly explain it to me – *as if I had said nothing – as if I hadn't understood it.*

I became increasingly distressed and bewildered as this occurred again and again. What was I doing wrong? Was I missing points, was I unclear? I tried everything I knew to improve my explanations – speaking more slowly, drawing diagrams, using charts, etc. But the only result was that I found myself explaining things to larger and larger groups. At the end there was always someone who came rushing up to explain the core of what I had just said, as if I had never said it. This continued for some years, always upsetting me until I had a SHEN session which precipitated me back into a painful early life-event I had not previously remembered.

During the session, I suddenly re-lived an episode that occurred when I was eighteen months old. I was crawling on the floor of my parents' house, proudly pointing at the nearby hot air register to show my parents, who towered above me, that I knew it was dangerous. My mother bent down, smiled at me, shook her finger and said, *"No, no Dickey, stay away from that, it's dangerous."*

I was crushed, hurt, empty and bewildered. How could she not know that I knew it was dangerous? Hadn't I just told her so?

When the session was over I felt cleansed, no longer crushed. I realized that she hadn't heard me because at 18 months I was not yet talking; inside myself I was thinking the thoughts but they just didn't come out. Then I realized this was the source of the bewilderment in the situations that had been upsetting me so badly.

Now that the old emotions were completed and not affecting me any longer, I was able to realize that the people who upset me were probably just excited about what I had just taught them. I had misinterpreted their excitement because on the surface it mimicked my mother's inability to hear my silent thoughts.

About a month later I found myself once again explaining something important to a small group of listeners. Once again when I finished one of them approached me and began telling me the essence of what I had just explained. Only this time I laughed – the painful emotion I had carried for so long was finally used up, exhausted, and finished forever. I knew that she was just excited about what she had just learned.

That type of incident has not reoccurred since that time.

THE CHIP ON YOUR SHOULDER – HEALING THE HARD WAY

Ever go around with carrying a ‘chip on your shoulder,’ just waiting for someone to try to knock it off? How many times have we been just itching to have “it” happen so that we could do what we didn’t do in the past?

Back in the days before I damaged my knee I ran most every day. Many times while running I found myself imagining that someone was about to come up behind me on a bicycle and knock me over and I then would rise up and blast him with my anger. The idea felt wonderful. I was very aware that there was no reality to this, but the rage I felt inside me was very real, some inner pain was getting closer to the surface, searching for an exit. I was careful not to put myself in a position where this might actually happen. I did not want to subconsciously cause a situation that would harm me and the ‘assailant’ I was conjuring up in my mind.

I believe this illogical behavior is the soul trying to cast off its inner pain by seeking or creating painful situations that are strong enough to merge forces with the pent up emotion on the inside until together they erupt and purge the soul of its lingering pain.

Often I have had someone tell me that, while in the midst of a raging anger at something happening to them in the moment, they have had clear memory flashes of similar times of pain and rage over related events in the past. They also told me that with the impelling force of pent-up emotion dissipated during the ‘big explosion’, they no longer acted so ‘off the wall’ when similar events occurred. An incident that took place years ago when I headed the Adult Education Committee at the church I attend illustrates this.

A woman in the church wanted to put on a program and was upset that she wasn’t being allowed. She badgered everybody, again and again. As head of the committee I was asked to decide if it was appropriate and worthwhile. At the next committee meeting she presented her program and, while the meeting paused for a break, I took her aside and said it was OK, she could do it. She looked at me strangely and walked off. Ten minutes later she dragged me aside and began arguing that she should be allowed to do it. Again I told her she could. She scowled and left but again cornered me, this time practically demanding that she be allowed to put it on.

By now I was getting a little tired of this and said, “*Look. I have told you twice already that you can put on your program. Why do you keep asking?*” “*What?*” she replied? “*I said you can put your program on.*” “*You mean I can do it?*” “*Yes,*” I said, “*that’s what I have been telling you.*” “*Oh*” she replied and walked off. After that she lost interest and never did put on her program.

So what was going on here? Why did she create this big battle and upset everybody around her? The reason is simple – the old rejection-based emotional episodes in her life needed to be completed. She had imagined being refused and so had worked herself up into a state, eager to do battle, scream and shout – whatever it took to dislodge the old, painful emotion.

TRIGGERS & TARGETS

Most people understand that ‘triggers’ are people or situations that trigger our deep emotional pain and bring it to the surface. New classroom situations are often triggers that evoke our lingering emotions of fear, humiliation, stupidity, confusion, and/or inadequacy left from painful childhood classroom experiences. If you find yourself feeling helpless, confused, stupid, ignored, unheard, inadequate, unable to speak when called upon, afraid to ask questions, experiencing difficulty in learning and/or unable to communicate your needs, most likely minor incidents in the classroom or innocuous actions of your instructors may be triggering lingering emotions from earlier, painful classroom events.

