

EMOTIONAL WISDOM

Daily Tools for
Transforming Anger,
Depression, and Fear

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INTRODUCTION

The Need for Transforming Our Painful Emotions

OUR SOCIETY IS EMOTIONALLY DISABLED. According to statistics from the National Institute of Mental Health for 2005, every year one in four Americans age eighteen or older suffers from a “diagnosable mental disorder.” Considering the present economic recession, the current number of people with mental disorders is likely greater. The NIMH list of mental disorders includes depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorders, and suicide. Even many adults who have no discernible emotional disorders feel stressed out by the complexities, pressures, and uncertainties of modern life. Clearly, there’s a need for practical and accessible tools for emotional health.

Emotional Wisdom presents a powerful self-healing program that transforms the painful emotions of anger, depression, fear, and guilt into kindness, courage, joy, and peacefulness. Our book presents three clear, easy ten- or twenty-minute Taoist practices with step-by-step

directions and helpful illustrations that will allow you to guide yourself through the techniques. The first two practices, the Six Healing Sounds and the Inner Smile, have been used for over two thousand years in China. The third practice, Releasing One Emotion, is our unique extension of the other two. All three are forms of chi kung. *Chi* means “energy” or “breath.” *Kung* means “skilled practice or discipline.” Chi kung means cultivating life-force energy: refining it, increasing it, directing it, and raising its vibration.

Our Western Problem with “Negative” Emotions

Most of us in Western society are not taught how to deal effectively with our so-called negative emotions. Some people act out their anger, frustration, or cruelty directly — by harming others verbally or physically. Most of us regard negative emotions as weaknesses, character flaws, or even sins. As civilized people, we’re taught to reject them — to hide, deny, or repress their existence, to train ourselves not to feel these disturbing energies. Of course, they don’t go away. They keep building up; they embed themselves in our internal organs, our muscles, and our psyche. Sometimes, they break out and embarrass us — in a sudden fit of anger — or they take the form of an unexpected bout of depression or excessive worry. They sabotage our lives, creating neuroses, addictions, and physical diseases. And by silencing our natural responses to negative emotions, we silence our natural responses to the positive emotions as well. Life may look good on the surface, but in truth we feel hollow and meaningless. Life without passion is a living death.

Taoism: All Emotions Are Natural

Taoism, the five-thousand-year-old Chinese philosophy of life — along with its branches, chi kung (qigong) and Traditional Chinese

Medicine (TCM) — has a different view of painful emotions. All emotions are seen as forms of energy, and they're accepted as natural expressions of our human life. The seemingly negative emotions are *valuable messages from our Soul*; they're telling us that something is out of balance and needs to be changed. Taoism recognizes that unresolved negative emotions are harmful, but this is not because they're bad or sinful.

Western medicine regards bacteria and viruses as primary causes of disease. In contrast, Traditional Chinese Medicine sees imbalances of body, mind, or Spirit as the primary causes of disease; bacteria and viruses affect only people already weakened by emotional or physical imbalances. TCM divides the causes of disease into three categories: internal, external, and other.

In Chinese medicine, the *primary internal cause of disease* is emotional disharmony. Holding on to anger, sadness, fear, or worry, or variations of these, stresses a corresponding pair of internal organs. This causes those organs to malfunction and become diseased. Please note that chi kung and TCM recognize that each internal organ has a wide area of influence through its meridian (an energy pathway), its relationship to all the other organs and their meridians, and its specific spiritual function. If negative emotions continue to build up in a particular organ, without being transformed, eventually the surrounding blood, muscles, tendons, and other internal organs are also harmed.

In TCM, *external causes of disease* are results of extremes of climate: excessive heat, cold, wind, dampness, or dryness. An excess of air-conditioning or dry central heating can also cause disease.

Other causes of disease besides internal and external are a weak constitution, physical or mental overexertion, excessive sexual activity, a poor diet, trauma, parasites, poisons, and incorrect medical treatment.¹

Painful emotions also disturb our blood's pH balance, the ratio of alkalinity to acidity. Our blood becomes thicker and acidic, and so it moves more slowly and works less effectively. Acidic blood makes us more susceptible to infection and illness.

On a spiritual level, negativity blocks our progress. The Taoist solution is to learn from and harness the powerful energies of troubling emotions by transmuting them into positive life-force energy. In this way, the toxins of our lives become the medicines for our rejuvenation, relaxation, and spiritual development.

Recent Western Acceptance of Eastern Wisdom

Western medicine and psychology are now validating the ancient Taoist wisdom and practices. Scientists are studying and acknowledging the destructive effect of long-held painful emotions. A new specialty in psychosomatic medicine, psychoneuroimmunology (also called psychoimmunology), was created in 1975. It studies the interaction between emotional states and the immune system. Its basic premise is that the body and mind are inseparable. Neuroscientist Candace Pert's studies demonstrate that all emotions are biochemical reactions that can harm or heal the body. The popular film *What the Bleep Do We Know!?* dramatizes and illustrates some of her findings.

