

Emotions facilitate our evolution as human beings

W E BODY THERAPISTS KNOW that when we tune into someone with our hands, we can often sense the emotional state in the other. Tuning in through deep listening is a powerful healing tool. This idea of "limbic resonance" is getting a lot of attention currently by neuroscientists and in many body psychotherapies. Yet this is something we human beings have always known how to do. We are remembering its importance.

"Does Stress Make You Sick? Can Belief Make You Well?" was a talk recently at the Mayo Clinic, number two hospital in the country by Esther Sternberg, M.D., NIH research scientist, and author of *The Balance Within—The Science Connecting Emotions and Health*.

Most of us are still pretty uncomfortable with most of our emotions. We were not trained or allowed as children to feel or express our emotions and ingrained habits of being die hard. But many are pioneers in this arena, having come by chance, necessity or wanting to connect to the deeper parts of ourselves that emotional consciousness brings, to explore feeling in the body and emotion in the heart. This is evolutionary for humans. It is a study of human connection, to the self and to others, and the physiological system that supports human connection. It's new for humans. If human beings are feeling their feelings, we cannot have marauding armies of humans harming humans. We simply wouldn't allow it.

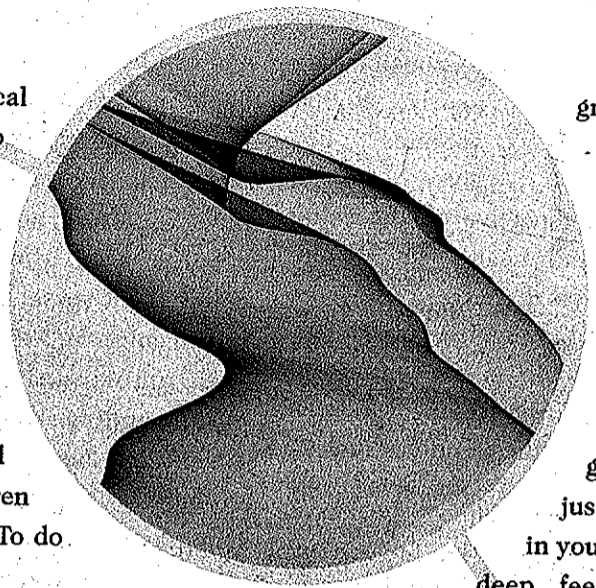
Anxiety and depression are the consequences of emotional disconnection from the self and others. Thomas Lewis tells us in *A General Theory of Love* that monkeys deprived of early limbic connection lose billions of neurons, suffer neural disorganization, lethargic despair, the accompanying outpouring of stress hormones and neurotransmitters with

unpredictable negative physical effects. They lose the capacity to modulate aggression. "They become erratically, unpredictably and chaotically vicious." (Lewis, 218). Add to this disconnection the neocortical brain of the human being and we understand human destructiveness. Lewis asks what if we were intolerant of childhood abuse and neglect and raised children to be in touch with their emotions. To do so, we have to learn it first.

The human connection system is actually a healing cascade of chemicals in the body facilitated by the still evolving part of the human nervous system and the body/mind, deeply connected to but distinct from the computer part of the mind, the brain. Lewis tells us that relationship through the healing cascade of the human connection system regulates and revises our neurological health and our physiological functioning. In loving and caring, in connecting through touch or otherwise, we modulate each other's emotions, neurophysiology, hormonal status, immune function, sleep rhythms, and stability.

Neuroscience is confirming the importance of touch, caring, and deep connection through emotional resonance and of understanding and stimulating this system in the body for recovery from illness, disease, injury, but also for human development and peace in the world. We can use emotional consciousness and intelligence for the evolution of a new human species that will use connection to other human beings as its first form of protection. Through emotional health we can stimulate a whole physiological system in the body, the physiological system of trust, and human connection, facilitating the evolution of the human species toward more and deeper intimacy, connectedness and safety.

Out of this realm of progressive thought come two powerful suggestions that help to change the chemistry of the body. One is the



gratitude list. "I am so grateful that..." to help you get to the feeling. If you cultivate the feeling of gratitude, not just the idea of it in your head, but the deep feeling in your

body, you actually produce the powerful cascade of healing chemicals.

The other is to guide your thoughts by how they feel. To do so you have to begin to become comfortable with experiencing your feelings, in yourself, without projecting them onto someone else, through blame, criticism, or holding someone else responsible for how you feel. If a thought feels good, it is probably a healthy thought for you. If you feel bad, your feelings are there to tell you that your thoughts have slipped into the negative, self-limiting, conditioned thoughts and beliefs that come from places you got hurt emotionally. Feelings are not typically a reliable guide to action, but they are a reliable guide about whether you are in healthy beliefs, or in self-limiting beliefs that cause you stress. This is a challenging idea for those of us in the modern world enamored with thought. So here is the challenge to try and see if it makes you well. Guide your thoughts by how they feel. And learn to know yourself by experiencing, deep in the body, your emotions.

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