Years ago I conducted a classroom trigger experiment in one a Workshops. In this particular class we were using school-type chairs, the type with writing arms attached, with our chairs placed in a circle. I asked the class to take their chairs and form them into three short rows. I didn’t tell them it was an experiment; I just told them it would be easier to see their faces.

They obliged me and soon I was facing three short rows of participants. It took only four minutes before fidgeting began and scowls appeared on many faces. Suddenly one person stood up, lifted her chair and said, *“I can’t stand this, it is just like being back in school.”*

With that the entire class stood and took their chairs and put them back in a circle echoing her statement that the circle was much less threatening.

TRANSFERENCE: MISTAKING THE TRIGGER FOR THE TARGET

In the heat of the moment people often blame the trigger. “You triggered me” starts the transference. Instead of thanking the trigger for getting them in touch with their interior pain, they will transfer their accumulated rage onto the trigger. They imagine they are being abused by the trigger, abused in the way the original instigator had abused them and proceed to attack the trigger. Their previously latent emotional episode has come to the fore and (unknowingly) they try to complete it in the here and now, by punishing the trigger. Since the trigger usually doesn’t want to roll over and play dead, what typically happens is that the abused, in their inability to get a full confession and restitution from the trigger, decides to set boundaries and avoids the trigger.

Very often this is accompanied by protestations of forgiveness and understanding that the trigger must have been wounded in the past. But punishing the wrong person certainly will not resolve the old emotional issues that are starting to emerge. Alienating and punishing the trigger in the here and now will never resolve the internal pain which will lie dormant for a time and then rise again, when triggered, to contaminate a new situation in the future.

TRANSFERENCE AND PROJECTION

Transference, the transferring of characteristics of a former antagonist onto someone else currently in your life, and *projection*, projecting of the characteristics you don't like about yourself onto someone else, are raised to new heights during emotional growth work. Every teacher or instructor in the field of deep emotional work will tell you the same.

Believe me, this is a situation I personally know very well. As a tall male, one who stands up in front of a class, much like the teacher, priest, or father from the person's abusive past – just by my appearance alone I have often been the trigger, the lightning rod. If I actually had all of the dozens of awful characteristics I have been accused of over the years, I would be an ogre of the caliber of Hitler, Bluebeard and Thomas Torquemada!

Fortunately there were usually enough other instructors and fellow students around to be able to convince the student that it was not Richard, it was their internal 'stuff' coming up so that most of those who were triggered elected to hang in there and work on their internal issues until they were no longer reflected onto me or onto others around them. So I am used to it, but it is nice when the student has worked through their 'stuff' comes to me and exclaims how different I seem to them now, not at all threatening anymore.

I arrived at a SHEN Workshop as my assistants were directing the students in assembling the special cradles we use when giving a SHEN session. Contrary to the printed instructions, some of the new students were trying to force the cradle legs into their sockets in a way that would damage them. I asked them to stop and explained the proper way. All but one began inserting them the correct way. This student went back and again immediately began jamming the legs in the wrong way but with more force than before. I stopped him and re-explained, more carefully this time, and again he went back and did it improperly, but with an even more determined look on his face.

Again I stopped him, but this time I know I spoke sharply (which I regret) and he went off in a huff, indignant.

Now he was angry at me for speaking harshly – I had set myself up as his antagonist. From that point on he resisted every instruction I gave him, from that point on he became more and more obstinate and alienated from me and from the other Workshop participants.

I am certainly not proud of losing my cool and speaking sharply to him, nor am I excusing myself for doing so, He did, however, lose a valuable opportunity to learn where his obstinacy came from and an equally valuable chance to rid himself of it.

SUMMATION, PART ONE

THE PAST ISN'T BURIED IN THE PAST – IT'S ALIVE AND KICKING JUST BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE PRESENT

**We are like vessels containing multiple 'states of being.'
These states of being swirl and jumble well below the surface of our active
awareness until some new life-event triggers one or another to coalesce and
rise to the surface and imprint the current experience.**

We carry the unfinished past within us, not just as thoughts, or memories of emotional episodes, but as multiple uncompleted emotional episodes, any one of which can blossom forth and rise to the surface when triggered by the similarities between people, objects, and situations in our past with people, objects, and situations in the present. The reactivated emotions of these unfinished experiential states combine with our reactions to the current situation creating responses to life that are muddled at best, and damaging at the worst.

The past takes precedence because the pent-up emotions from the past are fully formed while the emotions linked with the present are not fully formed, and, because we do not realize that emotions from the past are emerging. Thus the emotions and behaviors linked with the re-emerging episode control our responses to the situations and people in present time. Only when the emotions associated with the past have been fully spent (discharged) can we appropriately respond to current, present time reality.

