

Andrew O. Jackson
ajackson6441@gmail.com
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Website: <http://emotionalwisdom.net/>



My Path to Emotional-Wisdom and Well-being

Section 01: Introduction

“Our lives are not determined by what happens to us, but by how we react to what happens; not by what life brings to us, but by the attitude we bring to life. A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. It is a catalyst...a spark that creates extraordinary results.” (Refer: 01-a)

The U.S. has a major mental health problem. (Refer: 01-b) The mental health professional community has a major problem. 40,000 suicides a year means 40,000 people thought death was a more viable option than those perceived options offered from our mental health professionals. They would literally rather die than listen to more of the same rhetoric. I know. In 1989 I awoke from a blackout period with a rope in my hand. I almost became one of those statistics but a voice asked me if I could bear it a little longer. I was mentally ill. I was bi-polar, in and out of hospitals, manic, suicidal, listened to voices, and after days of ‘black-out episodes’, I would ‘come to’ on a mental ward wondering what had happened this time. I was heavily medicated and when off my medication I would go manic and end up back in the mental hospital. Once I ended up in jail with my wife demanding a divorce. Now I am mentally-emotionally well. I have left my world of therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists and pharmaceuticals behind. My first manic episode occurred in 1979 and I saw my last doctor in 1996. How did I get my life back?

Our emotions have an evolutionary path and the consequences of emotional evolution should be better utilized by the mental health community and our society at large. I hope my journey will begin a new path towards mental-emotional well-being for the thousands of people who are now unaware of the life that can emerge out their depths of despair. The intent of my story is to inspire hope and empower individuals with the basic knowledge and skills necessary to break out and to become alive and to live again.

The scientific argument for the processes involved with my mental-emotional rehabilitation is presented in a paper I wrote, “Cognitive-Emotional Therapy: Emotions Regulating Cognition”. (Ref: 01- c) Within this discussion I outline how emotions must have an evolved correlation between both ‘mental activities’ and the ‘bio-chemical balances’ within the ‘neurological pathways’ of the brain. These mental activities include the cognitive activities of thought, contemplation, and imagination, and also the sensory activities involved in sight,

sound, touch, taste and smell, as well as the initiation and perception of movement. These conscious mental activities that are available for cognitive evaluation, change and control correlate with the unconscious bio-chemical systems of the brain and body. It is this correlation that must be capitalized upon by therapist, psychologists, psychiatrists and pharmacology so that their patients may become empowered and begin a new road back to mental-emotional health and well-being.

-Disclaimer-

Please note that at no time do I recommend or suggest to any person under psychiatric or professional care to stop taking their prescribed medications. I am writing of my experiences of how I eventually came to a point where I successfully developed mental-emotional health and well-being and stopped taking psychiatric medications. I have written an argument for a new approach to psychology and psychiatry and the use of pharmaceuticals in a paper called “Cognitive-Emotional Therapy: Emotions Regulating Cognition”. This paper is available for download at: <http://cognitive-emotional-therapy.com/>. I do recommend to anybody reading this to take a copy of “Cognitive-Emotional Therapy: Emotions Regulating Cognition” to their mental healthcare professional and to mutually work out a therapy suited for your specific circumstances.

References:

(01-a) The Power of Attitude Motivational Poster

<http://www.successories.com/products/Motivational-Posters/All-Motivational-Posters/Essence-of/18/3736/The-Power-of-Attitude-Motivational-Poster>

(01-b) American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/>

(01-c) “Cognitive-Emotional Therapy: Emotions Regulating Cognition”, by Andrew Jackson

<http://cognitive-emotional-therapy.com/>.

Section 02: You Too Can Have a Better Life

Around 1992-93 in El Paso, TX, my new therapist, Sharon, told me to do something for myself, everyday. So, I began floating in our apartment’s swimming pool with a snorkel and facemask. I would just stare at the moving light and shadows on the bottom created by the disturbed surface water. My goal was to search for a little better feeling. I was making an effort to feel better. This was the start of my road to an idea of self empowerment, of me taking action to improve my mental-emotional well-being.

Over the next 4 years I worked constantly to release thoughts and ideas that didn't feel good and to dwell upon thoughts that felt better. I worked with a new psychiatrist, called the Salsa Doctor because he played in a salsa band, to change my medications as I improved my ability to use my emotions to guide my mental activities. (Refer: 02-a,) After 18years of hospitals and doctors, I left the mental illness industry. I began a new life free from therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, their medications and hospitals.

It is now 2016; I am happily remarried, retired from mechanical engineering and living a full life. I believe I can now relate to others my experiences that resulted in leaving the endless ideas, theories, paradigms and beliefs of the mental illness industry behind. I now live and believe in mental health and well-being. I work at mental health everyday. Mental wellness is no longer a mystery and I wish to share the many ideas I used to bring my life back to the living. I wish to explain the methods I used, and that everyone can use to improve their mental and emotional well-being. The scientific argument and logic for these methodologies can be found on <http://cognitive-emotional-therapy.com/>. (Ref: 02-b)

References:

(02-a) I first heard of “emotional guidance” around 1992-93 on some tapes by Abraham-Hicks. They correlated emotions and one's spiritual inner being. I use emotional guidance in terms of the evolved correlation between ones emotions, mental activities, and the bio-chemical balance within the physical body.

