

Diligence and Well-Being

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Notation: Numbering of Figures follows the numbering of the Section they are in. This means that in this paper, for example, there is no Figure 2 or 3.

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1. Diligence and Well-Being

In Buddhist psychology there are six teachings on the concept of Paramita, and these include:

- Dana Paramita (see web-article: D2: Dana Paramita) and
- Virya Paramita.

A paramita can be regarded as a means to the perfection / perfect realisation [Hanh 1998 p 192] of Well-Being. Thich Nhat Hanh describes Virya Paramita in term of diligence / energy / continuous practice [Hanh 1998 p 206].

The Chinese character for paramita embraces the idea of crossing to the other side of a river; the other side is the side of harmony and Well-Being. The side we are on at present is the side of strife, suffering, and distress. We can only get to the other side by our own efforts – so, metaphorically, we ourselves have to do the swimming or the rowing!

- In this context it is somewhat akin to Autogenic Training and Mental Training; no one else can do it for us.

As background to diligence, we can say that we have deep down within us many different seeds which reside in our Store Consciousness. (Store here means that we are not normally aware of them; i.e. below consciousness – see D3 on web: “Store Consciousness and Watering our Positive Seeds”). These seeds may be positive, neutral, negative and / or toxic.

All of these seeds can be watered, in which case they will rise up and manifest in Mind Consciousness (i.e. we become consciously aware of them). We have a choice as to which seeds we water. If our default position is one of increased Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) afferent activity, we will tend to be watering negative / toxic seeds; and the resulting negativity¹ will feed on itself.

If, on the other hand, our default position is increased PSNS afferent activity with the associated increased Social Engagement [Porges 2011] and nurturing / CARE circuits [Panksepp 1998], we will be watering the positive, wholesome and life enhancing seeds within us.

In terms of affect regulation, Virya Paramita can be divided into four aspects.

A. We refrain from watering the negative / toxic seeds. Certain life-styles, behaviours, and assumptions about ourselves can very easily water such negative seeds – such as watching unwholesome films / TV; reading toxic material, and ingesting toxic foods / fluids. In this way we can potentially prevent these negative emotions from arising. This requires diligence.

Avoid

B. If negative seeds do arise, such as hatred, ill-will towards others, and jealousy, we have skillful means to overcome them, such as:

Become Mindful

- i. Acknowledging their presence, rather than pretending they are not there. This overlaps with the practice of Affect Labelling [Creswell et al 2007; Lieberman et al 2007; and see B12 on web] – perhaps better described as “Naming and Taming” [Siegel 2010B pp 116; 246; 286]: we label and name whatever emotion / feeling arises.
- ii. We can practise a Partial Exercise, the Three Minute Exercise, or do a full Autogenic Sequence.
- iii. /

¹ Increased SNS afferent activity is associated with, in general terms, negative affect [Craig 2015]; and such negative affect (e.g. anxiety; anger; ill will towards others) will tend to water the negative / toxic seeds within us). By way of contrast, increased Para-Sympathetic Nervous System (PSNS) afferent activity will be associated, in general terms, with watering the positive and wholesome seeds within us [Craig 2015].

- iii. Changing the Peg. This involves replacing the toxic / negative feelings with a positive emotion / affect ².

C. We can, through daily diligence, water the positive seeds within us such as: CARE; nurturing; compassion; generosity; mindfulness. Such daily practice will include some form of Mental Training – for example: Autogenic Training and / or Meditation. These have a calming effect that is associated with Rest, Repair, and Recuperation; and facilitate our Reflective Function [Knox 2003 / 2012 pp 138 – 166]. Note also that:

CARE

- ☸ Positive Imagination and Visualisations can facilitate positive affect and watering the positive seeds within us [Holmes 2009; also see B9 on web].

D. Once positive seeds have become manifest in Mind Consciousness, we can – by skilful means – allow them to stay active for longer periods. We can learn to savour them and be in the present moment, without rush [see also Bryant & Veroff 2007].