LIFE SCRIPTS

Life-scripts (determinations about how our lives will always be) were written during a heavily charged, usually painful, emotional episode. All life-scripts override rational (neutral, reasoned, objective) thought about current reality. *We expect life to treat us in a certain way and we respond to our expectations, not to life as it actually unfolds.* Life-scripts remain in force until we complete the emotional pain that we were experiencing when we wrote them.

BEHAVIOR – ECHOES OF THE PAST

All of our 'behaviors,' 'patterns,' and 'learned responses,' that we apply in our daily lives were developed in one or more old emotional episode. Only when we complete the emotional episode are we freed to respond cleanly and spontaneously to the new situation that confronts us; only then will our behavior change, unbidden.

How do we know when we have completed the old episodes? Certainly not when we tell our friends that we understand why we are the way we are – and don't change. True change occurs only when our patterns, behaviors and approach to life change, change that is noted and commented on by our friends and colleagues.

PART TWO
THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE EMOTIONS

By most accounts Reason and Emotion are antagonists.

WHICH EXPERIENCES ARE EMOTIONS, WHICH ARE NOT?

Emotions are experiential states, felt or feeling states that pervade the body. They are not products of the brain and they do not appear to be controlled by the brain nor, as some suggest, are they derivatives of bodily motion.

Feelings (emotions, physical sensations, and biological impulses) are often confused especially since more than one can rise at the same time.

I differentiate them like this:

1. Physical sensations, such as the feeling of silk to our hands, the pain of bumping your head on an opened cupboard door, are not emotions, even though they may trigger an emotion into existence. *The pain of my bumped head may bring about anger at the person who left the cupboard door open – or the feeling of stupidity, if I am the one who left it open, but the physical sensation is clearly separate from the emotion.*

2. Biological urges, such as appetite, thirst, and sexual desire are not of themselves emotions, though they too may rise with the rising of an associated emotion. *Thirst, when occurring while lost in the desert, for example, may well evoke the feeling of fear.*

Biological impulses are reactions (biochemical reactions) to biological stimuli. The biological impulse of appetite follows the release of biochemical secretions in the gut.

3. Emotions are not bodily feelings even though they pervade the body, they are *psychic* feelings. Emotions are those feeling states for which no biological source exists: *these are love, anger, fear, shame, confidence, and disgust, to name a few.*

Emotions may impel us to take an action such as clenching our jaws or running from a fire, but the action is not the emotion, as some authorities suggest.

Emotions are the major compelling factors in our lives; emotions cause us to undertake actions, even before our brains have fully recognized the event that is occurring. Emotions, physical sensations, and biological urges are all, or can be, motivators. *Very often the motivations they engender are at cross purposes, which often leads to confusion between them.*

THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION OF EMOTION

The expression of emotion is different from the experience of emotion. *Experience* of the emotion is what one feels inside the torso, and *expression* of the emotion is what one does as a result of that experience. *Experience involves inward sensation; expression involves outward action.*⁴

Expression of emotion

- (1) involves motion,
- (2) occurs in the periphery of the body, and
- (3) produces a physical sensation rather than an emotional feeling.

The sensation of moving one's hand is clearly different from the feeling of sadness, anger, fear or any other emotion. Expression of emotion includes subtle actions such as shoulder shrugs, mouth movements, hand clenches, foot and leg jerks and eye blinks, in addition to the more dramatic screaming, kicking and hitting.

Experience of emotion involves

- (1) feeling states
- (2) which cluster in four specific regions
- (3) that are central to the torso, but
- (4) do not involve bodily motion.

There are distinctively different emotions associated with these regions.

- (1) love, sadness and compassion are experienced in the region of the heart,
- (2) anger and most fear is at the solar plexus, or upper epigastric region,
- (3) confidence, guilt, and shame are at the region between the navel and pubic bone,
- (4) fear of imminent physical danger and mortal terror arise at the perineum.

Of the four groupings, only the third group is inwardly focused, i.e. emotions which are about ourselves. All the other emotions are outwardly focused, either on other persons or on situations outside us.

⁴ A number of learned writers persist in saying that the emotion is the action and trivializing the "associated feeling state" as being an insignificant consequence of the physical action. It should be clear that I entirely disagree with this position.

GENDER AND EMOTION

We often hear statements such as, “Men are rational, and women are emotional.” We could just as well say, “Men are inhibited while women are free.” We are also led to believe that certain emotions are natural for men, others for women. This is a product of training, not of nature; all men and all women have the ability to feel any and all emotions, once their emotionally charged past is resolved. *Women’s and men’s physical bodies may be different but the emotions in their souls are the same.*

DOES EVERYONE FEEL EMOTIONS IN THE SAME WAY?

We cannot be sure if every person feels the emotion of love in exactly the same way, but the way people describe love indicates that it probably feels the same way to all. The same can be said about the other emotions.