In recent years, some allopathic doctors (MDs) and insurance companies have begun using an "integrative medicine" approach — that is, working in tandem with doctors of Oriental medicine, acupuncturists, and Chinese herbalists. The network of medical practitioners associated with the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, now includes the UCLA Center for East-West Medicine, which offers acupuncture, acupressure, and trigger-point injections that are covered by some insurance plans. The UCLA network also

periodically offers free classes and lectures in meditation. Many MDs and insurance companies now recommend that their patients take classes in stress reduction, anger management, meditation, hatha yoga, tai chi, and chi kung to improve their mental and physical health. These methods can be of enormous benefit.

The Six Healing Sounds and the Inner Smile can be catalysts that complement other methods of therapy, or they can stand on their own. When we do them regularly, we improve all areas of our lives.

Description of the Emotional Wisdom Tools

The Six Healing Sounds practice uses specific sounds, arm movements, and visualized colors to release negative emotions from, and correct physical imbalances in, particular internal organs. For example, unresolved anger makes its home in the liver and gallbladder. To release anger, we focus our attention on our liver and ask it for the message of the anger or other imbalance we are experiencing. The message may come immediately or at a later time. Then we say the sound *SHHHHHH* (the sound used to request quiet) with the appropriate arm movement, and we visualize anger as a cloudy gray substance being released into the ground. Next, we visualize green light flooding our liver, which changes the anger to kindness. Simultaneously, this technique relaxes and energizes the liver and gallbladder. We repeat each sound and arm movement three to six times. Doing all six sounds in a time-tested order balances the temperature and energy of our entire body, gives us greater focus and grounding, calms and relaxes us, and improves our physical health. Our happiness increases exponentially!

Our version of the Six Healing Sounds preserves 100 percent of the ancient practice as taught to Mantak Chia at age fifteen by his Chinese master teacher, Yi Eng, in Hong Kong. Mantak Chia has enhanced

the practice by adding details from Traditional Chinese Medicine: corresponding emotions and psychological traits, colors, and seasons. He also added placing one's hands on the body over the corresponding organs. From Western anatomy, he has added descriptions of the functions of the internal organs. Based on her intuition, Dena added asking for the message of the negative emotion and seeing the color as colored light. These innovations make the Six Healing Sounds a more profound experience — and they fit the Taoist principle of continual change.

In part II of this book, *Emotions — Messages from Our Soul*, we offer our personal interpretations of the valuable messages of anger, depression, fear, worry, hate, and their variations. Then, based on chi kung and Traditional Chinese Medicine teachings, we identify the specific internal organs that are adversely affected when each of these emotions is not released or transformed. We also recommend particular colors and tastes of food that alleviate specific painful emotions and support corresponding positive emotions.

The Inner Smile practice begins with visualizing and feeling a joyful image in our mind's eye; we then move that “smiling energy” into the brain, the heart, the internal organs, and the spine, thanking each part of our body for its particular function as we go. This technique fosters appreciation and gratitude for our marvelous human body. It also improves our self-esteem by consciously reprogramming us to love ourselves inwardly and outwardly. As a result, we have more love for others. We then attract more positive people and more desirable events in our lives. The Inner Smile is simple, yet so profound.

Our version of the Inner Smile preserves 100 percent of the ancient practice as taught by Yi Eng. Mantak Chia added more explanation of the functions of the organs, and he organized the sequence

into three logical lines. These changes deepen the experience and make it easier to remember the steps.

Dena designed the Releasing One Emotion practice, which adds a step for individual, deep-seated painful emotions. In this practice we examine one emotion at a time, deepen and exaggerate its feeling, release it physically, and ask for the lesson of the emotion. The practice concludes with forgiveness for all concerned, including ourselves. She and her students have had good results with this technique.

The last part of the book is called “Taoist Natural First Aid: Physical Healing.” It offers specific sounds and dietary advice for relieving common minor physical symptoms, which are listed alphabetically.

Practical Spirituality

All spiritual systems emphasize the importance of cultivating the virtues of kindness, patience, compassion, and agape, or unconditional love. But very few books give us concise, accessible formulas for releasing the toxins of anger, sadness, fear, or anxiety. *Emotional Wisdom*'s ten- to twenty-minute, easily grasped techniques release and transform turbulent emotions into an immediate sense of calm and balance. Practicing them puts the tools of transformation in our own hands — power tools for recycling our emotional baggage into vitality, joy, and inner peace.

For thousands of years, chi kung and Chinese medicine have taught that clinging to negative emotions is the *primary* internal cause of disease. And they have advocated the use of tai chi, chi kung postures, and meditation, as well as a balanced diet, to prevent disease and support healing. The old-fashioned classical Chinese doctor was paid to help families prevent illness; he visited and checked each family regularly and was paid monthly. He was not paid when they were ill.

As we do the Healing Sounds and Inner Smile, and as we transform our emotions, our physical health improves. Our internal organs become stronger and more efficient. We're also able to alleviate specific physical symptoms such as headaches, sore throat, colds, indigestion, insomnia, and many others by doing a relevant sound and then smiling into the area of discomfort. This is multitasking at its best.