Duration

Figure 1 below schematically depicts this four-fold approach to Well-Being.

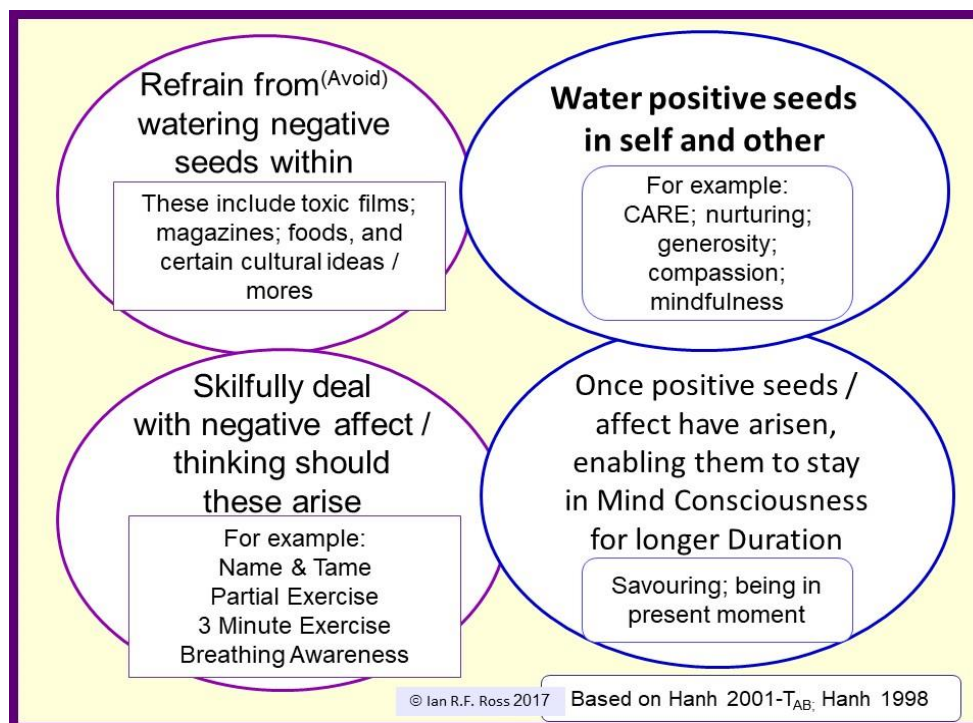


Figure 1

The Four-fold approach of Diligence
Diligence / Energy / Continuous Practice
(Virya Paramita)

We can, through mental training, become more diligent; we will return to this theme in Section 5. However, as indicated above, negative Procedural Learned Tendencies can inhibit this ability. This can be overcome with diligent Mental Training – which facilitates reflection [Knox 2003 / 2012] and Changing the Peg. Sections 2 and 3 deal with these two modalities respectively.

² See Section 3 on Changing the Peg. Note also that Mental Training facilitates our ability to reframe / re-appraise situations (see Figure 5).

2. Diligence and Procedural Learned Tendencies

Procedural Learned Tendencies (PLT) are unconscious behaviours / postures / affects that we may develop as a result of childhood experiences; they can be negative, neutral, or positive [Ogden 2009; Ogden & Fisher 2015; see also B17 on website].

If we have been blessed with “good enough” parents [Winnicott 1960 pp 145-149], watering positive seeds may be relatively easy – with some diligence. If we have suffered from Separation Distress and / or trauma / abuse, this may well be much more problematic, as we may, for example, suffer from a hypervigilant state [Dobbin & Ross³2012] and / or a Procedural Learned Tendency [Ogden 2009; Ogden & Fisher 2015] . These PLTs may have been adaptive in our childhood, but as adults they can greatly hinder our well-being.

For example, as a child we may have loved painting, and become excited each time the paints were brought out. But say that, not infrequently, we made a mess on the kitchen table, and for this we were regularly shouted at by one of our parents. Then, over time, we may unconsciously come to associate our creativity and urge to paint with excitement *and* anxiety. The anxiety then becomes wired into our system. This is a classic PLT. At the time, it may have had a survival value in that the anxiety may have stopped us asking for the paints – and so no mess and so no verbal (or possibly physical) violence against us.

