

“Don’t bottle up your emotions!” This is something I have been told quite frequently. If you haven’t heard this expression, you might not know what it means. And if you have, you would know that it means to block your emotions. You do this by not letting yourself release your emotions and instead keep them all inside and hold them back the way a bottle does when it holds water. From self-experience I have noticed people tend to bottle up emotions because it is looked down upon to express emotions. For example, crying is looked down upon; in the time we live in one must keep composure and never show weakness. Why is bottling up one’s emotions bad? Emotions are mental, right? They can’t hurt one physically in the body. But ancient Chinese medicine says otherwise and other studies have shown that when emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, and happiness are bottled up, they can have long-term and short-term effects on different parts of the body. You must learn to release emotions so that you can live a happy life with a healthy mind and body.

ANGER

“A strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, and hostility is the definition of anger” (“Anger”). We should never be expressing this emotion publicly because it is a violent and harmful emotion that can only bring pain to those around it. When we are angry, hormones override our amygdala, the region in the brain that helps register emotions, emotional behavior, and motivation in the brain. When one decides to keep this emotion suppressed in their body, one might experience some short-term side effects that consist of: headaches, dizziness, red eyes, red face, indigestion, and diarrhea. This emotion, according to Chinese medicine, “mainly takes place in the liver” (“Discovery health”). Other studies show that it takes place in the muscular and immune system as well. Both have results of long-term effects from blocking this emotion. One can suffer from gallstones, migraine headaches, high blood pressure, colds and flu, stroke, cancer, intestinal problems, menstrual problems; long-term repression can lead to depression and anxiety. You must learn to release your emotions; otherwise, you will develop these symptoms.

FEAR

“An unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone and/or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat is the definition of fear”(“Fear”). From self-experience, I have noticed when you show your fear of someone or something you are considered a “baby” and immature for being frightened. They don’t realize what is truly happening to you. It’s something you can’t really control that takes place in your brain. The brain’s hypothalamus initiates the body’s “fight or flight” response by activating both the sympathetic nervous system and adrenal cortical system, releasing thirty different hormones, preparing the body for any threats. The fight or flight response is something hard-wired in the brain when frightened and makes us want to fight or run. When experiencing this extreme fear, one could have involuntary urination. To deal with fear Chinese medicine healers focus on the kidney and bladder. If fear is blocked, it can lead to anxiety, pain in the area of kidneys and bladder, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers, indigestion, and nausea. Chronic fear “persists in absence of any direct threat” and this fear, if blocked, will result in anxiety, damage in the nervous system, and paranoia. If you bottle up emotions, soon enough you will get full and the emotions will find a way out through the long-term and short-term effects.

SADNESS

“The condition of being sad, feeling or showing sorrow and/or unhappy is sadness”(“Sadness”). Sadness, if shown publicly, is considered a weakness or an annoyance to those around you. If someone cries in public they will be known as weak, if they seek out people too much as treatment for sadness you are considered an annoyance for not making any progress. The brain even tries to make you cry to get better. While there are many kinds of tears, reflex tears keep the eye moist. When you are sad, sadness starts in the cerebrum where sadness is registered. Then, it activates the endocrine system to release hormones to the ocular area forming “emotional tears.” “A study tested both types of tears and the emotional tears are very different, containing hormones that relieve pain and others that show high stress levels” (“How Crying Works”). When this emotion is blocked, the healing process stops. Chinese medical practitioners say this emotion takes place in the lungs and symptoms you get from sadness prove this. For instance, one can experience symptoms such as fatigue and shortness of breath. Long-term effects from bottling this emotion also affect not only the lungs, but also the heart. One can face small intestinal problems, energetic problems, depression, throat/voice problems, and eye issues. You can suppress your emotions and live in pain or learn to release them and live in happiness. But even happiness could be too much.

