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Cognitive-Emotional Therapy: Emotions Regulating Cognition

1.0 Abstract

Should emotions be regulated by the mind or should the mind be regulated by emotions? Are emotions out of control or are emotions reflecting an out of control mind? Should psychological therapy focus on controlling emotions or on controlling the thoughts, imagination, perception and other cognitive activities of the brain that evoked this emotional response? How does regulating cognition change pharmaceutical therapy?

This paper uses the theory of evolution to develop an argument that there are fundamental and necessary correlations between (1) the mental activities of cognition, (2) the body's physiology and (3) the emotions of feeling good and feeling bad. Understanding these correlations reveals an emotional neural circuitry designed to regulate cognitive behavior. The nature of this emotional guidance system is developed and elaborated to encourage its incorporation into psychological and pharmaceutical therapy.

Section 2 of this paper reasons that emotions are an evolved biological system designed to give feedback on cognition. **Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6** integrate this cognitive/emotional feedback circuit into psychological and pharmaceutical therapies. **Section 7** develops the progression of emotional wisdom in guiding cognitive activities towards healthy, successful, and environmentally adaptive deductions, conclusions and decisions. And lastly, examples of cognitive-emotional therapeutic exercises are outlined in **Section 8**.

Introduction

The physical pain of a hand on a hot stove brings about a very natural response. Such pain is a signal to get the hand off the stove, which is usually a quick and automatic reflex. If the pain is ignored and the hand remains on the hot stove, the biochemical signature of the hand changes to the degree that the hand burns. If the hand is quickly taken off, maybe no medical attention is needed. If the natural response of the body is usurped in some fashion and the hand burns a little, maybe a little salve would allow the healing. But the longer the natural signals are covered up or ignored, the worse the damage and the more extensive the healing process, including skin grafts or worse. The crux of the problem is disregard for the body's signal to take the hand off the stove.

But aren't emotions also giving signals? Certain perceptions, thoughts and actions feel good. Other perceptions, thoughts and actions feel bad. This feels good; this feels bad. What is the significance of understanding emotions as an evolved biological system? What is the neurological liaison between mind, body and emotions that promotes health and well-being? How can this relationship be exploited to develop more effective psychological and pharmaceutical therapies?

Cognition, Emotions, Physiology and Neurology

There is a vast array of interconnecting neurological networks which allow communication between the different functional areas of the brain. These evolved neurological circuits support liaisons between cognitive neural networks, emotional neural networks, and the body's physiology (ref 1-1). Whereas the five sensory neural networks provide information about the external environment, the emotional neural networks provide information about the state of the brain's neurological environment itself.

There is an array of neurological networks associated with positive emotions, a second associated with negative emotions and a third that inhibits or stops and freezes action (ref 1-2). Because different combinations of arrays are activated under different circumstances and nuances, there exist a great variety of corollary possibilities between cognition, emotions, brain/body physiology and the activities associated within each function.

Neurological networks develop, grow, and even reorganize throughout life. New relationships among these networks develop as new lessons in life are experienced and learned. This attribute of neural networks is called neuroplasticity (ref 1-3). As a result of neuroplasticity, every person has the neurological capacity to change and develop new interpretations of and responses to his or her environmental stimuli.

Cognition deals with the processes of knowing, namely, perception, recognition, conceiving, and reasoning (ref 1-4). The focus of, this paper, however, is how emotions have evolved their own wisdom as to how that knowledge should be processed. Emotional neural circuits provide feedback as to how cognitive processes need to be further utilized before any internal mental deliberations have been properly concluded.

Reference:

1-1: <http://www.innerbody.com/image/nerv02.html>

1-2: http://thebrain.mcgill.ca/flash/a/a_03/a_03_p/a_03_p_que/a_03_p_que.html

1-3: <https://www.britannica.com/science/neuroplasticity>

1-4: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/cognition-thought-process>

2.0 Emotions as an Evolved Biological System

What if emotions are more than a stimulus for song, poetry and drama where poets bend and sway their audiences' emotions up and down, as a roller coaster excites and thrills for the

pleasure, or dismay of its breathless riders? What if emotions are an evolved biological system – like the muscular, skeletal, or nervous systems – and are closely related to the sensory systems?

Is it possible to think of emotions as being separate from the evolutionary process of the human species? If emotions have been run through the evolutionary mill, i.e., not separate from the evolutionary process, what would some characteristics of the resultant design be? Is it possible to use the ideas and concepts found within evolution to form logical deductions and conclusions about emotions and feelings as they pertain to biological functions?

The notion that species develop by naturally selecting attributes that are advantageous for survival is the cornerstone of the theory of evolution. If any human is to live or even thrive to maturity where offspring will continue the survival of the species, might there be an evolved link or correlation between emotions and an individual's cognitive activities and the body's physiology? The following is a discussion to put forward the types of correlations that must exist.

The Mind/Body/Emotion Correlation

If feeling good correlates with a well-balanced and physiologically-vital body then feeling good while climbing a tree to gather food or while balancing on slippery rocks in a rushing stream to fish may not be hazardous. But if feeling good were to correlate with a weakened and lethargic physiology, such challenging actions would tend to be deadly. Such a false/positive correlation between emotions and physiological vitality would be disadvantageous to survival.

How would a genetic line survive if feeling good correlated with a cognitive knowing of strength and vigor, and adeptness with an actuality of weakness and ineptitude? Such a correlation has a limited survivability when climbing trees or foraging across the savannahs in search for food or, in a modern example, when in an inebriated state, a person confidently gets behind the wheel of a car to navigate through rush hour traffic. And where is the motivation to act when there is an actuality of vitality, vigor and strength but emotionally there is a feeling of illness, lethargy and weakness? Therefore, evolutionarily speaking, feeling good correlates with vitality, vigor, and strength and feeling bad correlates with illness, lethargy, and weakness.

Imagine that such basic life behaviors as breathing or eating were so emotionally painful – or the lack thereof were so pleasurable – as to bring about suffocation, starvation and death. Such an emotional/ physiological correlation would lead to the demise of an individual and his or her genetic line. Whether this was a genetically predisposed or inherited condition, or whether there even existed a genetically developed predisposition to learn such a behavior, such a false/positive correlation between emotions and physiology would hinder personal and genetic survival. Therefore, there is a natural correlation between feeling good with healthy physiological behavior and the way the body functions.

From an evolutionary perspective, feeling good means a positive correlation between the neural networks that activate (1) a cognitive awareness of strength, vigor, and well-being, (2) an actualization of a physiology of strength, vigor and well-being, and (3) the neural networks associated the emotions of pleasure. Biochemistry, both at the molecular level and the neural network level, must sustain the correlations between (1) the cognitive knowing of, (2) the feeling of, and (3) actualization of strength, vigor and well-being. Simply put, if these correlations did not exist in this way a person would have a low probability of survival.

Cognitive Imagination

How would a genetic line survive (1) if the body's need for water did not stimulate the mind's imagery of obtaining water or (2) if this imagery of obtaining water correlated with negative emotions? If the body needs water, this must correlate with the mental act of imagining water and correlate with positive emotions. That is, there is a correlation between imagining the necessities of life and positive emotions. If, instead, there was a correlation such that the imagery of food, water, and shelter brought about negative emotions, then these basics of life would be avoided, leading to an evolutionary dead end. So, for the survival of the species, there is an evolved correlation between the evolved neural networks of the cognitive brain of imagination and the neural networks of the emotional system such that it feels good when the individual's imagination dwells upon the food, water, and shelter, which is wanted and desired by the body in order to survive. A person dwelling upon that which is wanted triggers the emotionally positive neural network that activates an emotionally positive response.