<http://www.discoveringpeace.com/the-abraham-hicks-emotional-guidance-scale.html>

(02-b) “Cognitive-Emotional Therapy: Emotions Regulating Cognition”, by Andrew Jackson
<http://cognitive-emotional-therapy.com/>

Section 03: The Path to Wellness – Emotional Wisdom

For over a decade I was in and out of hospitals, miserable, depressed, manic, and wheeling from a whole range of different negative emotions. All this time I was also told that I had a “chemical imbalance” and needed medication. Well, if I was depressed or manic and I had a “chemical imbalance”, then when I felt better would my “chemical imbalance” be more of a “*chemical in-balance*”. That is, in the times when I felt a little better, was my bio-chemistry also a little better? If that were the case, the key was to find out what feeling better was about.

In 1992 I started applying an idea of using my emotions to guide my behavior, especially to guide my mental behavior of what I was thinking, dreaming, imagining or even contemplating. It was very obvious to me that my emotions correlated to my mental activities. What now occurred to me was that my emotions must correlate with my mental activities and my bio-chemistry. I began to use my emotions to guide my mental activities and improve my “bio-chemical imbalances”. If a thought brought about an emotionally-negative response, I would make attempts to “eliminate the negative”. If a thought brought

about an emotionally-positive response, I would make attempts to “accentuate the positive”. (Refer: appendix 01). This was the key to my recovery.

Section 04: Paradigm Shift – My Emotions are About Me

One of my earlier realizations was that my emotions are about what I am doing. My emotions correlate to what I am thinking about. My emotions correlate to what I am imagining and to what I am observing, that is, my emotions correlate to my mental activities. This goes contrary to our common use of language relating to emotions:

- 1) “She made me mad”... she may have provoked me, but it is my focus upon what she did that makes me mad.
- 2) “I don’t like him”....what I observe or what I interpret about him brings about the negative emotion of dislike. Again, it is my mental activities that are bringing about the negative emotions.
- 3) “He made me laugh”... It is my observation and my correlating mental activities that make me laugh.
- 4) “She is so emotional” or “his emotions got the better of him”....both those statements are really about a person’s thoughts becoming unregulated and out of control with the emotional system responding to the exploding mental processes.

The importance of this paradigm shift is that instead of me being disempowered by emotionally reacting to life’s tragedies and comedies, I can become empowered by using my emotions to regulate or influence what I choose to observe, think, and do. Instead of reacting to life’s events, I can start to choose the events in life to interact with, the events that stimulate my positive emotions. The meaning of depression or being depressed is that my thought patterns and thought habits have revolved around emotionally negative mental activities. For me to be mentally-emotionally healthy I must develop my ability to use my emotions to guide my mental activities to where I have the capacity to choose my mental activities based on my emotional responses.

Somewhere or somehow during my up-bringing my emotional system became corrupt. My emotional system was broken. I was “mentally ill”. I no longer had the capacity to respond to my emotional guidance as nature intended. I could not choose my mental activities based on my emotional responses. Mental-emotional health and well-being is about using emotions to regulate mental activities, to rebound off of emotionally-negative thoughts and onto, and towards, emotionally-positive thoughts or, at least, onto something less emotionally negative. This became my new approach to psycho-therapy.

Section 05: Stopping the run-away train

My emotions have value. They are important to me. They are about me and what I am doing. But to have value and to be important emotions must be used as they have evolved over tens of thousands of years. The presence of negative emotion – like being depressed – did not

evolve to gather and remember more emotionally negative facts and events that do nothing but add more fuel to the fire. Being depressed meant to do something to feel better.

Unfortunately I had been taught to tolerate and to ignore negative-feeling emotions. So rather than making an effort to feel better, I did nothing. I did not know what to do. This usually meant a brain storm of more emotionally negative thoughts which would escalate an emotionally-negative situation further along the downward spiral. Like a run-away train down a mountain, there is not going to be a good outcome. Of course, this was all internalized. I had learned not to complain about aches and pains. In the cold of winter growing up on a farm, chores had to be done. Emotions were like frost bit fingers; as long as there wasn't a medical necessity and the pain could be tolerated, keep quiet and do your job. I had broken my arm, dislocated my wrist, broke my collarbone twice, stepped on nails that went through my foot, as well as tolerating dozens of slivers imbedded into my hands and feet. I had learned to take my frozen hands and run them under lukewarm water. When the severe pain stopped they were thawed out. Physical pain was a part of life. You tolerated it and kept working. That is life. Emotional pain is inconsequential – or so I thought.

The way I describe it now is that depression is like a run-away train speeding down a mountain, there is going to be a crash. But if the negative-emotions can be caught earlier and earlier, that is, if the emotional signals are listened to earlier and earlier, maybe this time, the train won't gather so much momentum that it can't be stopped. In a conversation with Esther of Abraham-Hicks, (05-a) I was told that emotions were like brushing your fingers onto a moving fan blade, you can feel the negative vibrations. These are signals to remove your fingers. The same goes for negative emotions and thoughts. My answer was, "by the time I realize my fingers are touching the fan, they're mince meat."