Some people are unable to feel certain emotions, usually because they have suffered some great emotional pain in the past and emotionally shut down. A great grief may pain the heart so much that it closes and can no longer feel sadness or love, only pain. Proper treatment can reverse this condition, allowing the person to feel emotion again.

A few people report that they do feel emotions at all (this syndrome is known as alexithemia.) Unlike blindness, which is a physiological condition, alexithemia is treatable. I have personally treated clients presenting with this unfortunate condition with complete success.

CATEGORIES, QUALITIES & CHARACTERISTICS

Some define emotions as being good or bad or as ‘positive’ or ‘negative.’ This is incorrect; I do not believe any emotion can be consistently ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ ‘Positive’ and ‘negative’ are equally unsustainable judgments in ranking the emotions.

Can you truly say that anger is always bad? *Think about the mother who sees her child being suddenly attacked and hurt by a much older bullying child.* Would you be willing to judge the mother’s anger that impels her to go after her child’s attacker as being ‘bad’? Perhaps, but in the heat of the moment, isn’t the flair of anger normal? Is love always good? Not when it leads you into a terrible relationship. *Good and bad, positive and negative are judgments, and are not useful.*

EMOTIONS: TENACIOUS OR FLEETING

Certain emotions are difficult to hold on to, others are difficult to let go of. No matter how hard we try to shake them off, painful emotions that we don’t want seem to stubbornly resist. At the same time it is difficult to keep the pleasurable emotions we would like to have with us all the time.

Emotions that won’t let go	Emotions that we can’t keep
Fear	Joy
Grief	Happiness
Shame	Love

DESCRIBING HOW EMOTIONS FEEL

Some emotions are pleasant and feel good, but some are decidedly painful. Does the emotion impel us to action, or to inaction? Is the emotion invigorating, does it make us ‘light up’, or does it shut us down? Certain emotions are expansive, causing us to move outward into life, while others are contractive, causing us to pull back from the world. *Contractive emotions actually contract the region of the physical body in which they are felt; expansive emotions do not affect the body in this way.*

COMMON QUALITIES OF EMOTION

A number of qualities of emotion are held in common.

Pleasant	Painful	Expansive	Contractive	Invigorating	Stultifying
Joy	Fear	Joy	Sadness	Joy	Abandonment
Happiness	Grief	Love	Shame	Anger	Grief
Contentment	Betrayal	Rage	Betrayal	Love	Betrayal
Confidence	Shame	Confidence	Loneliness	Elation	Shame
Worthiness	Loneliness	Elation	Fear	Accomplishment	Loneliness

QUALITIES OF INDIVIDUAL EMOTIONS

Despite the many features in common, each emotion is unique in that it feels distinctively different from any and all other emotions. The emotion of love feels different from fear, for example. Even within an emotion, such as love, there are differences between subsets of the emotion. Love of mother is not quite the same as love of father; love of a brother or sister is not the same as love of a grandparent.

EMOTIONAL PAIN AND EMOTIONAL REACTION

As was described earlier, the emotions of fear, grief, and shame share the quality of being painful. The body reacts by contracting around the emotional pain site and traps the emotion but the brain cannot contract to suppress the painful emotion because emotion is not in the brain. Therefore, the brain acts automatically to avoid the pain by jumping to an emotion that literally does not feel as bad. The emotion we most often jump to is anger. *This is not a conscious or willful choice; it is an emotional reaction to an emotion.*

DOES CHOOSING TO FEEL AN EMOTION CREATE THE EMOTION?

As noted in the chart above, the emotion fear is normally painful but it can be invigorating as well. Many people find under controlled conditions fear can be stimulating and seek out experiences that place them on the edge of fear. Skiing the slopes, riding the thrill rides, driving a race car 150 miles an hour around a closed track all create an adrenalin rush plus an emotional buzz, or thrill of excitement.

Many years ago I had a colleague who liked to ski. I had not skied for many years and we decided it was time I did so we scheduled a trip to Colorado to reintroduce me to the slopes. On the flight to the mountains, he leaned over to me and in an embarrassed tone asked, *“Do you know why I like to ski down the steep slopes?”* I shook my head and he went on, *“When I ski down the steep ones I feel fear — and when I feel fear, then I feel alive!”*

When we are in control we may welcome the rush but when fear is unexpected and comes as a real threat, we react against the fear as we react as we often do against any painful emotion; we avoid it by activating another emotion, anger.

It is important to recognize that the decision my colleague made neither initiated nor produced the emotion; it merely set the stage for the emotion to rise when the external stimulus occurred.

FEELING SEVERAL EMOTIONS AT ONCE

While it is possible to feel more than one emotion at a time, and we frequently do, we are not usually aware of it. Have we not heard expressions such as, *“I love you so much I can’t be angry at you and I am so angry at you I can’t feel love.”* The result is that each emotion blocks the other and we end up feeling neither, only pain. *When we feel too many emotions at once we are thrown into the emotional state where each emotion locks the other down and we can experience neither.*

INTERPLAY OF THE EMOTIONS

What follows are descriptions of how the emotions interrelate with each other. These fundamental principles of emotion apply to all and are continually at work underneath our inhibitions and the choices we make about experiencing emotion.