How would a genetic line survive if the idea of *not* obtaining food, water, and shelter correlated with feeling good? Or, how would a person (and his or her genetic lineage) survive if cognitive imagery dwelt upon that which is not wanted and this mental activity did not correlate with negative emotions? A person dwelling upon that, which is not wanted, triggers the emotionally negative neural network that activates an emotionally negative response.

A vast array of the mental activities of cognition and imagination pertain to human existence. Specific correlations between these mental activities and emotions are essential to the survival of the species. Just as there is a correlation between positive emotions and biologically necessary actions, there is also a correlation between the mind's conscious mental activities, the brain's biochemical neural network and the perception of positive emotions when dwelling upon that which is wanted. There must have been an evolutionary development that resulted in these correlations or we wouldn't have survived as a species.

Conclusions

When factoring in evolution, emotions become an integral part of the brain's neural network for maintaining the body's health, strength and vigor. Emotions bring another attribute of awareness to a person's consciousness as to the nature of his or her cognitive and physical activities. For simplicity, emotions can be divided into two areas of awareness: those

emotions that feel good and those emotions that feel bad. Feeling good or feeling bad has biological health significance. How? Because of these evolved mind/body/emotion correlations, cognitively activating an emotional positive neural network also triggers a corollary activation of the physiological neural networks pertaining to strength, vigor, adeptness, and well-being. Cognitively activating the emotional negative neural network is a warning signal that the continuation of such cognitive and physical activities may have a negative impact on the health and genetic survival of the individual.

The simple arguments above are constructed to illustrate how evolution brings about specific relationships between the mind, body, and emotions. Many more complex scenarios can be developed for the variety of relationships people have with their physical and social environment. Also, the element of time and the relativity of strength and vigor are not discussed but can be easily factored in for added layers of complexity.

3.0 Mental “Illness” Or Mental “Injury”

The physical pain of a hand on a hot stove brings about a very natural response. The pain is a signal to “get the hand off” and usually results in a quick and automatic reflex. If the pain is ignored, usurped, or sedated and the hand remains on the hot stove, the chemistry of the skin would develop the biochemical abnormal signature of a burnt hand. If the hand is quickly taken off, there’s a chance that no medical attention will be needed and the body will heal itself. If the natural response of the body is usurped and overpowered in some fashion and the hand burns a little, maybe a little salve would aid the healing process. But the longer the natural signals are ignored or unperceived, the greater the damage and the more extensive the healing process; skin grafts might be required – or worse – physical healing might not be possible at all. The crux of the problem is the unresponsiveness to, or ignorance of, the body’s signals to get the hand off the hot stove. It would be absurd to pharmaceutically ‘normalize’ the hand’s biochemical signature without removing the hand from the hot stove.

From the perspective of an emotional guidance system, the biology of a biochemical “abnormality” associated with emotional pain is analogous to the biochemical “abnormality” associated with the hand’s physical pain on a hot stove. Putting the hand on the hot stove brings about the very natural response of quickly removing the hand from the damaging heat. Similarly, the emotional pain within the activated emotional negative neural circuit is a feedback signal to get the mind off a potentially damaging mental stream of consciousness. Within a healthy individual, this is a natural, quick response, which has developed into an automatic behavior. However, the more (1) the emotional pain is suppressed or usurped because of some traumatic experience or (2) it is biochemically blocked or sedated or (3) it is blocked by neurological damage due to heredity, illness, or disease, or (4) it is blocked for any other reason such that the individual’s thoughts and the activities of his or her mind remain on the ‘hot stove’, the more the associated biochemical signature will differ from that of a ‘normal’ healthy person.

Where well-being and a natural emotional responsiveness exist, no medical attention is needed. But if the mind ‘burns’ a little, maybe some simple medication accompanied by supportive psychotherapy would promote healing and a return to a naturally functioning neural network of a healthy cognitive/emotional relationship. However, in acute cases where such a natural emotional response, awareness, or behavior is lacking, and where healing is not occurring, supportive medication and hospitalization may need to be more invasive. Extensive rehabilitation therapy will be needed to take advantage of the brain’s neuroplasticity abilities to create a new neurology of healthy mental responsiveness to its emotional guidance system. The crux of the problem for those suffering to this degree is their disregard or ignorance of, or in some cases, physiological damage to, a wondrous and highly evolved emotional and cognitive neural circuit.

One observation within people with mental illness is a biochemical abnormality from the “mentally healthy.” But there is, by evolutionary design, a biochemical anomaly when a person’s mental activities are mentally unhealthy and are dwelling upon unwanted, unhealthful, or negative aspects of life. When a “hand” remains on the hot stove, he or she is activating a completely different neurological network. There should be a different biochemical signature. The fallacy is in the attempt to pharmaceutically “normalize” a patient’s mental and emotional state without removing that person’s “mind” from the hot stove and reestablishing “normal” neural network activities between cognition and emotions.

Responding to a neurological emotional guidance network

There is great power within the activation of the emotional negative neural network and the conception of an emotional recognition of that which is not wanted nor desired. But this power is only actuated if the opposite end – the positive, pleasurable end of the spectrum can be recognized, conceived, and then reasoned.

People who are healthy, happy and successful in life have an ability to pivot off the emotionally negative aspect of a scenario and into a more emotionally positive *re-framed* scenario. They have learned and developed the necessary skills that are essential in our society to manage their focus of attention in response to their own emotional feedback: a kind of ‘cognitive dexterity’. This dexterity results in only a temporary activation of the emotionally negative neural network. They have the motivation, drive and, most importantly, the proficiency to create a scenario of that which is wanted and desired – which activates the emotional positive neural network.

The development of the extreme biochemical signature of mental illness that requires psychiatric drugs is the result of a chasm that developed between the cognitive activities within the brain and the individual’s responsiveness to the emotional guidance system. Severe mental “injury” or “illness” that may never fully heal may result from neurological damage, disease, drug abuse, prolonged and extensive use of medications, trauma, birth defect, or some other inherited condition. On the other hand, some very treatable conditions may have developed through life from a person’s inability to process the indoctrinating effects of life’s significant characters – i.e., as parents, religious figures, teachers, peer

groups – or from the constant barrage of ‘information’ in this new age of technical wizardry. Less dramatically, such conditions may be caused by the many interactions life presents while growing up – where others’ emotional guidance systems have usurped, instead of enhanced, a person’s natural emotional development.

4.0 Mental Rehabilitation

In the discipline of psychotherapy, there is a need for teaching emotional guidance, rather than teaching emotional regulation. Emotional guidance is where negative emotions and their associative cognitive activities are used as a launching pad to reach for less negative and more positive and productive cognitive activities that will eventually result in positive emotions.

Such a discipline would help individuals use the brain’s neuroplasticity capacities to develop new and positive habits of thought, perception, and imagination. Such a discipline would help a person develop internal powers of choice and creativity to move the mind towards activities that result in harmonious emotional responses. Besides the cognitive activities of recognition, conception, reason and imagination, there are the perceptual activities of the senses – touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting – as well as the physical activities a person may engage in. All can involve emotional aspects to be heralded and empowered into well-being.

There is a need for a discipline within psychotherapy that fortifies a patient’s desire to stay on the road toward a natural state of health and well-being: a discipline where a patient’s own emotional guidance system is acknowledged, validated and reinforced. This implies empowering a patient with the ability to reach for and chose a thought that feels better. These thoughts may simply go from painful to less painful, but eventually they will go from feeling good to feeling even better. The key for success is a caregiver who will develop a patient’s cognitive ability to find a thought that feels better. A person may never reach a state of mental health that is without therapy or medications, but just demonstrating with them that they have the ability and the power to feel better creates hope. Hope can make all the difference between staying with or leaving a program. It can make the difference between staying or leaving life itself.