The question has become, how can I become the observer-self? That is, how can I separate myself from the pathos of the moment – be it anger, depression, or what ever – and STOP? How can I develop the cognitive awareness to stop and act upon a negativity charged situation in a more emotionally positive direction. As I realized I was on a run-away train earlier and earlier, the easier it becomes for me to stop the downward and emotionally-negative train of thoughts and actions and to take steps to move back up the emotional staircase.

I learned to move up the emotional staircase in steps, that feeling a little less negative is a wonderful thing. The steps of an emotional hierarchy vary depending upon the set of emotions involved. One order of progression may be...despair, anger, frustration, displeasure, pleasure, joy, delight, exhilaration, ecstasy. (Ref: 05-b) I may not be able to go from despair to joy. That would be too great a leap. But I could 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. Around 1993 I started this process as a heavily medicated patient. It took me years to work out the numerous convoluted habits of thoughts I had developed that would send me careening down the mountain. But with continual practice, a better lifestyle emerged and with the help of a psychiatrist that would listen to me, I became less and less medicated until and the time came that when I took myself off all medications and I did not end up back on a mental ward.

But to this day, and it will be every day in my life, I must catch myself when I am going negative and act upon what my emotions are telling me. I really, really, really know what happens when emotional systems are ignored. Once in the middle of my life of insanity, I 'awoke'. I was standing in an attic with a rope in my hand. How I got here or where the rope came from I have no idea. I was going to hang myself. Somehow I stopped and heard 'a voice' ask, "Can you go on with your life?" I said yes and turned around and made it to the hospital.

References:

Ref: 05-a: Abraham-Hicks

<http://www.abraham-hicks.com/lawofattractionsource/index.php>

Ref: 05-b: The Emotional Guidance Scale, Abraham-Hicks

<http://www.discoveringpeace.com/the-abraham-hicks-emotional-guidance-scale.html>

Section 06: Blackouts and Mania

I have been talking about depression and going down the emotional scale. But, my hospitalizations were for manic episodes. My depression symptoms were ignored, except one time around 1988 when I was back in school going for my first Masters in Industrial Management Technology. I told my psychiatrist that I was having a particularly hard time in a relationship and could he give me something. I 'awoke' in a classroom with the teacher handing back tests, including mine. I have no recollection of going to classes, taking this test or anything else over the previous 5 days or so.

Most often my 'black out' periods were affiliated with a manic episode. Around 1989 I 'awoke' once in a hospital and wondered how I got here. The care-giver said I had gone up to a police car and told them that my friend needed help. My friend turned out to be a garbage can. During other manic episodes I would remember events up to hospitalization and then lose a few days to blackout periods.

In 1990 I 'awoke' another time with my mother in a drug store in. We were getting my prescriptions refilled. I carefully started probing about the circumstances. I remember being accepted to a teaching position in Xianyang, China after receiving my 2nd Masters degree. I was going to teach industrial management. I have no idea of how many days or even weeks had gone by. Somehow I was now in Madison, WI where apparently I had 'lost' about 10 months of meds for my trip. We got my meds and the next day I was on my way to China.

Manic episodes were never a 'high' but they were escapism from depression. When recalling a manic episode I would describe them as scary, frightening, and even terrifying. I had no control. I was an observer watching somebody do crazy stuff. My reality was this 'trip' that I participated in and like a 'dream' events just happened. An idea to do something

would come to me and I would do it. I had lost all sense of propriety except within some very narrow stream of conscious mania.

I would say now that severe depression drove me to become very narrowly and intensely focused on something else so I wouldn't feel the general pain that engulfed my life. And then, this very narrow reality took on a life of its own without any of the normal restraints derived from a broader perspective and reality. From 1989 to 1996 I needed medications to control my mania. Since 1996 I have been able to consciously control my 'bio-chemical' imbalances as to not need medication.

Section 07: Mental-Emotional Rehabilitation

I was mentally-emotionally broken. In 1979 I could no longer hold my self together. I stopped. I stopped at a stop sign. There was 'evil' in the car. I took off all my clothes, got out of the car and started running naked across a corn field trying to align my family and the planets to make things right and to prevent further disaster. From 1979 to 1996 I was in and out of hospitals and constantly medicated. I listened to, and tried to make work, the ideas told to me by the many therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists in my life. It was not working for me. I could not make their world my life.

In 1992 I set upon my own path. I began using a variety of mental-emotional rehabilitation exercises to control my manic-depressive symptoms. The difference now was I was going to use my emotions to guide my mental activities. If a thought felt emotionally-negative, I would do my best to modify it into something emotionally-positive or to discard it. If a thought felt emotionally-positive, I would make attempts to expand it and to dwell upon it. I would challenge my mental activities up to 20 to 30 times every day. The following are descriptions of the different rehabilitation techniques I used in my quest for mental-emotional well-being:

1. Focusing on 'that which is wanted'

I was first asked "What do you want?" in a group therapy session. In a way, I really didn't know what that meant. Years later, I went to an Abraham-Hicks seminar (Ref: 07-a) and I was asked "What do you want?" But this time, the ideas of 'I want' and of what 'I desire' were related to my emotions. I learned that when I mentally dwelled upon 'that which I want', I feel good. When I mentally contemplate the "lack of what I want", I feel bad. Much later I wrote an evolutionary scientific basis for this correlation in "Emotional-Evolution".