- Later on as an adult we may have developed a wish to take up painting again, yet this is associated within us with uncomfortable feelings (anxiety, heart racing etc) because the PLT from childhood has been triggered.
- So our creativity, which for another child might have watered her or his positive seeds, in us is associated with increased SNS afferent activity – and so waters negative seeds (e.g. FEAR or a feeling that we are not loved).

Procedural Learned Tendencies⁴ are unconscious tendencies that can affect our whole being; our response, our behaviours, our relationships with others and our body postures. We may therefore develop, for example, habitual postures in certain situations.....

For example, if proximity-seeking behaviour such as reaching out and making eye contact were consistently responded to in a mis-attuned or negative manner, we will eventually begin to⁵ predict that there will be unpleasant consequences if we seek proximity. Then we may literally stop reaching out to others and avoid making eye contact. In turn, others may not notice our desire to connect and thus fail to respond in an attuned manner, confirming our predictions. If standing upright with our heads held high brought unwanted attention, abuse, or shame, we learn to slump or keep our head down in a nonassertive posture. Such a posture in and of itself reflects and sustains the early learning, restricting upgrading meaning and predictions. Physical actions such as these continue long after circumstances have changed, even when they are ill-suited for current situations and relationships. The predictions that shape these actions are not challenged, or if they are, the physical habits that reflect and sustain the out-dated predictions often inhibit their full transformation.

Ogden and Fisher 2015 pp 28-29

³ No relation to Ian Ross

⁴ For clarification: a PLT depends upon a procedural memory. In a different domain, learning to ride a bicycle is an example of a procedural memory – the body learns unconsciously to balance, and so we no longer have to think consciously about our balance. In the present context, PLTs are unconscious modalities that affect our Well-Being.

⁵ Unconsciously [IR]

During the early weeks of Autogenic Training, the individual may become aware of various bodily tensions – and this may be in the form of Autogenic Reactions during, or shortly after finishing, a Standard Exercise sequence. It is not that the the Autogenic Training per se is causing such tensions, rather that with mindful awareness we are increasingly becoming attuned to the actual state of the body – and so picking up, for example, SNS afferent signals from tense muscles that we previously had not been aware of. This may require sensitive handling by the Autogenic Therapist – in a nurturing environment [see, for example Rodin 2005].

Gradually, with on-going practice, these SNS afferents will reduce as PSNS afferent activity increases.

There are, of course, countless childhood experiences which can result in negative PLTs in adulthood. This may well result, as indicated above, in a background default neuro-physiology of increased SNS afferent activity. Consequently this will have an impact on our four fold approach to Virya Paramita. Yet, with persistence, diligence, and a commitment to wholesome mental training, we can change.

The systematic training of the mind – the cultivation of happiness, the genuine inner transformation by deliberately selecting and focusing on positive mental states and challenging negative mental states, is possible because of the very structure and function of the brain..... Neuroscientists have documented the fact that the brain can design new patterns, new combinations of nerve cells and neurotransmitters (chemicals that transmit messages between nerve cells) in response to new input. In fact, our brains are malleable, ever changing, reconfiguring their wiring according to new thoughts and experiences.

Howard Cutler 1998 p 31

3. Changing the Peg⁶ - some reflections

(One of the skilful means of reducing negative affect / feelings once they have arisen)

3.1: Introduction to Changing the Peg.

The concept of Changing the Peg comes from Buddhist psychology, and so has been around for over two millennia. Our perceptions of ourselves and the world can be misguided or wrong – this is often not our fault, and may reflect trans-generational negative Habit Energies / Procedural Learned Tendencies that distort our view, thoughts and feelings. As a result, we are, as it were, looking and experiencing the world through a dark / distorted lens. This will then reinforce our negative perceptions of life – just as a perturbed lake / loch distorts what it is reflecting.