Emotional Guidance

Within the psychology of “emotional guidance,” the naturally evolved response to negative emotions is for a person’s consciousness to use the energy from this negative cognitive/emotional state to pivot the mind’s activities onto activities that bring positive emotions. If emotions are skewing negative, it is the person’s signal **to stop** and take steps towards a new perspective and to refocus the mind and its activities onto a reframed view of the subject. If these efforts fail, then refocusing consciousness onto something entirely different may be the best action to bring a more positive emotional response. As people grow from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, they learn more complicated and sophisticated

facets of (1) recognizing and acknowledging the presence of negative emotions, (2) stopping the spiral down the emotional staircase earlier and earlier in the decline, or as in the case of mania, stopping the upward spiral, (3) reframing and refocusing the consciousness into a less negative emotional perspective, and (4) repeating this reframing and refocusing into better feeling emotions until they are back at an emotionally positive, healthy and harmonious vantage point.

Maintaining a healthy and joyful lifestyle requires retention of this ability to move up or down the spiral staircase with ease and fluidity, just as emotions flow up and down with the changing consciousness of watching a movie or reading a book. These issues involved within mental illness, addictions, and violence develop when this more complicated and creative aspect of a healthy cognition are absent, usurped, driven, or even manipulated out of a person's repertoire of survival skills. The resulting loss of choice to get on or off the emotional roller coaster can leave an individual broken and in need of professional help.

Defining Mental Health and Well-being

If a person's emotions are working as evolution directed and are giving feedback on his or her cognitive activities, then a problem is not an "emotional disorder" it is a "cognitive disorder." A true emotional disorder would be akin to a sight disorder such as near sightedness, far sightedness, or even color blindness. A distinction must be made between a properly working emotional system – one which gives accurate feedback on one's mental activities – and an emotional system with a disorder which provides inaccurate emotional feedback.

Within the context of emotional guidance, a person is mentally healthy when he or she can naturally (i.e., without alcohol, drugs or medications), respond to emotional guidance and move up or down the emotional spiral staircase as a choice. Mental health means a person has the aptitude, skills and capacity to return back into the pleasures and harmonies of life from event to event throughout life. Mental health is being capable to do the work that is necessary to move within the emotional spiral staircase: from a mental/emotional negative state into (and to act from) a mental/emotional positive state of existence.

5.0 Psychological Therapy

Should emotions be regulated by the mind or should the mind be regulated by emotions? Are emotions out of control or are emotions reflecting an out of control mind? Should psychological therapy focus on controlling emotions or on controlling thoughts, imagination, perception and other cognitive activities of the brain? Evolution has established a cognitive/emotional correlation such that emotions should guide cognition and physical behavior towards their emotionally positive characteristics.

Within emotional guidance is the cognitive construct of want and desire: more precisely, the pleasure one feels when perceiving and cogitating upon obtaining and having that which is

wanted and desired. The foundation of a psychotherapy rehabilitation that asks, “What do you want?” reaches through to the core of our evolved DNA that creates pain when hungry and pleasure with fulfillment. The beginning of healing starts with reaffirming and strengthening the neural networks of an individual’s 1) objects of desire and wanting, 2) the emotional feeling of pleasure, and 3) their actualization into reality.

“What do you want?” is a question that brings about an emotionally negative response if the patient is dwelling within the cognitive constructs of the ‘not wanted’ or ‘lack of’ that which is actually desired. Our evolutionary reflexes are to move consciousness into the presence of ‘that which is wanted’. The therapist’s role is to help move cognitive activity from that which is ‘not wanted’ to that which is ‘wanted’. Emotions are the guiding light regarding the success or lack of success in this change in cognitive activity.

This therapy reaffirms an evolved biological guidance system where emotions are used to evaluate cognitive behaviors. In stark contrast to ‘emotional regulation’, emotions are not being ‘regulated’ but are used to regulate cognitive behaviors. In this context, emotions are not ‘out of control’ nor is there an ‘emotional disorder’. On the contrary it is the cognitive mind that is ‘out of control’ and there is a ‘cognitive disorder’. Deviant emotional behaviors are reflections of this aberrant cognitive behavior. Emotional dysfunctions are signals to the consciousness that there is a dysfunctional aspect within the mind’s cognitive activities. It is these cognitive irregularities that need to be addressed.

It is the nature of the mind to ferret out that which is wanted from within that which is not wanted. It is the nature of the mind to acknowledge that which is not wanted from within that which is wanted. The mind has a function. Emotions have a function. Psychological and pharmaceutical therapy must honor these functions. Mental illness arises when healthy responses to the emotional system are absent and the individual does not have the mental/emotional capacity, agility, or wisdom to respond to his or her emotional guidance in a natural and healthy manner to ‘get his or her mind off of the hot stove’.

A useful definition of mental illness is the **inability** of a person to respond constructively to signals. Individuals feel or perceive emotions and normally respond to their emotional guidance system by avoiding mental activities that bring about negative emotions. Negative emotions are a driving impetus to create and imagine a new and different chemistry of cognitive activities that bring about positive emotions. If feelings are skewing negative, this is the brain’s signal to re-cogitate on this subject or to get off this subject entirely and refocus the mind and its activities onto something that brings a positive emotional response. The objective is to keep the mind and its cognitive powers of perception, recognition, conception, reasoning, and imagination, along with the body’s capacity of actualization, to be continually reaching for better, good feeling emotional responses.

The goal and practice of *psychological rehabilitation* is to utilize the brain’s power of neuroplasticity and to develop within a person mental agility to constructively respond to his or her emotional guidance system. At first, these steps may simply go from painful to less

painful, but eventually, with the development of new habits and skills of mental agility, the steps will be from feeling good to feeling even better.

6.0 Pharmaceutical Therapy

Medications can be very effective in ‘normalizing’ external behavior, but what are these chemicals doing to the cognitive-emotional neural feedback circuit? How can emotions guide cognitive behavior when emotional neurological networks are being targeted with artificially introduced chemical agents? Emotions have an evolved role in guiding cognitive behavior and decision-making. Are emotions ‘out of control’ and in need of ‘emotional regulation’ or are cognitive activities out of control and in need of regulation?

Any uses of pharmaceuticals designed to impact the emotional system also impact the emotions’ correlations with (1) the mind’s cognition and (2) the body’s physiological activities and (3) the emotions’ guiding responsibilities. Biochemical agents must harmonize with emotional design **and** augment the brain’s neuroplastic capacity for developing new constructive habits. The purpose of pharmaceutical therapy is to assist people to respond to their emotional guidance in a healthy and constructive manner.

Psychiatric Medications in Healing

There is a need for psychiatric treatment to use drugs and medications that help individuals regain their own power and responsiveness to their own emotional guidance system. These medications should also help such persons break away from a narrow and myopic world view which can spiral their consciousness out of control. There is a need for pharmaceuticals that can help create a biochemical environment where the personal powers of an individual’s consciousness can start making attempts to be more responsive to his or her emotional guidance system and augment the brain’s neuroplastic capacity. These new designs would aid individuals in their abilities to use their own mental skills and reflexes to co-function with their emotional guidance systems. These new medications would empower the consciousness to either take the mind off the negative downward spiral of consciousness or take the mind off the out-of-control upward spiral of mania. As new skills are developed and new neurological circuits are cultivated, the need for and the types of pharmaceutical assistance change and may eventually be removed entirely. But, like the hand on the hot stove, damage can be so extensive that no amount of training and development will ever succeed because entire functions of the brain may have been irreversibly programmed into destructive patterns. In such cases, there is the possibility that the mental/emotional/body chasm may be permanent, resulting in a need for permanent pharmaceutical intervention.