Feeling good or bad still didn't have that much significance until I correlated the idea of feeling good with a healthier biochemical balance. Now feeling good meant I was 'focusing on that which I wanted' and feeling good also meant my biochemical balance was healthier. Learning to use my emotions to identify what I wanted and the lack of what I wanted became a significant part of my life. It was important to have wants and desires and to learn how to use my emotions to guide my mental activities. Mental activities include: (1) thoughts, ideas and what I am thinking, (2) dreams and imaginations (3) memories of people, places, things,

and events and (4) sensory input, that is, what am I seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling.

Now when I had a negative emotion, I knew I was dwelling upon or focusing on something I didn't want. Since I really, really wanted to improve my bio-chemical imbalance, which was my curse and cause of years of torture and suffering with mental illness, I worked hard to find the mental activities that brought about good feelings. At first, this meant finding mental activities around wants and desires that felt just 'less bad'. Most of my days were intertwined with painful emotionally-negative thoughts and behaviors. But as the years went by, positive-emotions became a greater part of my life.

Going from depression to joy doesn't really ever happen. Years have been spent building a huge emotionally negative vortex of depressing thoughts and behaviors. But within all my negative emotion, there were days where I would feel better. A good exercise to further emotionally-positive movement is the 'focus wheel'. I first heard of this from a conversation I had with Esther Hicks of Abraham-Hicks around 1993 (Ref: 07-a).

To do a "focus wheel", first take a sheet of paper and draw a circle in the middle that you can write in. Then draw around the outside of the center circle, 6 or 8 more circles to write in. Write down in the middle circle something you want or desire. If you read your object of desire that you wrote down and don't feel good, go to the outside circles and write in something similar to the central idea that you do feel good about. The idea is to fill in the outer circles with 'feel good' statements that get closer and closer to the meaning and idea of the object-of-desire in the middle.

A note here about having objects-of-desire; these objects need not be actualized in real life to feel good. That is, the object of the game is to feel good and to promote mental-emotional health and well-being. Having objects of desire to dwell upon are one means to this end. Negative emotions would signify dwelling upon the lack of that which is wanted and desired. If an object-of-desire brings nothing but painful emotions, it is not its time.

2. The Art Appreciation and Reframing

The territory of Wisconsin has strong ties with European countries and ethnic groups like Germans, Swiss and Scandinavians. Our grade school was called Norway Grove. A common first grade question is "What is your nationality?" When we asked our dad that question he said "We are German, English, and part Indian and Negro." He would frequently add any other racial group if the discussion warranted. Our first lesson from him about cultural appreciation was to not depreciate other ethnicities or races. Similarly, in a person, I could look at what I didn't like or at what I do like. To appreciate a person means to find something of value within them and focus upon that. Or, to appreciate a situation means to find something of value within the situation and bring it forward. It 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 this rain is good for the farmers." 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.

We had some raspberry plants on the farm. Sometimes, after popping a nice ripe berry, right off the plant, we would crunch into a bug. My mother's comment about the whole affair was...."Protein". "Reframing" a subject or event means 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 focus on the thorns, it is an entirely different plant. The idea of reframing a subject changes the aura or feeling around an event. "We may have lost the game, but we learned something valuable that will make us better." "I may have gone through years of crippling manic-depressive illness but I learned a path out of mental illness that I can share with others."

Listing the positive attributes of people, places or events requires the work and effort needed to use one's emotions to guide one's focus from the emotionally negative aspects to the emotionally positive aspects. But once these positive attributes are identified and they become the first in a series of thoughts, the following actions and events will become healthier. New habits into emotionally-positive mental activities are being developed. Remember, the primary goal in these exercises is to bring about the health and well-being that comes with feeling good. A 'reality' of beauty and marvel exists but it can easily become hidden and lost behind the hardships of depression. Appreciating the beauty in nature is a wonderful method to extricate one's self out of the harsh 'realities' of a negative world.

3. Touchstones

It was night and we were standing around a bonfire. Our group leader gave us each a small quartz crystal to hold in our hand as he was giving us a pep talk, something about personal power. I was focused upon the fire and the dug out path. In a few moments the path was going to be a hot bed of coals and embers. When my moment of truth came he said "Wait, the hot coals were not hot enough" and a new batch of brightly glowing and flaming hot coals were being spread out before me. My quartz crystal is a touch stone reminding me that I did a fire-walk that night.

Any object can be a reminder of an emotionally positive moment. Pictures are very common keepsakes. But an object or even a certain smell can quickly bring back memories of a painful life. A certain amount of selective recalling is healthy. All of the techniques presented here are tools I learned to use, and still use to this day, to develop healthier habits of thought.

I never really went to school my 7th grade year. My dad felt his family needed a broader education. He sold all the livestock on the farm, built a camper and with 4 children, an Irish Setter in the back and with my parents in front and we took off for points west. We spent two months touring the western National Parks, three months camping along Mexico's Pacific coast, and then we went to Colorado for a month of skiing. This adventure into appreciation proved to be a valuable touch stone in my difficult years in the future.