The emotions rarely work in isolation; they interact with each other. While they can and do rise and fall together, more often one will rise and then trigger another into prominence as the first falls away. This in turn can lead to another rising and falling. Everyone is aware that the emotion we are presently experiencing can be blotted out by the rising of new emotion, but why does this happen? Does one take precedence over another? If so, what is the order of precedence? Is there some hierarchy or ranking to the emotions?

There is a distinct ordering in the emergence of the primary emotions,⁵ in emotionally disturbing events, and in traumatic and post-traumatic situations.

THE ROOTS OF ANGER

Anger makes you forget the painful emotion being avoided. And anger is stimulating but the three main painful contractive emotions of grief, fear, and shame are anything but stimulating. They are deadening and drain us of both our physical and emotional energy. According to Aristotle, "*Anger is a burning desire to pay back pain.*"



GRIEF TURNING INTO ANGER: Imagine a lazy afternoon; it is warm; the kids are outside playing and sometime or other little Johnny wanders off, unnoticed by Mom. The afternoon wears on and as the day starts to cool, Mom notices that Johnny is not around and goes looking for him. He is nowhere to be found; Mom gets worried. Dad comes home from work and both, now frowning and with tight hearts, search in an ever widening circle — *but no Johnny*.

Dusk approaches, everyone is worried, the neighbors are polled, and Dad calls the police to learn if they have a missing child. Mom and Dad are fighting the tears, afraid of their own worst thoughts, when Johnny turns up unconcerned dragging his teddy bear and announces that he was off somewhere he had been told not to go.

So, do Mom and Dad sweep him up into their arms and profess how much they love him??? No, more likely one or the other grabs Johnny up, shakes him angrily, berating him for not being where he was supposed to be.

⁵ The basic primary emotions are fear, love, shame, grief, worthiness, abandonment and terror. Secondary emotions such as resentment, disgust, reverence, pride and humility are derivatives of, or combinations of, the primary emotions.

FEAR TURNING INTO ANGER: Just try coming up behind a friend and poking a finger in his or her side, or just saying 'boo' – to frighten them and watch how fast your friend turns, sees that it is you, and angrily lashes out at you, "You scared me!"

SHAME TURNING INTO ANGER: Accuse someone of doing something that makes them feel ashamed – or would make them feel ashamed if they had actually done the deed you are accusing them of – and watch how quickly they deny it and turn the accusing finger onto someone else, often the one who pointed out their presumed fault.

Once, when I was slowing down at the toll booth on the Golden Gate Bridge, I was bumped from behind by a driver who failed to notice I was stopping. As I got out to see if either car was damaged, I heard the other driver berating her little girl for nearly causing an accident. *"Look what you made me do."* When I got to the side of the car I saw that the little girl had tumbled off the seat – *because her mother had failed to strap her little girl into a safety harness.* The mother was embarrassed and ashamed. Rather than feel her shame she converted it into anger and blamed her daughter who, understandably, looked totally bewildered.

Anger is the emotion of avoidance.

Anger, then, becomes the cap over painful emotions, and anger is the one we most have to deal with when going through our own emotional clearing and Healing anger is not truly finished and cleared until the originating grief, fear, or shame has emerged, is felt, identified and fully discharged. Then the therapeutic course changes and the SHEN practitioner re-focuses his or her efforts to assist the emotion under the anger to emerge, be experienced and finally, to dissipate.

AUTOMATIC (LEARNED) REPRESSION OF ANGER

On the other hand, because of being punished severely when we have been angry, many of us have developed an instinctual suppression of anger; when we start to feel angry, we may clamp a lid on our anger, or at least we try to:



Thus we have fear, grief or shame pushing anger to the surface where it is met by automatic suppression pushing it down. This produces a new emotion – frustration.



Frustration (hidden anger) leads to passive-aggressive and other harmful behaviors, none of which can effectively lower the level of anger. Over time, the frustration becomes physical, eventually causing a partial shutdown of physical and mental functioning. *Frustration, when it continues for a long time, becomes depression.*

THE ADDICTION TO ANGER

So why is anger so hard to deal with, and why is it so hard to get out of it when we are in it? Anger is a pivotal emotion. It is an emotion that shifts our direction from an inward orientation to an outward one. Unfortunately, anger is invigorating. Anger stimulates the heart, it increases blood flow, it raises body temperature, and *it may provide us with the only excitement we have had in a long time.* Anger can become addictive and this may be a real problem in getting a person through the mass of anger they hold to the original emotion underneath the anger.