Masking Neurological Processes

There is a danger of medications masking destructive cognitive behaviors that normally are exposed through erratic, abnormal, and convoluted emotional feedback. If these emotional reflections of aberrant mental and physical behaviors are camouflaged with pharmaceuticals

and if irregular cognitive behavior is left unaddressed without proper psychological counseling and therapy, cognition may fester unabated and create a myopic vortex of circular mental and physical behaviors. This psychosis can break out with disastrous consequences to the patient and to others, who may become characters in a manically-conceived tragedy played out in real life.

This paper does not ignore the importance of pharmaceutical therapy, rather, it redefines its purpose within the brain's neuroplastic environment to help individuals regain a natural state of responsiveness to their emotional guidance system. As discussed earlier, a person has an evolved emotional guidance system that promotes cognitive and perceptual behavior that emotionally feels good. Negative emotions promote avoidance behaviors. Mental illness may be defined as a person's inability to constructively respond to internal emotional guidance by disengaging from emotionally negative activities and actively engaging in emotionally positive activities that are useful, healthful and life giving. Pharmaceutical therapy should be augmenting psychological therapy in redeveloping the neurological networks that reinforce evolutionary design.

New Opportunities in Medicine

The argument presented here for understanding emotions as a product of the evolutionary process opens up vast new opportunities and possibilities within the fields of psychology and pharmacology to rehabilitate the cognitive attributes of mental illness while honoring the evolutionary role of emotions. There is certainly a need to identify new medications that are appropriate for healing. Pharmaceuticals need to work with and augment the cognitive rehabilitation processes within psychotherapy and neuroplasticity. And, most importantly, the argument presented here opens up the possibility of a new hope for patients. Patients may now approach daily psychological and pharmaceutical therapies with the hope and anticipation of new possibilities within a journey of healing.

A successful return to well-being and health takes work on the part of both caregivers and patients. If pharmaceutical intervention is required to stabilize a patient's emotional and cognitive behavior, there is still a need to develop programs that reduce this pharmaceutical impact. As a patient's rehabilitation promotes the new skills and habits necessary to respond to emotional guidance in a healthy and productive manner, less invasive drug therapy is required. Any healing and return to wellness is dependent on the desire, determination and fortitude of patients to seek wellness and to develop healthy new habits and patterns of thoughts and behaviors in response to their emotional guidance. Likewise, the desire, determination and fortitude of the therapist, the psychologist, the psychiatrist and the pharmacist play their role within the patient's healing process of restructuring their cognitive and emotional neurology and return to well-being. *Well-being* means health, vigor, energy and vitality with anticipation for the future and all its uncertainty.

7.0 Cognitive-Emotional Wisdom

Cognitive-emotional wisdom means having the mental and emotional understanding and ability **to not act** from the lower steps of despair, depression, and anger. It means to have the mental tools and cognitive agility to move up the emotional spiral staircase and **to act** from the place of good feelings where clarity, health and vigor reside.

The steps to move up the emotional staircase/emotional hierarchy vary depending upon the set of emotions involved. One order of progression may be from despair, to anger, to frustration, to displeasure, to pleasure, to joy, to delight, to exhilaration, and finally, to ecstasy. A patient may not be able to go from despair to joy. That would be too great a leap. But he or she may go from despair to anger, from anger to frustration, from frustration to displeasure, from displeasure to pleasure, and from pleasure to joy over a period of time.

Cognitive-emotional wisdom means having the desire, courage, and tenacity to do the work necessary to move up the emotional staircase and to continually reach for a thought that feels better. Poetry, music, dance, the arts, and sports all have an important and profound effect because successful participation within these disciplines demands cognitive control with emotional guidance. And every step higher in the level of accomplishment demands an even greater commitment to cognitive discipline through emotional guidance.

As individuals mature into adulthood, they continually develop new skills to use their emotional guidance system to harmonize the activities of their minds and bodies with the external world and to adapt a prehistorically evolved emotional guidance system with the demands, complexity, and nuances of our modern society. Cognitive-emotional wisdom also means having a broad enough perspective on ‘what feels good is good’ to understand that ‘what feels good’ in the immediate present may have a completely different emotional response in the very near future. Jumping off a cliff may feel great, but the landing leaves much to be desired.

The mind and body exist within a multitude of conditions and activities, all creating a symphony of emotional feedback and harmonies. It is these harmonies and disharmonies that individuals must bring together as they conduct the symphony of their life creations. The primary goal and objective for society and its members should be to nurture and guide individuals into their own beings as creators of their own lives. Much too often, societal and individual actions create schisms between individuals and their own personal emotional guidance, sometimes innocently, sometimes benevolently, but sometimes maliciously and by design.

Development of Cognitive-Emotional Wisdom

The narrowness of myopic mental vision and perspective also plays its role in mental illness and aberrant behaviors. The answer is to strive for action that is not mentally myopic, but integrates the totality of a person’s cognitive and emotional universe. Different sections of an orchestra must be aware that they are playing in the same key to remain in harmony. The

dissonance that can develop within a person to accommodate society's diverse demands can be so great that it becomes impossible for a person to remain whole and mentally healthy. To be mentally well, individuals must have successfully mastered the necessary skills to navigate their cognitive and emotional processes through life's challenges and adventures. They must successfully integrate the lessons demanded by society and develop the necessary cognitive-emotional wisdom to succeed.

In a healthy cognitive/emotional symbiotic system, emotionally negative activities of the mind are sources of inspiration and creativity: inspirations for new, emotionally positive cognitive activities that are the necessary precursors to healthy physical action. Emotional wisdom is reached when emotionally positive cognitive and physical activities bring health and vitality and nurture a constructive, cooperative and successful personal environment. Emotional ignorance, on the other hand, is when emotionally negative cognitive activities run amok: externally they create destructive physical actions and internally they create unhealthy environments susceptible to disease, illness and injury.

The first step towards cognitive-emotional wisdom is to establish a person's awareness of the fundamentals of the emotional feedback system. Unfortunately even the syntax of language uses emotions independent of the mind. The phrase 'don't be so emotional' or the concepts within 'emotional disorder' do not use emotions as a function of mental activities. This use of language obscures the notion that the display of a person being 'emotional' is the direct result of his or her current mental activities and it is these cognitive activities that need to be addressed.

Cognitive-emotional wisdom is born when emotionally depressed persons begin to understand and accept the relationship between their depression and the nature of their thoughts. The fall into depression is not their fault but healing demands taking new responsibilities. For depressed persons to continue dwelling upon the people and events responsible for their current condition is to create barriers to understanding and accepting their new responsibilities for their own thoughts and actions. Cognitive-emotional wisdom means to begin taking new responsibilities for one's own behavior and to change and develop new habits of thought and perspectives. A neuroplastic brain makes all this possible.

Cognitive-Emotional Wisdom in Education

What is the purpose of education if it is not to provide the tools and training for a successful adult life? Can education be called a success if it does not provide the understanding and training of a personal cognitive-emotional system which has evolved for the actualization and maintenance of mental and physical health and well-being? Education should not be confined to developing a student's cognitive skills without also understanding the emotional connection needed to succeed in life. Cognition, emotions and physiology have evolved together as a team. This collaboration should certainly be part of our educational curriculum.

Education must also be about training students to develop the wisdom necessary to function with an emotional system that has been evolving hundreds of thousands – if not millions – of

years. To ignore the intricacies of an emotional guidance system is to disregard centuries of survival on the savannahs of Africa. This emotional guidance system needs to be prepared and cultivated and nourished for successful operation within today's technological world and within the awakening and new acceptance of an individual's abilities to guide his or her own life.

The importance of physical education, sports, and even early-year recess in school is that it nurtures the emotional ties to physical health and well-being. We evolved to be active and these school activities reinforce the correlation between positive emotions and physical behavior. Encouraging healthful activity that feels good is to promote this evolutionary correlation. Seeking joy and the feeling of well-being within physical movement reinforces the physiological and emotional connection that has evolved over thousands of years.