Emotions have an evolved purpose. Negative emotions are indications of your bio-chemistry going out of balance. Appreciation of people, places and events is a wonderful way of activating emotionally positive mental activities. At a very young age, I was with my dad at night. He looked up at the stars and said “I wonder what is behind the stars?” My mind went blank but I was in a mixed state of awe, appreciation, and bewilderment. What do you mean something ‘behind the stars’?

The sense of mystery of being alive, on a planet floating in space among billions of stars should never be lost. We are beings that see, hear, and feel. But what we see ‘out there’ are actually bio-chemical nerve impulses inside the brain. The day after my fire-walk, I mistakenly left my crystal on a friend’s fireplace mantle. I was now on my way back to college and it was gone. Six months later I was getting up for class when I looked down at my bedside table. There was my crystal.

4. Acts of kindness

I woke up with Enya nibbling my lip. She wanted something. I had two cockatiels, Enya and Yani. I would frequently fall asleep on our couch and wake up with Enya on my chest and Yani on my upraised knee. When I got them, they were flightless and could only climb around in and around their cage. Over a period of a few months and countless crash landings, they were gracefully flying around the apartment with the ceiling fan as one of their favorite hangouts. I was unemployed and living in a very “foreign” city called El Paso. They were my buddies. Playing and taking care of them was one of my higher moments during that very confusing time period.

A healthy life style means to live – and to act from – an emotionally-positive place. An emotionally-positive action taken outside the mind develops a touch stone into a healthy lifestyle. One method to bring up the emotions of a positive life style is to do ‘acts of kindness’. This extends the mental exercise of appreciation outward and into the world and begins the unveiling of a new life of well-being and kindness. 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 or teaching a bird how to fly. The feelings of a kind act toward others makes the reality of an emotionally-positive world more real and is a great contrast to an emotionally-negative world that I was trying to leave behind.

5. Distractions

Sometimes I found that reframing was just plain too difficult. Many times I would continue to fixate on a subject of angst that was just too unyielding to remold into a better feeling accord. It was time to step away from the subject and ‘go to a movie’. The object here was to radically change my focus and to completely distract my mind and its current unproductive activities onto something else. I would go to a movie, read a book, go for a bike ride, or take a walk in the park. If I found my emotions were feeling better then the distraction was working. Later, the subject of angst can be re-approached with a clearer head.

A common societal ritual of going to a bar for a few drinks especially with friends can be a very effective means of distraction. For six years, when I was teaching shop at Dominican H.S., I was one of the first to Friday's happy hour. I was probably lucky that when I drank too much, my hangovers were just way too painful. They were a constant deterrent to getting drunk. Much too often, this distraction, or that of other drugs or even medications, can become the final solution and the subject of angst is never re-approached and resolved.

A job can be a good distraction. But it wasn't until my last job before retirement as a mechanical engineer that I understood this. My work had always been part of my problem. Now that I have retired from actually having an enjoyable working environment, I can't believe, but I understand, the years I 'wasted' doing something I disliked. Feeling good about my vocational work was never a high priority. It should have been. Ironically now that I am retired, I place a lot of value on the words 'find a way to enjoy your job or get a new job'. I am very thankful that I found a positive work experience for my final 10 ears of employment. Perhaps my healing allowed me to find this more positive life experience.

6. Meditation

My first experience in meditation was at the Deer Park Buddhist Center and Monastery in Oregon, WI. My curiosity was aroused from reading "The Third Eye", by Lobang Rompa. I went and attended an open house. We gathered in a room and sat down on the floor and "we" meditated. It was a very difficult experience for me. My mind was too active. I hadn't the vaguest notion of what my mind was supposed to be doing. I kept from squirming around for about 45min and finally we were given the 'all clear' signal.

I have since practiced meditation on my own. Dwelling upon the movement of a candle flame, following my breathing and at times I listened to guided meditations that directed my thoughts into a variety of adventures. There is much written on meditation and the internet is full of meditative activities. For the purpose of mental-emotional well-being, the goal is to follow your emotional guidance into a world of peace and harmony. Your emotions tell you the success of your meditation activity. If you are feeling better, you are headed in a more healthy state of being. If you are feeling worse, your bio-chemistry is going more out-of-balance.

The most enjoyable and exciting meditation I did was as a group effort. We called it "synergy meditation" as the energy of the participants came together into one co-creative event. Depending on the size of the group we would use chairs and sit in patterns that made up concentric circles. After quieting ourselves we would visualize "connections" to the earth and sky and to persons across the circle. Then at random, participants would volunteer and convey to the rest of the group what they perceived and a story would develop, something like this: I see a forest. There is a deer in the forest. He is going up a path. The path is leading up a mountain. There is a flat area on the mountain top. A cloud is coming by. I am being picked up by the cloud. We are traveling a long distance. I see the Sphinx. There is a door on the left paw of the Sphinx. We are going through the door down a stairway. We are going into a room underground between the paws. I see a library with lots of people looking at scrolls.....

Meditations are healthful activities that may also serve as distractions whose function is also to quiet the mind. Some meditations, like focusing on one's breathing or on a spot on one's forehead, work on slowly eliminating the thought processes. The key to 'no mind' is to not latch on or fixate upon a thought but to allow a thought to pass through the mind. More mentally-active, guided meditations are where someone is leading the thought process.