Aristotle addresses the addicting influence of anger in his *Rhetoric* where he states, *"...accompanying every outburst of anger is a certain pleasure derived from the hope of revenge. ... The poet spoke correctly when he said that, "Anger – 'Much sweeter than dripping honey, swells in men's hearts'."*

We are reluctant to admit – especially to those who would counsel us – that we like to get angry because it energizes us! Not only that, we get to blame and as long as we can blame we don't have to accept our responsibility for initiating the event. But blaming the target, especially after setting the target up to be the target gets us nowhere and never resolves our issues.

This is why I am strongly against anger raising therapies – they are addictive. Not only is the anger invigorating, the person gets praised for getting into their anger!

ANGER – A POOR MEANS OF RIGHTING WRONGS

Historically anger was considered to be the most disruptive of emotions. The Roman philosopher Seneca wrote some of the most cogent comments on anger in *"De Ira."* In response to the question, *"Is anger natural?"* he replies, *"Man was begotten for mutual assistance, anger for mutual destruction."* and concludes that it is not natural. Later, commenting on the question, *"Can anger be useful or be controlled"* he concludes that once let loose, it cannot be controlled by reason, since reason has been contaminated by the emotion.

Personally I have found that every action I have taken when ruled by anger has been divisive, damaging, irretrievable, and – in the long run – extremely unsatisfactory.

PSEUDO-EMPOWERMENT & TRUE EMPOWERMENT

Some disciplines teach that the Solar Plexus (site of anger and fear) is the *'Power Center'* and urge you to develop it. I disagree; I believe the Solar Plexus is where we operate when we do **not** have power. Both anger and fear throw us off balance. Only when you are in your Kath – the site of the personally oriented emotions, the foundation emotions of confidence, adequacy, sufficiency, and the feeling of worthiness, just below the navel – can you truly *'be in your Power.'*

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF ANGER

The residue of painful emotions from early life-events congregate into a tangled mass of emotional pain held deep inside, waiting to activate at the nearest sign of a real or imagined emotionally charged event that feels similar. Any new painful event instantly triggers the internal pain and reactivates it. Since the pain being evoked is always considered by society (and usually by ourselves) to be inappropriate and harmful, we may try to suppress it mentally. All the while our bodies are reacting to the pain by contracting. The contraction traps the pain inside, locking it, making it worse.

In SHEN we teach our practitioners that the only way you can break the cycle of anger is to work to resolve the pain that is underneath the anger. We work to eliminate the emotional pain underneath the anger knowing that if we do, the cycle will be broken and the anger will leave; but if we focus on the anger, it will not heal.

COMPASSION AND EMPATHY

Compassion, like anger, is a motivating emotion. It compels us to take action to right wrongs. I suspect that Seneca, with his concerns for humanity, would consider compassion to be the antidote – at least the alternative – for anger’s destructiveness.

While compassion is most often thought of as a statement of how we should be, it is first and foremost, an emotion. The emotion compassion springs not from love as is often been suggested, but from empathy, which is the ability to feel another person’s emotion(s) in particular the ability to feel the painful emotions. Feeling another person’s love, for example, would not inspire compassion but feeling of another person’s grief or despair would.

The ability to feel another’s emotions rests on the ability to feel your own internal emotions and second, being able to sense (feel, not by observing gestures or facial movements) emotions originating outside in others. How this can occur will be discussed in another section.

SUMMATION, PART TWO

1. The emotions are distinct from physical and biological sensations and, as responses to normal states of life are available to all when culturally and parentally fostered inhibitions are resolved.
2. Despite some commonalities, the emotions are unique, each varying from the next, unique in their feeling states, unique in the ways they affect us. Their effects on the brain and upon the body are not mysteries, they can be understood when their characteristics are understood.
3. Emotions give rise to new emotions without mental intent.
4. It is our emotions, not our thoughts that empower or disempower us.

Life without emotion would be living without life.

PART THREE

THOUGHT AND THE EMOTIONS

In his *2nd Meditation* René Descartes⁶ theorized, “*I am thinking, therefore I exist*”
To which I would add: “*And I feel, therefore I am alive.*”

Computers think, compare, reason, sense, and are aware of sensing, but are not alive. Computers do not feel. But we feel as well as think, and it is our emotions that make us feel alive – not our thoughts. If it were not for our emotions our lives would be nothing but endless strings of mental actions, devoid of feeling, empty of life.

EMOTIONS ARE EXPERIENTIAL STATES, NOT MENTAL STATES⁷

Unlike thoughts, which we are aware of only in our heads, emotions are experiential states or ‘felt states’ that envelope portions of or sometimes our entire bodies. However, they are not biological feeling states, such as the biophysical feeling state of a bruised knee, or the biochemical feeling state of hunger. Nor are emotions sensations, such as the sensation of cold on the skin, or of light upon the retina. Emotional feeling states are experiential states of another order entirely. Emotions are *states of being*, states that we may feel as sharply defined knots of emotion, states that can overwhelm us, penetrating our entire bodies with their essence, leaving us weak with their intensity. This is not to say that emotions and sensations – emotions and biological feeling states – cannot be experienced at the same time; often they are. *The point is that it is not necessary to have a physical sensation in order to have an emotion; they are mutually exclusive experiences.*

“I think I am losing my mind.”