It is suggested that negative mind states, including destructive and / or negative emotions, can be overcome by changing our inner mental state to one of a positive emotion / affect (Hanh 1998 p 207-209). This switch in our mental state is called changing the peg. Interestingly, Spinoza developed a similar concept in which he stated that we can overcome a negative affect not by reason alone, but by 'reason-induced-emotion' [Damasio 2003 p 12]. Spinoza, in his Ethics, says: "*An affect cannot be restrained or neutralised except by a contrary affect that is stronger than the affect to be restrained*" [Spinoza 1677; (Ethics Part I: proposition 7, quoted by Damasio 2003 p 12), Damasio 2003 p 11-12; Ross 2005X p 30-34].

⁶ The following is an adapted extract from the Glossary of E-03 on this website

Studies in neuro-science support this concept; positive affects tend to act as anti-dotes to the informational substances associated with such negative mind states – for example, anxiety, grief, and anger (Panksepp 1998 e.g. pp 201-205; Ross 2005X p 31-32).

In addition, meditation, and so by extrapolation the Autogenic State:

- a. activates the Left Frontal Lobe (pre-frontal cortex) region of the brain, and this in itself reduces amygdala activity (especially fear / anxiety circuits) – and dissipates any pre-existing negative affect [Davidson 2003B pp 212-338; Ross 2010 pp 147-149]
- b. increases PSNS afferent activity – and this is associated with increased positive affect [Craig 2015].

3.2: Changing the Peg as metaphor.

“Changing the peg” can be seen as a Buddhist metaphor for the concept of dealing effectively with negative mind states / afflictions. In olden times, a carpenter would use a peg to connect two blocks of wood together. If the peg became rotten, the carpenter would replace it with a new, wholesome peg [Hanh 2007 p 96].

- In the same way, if we are suffering from a negative / unwholesome affect, it can be overcome by replacing it with a positive wholesome affect – in the context of Meditation and Mindfulness.

Hanh suggests that a better modern-day metaphor for changing the peg might be that of changing a CD. If the CD (or DVD) is negative / toxic, we can replace it with a positive / wholesome one.

- In Affective Neuro-science, Panksepp notes that activation of, for example, the CARE-circuits can release informational substances (e.g. oxytocin) that act as antidotes to the FEAR- and RAGE-circuits [Panksepp 1998]. We could say that, by extrapolation, Panksepp’s research supports this ancient concept of changing the peg.

I like the original concept of changing the peg; partly because the transformation only comes about by our own effort (imagining that we are the carpenter actually changing the peg). Changing the peg from a negative affect to a positive affect requires effort, and only we can do this. For the carpenter, this required skill, patience, and time. Changing a CD does not really require much effort.

While doing an annual bike overhaul today (25th June 2017), I came up with an alternative metaphor that I think Thich Nhat Hanh would also like.

Rohloff gears and changing the oil

There is a wonderful bike gear produced in Germany by Rohloff (e.g. the Speedhub 500/14). This requires an oil change every year or 5,000 km. It is a bit like a modern version of the old three speed Sturmey-Archer Gear, only the Rohloff system has 14 gears rather than three or four. This means it has a gear range that is similar to the more familiar Derailleur gears.

The oil change for the Rohloff requires some effort and some time, and can be a bit mucky; yet it then sets up the bike for another year or so. If the oil is not changed, this can do great damage to the gear mechanism as it gradually becomes clogged with dirt and muck – and could eventually seize up.

In the same way, if we do not transform negative / unwholesome affect, we ourselves can seize up mentally / become toxic.

3.3: Changing the Peg refracted through the Transactional Analysis model of Ego States.

Transactional Analysis posits three Ego States that we all have within us. These are:

- Parent Ego State
- Adult Ego State
- Child Ego State.

Ego States are notated with a capital letter. Thus Parent, to distinguish from parent; Adult, to distinguish from adult; and Child, to distinguish from child. What follows is a very simplified version of what can become quite a complex model.