These methods of calming the mind and 'emptying it of thought' are a 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 necessary to quiet the mind to allow room for these new mental activities to sprout.

The Native Americans have a way of challenging a person's mental ability to remain at peace. I attended two sweat lodges run by the Chippewa of the upper Midwest and one sweat lodge run by the Apache of the desert Southwest. As the steam of the water spread on the hot coals throughout the inside the sweat lodge, rather than maintaining my composure I could only do my best to maintain an appearance of calm tranquility.

7. Moving Meditations

Even more active meditations that involve the body are yoga and tai-chi. Running, biking, and rowing are activities that may also have the meditative quality of leaving the turbulent mind behind. Monitoring the emotional state is the key to effectiveness of any meditation. Around 1994 my first wife and I were learning Sufi Dances of Universal Peace from a Sufi at the Unity Church in El Paso, TX. The absolute highlight of this experience was when we went to White Sands National Monument in New Mexico on a full moon night to dance our dance of universal peace on top of a brilliantly white sand dune. This dancing brought a great sense of peace and well-being. This activity redirected my awareness off of a very active emotionally-negative mental state. I have had classes in folk dancing, jazz and ballet. But before this I never appreciated the mental-emotional health benefits of redirecting my focus onto something emotionally-positive. I was learning to take an active roll in my mental-emotional state of being. I could appreciate that I was taking steps towards mental-emotional wellness.

Also around this time I started taking a class in Tai Chi. My teacher and the Dali Lama had the same Buddhist instructor. Now, almost twenty years later, I can't remember their names. I was still very ill. The class opened up with breathing exercises similar to that found in meditation. We would visualize the movement of air in and out of our bodies. Our breathing was accompanied with synchronized hand and arm movements. The actual movement in Tai Chi is very graceful and calming. My mental focus on my performance removed my consciousness from my tempestuous mind and into the world of Chi. (Refer: 07-b)

While going to college I became involved with a Hindu family and acquaintances from Trinidad. It all started with my infatuation with a young woman. The next year I moved into one of the houses they rented. It was a community living style where we all pitched in with

the food and cooking. I was a vegetarian that year and attended their Hindu religious services that were performed in our living room. One of the renters was a Hindu Priest. He also ran a class in yoga where I learned different poses. At times, I would have a quieter mind as my focus of attention moved away from the mental quagmire of my illness.

I include yoga as a moving-meditation group, because it takes a person from form to form. The significance of yoga for mental-emotional well-being is that like other meditation activities, it helps remove consciousness from the tempestuous mind and into a quieter mind where emotionally-positive mental activities may become fertile and grow.

While living with the Hindu family I also ran every morning. I tried, but I never could achieve the 'runners high'. My mind never quieted down to allow the peace of 'no mind' to come through. But I can see how running, rowing, cycling and other repetitive motion sports can be mentally-emotionally very healthful. Any time the tempestuous mind is at rest, healthy and more emotionally-positive mental activities can move in. The key was for me to listen to my emotional guidance and to feel for emotionally-positive movement.

8. Sports

Sports provide a wonderful opportunity to develop mental-emotional harmony within the chaos and spectacle of athletic competition. I wrestled in high school. I was unbeatable in practice. But when it came to competition, my mental-emotional state went to pieces. My nervousness was my greatest competition and it always won, even if the final score favored me. In later years when I was practicing the 5 Shaolin animal forms taught by a Buddhist Monk, I learned that indeed my true "enemy" was within. As a high school assistant wrestling coach I failed to impart this type of thinking to my students. Any opportunity to develop their mental-emotional harmony was lost and buried deeper into their utmost desire to win. (Ref: 07-c)

Organized sports within the educational curriculum provide a great opportunity to promote mental health and well-being. Mental and physical aptitude, health and well-being are dependent on the athlete's desire and ability to enhance their bio-chemical balance which is a function of their emotional state which is a function of their mental activities. And it is those conscious mental activities that are within the scope and range of influence by the athlete, coach, and sports psychologist. I hope these opportunities will be realized and promoted in the future by our educational professionals. Where an athlete's sporting career is limited, his whole life will benefit from the skills and knowledge he developed to use his emotional guidance.

9. Hobbies, Music and the Arts

Music can provide an opportunity to bypass confused and convoluted mental activities and to provide a direct link into the inner harmonies of well-being. Music can also promote agitation, anxiety, nervousness and apprehension. Yearly Academy Awards for best score and best song attest to this. During my years of teaching high school, I devoted time to learning and playing the guitar. It brought me a sense of peace and connection to a more

harmonious consciousness. I used music as a refuge from the calamitous world of teaching and my mental illness.

My mother and father imparted their love of skiing, canoeing, camping, picnicking and sailing. Through out the year, each season offered a different opportunity to take a break from the hectic life of farming. Only years later would I appreciate the significance and importance of consciously taking steps to feel better. And only years later did I realize that I was taught that doing activities that I enjoyed was a reward. I was paying room and board by the age of 10. I believed my true worth and value came from hard and dedicated labor. I didn't understand the importance of finding joy in my vocational activities until 40 years later.