JOY

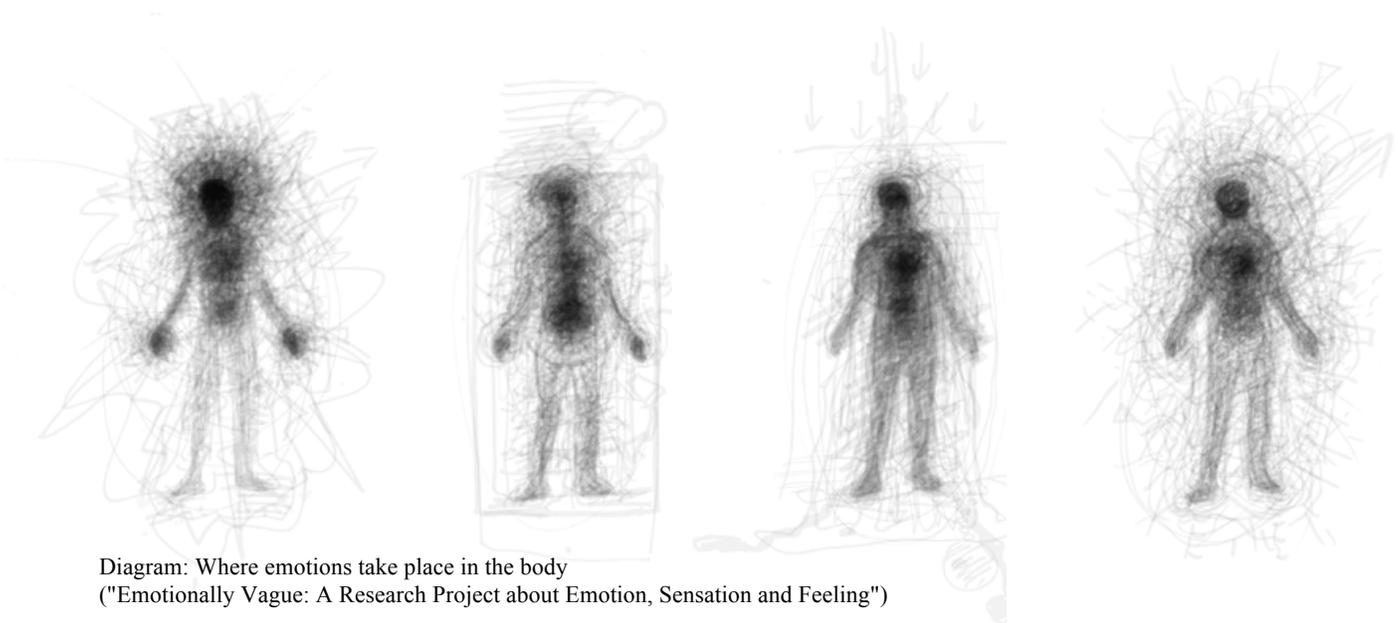
“Joy is the feeling of great pleasure and happiness”(“Joy”). Joy is encouraged, but one shouldn’t experience it too much. For instance, when somebody parties too much and overflows their body with joy, it isn’t always a good thing. When they do this, they are considered irresponsible and too “crazy” to be around and only trouble can come from them. You release endorphins into your brain and nervous system when you feel happy: this increases the body’s threshold for pain and lifts one’s mood. This mood is, in fact, looked down upon in Chinese medicine, as it is an agitation or over-excitement. Too much of anything is bad; joy is directly connected to the heart. When one over-experiences joy, the emotion will be trapped in the heart, and cause symptoms like heart palpitations, anxiety, insomnia; it effects the heart circulatory system and small intestine.

Anger

Fear

Sadness

Joy



Professors of psychology at the University of Virginia, Robert Emery and Jim Coan, show that emotions can actually harm you: “Terms such as ‘heartache’ and ‘gut wrenching’ are more than mere metaphors” and “emotional pain involves the same brain regions as physical pain, suggesting the two are inextricably connected.” If you have ever suffered from heartache you have suffered from emotional stress and during stress, one might experience sensations in the chest in which the muscles tighten and heart rate increases. One might feel abnormal stomach activity and shortness of breath. This is an example of how emotions can affect one physically. Pain researchers from the University of Arizona and the University of Maryland have conducted a recent study to help explain how emotions affect the body. The area of the brain that regulates emotional reactions is called the “anterior cingulate cortex.” This area will increase the activity in the vagus nerve when put in a stressful experience. This vagus nerve connects to the neck, chest, and abdomen, and when overstimulated, can cause pain and nausea. Not only can you feel physical pain from your own emotions, you can experience pain on behalf of another person (also known as “empathy”); empathy can influence our pain perception. This is not only found in humans, but in animals as well. In 2006, a paper was published in *Science Magazine* revealed that when a mouse observes its cage-mate in agony, its sensitivity to physical pain increases. Then, when it is in contact with a friendly, unharmed mouse, its sensitivity to pain will diminish. A study on humans was also done. Simple acts of kindness, such as holding hands, show that it can “blunt the [brain]” to threats of physical pain. This tells us that not only can being kind be beneficial to others, it can benefit ourselves as well. We should be kinder and gentler to each another. There are regions in the brain that involve anticipating pain and regulating negative emotions. The right anterior insula helps regulate motor control and cognitive functions. The superior frontal gyrus involves self-awareness and sensory process. The hypothalamus links the nervous system and the endocrine system. This is evidence that emotions can very much turn into physical feelings.