As adults, we all carry all three Ego States within us. Some Ego States are wholesome, some are not. For example, the Parent Ego State can manifest as:

- Critical Parent, in which our own parents' critical and dismissive attitude to us as a child may have become internalised within us; in this case, whatever we do or think may be criticised by the Critical Parent (Ego State) within us.

On the other hand, the Parent Ego State can manifest as:

- ☸ Nurturing Parent, in which we have internalised the nurturing and CARE-ing qualities of one or both parents. In this situation, in times of stress / distress, our internal Nurturing Parent [NP] shows compassion and tenderness towards us. The NP will, in neuro-physiological terms, be activating our CARE and nurturing circuits.

Most of us carry within us both a Critical Parent and a Nurturing Parent – in different proportions depending on the childhood family dynamics.

In the case of our Child Ego State, this can manifest as:

- Adaptive Child. This is probably not wholesome in the long term, but may have been adaptive in early childhood to protect us in an impossible situation. Such an Adaptive Child overlaps with Winnicott's False Self [Winnicott 1960], and can be a powerful driver of negative Procedural Learned Tendencies. It can result in us as adults being in the habit of watering negative seeds within ourselves and others.

On the other hand, our Child Ego State can manifest as:

- ☸ Free Child, in which our Creativity and PLAY-fulness are allowed to develop to the full. (Note that there can be negative manifestations of our Free Child – such as “driving a motor-cycle at full speed along a crowded road”, endangering both self and others [Stewart & Joines 1987 p 24]).

If our inner child is hurting as a result say of some loss (e.g. a relationship break-up – in which we may have mixed feelings of loss and anger), then our inner Nurturing Parent (NP) can take good care of our inner hurt child, and comfort her / him just as a mother (parent) would with her distressed child. The NP as it were becomes the new peg, and the associated CARE-circuits will release eu-molecules [Ross 2010] such as oxytocin, which can be an important first step towards healing deep wounds within.

A negative Habit Energy may manifest within us as a Critical Parent (CP). This will then be watering negative seeds within, as the CP is associated with increased SNS afferent activity (see footnote 1 on page 2).

Transformation towards allowing our Nurturing Parent (NP) to manifest will be associated with increased PSNS afferent activity, and so will be watering the positive / wholesome seeds within.

This is an example of changing the peg. CP results in us *being* the pain and hurt of the child, as each time CP arises so does SNS afferent activity, just as it did when we were actually a child with a real critical parent. A different dynamic arises with NP; as a result of changes in our neuro-physiology brought about by Mental Training / psychotherapy, we are reframing the whole situation from the perspective of our own NP with its associated positive nurturing dynamics. Our NP inter-acts with our CARE circuits, and so takes good care of the negative / toxic states within, as illustrated schematically in Figure 3.