This discussion is about bringing an individual and societal awareness of the mental-emotional health and well-being and the healing affects of hobbies, music and the arts. These activities provide a wonderful tool for the promotion and maintenance of mental-emotional health. These health properties are greatly enhanced with a conscious awareness of the correlation between emotions, mental activities and the individual's bio-chemical balance.

10. Stop going there

Even now, to this day, the remembrance of my manic episodes is painful. I only tread there very carefully and deliberately. There are many events throughout my life that are best left alone as I can find no other way out of their quagmire. Sometimes a subject should be left alone until it can be transformed into something more freeing. My interaction with the El Paso police and treatment within their judicial system is an experience I only now have been sharing. That was over twenty years ago.

Maybe a subject is so vast and unyielding that the only solution is just to 'not go there'. There is no solution or 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, dwelling upon and fixating on world hunger can become overwhelming. If a person isn't able to take such a subject and dwell upon the good they can do, perhaps it is a subject for that person to put aside until they are stronger.

11. Having Compassion for Self

"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 a way to stop this self-inflicting torture." I attribute these words to Sharon, my therapist in El Paso. I realized that my thoughts were a source of anguish, but somehow her words helped me take a little step outside myself to do something about it. Many people can bring up compassion for a person who is having a difficult time, but they fail to feel the same compassion for

themselves. This takes practice and it well-worth the effort, e.g., catch yourself being to hard on yourself and then try to think of the compassion you would have for someone else.

12. Using Religious Ideals

There are many aspects of the religions of the world 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 is important because within religion are also ideas and beliefs that, rather than bringing about an experience of “salvation” and peace, bring about more hell on earth.

In western traditions, “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 forgiveness is, more importantly, by and for the injured. Forgiving someone is an act of letting go of a past life experience so that a new life may begin. Forgiveness is a way for a person to move on with their life so that they 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 yenehem 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) “There is no path to happiness: happiness is the path.” Gautama Buddha
(quoteideas.com)

13. The What-If game

I had an idea, what if my emotions correlate with my bio-chemistry? I was standing in our apartment’s hallway in El Paso, TX. What if my emotions are telling me something of my bio-chemical balance? The idea swirled around in my head. What if by feeling better, my bio-chemistry would be better? For some 13years I had been told that the only solution to

my mental illness was medications and that this was a lifetime illness. I will be taking medications the rest of my life. What if, by listening to my emotions, I could change all that? What if my doctors were wrong? What if I could get well?

In the late '80's while reading about different religious and metaphysical ideas from around the world, I would play the 'what if' game. What if this idea were true, what would that mean? I had no 'proof' of validity, but if I were to take the position that if it was true, what would that mean? Where would this new perspective on 'reality' take me? And the game would go on. Because I accepted a new position as 'true', then, new ideas of 'reality' would come to me. What if this new perspective is valid? I have no 'proof' of its validity, but what if I accept this new platform as a 'true' reality, where would this lead me?

The 'realities' presupposed within the metaphysics of the Far East and within the Americas' Indigenous people may simply not have been compatible with my own western philosophical and religious upbringing. Years ago, my consumption within the 'what if' game may have contributed to my mania, but I was going to follow through the process again. The 'what if' game took the idea of a correlation between my emotions and bio-chemistry and brought a new reality of hope and possibilities. I was dying. The despair and anguish within me was consuming what life I had left. What if I was wrong? What if my emotions did not correlate with my bio-chemistry? What if the psychiatric profession was right? Then there was nothing to live for anymore. A future of medications, doctors, and hospitals as a solution to my depression and mania was no longer viable.

References:

(07-a) Abraham-Hicks

<http://www.abraham-hicks.com/lawofattractionsource/index.php>

(07-b) A description of Chi can be found on:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qi>

(07-c) Cognitive-Emotional Therapy: Emotions Regulating Cognition, Section 07, Emotional Wisdom, by Andrew Jackson

<http://cognitive-emotional-therapy.com/>

(07-d) American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/>

Section 08: Emotional Wisdom

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 they 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” stops doing “what ever”, then “I” will feel better. To depend on someone else’s behavior changing in order to feel better is a trap. That would require 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.

Emotional wisdom isn’t only about moving up the emotional staircase when circumstances and events are conducive for upward movement, it is 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 circumstance of life that the motivation for stopping the emotional-downward spiral into self-destruction only develops from having already traveled this despondent path. And, it is the fortunate few who work and regain their evolutionary roots and learn to take action from an emotionally positive position.

A therapist may have to help a patient focus on a very narrow and constrained view of the world in order that the patient may access and use their emotional guidance. But as healing occurs, broadening a patient’s scope and understanding of how to use their emotional guidance in an increasingly vast and complicated world becomes necessary. Developing the mental-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 has to offer. Tens of thousands of years of human evolution means health and well-being is a function of our cognitive ability to teach and to learn how to use our emotions to guide our mental activities.

Section 09: Walking Away from the Mental ‘Health’ Industry

In May of 1996 I left El Paso, TX and returned to my roots in Madison, WI. I sold my grandmother’s prized secretary desk I had inherited to pay for an airline ticket home. I shipped what few other possessions I had. My ‘ex’ drove me to the airport and I never saw her again. I heard years later that she had died of cancer. I was going home to start a new life.