Performing arts such as dance, theater, and music especially ask of each participant to connect with and to discover their emotions. These disciplines require an exploration into emotions. Instead of promoting a culture of emotional ignorance, they promote a culture of emotional understanding and appreciation. This emotional awareness is a vital factor in comprehending the cognitive, emotional, and physiological alliances.

Basic lessons in the understanding of and the application of one's own emotional system are vital. The absence of these lessons leads to violence. Emotional wisdom is about taking healthful actions in joy rather than taking destructive actions in anger. The capacity to perform the mental gymnastics necessary to take such healthy actions should be developed during early childhood to take full advantage of the brain's neuroplastic behavior to reinforce these habits.

Students must have the cognitive training and skills to climb up the emotional staircase from the lower emotions of rage and anger, to the higher emotional levels of frustration and irritation, and finally to the pleasurable feelings of positive emotions. The failure to develop this cognitive-emotional wisdom, where emotional evolution is ignored, can be directly tied to our society's violent behavior where movement up the emotional staircase is never learned, developed, nor practiced. Successful students know how to use their emotions to guide their cognitive activities. A successful life has the same requirement.

We as a society have failed to develop the necessary education and training of a unique and wonderful emotional guidance system. The consequences of such an ineffective emotional understanding can be readily seen in our prisons, hospitals and welfare institutions. Violence is the result of an individual's lack of understanding of the cognitive-emotional connection. The emotional guidance system has evolved to constructively guide individuals so that violence is a last resort for immediate physical danger. The overhaul of our criminal justice system must start with an overhaul of our educational system and cultural values pertaining to understanding thousands of years of emotional evolution and the nurturing of cognitive-emotional wisdom.

Criminal Justice Reform

The mental skills and agility that most people have developed from birth to navigate successfully through the societal nuances and intricacies of ‘what feels good is good’ and ‘what feels bad is bad’ is absent in the tens of thousands of imprisoned people. Any successful, sustained rehabilitation is dependent on understanding the brain’s neuroplastic nature by our teachers, our parents, our schools, our religious figures, and by our politicians who are blindly setting up laws and punishments. **The brain can be rewired from an emotionally negative decision processing that further accentuates destructive behavior to an emotionally positive decision processing that accentuates rewarding, useful and constructive behavior and results.**

Why does society respond to unwanted behavior via punishment? Why is “spare the rod and spoil the child” such an ingrained euphemism within our culture? Why is punishment for “crimes against society” considered to be just and humane behavior? Instead of punishment, society must nurture cognitive-emotional wisdom, the wisdom that finds a thought that feels better; a process that developed over tens of thousands of years of evolution and that is now etched in our DNA. Where is the cognitive-emotional wisdom *education and training* that should be imparted in our schools and prisons? Every person has an emotional guidance system; its understanding and training must be part of our evolving moral culture. We have a penal justice system entrenched in ‘punishment’ to bring ‘justice.’ Our penal system should be about justice, to be sure. But where is the justice if there is no understanding of, nor education and training to employ a very ancient emotional system?

Decision making and action from a negative emotional base has its evolutionary foundation within the reality of actual and immediate physical danger. To act from fear and anger within an emotional storm is to act without the benefit of the mental clarity and purpose found within an emotional calm. Life and death mental reflexes are for the natural and artificial battlefields that have little to do with most behavior requirements within our modern societies. A person’s power of decision making comes not from the emotional negative places of fear, anger, and despair, but from the emotional clarity found within peace, joy and hope. There can be no criminal justice without also providing the cognitive/emotional rehabilitation needed to succeed in society. It is a crime of society to believe that punishment is justice for criminal behavior. Punishment reinforces and propagates an emotionally negative and destructive way of living. Is that society’s intent for our current criminal justice system? The lack of ethical decision making skills in adolescence does not mean these behaviors can not be rehabilitated into new ideologies and behaviors later in life.

Who can predict the motivation, drive and desire of a person to return to the life of freedom and the life of well-being, joy, vitality, and enthusiasm for another day’s adventures even after years or even decades of imprisonment? Within a climate of doubt and disbelief of reform possibilities there may still exist within someone a flame of hope and the necessary drive to work and develop his or her cognitive-emotional wisdom and return to the freedoms and harmonies of joyous well-being. Is there not a moral duty within society to explore the

possibilities and give those imprisoned a chance to return to a naturally healthy life of freedom? There is a societal duty to explore, develop and learn about the cognitive-emotional connection. Likewise, there is a societal responsibility to understand cognitive-emotional wisdom and the brain's neuroplastic ability to change and to develop new neurological networks that can define new perspectives, new alternatives, and new ways of successful living.

Reframing Antisocial Personality Disorder

Because of the brain's neuroplastic nature to develop alternate networks, more advanced mental constructs of wanting and desire can develop as a person matures. The combination of internal physiological behaviors and the external physical exertion for survival also means a more complex development between the biological body and emotions. Movement to gather food or even to hunt on the African savannahs during humanity's beginnings meant survival. Thus, a correlation between emotional pleasure and physical activity would be evolutionarily advantageous.

Although the joy of the hunt and the pleasure of gathering may produce the food needed for survival, during the heat of the day continual exertion risks heat exhaustion, dehydration and death. Rather than being a mere pawn of pleasure and pain, the individual must make decisions whether to continue to hunt in such adverse conditions with survival of self and family as one possible outcome and the death of the hunter and those dependent on the hunter's survival as the other.

Thus, neuroplasticity of the cognitive and emotional networks involves a complexity that permits mental reflection about the conditions for physical exertion and weighing of conflicting factors of feeling good getting food versus feeling bad because of the day's heat. The success or failure of these reflections and choices can spawn different genetic lines with different values and behaviors, such as one emphasizing the survival of the self and another emphasizing the survival of the family. One genetic line may care about other people; another genetic line may not. Therefore "antisocial personality disorder" would not be an actual disorder; rather, it would be a natural part of an individual's evolution that society must recognize.

Military Personnel Decommissioning

The power of the brain's neuroplastic capacity to adapt to the demands of a new environment by changing and developing new neurological networks is also demonstrated by the successful migration from civilian to military life. Unfortunately, this neurological network change, which is developed to succeed in military life, is not later reconfigured for civilian life. There must be a structured 'decommissioning' period for military combatant that accounts for the neurological network changes that allowed for success within a militarily structured environment designed for war. This wartime neurological network must be reconfigured for a successful civilian life. Military life starts with a very well developed 'boot camp' that prepares a civilian for the new rigors and demands of a combatant. Where

is the basic re-training that deprograms and alters the neurological networks that formed while in active military service and that are now detrimental to civilian life? Where 'commissioning' personnel into military service has a long and rich tradition to produce successful combatants, surely it makes sense that the 'decommissioning' of military personnel with the new knowledge of the brain's neuroplastic adaptive behaviors must be explored. Success can be measured when we no longer hear of homeless veterans or those who have given up hope and committed suicide. Our military personnel are the most advanced and best trained in the world. They should also be the most advanced, best trained and most capable of transitioning anew to civilian life.