There are ways that you can heal yourself from emotions that cause physical pain, such as Deepak Chopra's seven-step exercise to release emotional pain and Chinese acupuncture medicine.

To sum it up, Deepak Chopra M.D. is a well-known physician who created a seven-step exercise to help release blocked emotions. “If you don’t know how to deal with feelings of anger and fear, you’re likely to turn them inward at yourself.”

Step one:

“Identify and locate the emotion physically.” To do this, you must set yourself in a quiet comfortable place. Close your eyes and meditate for a few minutes if you’d like. Once calm and focused, think by keeping eyes closed, and focus or recall a situation in the recent past that was upsetting to. Find the point you were emotionally upset. Picture the situation in third person; watching yourself and experience the upsetting feeling. Give the feeling a name and focus and that word.

Step two:

“Witness the experience.” Slowly bring your attention away from the word and into your body. Find where you are feeling physical sensations from the upsetting experience and word. This will locate where you are holding the emotions from that experience.

Step three:

“Express the emotion.” Place your hand where you sense that feeling is. Then say, “It hurts here.” Repeat the process. You can also write your feelings out on a piece of paper or write out the situation from first, second, and third person.

Step four:

“Take responsibility.” Be aware this pain is real and happening inside you, even though nothing is happening in the material world. Stop blaming anyone, including yourself. You don’t need anybody to make the pain go away.

Step five:

“Release the emotion.” Put your attention to the place in your body that hurts. With every exhale, release the tension in that area or your body for 30 seconds or so. You can also make an audible tone with every exhale. (And if you wrote any emotions on paper, burn it, and offer the ashes to the wind.)

Step six:

“Share the outcome.” You can talk to the person you feel caused you pain or share with someone else, as long as you say it out loud and know that that emotion and experience is over in the past and you have overcome it.

Step seven:

“Celebrate the process.” Give yourself a treat, something enjoyable. To fully put it in the past, start your new way of life out happy.

In traditional Chinese medicine, health is the result of a harmonious balance of “yin and yang” and the life-force known as “chi” or “gi.” The force flows through meridians or pathways in the human body. These meridians and energy flows may be accessed through 350 acupuncture points in the body. People develop illness when there is an imbalance in these forces. When needles are inserted with appropriate combinations its said it will bring the flows back to their proper flow. Acupuncture practitioners say that this stimulation increases blood flow and triggers the body’s natural painkillers. Acupuncture involves several weekly or fortnightly treatments; most courses consist of 12 sessions, each session lasting 30 minutes. The session will consist of an assessment of the patient’s condition, insertion of needles, and advice on self-care. These sessions begin with the practitioner asking him/her to lie down, face up, face down, and/or sideways, depending on where the needles must be inserted. The disposable single-use needles will be inserted in the patient. The patient should feel them without pain. When the needle reaches the correct depth there will be a deep aching sensation. Some needles may be heated using electricity after insertion to help stimulation; the needles will remain there for 20 minutes.

Acupuncture is growing very popular in North America. We are starting to use it to alleviate pain and nausea after surgery. The US Air Force taught “Battlefield Acupuncture” (“Libertpub.com.”) to physicians deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in early 2009. Acupuncture significantly reduces the level of pain and the amount of potent painkillers needed by patients. A study (“Medical News Today”) had also been conducted that tested 42 pregnant women fifteen to thirty weeks pregnant, aging from fifteen to thirty-nine with symptoms of indigestion. They were randomly assigned to two groups to treat their indigestion. One group would be treated with only conventional treatment and the other would have conventional treatment in addition to

acupuncture sessions once to twice a week. Results showed the women in the acupuncture group had less severe symptoms and required less medication than the other group, and when treatment was over 15 women in the acupuncture group said their diet had improved by fifty percent. Another case ("Acupuncture and Related Topics") has been found where a fifty year-old man was suffering from panic disorder confirmed by DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual). The man could not leave his house for simple tasks, such as going to church and meeting family. An acupuncture physician then went to his house to treat his kidneys because the man's panic was linked to fear. After many months of intensive treatment, the man began to leave his house.

The mind and body are incredibly linked. Emotions can affect your physical being. The idea of something as simple as a thought becoming real has always interested me. This topic should not only be important to me, but to you as well. Bottling up your emotions and experiencing the effects can happen to any of us. It could happen to you. Remember that "bottling your emotions" is not just a saying; it will become very real and cause you physical harm. You need to release your emotions to live a healthy life.

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