Every time I had previously stopped taking my medications I eventually went manic, only to prove my doctors and parents right, that mental illness was a life time sentence. I always felt they were wrong and this time I was going to prove it. I had worked very hard over the last few years to change my mental-emotional state by using an idea that emotions correlated to my bio-chemistry. Over these years I had convinced my psychiatrist that though I needed medication to control my mental-emotional state, weren’t there other medications that were less invasive. I was becoming stronger and I could better use my own emotions to guide my mental activities. I have to admit that 1995 was not a good year. I had a couple manic episodes and ended up in jail with my wife asking for a divorce. I understood completely and I was very sorry I couldn’t be the person she married. That person was alive because of the medications he took but he was also dying because of those same drugs. I was not going to live much longer continually medicated.

I had been off any medications for about eight months though I still depended on cigarettes to ease my turbulent mind. Years ago, I 'awoke' after a manic episode in a mental hospital and a nurse was giving me my cigarettes to go outside for a break. They were Camels, the same my mother use to smoke before she quit. Somehow during a "black-out" period I had started smoking. It was eight months previously that I had gone a "little" manic and was spending my nights walking the desert mountains around El Paso. Eventually I came down, though with a couple more tattoos, but I was able to stay sane enough to stay out of the hospital. That was my last manic episode. It took me several years after that to quit smoking but that was an acceptable transition for me at the time.

Over the next few years back in Madison I was still not in great shape but getting better. I went from Social Security Disability, to packing grocery bags, to cashier, to quality inspector to a drafting and CAD teacher in a local college. I had visited a good college friend of mine. We were roommates before my twenty year nightmare into mental illness began. Our meeting was like the story of Rip Van Winkle. Mentally I was back in college talking to my old roommate. He was married, and had children in college. And, oh yeah, twenty years had gone by! Tears came to my eyes as thoughts of my last twenty years flashed by, my god.....

It took me about eight years (from 1992 to 2000) to regain my mental-emotional health and well being. In 1992 I began attempts to change my bio-chemical balance by correlating my emotions with my bio-chemical balance. I was on my own. I was exploring unheard of territory, a territory forbidden to me by an industry dependent on medicating mental illness and my well meaning family who would not listen to my "insanity".

In 2014 I began writing another paper to the mental health community presenting the scientific evidence that the territory I traveled is a viable alternative to today's theories and beliefs of mental illness. It is a territory that must be opened up and explored for today's ideology fails 40,000 people every year. 40,000 suicides a year means 40,000 people every year believe death is a more viable option than that offered by our mental health professionals. Is that not enough reason to explore the possibilities in an evolved biological system that correlates emotions, mental activities and bio-chemical balance? I develop this argument in "Cognitive-Emotional Therapy: Emotions Regulating Cognition" which can be downloaded from; <http://cognitive-emotional-therapy.com/>. I am living proof of the success this story can have for one person. It is my sincere hope that my story will help others.

Appendix 01: "Accentuate the Positive"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3jdbFOidds>

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE ~ Johnny Mercer & The Pied Pipers (1945)
You've got to accentuate the positive
Eliminate the negative

Latch on to the affirmative
Don't mess with Mister In-Between

You've got to spread joy up to the maximum
Bring gloom down to the minimum
Have faith or pandemonium
Liable to walk upon the scene

To illustrate his last remark
Jonah in the whale, Noah in the ark
What did they do
Just when everything looked so dark

Man, they said we better, accentuate the positive
Eliminate the negative
Latch on to the affirmative
Don't mess with Mister In-Between
No, do not mess with Mister In-Between
Do you hear me?

Oh, listen to me children and-a you will hear
About the elininatin' of the negative
And the accent on the positive
And gather 'round me children if you're willin'
And sit tight while I start reviewin'
The attitude of doin' right

You've gotta accentuate the positive
Eliminate the negative
Latch on to the affirmative
Don't mess with Mister In-Between

You've got to spread joy up to the maximum
Bring gloom, down to the minimum
Otherwise pandemonium
Liable to walk upon the scene

To illustrate my last remark
Jonah in the whale, Noah in the ark
What did they say
Say when everything looked so dark

Man, they said we better accentuate the positive
Eliminate the negative
Latch on to the affirmative

Don't mess with Mister In-Between
No, don't mess with Mister In-Between

Appendix 02: "Recipe For Eternal Joy"

By: Abraham-Hicks

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t33UpC_I9i8

Recipe for Eternal Joy

- Seek joy – first and foremost.
- Seek reasons to laugh.
- Seek reasons to offer words of praise – to self and others
- Seek reasons to love. In other words – in every segment of every day – look for something that brings forth within you a feeling of love
- Seek that which uplifts you.
- Seek opportunity to offer that which uplifts another
- Seek a feeling of well-being.
- Know that your value can only be measured in terms of joy. Acknowledge your absolute freedom to do any of these things or not to do any of these things – for it is, without exception, your choice in every moment of every day.

Appendix 03: "Psalm 23"

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yes, though I walk through the dark valley. I will fear no evil.

His rod and His staff they comfort me.

He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies, my cup runs over.

Surely, goodness and mercy, shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD, forever.