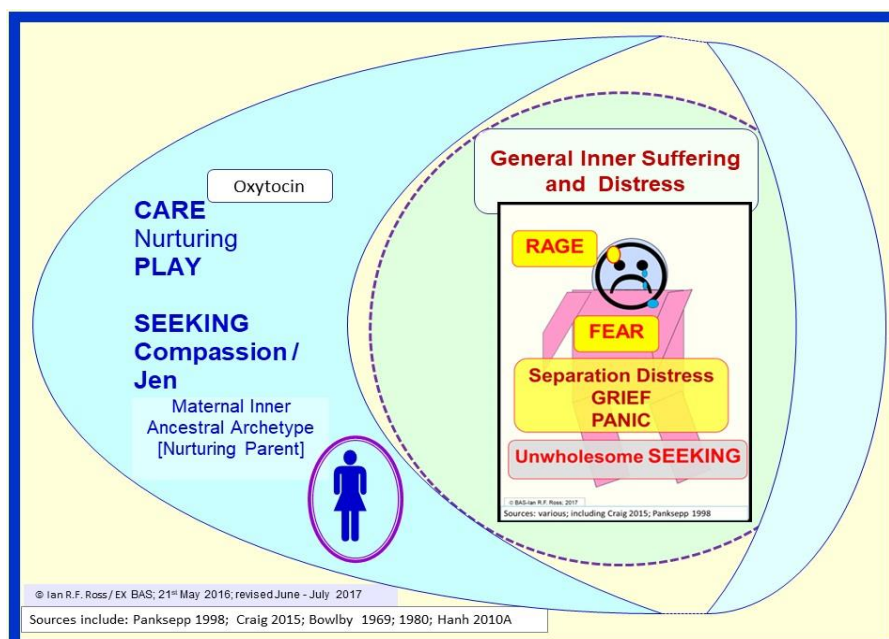


Figure 3

Schematic representation of the Nurturing Archetypal Mother [Nurturing Parent] within, that can reduce distress in our hurt-inner-child

Comments on Figure 3

- i. Our distressed inner child [Adaptive Child] is represented by the child figure on the right.
- ii. Distressing Primary Process Emotions [Panksepp 1998; Panksepp & Biven 2012] depicted are RAGE (anger); FEAR (anxiety); Separation Distress manifesting as PANIC or GRIEF; and possibly unwholesome SEEKING brought about by distorted / negative Procedural Learned Tendencies.
- iii. Mental Training facilitates the development of Diligence and becoming more in contact with our Nurturing Archetypal Mother [Nurturing Parent] within; and thus allowing care and compassion to flow – towards ourselves and others.

Changing the peg can also give us new insights and a new meaning to life.

4. Distressing Emotions and wholesome means for overcoming them

In broad terms, we can look at distressing emotions and how to overcome them from two perspectives.

- i. The Intentional Off Loading Exercises as described by Luthe – and, in a somewhat different context, the popularity of this type of approach in North America with therapists during the 1960s and 1970s⁷. [See, for example, Adam Curtis 2002].
- ii. Meditative traditions in which we shine the spot-light of Mindful Awareness on the arising emotion, without judgement, and acknowledge the emotion as part of us. From this perspective we do not perceive the affect as either good or bad, but more like an epiphenomenon of the human brain that is not our fault per se.

This overlaps with Rumi's poem "The Guest House":

‘This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness, some
momentary awareness comes as an
unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!

Rumi

translated Barks & Moyne 1995**

** Also see: <http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/guesthouse>

In the meditative traditions, our focused attention on the emotion notices that it arises, plateaus, and then gradually subsides [Hanh pp 2012B 43-46]. If it is a distressing emotion, we can gently take good care of it – just as a parent would her distressed child, or an older sibling taking good care of a distressed younger sibling. This approach overlaps with changing the peg, with Spinoza's concept (see above), and with affect labelling [Creswell et al 2007]; that is, naming and taming [Siegel 2010B].

A danger with the Intentional Off Loading approach is that if we are not mindful it can fuel negative / destructive emotions [Hanh 2001 pp 115-117].

It is the roots of anger in you that produce anger. The roots of anger lie in ignorance, wrong perceptions, in the lack of understanding and compassion. When you vent your anger, you simply open the energy that is feeding your anger. The roots of anger are always there, and by expressing anger like that, you are strengthening the roots of anger in yourself. That is the danger of venting.

Hanh 2001A p 116

⁷ This is of interest as it gives a context to the historical period in which Luthe developed the *Intentional Off-Loading Exercises*. At that time in America there was a vogue for therapies which involved some form of "off-loading" [e.g. Fritz Pearls, Esalen Institute; and Werner Hans Erhard who developed the EST institute (Erhard Seminars Training) – see Curtis 2002 for an overview. However, Curtis is a somewhat problematic figure in the context of films purporting to be documentary. My brother Michael comments: "Adam Curtis does not belong among the other authors you cite. From what I have seen of his work he puts forward his own views in a very strong way, but it is not a documentary in the sense of allowing other voices a chance to give a different perspective." Despite these reservations, my own feeling is that the quaternity of films that make up "The Century of the Self" give a very interesting perspective on specifically engineered man-made psychological forces that have been at work in the western world during the last one hundred years.