The Wisdom of a Champion: Let Joy Reign

*The crowd is cheering. Those in the arena are stomping their feet in appreciation of the skillful play of their basketball team. Team execution has reached a new level of excellence. Every shot is dropping and – amazingly – a teammate is in the right spot for every loose ball, block, rebound or steal. There's electricity in the air. It feels good! It feels great! It is wild. For team member and fan alike, this didn't just happen; it **began** with a feeling, a positive good **emotional** feeling that grew and then exploded...lighting the nets (and spirits) ablaze!*

The mental game of 'being in the zone', 'creating momentum', 'being connected' and 'having confidence' is about **emotions**, about **good feeling emotions**. There is no mental game, there is no mental focus, unless the emotions and feelings collaborate and acknowledge it. The mind and emotions must work together – as the proverbial team – to bring forth an athlete's best performance. This mental-emotional game is about bringing forth an accumulation of all the times an athlete experienced a successful moment, especially in competition. The mental-emotional game of any contest is about having the discipline to use the mind to (1) find, (2) focus in on, and finally (3) use the presence of good feeling emotions to develop and to maintain the zone: this mental-emotional zone of confidence gleaned from previous successes. The team must recreate the mental-emotional game first, before the competition, to 'own' any court and competition. Underdogs win because they create a pre-game vortex of success which is undeterred by the opponent's performance. ***Their results and outcomes of actions, shots, and plays follow their mental-emotional game.*** Champions win for the same reason. Yet, how many teams get overpowered in the last few seconds, not by an opponent's skill, but by the opponent's overpowering belief in themselves as the victor.

The mental-emotional play of a competition starts long before the actual game begins and must continue throughout any competition. Championships are lost because emotional guidance gets distracted from the final outcome and is sidetracked into the pregame publicity of previous successes. Winning feels good but a tournament isn't over with the semi-finals. This is the time for real mental and emotional discipline; to use the mind and its cognitive abilities to focus in on, to recreate, and then to **maintain the emotional play of previous successful competitions**. What were the mental-emotional states that brought previous successes? Recreate these mental-emotional states as protection from any barrage of doubts, fears, uncertainties, and questions presented by the upcoming event. Recreate these mental-

emotional states as a defense from the lure and illusion of a victory that doesn't yet exist. This starts at home and continues in the locker room and begins all over again on the court.

The audience may be watching and emotionally reacting to the action on the court, but the real plays take place in the minds and hearts of each player. Which team is going to maintain their knowing of, and feeling of success? Which team will rise and overcome each challenge on who owns this ball, these nets and this court? Which team will first feel the frustration of a missed shot or stolen ball or an opponent's score and feel the gnawing fear of doubt? Every move and pass before a shot is an assertion of confidence. Pass the ball around to set up a shot but also to break down the opponent's mental resilience and to assertively demonstrate to them that "we" control this game. We own this game. We are enjoying this game. Our bench is enjoying this game. We are winning this game no matter the current score. "Do you feel it? Good! Take the shot."

A player cannot play his or her best having an emotionally negative state of mind. The presence of negative emotions means that a well-balanced and vital body is not physiologically present. Mental disharmony, felt through emotional dissonance, translates promptly into imbalances in the body's physiology. Eye hand coordination is off. Touch is off. Shots rim out or even become air balls. A simple layup becomes a challenge. Accidents happen. Injuries occur. To physically compete at a peak physiological state, the emotional state cannot be negative. Negativity leads to injuries when the body is stressed and pushed to its limits during competition. The mind and body are biologically not working together as a unified whole. **Evolution advanced a correlation between feeling good and a well-balanced and vital body.** Emotional awareness of this, either consciously or unconsciously, meant survival. Those who acted without this understanding did not survive. To act without joy means the body is *not* in a prime physiological state and simply does not have the harmony within itself to excel and perform at peak abilities.

Every moment throughout every day is an opportunity to train and to practice moving into a better and better feeling place. Every negative emotion is an opportunity to create a more powerful mental attitude. Winning starts when each negative emotion is used as motivation to find a thought that feels better. Each of these successes helps develop the mental gymnastics to respond to an evolved emotional guidance system with intent and with design. The emotional system is giving constant feedback on whether 'your head' is getting into 'your' game or into 'theirs'. The question is....do you have the mental and emotional discipline to listen and to make the necessary adjustments?

Emotions are responses to all that activity going on between the ears. They are an ever present coach that lets each player individually know where his or her mind's activities are heading. The better the feeling, the more mental activities are in '**your game**'. The worse the feeling, the closer mental activities are to getting lost in '**your opponent's game**'. Half time provides a moment to stop and step up the emotional staircase. Have the discipline to use your mental training and abilities to move up from despair to anger, from anger to frustration, from frustration to hope, from hope to belief, from belief to joy, from joy to excitement, from excitement to...Take the time to re-take the ball and court and make them

'yours.' A time out is an opportunity to get 'your' mind, 'your' heart, and 'your' body back into the game, 'your game.' Then any court throughout life will bring joy and become 'yours'.

Emotions in the 21st Century

The purpose of life from a physiological, biochemical perspective is to find joy. A correlation exists between joy and the biochemical balances found within the brain's neural networks and the health that make for a strong and vigorous being. Has not that been the evolution of the emotional system? A false/positive correlation between joyous emotions and lethargy, weakness, and ineptness would only make a being vulnerable and easy prey within the survival of the species. Joy, happiness, and wonderment associated with biochemical harmony of strength, confidence, skill, and agility, on the other hand, would clearly enhance the survival of the species.

Genetically, humans are wired to feel emotionally good. The very strength and survival of the individual depends on striving for better feelings and what those feelings represent within the body. It is our evolutionary nature. But we do not thrive as individual beings without the societal strength to create and empower the development of cognitive-emotional wisdom where individuals learn, develop, and know how to respond to their own individual emotional guidance with healthful and joyous actions and behaviors.

It is necessary to elaborate on some important distinctions which need to be made of our 21st century consumer-focused society. Sugar may have wonderful 'feels good' associations but gaining weight is probably not one of them. Shopping may feel good but getting the bills may not. Having a brand new car feels great, but the consequences of it being a stolen car does not. The same 'feels good' but 'know the bad' goes for drinking, drugs, medications and all of human behaviors. Knowing what actions may feel good and knowing what consequences may feel horrendous is a product of the cognitive mind and the emotional system. Though society's acceptance of such actions is another discussion on its own: what if a person's behavior aligns with emotional guidance but this behavior is contrary to accepted societal norms? And conversely, what if a person's behavior aligns with emotional guidance but this behavior *ought to be* contrary to accepted societal norms?

Where is the emotional wisdom in a 'feels good is good' behavior model? The better one feels, the healthier one is, began evolving tens of thousands of years ago. In question are emotions' guiding relevance in the 21st century. The power of cognitive-emotional wisdom lies within one's abilities to meet the challenges of today's complex societies by transmuting life's pains and failures, via work and imagination, into the thoughts and actions that both feel good and are integral and harmonious to a self that does not demand the obedience and subjugation of others. Joy and happiness dependent on the requirement and demand for specific behavior in others is an attempt to appease a false ideology. It can never succeed. To make joy and happiness dependent on others' behaviors is to deny the evolutionary role of emotional guidance. Emotional guidance and cognitive-emotional wisdom are **self** management tools.

8.0 Cognitive-Emotional Therapy

Cognitive-emotional well-being means: 1) having the ability to evaluate one's own cognitive activities with one's own emotional system, 2) having the ability to STOP...and respond to this evaluation, 3) switching from emotionally-negative cognitive activities to those cognitive activities that will elicit positive emotions and, finally, 4) using these new emotionally-positive thoughts as the basis for constructive action. Cognitive-emotional therapy is about developing the cognitive skills and habits necessary to harness the emotional guidance system for purposes of attaining mental and physical well-being by gaining new perspectives of people, places, and events. With this new perspective, new opportunities to act and function will be unveiled that were previously masked by old and emotionally negative cognitive habits. And most importantly, such revised cognition causes the patient to feel better.

Negative emotions are very important; in fact, they are fundamental parts of the healing equation. Negative emotions are the bottom steps of the emotional staircase. Positive emotions are the top steps. Negative emotions bring an awareness of that which is not wanted (bottom steps) and are used to identify that which is wanted (top steps). The problem and the solution are part of the same staircase. Engineers, for example, have problems to solve. But engineering solutions don't appear by fixating on what's wrong. Solutions will become apparent only after silently exhaling and releasing the old. Be still and listen...