Our minds (brains) are so enmeshed with emotion that we have come to believe that the brain is in control of our emotions. We believe that the brain is responsible when we feel an emotion, so if we feel an emotion we don’t think is appropriate, we may doubt our sanity.

Years ago I gave a SHEN session to a man who was scheduled for surgery to correct a swollen cartilage in his lower spine that was causing him great pain. The session was offered to reduce his pain as much as possible. However, his pain was deep in the region of the body where the emotions relating to self-worth (shame, worthiness, confidence, etc.) originate. During the session he drifted into a deep, almost trance-like state and the pain abated considerably.

When he roused from the deep state, he exclaimed, “*I must be losing my mind, I had two memories and I wasn’t even thinking about those things.*” Both were memories heavily charged with emotion. One was of proposing to his wife, the other was of a fight he had had with his father; both challenged his confidence, both challenged his basic feelings of self-worth. *Like most of us who believe that our brains control what we think, he believed his brain was failing, that it was losing control, that he was losing his sanity.*

⁶ ‘*I think, therefore I am*’ (*cogito ergo sum*). René Descartes (1596-1650)

⁷ There is considerable debate in academia as to the nature of ‘mind’ and its relationship to the brain and to consciousness. However, in this paper I use ‘mind’ and ‘brain’ interchangeably as they are commonly used, even by academics.

REDEFINING RATIONAL (OBJECTIVE) THOUGHT

We are taught to believe that our brains control our emotions, but they do not, it is the other way around – *our emotions control our thoughts.*

In theory rational thought – objective thought – is devoid of emotional content. But is this ever possible? The degree to which emotions control our thoughts is clearly shown when we examine the process of thinking. At one time or another, most of us have had the experience of thinking a series of thoughts that seemed completely rational given the facts of the situation and then having the entire chain of ‘rational’ thought crumble as our emotion changed. The facts had not changed, but our ‘rational thought’ had. *Thought unaffected by emotion is not possible.*

A person in the grip of anger often undertakes actions that seem totally logical at the time only to find that they cannot support that rationality when they are in a different emotional state. *"I don't know what got into me!"* The answer to this is, of course, “An emotion.” Or a person will take actions while in a state of fear that they cannot understand, or explain as being rational, when they are no longer afraid.

Two people, one in a state of love, the other angry, walking together will perceive the identical event but put entirely different meanings to it; when their emotional states are different their conclusions and judgments will be different as well.

The fact is, ‘rational’ seems not to have as much to do with objective reality as it does with consistency. Since the basis for our thoughts always changes as our emotions change, it would be more accurate to define rationality by the prevailing emotion being experienced at the time. If we were to say, "Rational as while experiencing love" or, "Rational as when in a state of anger", we would be closer to the truth of it. To be realistic, rational thought must be defined by the emotional base upon which it rests not only its tone and its consistency.

CONFUSION – AN EMOTIONAL STATE

At first thought, confusion appears simply to be disorganized or non-rational thought. But when we are confused we do not say that our thoughts are confused. Instead, we say, "I feel confused". Confusion is a feeling state, an emotional state. But why is it disorganized? Why has the thought process become fragmented, which it does when we are feeling confusion? What prevents logic from ordering our thoughts?

I stumbled onto the true nature of confusion many years ago while doing SHEN with an older woman who was troubled with a lot of buried emotion. While working in the region between the lower part of the rib cage and the navel, I was suddenly swept with a feeling of confusion. I recall being quite startled, wondering why I felt confused because my thoughts were not vacillating. But I was still puzzled and I remained puzzled until the next time I worked with the woman. Again, as I worked in the same body region as before, the feeling of confusion swept over me, but suddenly I understood what was happening to me. I was picking up and feeling the release of a jumble of her emotions!

She later confirmed that she couldn't sort out the emotions she was feeling at the time; they were too quick and random.

Our thought patterns change when our emotions shift. Confusion is the result of rapid emotional shifts; the emotions surfacing one after another carry the thought stream in rapidly changing directions. The structure of the thought train is altered by the emotion of the moment, so much so that often a thought sequence vanishes in the middle of a sentence, leaving it to waver off in the face of the next emotion.

The person in the confused state is usually aware of an unpleasant shifting mood or emotional state. Why does this happen? Are the unpleasant emotional feelings a reaction to the disturbed thinking process? That is, do we have unpleasant feelings because we are upset at our illogical thinking? Observing the shifting facial expression and body language when an obviously confused person is speaking presents quite a different picture.