Suggestions for Using This Book

This is primarily a practical workbook; its value depends on how you use it. It's organized so that each section builds on the previous one. The first two chapters contain explanations that enhance and deepen the effect of the three major tools for transforming troubling emotions. However, as always, follow your intuition. You could start by doing just one Healing Sound or the first line of the Inner Smile. Then we recommend that, after sampling one of the practices, you go back and digest each section in the given order. It's best to thoroughly learn and practice one of the three tools for Emotional Wisdom at a time. Allow yourself a few weeks to memorize and feel comfortable with the steps. Then move on and add the next tool. You'll be amazed by these ancient, natural techniques for happiness and inner peace.

Note

1. Giovanni Maciocia, *The Foundations of Chinese Medicine: A Comprehensive Text for Acupuncturists and Herbalists* (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1989), pp. 132–141.

Part One

THE TAO OF EMOTIONS

CHAPTER 1

THE VALUE OF EMOTIONS

WHY DO WE HAVE EMOTIONS IN THE FIRST PLACE? Many of us experience them as a disturbance, something out of our control. But they're not simply a thorn in our side. They are natural energy responses to what we experience through our senses. They're vital messages from our Soul, our higher self, to our personality or body.

Please note that many Western spiritual books use the terms *Soul* and *Spirit* as one and the same. However, in Taoism and some other esoteric writings, our Soul is the intermediary between our personality or body and our Spirit.

British spiritual teacher Ronald Beesley clarifies the distinction between Soul and Spirit. "The Spirit is of God [Tao]. Soul's one objective is to raise our consciousness to the level of Spirit. Soul is the active part of our being. It seeks out our fears and our inhibitions and makes us confront them. It supports us in facing and cleansing ourselves of these weaknesses. Our Soul is a loving parent and wise teacher."¹

All emotions are the raw materials of human life, and they function as the guidance system for our decisions and actions. They are the raw materials for music, painting, drawing, sculpture, theater, film, dance, poetry, and fiction. Our emotions are spiritual treasures.

What are the messages of the positive emotions? The softer, yin emotions of calmness, gentleness, appreciation, kindness, and tenderness tell us we're in harmony with our higher selves, and so with Tao. The exciting, yang emotions of eagerness, enthusiasm, delight, happiness, ecstasy, and bliss tell us we're moving forward splendidly, also in harmony with Tao.

Negative Emotions: Catalysts for Growth

So, why do we have negative, painful emotions instead of just positive, pleasurable ones? Physical pain is a distress signal that some part of our body needs help. So, too, emotional pain is a distress signal that some aspect of our life needs help. The word *emotion* comes from the Latin word *emovere*, meaning to move out, move away. Despair, worry, fury, jealousy, and terror are marvelous teachers, motivating us with their sting to *move out, move away* and into harmony, joy, and courage.

The tragedy of modern life is that so many of us don't allow ourselves to feel the natural pain, and learn the lessons, of the turbulent emotions. We waste our precious time paralyzed by fear, denial, and repression. We self-medicate with food, alcohol, prescription and recreational drugs, electronic toys, entertainment, sex, overwork, and the media. Our bodies pay the price in discomfort, malfunction, and disease. Our minds pay the price in separation and alienation from our true selves. As Eckhart Tolle says: "Every addiction arises from an unconscious refusal to face and move through your own pain. . . . You are using something or somebody to cover up your pain."²

Reconnecting to Our True Feelings

If we are experiencing this alienation from our feelings, doing the Six Healing Sounds and Inner Smile daily will reconnect us to our internal organs; they, in turn, will restore our awareness of our true feelings. How long will this take? We can't give you a time frame, because each person is unique. However, most people feel calmer and more relaxed the first time they do these practices. Some people don't feel an obvious change for a few weeks or even a few months. But be assured, you will be changing your emotional and physical energy to a healthier state, even though the change may be subtle at first. Mantak Chia's forty-five years of practicing and teaching the Healing Sounds and Inner Smile, and Dena's twenty-six years, have convinced us of their benefit. Not one student has ever complained that they don't work. Those who use them as a daily tool always marvel at their healing power.

Facing, learning from, and transforming our negative feelings is an act of courage. It's a conscious choice that takes patience, self-honesty, forgiveness, and determination. It requires a commitment of time — to untie those emotions that have bound us up. Ultimately, we will save time, by having greater happiness, greater health, and a longer life. This demanding process is the crucible that transmutes negative energies into happiness and harmony. Our suffering is no longer a tragedy. It becomes the fuel that molds us into better human beings. It's a form of purification. And having endured and transcended emotional pain, we have more compassion for others who are still lost in turmoil. Chi kung (qigong) gives us many powerful and practical methods for igniting the fire beneath the crucible of transformation. The Six Healing Sounds and the Inner Smile are two of the most basic and important ones.

Notes

1. Ronald P. Beesley, *Esoteric Christianity* (Kent, England: White Lodge Publications, 1975), pp. 36–40. This is a close paraphrase of what Beesley says.
2. Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1997), p. 127.