The objective of cognitive-emotional therapy is to attain mental and physical health and well-being. This starts with learning how to emotionally feel better. The role of the caregiver is to help pave the way for the patient to move along the emotional path. How far along the path a patient travels depends on his or her motivation to take another step: take one more step just to feel a little bit better. One step may take a month. It may take two. But no matter the time, the cornerstone role of caregivers is to help patients take that next step with the promise that when they do, they will feel better. At first, feeling better may simply translate to feeling less pain. Eventually, though, over time, with development of new cognitive habits, emotional feelings will transcend from negative to positive.

Motivation to Feel Better

The answer to the question "how do you feel?" depends on what that person mentally dwells upon. Questions such as, "tell me, what is going on?", "what is happening?" or "what's up?" coupled with follow up questions such as, "how do you feel about that?" or "how does that make you feel?" are appropriate questions to ascertain the current emotional-thought correlations. The reason for asking these questions is to help a person to acknowledge the correlation between emotions and mental activities.

Answers to these questions will also help the therapists find the desires within their patients' mental-emotional jungle. These desires can be harnessed as motivation to alter a patient's current, negatively-charged patterns of thoughts and actions into patterns of thoughts and

actions that feel better. “What do you want?” develops focus. An answer demands a “fearless sifting and winnowing” (ref 8-1) of thoughts, experiences and desires and a focus on ‘that which is wanted’ and its associative **positive** feelings.

Whatever a patient’s desire may be, there is an underlying desire to feel good, to feel better. This desire is an important motivation to do the work necessary for improvement. Feeling good is also needed for activating the underlying neuroplastic changes in the brain that will lead to a new, different and improved life style.

To feel good, to feel better, to get well, to have a life and to enjoy work and play requires a person to use his or her own emotional system to change current habits of thought. Work and action are necessary to **not** be angry, sad, disappointed, depressed, and to lessen the emotional pain or move out of the depths of despair. “Do you want to feel better? If the answer is yes then here is where you can start: do something for yourself everyday – something constructive – that helps you feel a little better.”

Exercises in Cognitive-Emotional Rehabilitation

1. Focusing on that which is wanted

“What do you want?” is a question to bring focus and to identify a subject of desire and to bring forth positive emotions. A person knows when he or she dwells upon ‘that which is wanted’ when positive emotions come forward. Negative emotions come from ‘looking at’ or ‘dwelling upon’ such people, places and events a person **doesn’t** want; “You have told me what you don’t want; now tell me about what you do want.” The presence of positive emotions within the conversation may be attributed to success in changing the subject from the ‘lack of that which is wanted’ to the ‘presence of that which is wanted’. Continual discussion around these emotionally positive subjects lays the foundational touch stones for moving up the emotional staircase where more joyous and healthy activity resides. At first, these touchstones may be just ‘less painful.’ Yet, with continual work, movement up the emotional staircase will eventually bring emotionally positive results.

Individuals can’t focus on what they don’t want and have positive emotions. We may use positive words, but if the emotion behind our words is still negative, nothing changes. When words and phrases are positive but the emotional state behind such words remains negative, mental activity is negative. The emotions behind the mental activity are the guiding factor. Focus on the emotional state. When it changes from negative to positive; positive-sounding words become honest and in harmony. The conversation revolving around a subject now leads towards health and well-being. The challenge is to continue to modify the attributes of the conversation in this healthier direction and to bring forth more and more positive emotions.

2. Reframing and Appreciating

To appreciate a person or persons means to find something of value within them to focus upon. To appreciate a situation means to find something of value within the situation and bring it cognitively forward. Appreciation means to make the effort to dwell upon some emotionally positive aspect of a person, place, or event. “This rain means we can’t go for our walk, but we can catch up on our reading.” The subject matter doesn’t change. It hasn’t stopped raining, but the rain’s positive attribute is brought forward and the emotional state improves. Or as the saying goes, ‘make lemonade out of lemons.’

One type of reframing is to step back from the emotionally-negative subject of a discussion and to take a more general view. Instead of looking at the overwhelming task of ‘my whole house is a mess’, reframe the massive task of cleaning the whole house into a practical task of cleaning one room or one corner, or even to start with a drawer. A rose is a very beautiful flower, but if you only see the thorns, it is an entirely different plant.

Listing the positive attributes of persons – or events – requires the work and effort needed to use emotions to guide one’s focus from emotionally negative aspects to emotionally positive aspects. But once these positive attributes are identified and they become first in a series of thoughts, the actions and events which follow will become healthier. Remember, the primary goal in these exercises is to bring about a healthy lifestyle with all its benefits. Appreciating nature is a wonderful method for extricating oneself from the harsh ‘realities’ of a negative world and into another, no-less-real ‘reality’ of beauty and marvel that also exists in our world.

3. Touchstones

Any object can be a reminder of an emotionally positive moment. Pictures, for example, are very common keepsakes: likewise cards, clothes. Songs and music have an especial habit of activating thoughts and mental activities and their emotional responses. Helping a person to understand how objects can draw out emotionally positive thoughts is but one aspect. But objects, events and even certain smells can also quickly bring back memories of a painful experience. The opportunity to stop old habits of thought and to develop new habits of thought presents itself many times throughout the day. Years may have been spent building an emotionally negative vortex of depressing thoughts and behaviors. Daily negative flashbacks are a burden. But each flashback is an opportunity to take another step up the spiral staircase and to develop healthier habits of thought.

4. Acts of kindness

A healthy lifestyle means to live – and to act from – an emotionally positive place. An emotionally positive action develops a touchstone to a healthier lifestyle. One method to bring up the emotions of a positive lifestyle is to perform acts of kindness. This extends the mental exercise of appreciation outward and into the world. It begins the unveiling of a new life of well-being. A kind act may be as simple as petting a dog or a cat, smiling at a waiter

or waitress, cleaning a room, or washing a car. The good feelings of a kind act toward others make the reality of an emotionally positive world more real. It stands as a great contrast to the emotionally negative world that a person is trying to leave behind.

5. Distractions

Sometimes reframing may be too difficult. Then, instead of continuing to fixate on a subject of angst that is just too unyielding to remold into a better feeling accord, it may be time to step away from the subject and to mentally dwell on something else. The object here is to radically change focus and to completely distract the mind and its current unproductive activities onto something that provokes emotionally positive feelings. Go to a movie. Read a book. Enjoy a bike ride or a walk in the park. If the emotions improve then the distraction is working. The subject of angst can then be re-approached with a clearer head.

Going to a bar for a few drinks with friends can be a very effective means of distraction. Much too often, however, this distraction like drugs and medications, may be seen as the final solution...and the subject(s) of angst is never re-approached and resolved.

6. Meditation

Meditations are healthful activities whose function is to remove consciousness from the mental chaos generated by daily life. Some meditations, like focusing on one's breathing or on a spot on one's forehead, work on slowly quieting the thought processes. The key is not to latch on or fixate upon a thought but to allow a thought to pass through the mind. More mentally-active, guided meditations take place when someone leads the thought process. Yoga and tai-chi are even more active meditations that involve the body. Running, biking, and rowing are activities that may also have the meditative quality of quieting the mind. Monitoring the emotional state is the key to effectiveness of any meditation.

These methods of calming the mind and 'emptying it of thought' represent means to allow more emotionally positive thoughts to replace the old. A person will feel better because mental activity has been removed from the subject of angst, but the real fruit of this labor comes when new, more emotionally positive thoughts are allowed to grow and prosper. It is always necessary to quiet the mind to allow room for these new ideas to sprout.