The process occurs in three distinct steps. The facial or body language shifts occur first signaling a change in emotion. This is followed by a pause, and, finally, by a statement – either spoken or just thought - from an entirely different emotional perspective. That perspective is indicative of the new emotion being experienced.

If the thoughts had changed first, we would have heard new statements before the facial expression and body language changed.

When the emotional shifts are too rapid for the person to follow, their thoughts cannot keep up, chains of thought falter and break, and confused thinking results. The person in the confused state will usually say, "I feel confused". It is rather telling that when people are in this state they do not say, "I think confused".

Confusion is the result of rapid emotional shifts that alter the brain's ability to process information consistently.

EMOTIONS AND MOTIVATION

Emotions are the motivating factors in life – nothing happens until we have an emotion. We may read about starving children in some far off country and may think that something needs to be done, or that it concerns us that children have to live like that, but we do nothing until we feel compassion in our hearts. Only then are we compelled enough to move, compelled enough to do something about it.

We may know that it is time to clean out the garage or that the cat needs to be fed but is only when we feel shame that we have let the garage go for so long or feel sad about the cat's hunger that we take action.

EMOTIONAL RELEASE & EMOTIONAL DISCHARGE

Releasing emotion and discharging emotion are two very different actions. Releasing the charge of an emotion releases it into action while discharging an emotion deflates the emotion and requires no externalization, or action.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE & SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

This is a large subject, one which I cannot possibly do justice to here. However, both are clearly experiential feeling states and as such will influence each other.

Personally, I think of spiritual and emotional experiences as being a joined spectrum of feeling states. We label them 'emotional' on one end of the spectrum and 'spiritual' on the other.

Somewhere in the middle is love, first as love of self and then of others, finally as love of something holy. *It seems to me that one cannot get very far on any spiritual path when hampered by uncompleted painful emotions, especially anger.*

SUMMATION, PART THREE

1. Emotion overrides reason. Our emotions control our thoughts and our thoughts control our actions.
2. Emotion remains after it is initiated in one event and affects the way we act in the next when it does not come to completion in the first.
3. We cannot turn an emotion off; it remains inside us affecting all our future actions until it is exhausted.
4. Confusion is a condition where several emotions are in action and the shifting emotional state destabilizes our thinking process.
5. The 'emotional' and the 'spiritual' are experiential states, joined together in a continuum.
6. Our emotions are the drivers that impel us to take action.
7. Because the uncompleted emotions from long 'forgotten' incidents affect us just as much as emotions generated entirely by present time situations, these old, uncompleted emotions will control our thoughts and direct our actions in the now, in ways that appear entirely irrational or overblown to others around us, who are not affected by our uncompleted emotions.

THE TWIN MYSTERIES OF EMOTION

WHERE ARE THEY? IN THE BODY OR IN THE BRAIN

When emotion has been investigated at all, it has been studied from only two orientations, the biochemical model and/or the mental model. Each of these models presumes emotion to be a subordinate and/or end process in its particular system. We have been taught to view emotion as a result rather than a cause, but when we examine it carefully, we begin to suspect that emotion is the primary controlling factor in our lives not a secondary one.

Neither view explains the true nature of emotion. Both models have serious deficiencies, not only failing to answer many of the questions they raised, but also raising new questions because of their conclusions.

Psychological profiles address the results of emotions with terms such as "poor self image" or "rigid personality" without regard to the specific emotions that produced those results. What happened to the "feeling sick with shame" or the "feeling worthless" that the person experienced in their gut? "Poor self image" and "rigid personality" are judgments, not descriptions of emotions.

HOW DO EMOTIONS UPSET OUR BODIES THE WAY THEY OFTEN DO?

The biochemist discovers that epinephrine levels rise during a state of fear and promptly decides that the body has diverted blood from the epigastric region to the extremities because we don't need to digest food right then; we need to either fly or fight. But don't the muscles that activate the diaphragm – vital for both fight and flight – need blood just as much as the extremities? Or could some other factor be involved in the shifting of blood volume? Could that factor have anything to do with mutual location, since the diaphragm region is where we feel the contractions of fear?

No one would deny the implications of the autonomic, endocrine and limbic systems in the total effects on the body during the experience of emotion, but are any of these systems the cause of emotion, or are they merely responding to an emotion?

The evidence linking the emotional underpinnings with an increasing range of bodily complaints steadily mounts at the same time that research into possible neurological and endocrine causes fails to produce anything much beyond frustration. To understand how emotions directly affect the body we need to examine the emotionally induced spasmodic contractions AKA the

Auto-Contractile Pain Reflex (ACPR), which is the subject of another essay.

NOTE: It is interesting that neither the 2,670 page *Cecil Textbook of Medicine* nor the 4,500 page *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* list the word 'emotion' in their extensive indices, despite the obvious influence our emotions have on our physical and mental health.