7. Sports

Within the educational curriculum, organized sports provide great opportunities to promote lifelong mental health and well-being. For most student athletes, performing well is their top priority and focus. Enhanced physiology for peak performance is a function of feeling good. Feeling good correlates with a cognitive knowing of strength, vigor, and adeptness and an actuality of strength, vigor, and adeptness. Feeling good means adherence to a strict protocol of utilizing the emotional guidance system to evaluate one's own mental activities. Negative attitudes and nervousness hinders an athlete's performance potential. Negative emotions mean an altered neural circuitry and a diminished biochemical balance from that found

within the natural performance-enhancing attitude of feeling good and the presence of strength, coordination, and empowerment. Record-setting performances come from a physiology found within emotionally positive states of being. An athlete's whole life will benefit from the cognitive skills and training developed to utilize the emotional system for physical performance enhancement during athletic competition.

8. Music and the Arts

Music and the arts training are significant in that their goals involve reaching into the emotional system and to give these perceptions an outward expression. The processes of reaching in and identifying emotional states is a significant step toward working the cognitive/emotion symbiotic relationship. Music can provide an opportunity to bypass confused and convoluted cognitive activities and make available a direct link into the inner harmonies of well-being. Music and the arts can distract the mind into a better emotional place. In some cases, they can also promote agitation, anxiety, nervousness and apprehension. But most importantly music and the arts can activate and promote pathways into a sense of peace and connection into a more harmonious, healthy, and useful consciousness.

9. Stop going there

Maybe a subject is so vast and unyielding that the only solution is just to 'not go there'. There is no solution, view point or aspect that elicits positive emotions. Avoidance may not be 'how I was brought up' or 'politically correct' but it may be important for a person's health and well-being. "That is not your problem" may be the best advice a therapist can give for developing a patient's health. There is an important lesson here in valuing personal health and well-being and the role of the personal emotional guidance system over the values imposed by society and others. For example, fixating on world hunger can become overwhelming. If a person isn't able to view or evaluate such a subject and emotionally feel good about the 'good' they can do, perhaps it is a subject for that person to put aside.

10. Having Compassion for Self

Many people can manifest compassion for a person or animal that is having a difficult time, but they fail to feel compassion for themselves. "Give yourself the same compassion you give to others and stop using your own mind to beat yourself up. Do these thoughts feel good? If not, let us work together and find ways to stop this self-inflicting torture."

11. Using Religious Ideals

There are many aspects of the world's religions that pertain to easing the mind of its burdens. There are the Sufi dances of peace, there are the Hindu practices of "yoga" which means 'union with God', and there are the Buddhist meditations for "enlightenment" to reach "Nirvana" and the cessation of suffering. Religious practices can be explored with patients who are so inclined. Personal emotional awareness and wisdom are important because

within religion are also ideas and beliefs that, rather than bringing about an experience of salvation and peace, simply invite “hell on earth.” Emotional guidance is about controlling one’s own activities, not about controlling others.

“Let go and let God” or “trust in Allah” are just a couple examples of how religious beliefs can be used to bring about emotionally-positive mental activities. The subject of forgiveness may be about someone and their transgressions, but, most importantly, forgiveness is by and large for the injured. Forgiving someone is an act of letting go of a past experience so that a new life may begin. Forgiveness is a way for a person to move on with life so that he or she may be “reborn” into a better existence. Other words of comfort may include:

- 1) “When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.” Lao Tzu (brainyquote.com)
- 2) “May God console you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem (*Ha'makom yناهem etkhem betokh she'ar avelei Tziyonvi'Yerushalayim*).” (myjewishlearning.com)
- 3) “Sadness is the heart telling you to find Allah. Depression is not listening to your heart. Comfort is remembering Allah is always there.” Yahya Adel Ibrahim (islamicquotesdb.com)
- 4) “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want...” Psalm 23 (King James Bible)
- 5) “Wherever you go, go with all your heart.” Confucius (goodreads.com)
- 6) “Happiness radiates like the fragrance from a flower and draws all good things towards you.” Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (brainyquotes.com)
- 7) “There is no path to happiness: happiness is the path.” Gautama Buddha (quoteideas.com)

Stopping the Runaway Train

Emotions have value. They are important. But to have value and to be important emotions must be used as they have evolved. The presence of negative emotions did not evolve to add fuel to the fire and escalate emotionally negative situations accelerating the emotional downward spiral. Like a runaway train down a mountain, there is not going to be a good outcome. The question is, can a person become the observer-self? Can the person separate him or herself from the pathos of the moment...and **STOP**? Can the therapist empower a person to stop and act upon a negatively-charged situation in a more emotionally positive direction? If we realize we are on a run-away train earlier and earlier, it becomes easier to stop the downward and emotionally-negative train of thoughts and actions and start back up the emotional staircase.

Cognitive-Emotional Wisdom in Therapy

Much of a patient's negative emotion comes from dwelling upon the "undesirable" actions of others. Try telling someone who is angry at someone to look at "what you want" in order to feel better and that angry person may reply "I will feel better when I punch him in the face." Or "when my brother stops doing that, then I will feel better". That is, when the proverbial "they" stop doing "whatever", then "I" will feel better. To depend on someone else's behavior changing in order to feel better is a trap. It requires that "every person in the world who doesn't do as you like must change. Is that really a reasonable expectation?" The need for action can and should be satisfied, but action from a positive emotional place is far different and more effective than action taken in anger.

Cognitive-emotional wisdom isn't only about moving up the emotional staircase when circumstances and events are conducive for upward movement, it's also about having the discipline and fortitude to resolve the internal struggles and to create the mental and emotional harmony necessary for action when circumstances and events are not conducive for upward movement. Too many people have the unfortunate life circumstance in which the motivation for stopping the emotional-downward spiral into self-destruction only develops from having already personally followed this despondent path into a barren wasteland. It is the fortunate few who work and regain their evolutionary roots and learn to take action from an emotionally positive platform.

A therapist may have to help a patient focus on a very narrow and constrained view of the world in order for that patient to access and use his or her emotional guidance. But as healing occurs, broadening a patient's understanding of how to use emotional guidance in an increasingly vast and complicated world becomes necessary. Developing the cognitive-emotional ability to function in society is one measure of health. A greater measure of health and sanity is to actually enjoy the opportunities society offers. Tens of thousands of years of human evolution means health and well-being is a function of our ability to use our emotions to guide our cognitive behaviors.

Reference:

8-1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sifting_and_winning

9.0 Conclusion

The human spirit is intertwined within a massive collection of neurological networks and circuits. Evolution has guided all of these interconnecting relationships into a highly functioning being who learns and grows and strives for a joyous collaboration with his or her internal and external environment. The nature of being is to be healthy and to live a joyous life. Those who haven't naturally grown into this wonderful connection may need help and guidance in utilizing an emotional system that has evolved to guide their cognitive universe.

Well-being begins with an appreciation and understanding of the remarkable emotional guidance circuitry found within each and every person. Those striving to become well may need the help of a psychology and psychiatry discipline that honors and promotes the emotional system as an evolved biological sensory system of the human spirit. Some people may need the help of pharmaceuticals specifically designed to help them manage their cognitive behaviors with the guidance of their emotional system. And with successful psychological rehabilitation, there is a need for a progression of less invasive medications that allow....and demand that....individuals be more responsive to their own emotional guidance.

Psychology and psychiatry can heal. They can free the mind from its bondage of past injuries and reestablish the power of consciousness to respond to its own emotional guidance in ever new, healthful and creative ways. Despair, frustration, anger, hate and depression should not serve as fuel for acts of violence, war, and suicide. Instead, they should serve as a springboard of awareness for the need and priority **to act** and stop the downward spiral into hell. From a mental locus of great pain and anguish there exist steps of lesser pain, from which exist steps of no pain. Eventually these clear and iterative improvement steps will lead to new places and acts of appreciation, joy, and passion. The value of therapy, psychology, and psychiatry to help a person retrain his or her mind cannot be overestimated. A new life can be reborn and that is a very wonderful event.