This can be the equivalent of pouring kerosene on fire [Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, Pema Chödrön's teacher; see also Goleman and the Dalai Lama 2003: Destructive Emotions and How to Overcome them].

Distressing emotions such as anxiety and anger that do not settle with the judicious use of *Intentional Off Loading Exercises* may have their origins in our ancestors, and these affects may have been passed down transgenerationally as negative Habit Energies [Hanh 1998] or Procedural Learned Tendencies [Ogden 2009]. This being the case, such distressing / toxic emotions will not be resolved by Luthe's approach (or if they are, it will tend to be in a temporary and superficial manner⁸).

Thich Nhat Hanh penetrates the fundamental paradoxical limitations of types of off loading exercise (such as anger) in a short section of his book "Peace in Every Step – the path of mindfulness in everyday life" [Hanh 1991 pp 59-60, in a short passage called 'Pillow Bashing'].

Expressing anger is not always the best way to deal with it. In expressing anger we might be practising or rehearsing it, and making it stronger in the depth of our consciousness. Expressing anger to the person we are angry at can cause a lot of damage.

Some of us may prefer to go into our own room, lock the door, and punch a pillow. We call this "getting in touch with our anger." But I don't think this is getting in touch with our anger at all. In fact, I don't think it is even getting in touch with our pillow. If we are really in touch with the pillow, we know what a pillow is and we won't hit it. Still, this technique may work temporarily because while pounding the pillow, we expend a lot of energy, and after a while, we are exhausted^{PB} and we feel better. But the roots of our anger are still intact, and if we go out and eat some nourishing food, our energy will be renewed. If the seeds of our anger are watered again, we will have to pound the pillow again.

Pillow pounding may provide some relief, but it is not very long-lasting. In order to have real transformation, we have to deal with the roots of our anger – looking deeply into it causes. If we don't, the seeds of anger will grow again. If we practise mindful living, planting new, healthy, wholesome seeds, they will take care of our anger, and they may transform it without our asking them to do so.

Hanh 1991 pp 59-60

⁸ The first practice of Diligence in the context of Virya Paramita is to stop, avoid, or refrain from watering negative / destructive seeds (affects) within us. If the seeds of anger in us originate in our parents / ancestors, then true healing can only come about through compassion and mindfulness for both ourselves and them. They too may have been "victims" of transgenerational negative Habit Energies passed down to them. We are a continuation of our parents and ancestors, so for deep healing to come about mindful compassion embraces them as well.

^{PB}This is an interesting statement as it resonates with Margot Sunderland's comments that the practice of leaving a distressed child to cry because they will eventually stop crying is highly problematic. They eventually stop crying, not because they feel better, but because they are exhausted. Distressing Primary Process emotions – such as Separation distress and FEAR – are not healed in this way [Sunderland 2006 / 2016].

Reservations about this type approach have also been expressed in several studies over the last couple or so decades. [e.g. Bushman et al 1999; Bushman 2002; Verona et al 2008]. Bushman et al, writing in 1999, were particularly concerned about the way the media at that time were advocating catharsis as a therapeutically efficacious approach. They conclude their research paper as follows:

Our findings suggest that media messages advocating catharsis may be worse than useless. They encourage people to vent their anger through aggressive action, and perhaps they even foster the displacement of aggression toward new, innocent third parties. In our research, people who received pro-catharsis⁹ messages first chose to vent their anger by hitting a punching bag, they then they went on to show elevated aggression toward the person at whom they were angry. They even showed increased aggression toward an innocent third party. Pop writers may think they are offering helpful, sage advice on affect regulation, but the effect of advocating catharsis may be to cause a general increase in aggressive behaviour. Perhaps media endorsement to cathartic release should come to be regarded as a potential danger to public health, peace, and social harmony.

Bushman et al 1999 p 375

In the context of diligence (Virya Paramita) and Well-Being, catharsis is an approach that we need to be cautious of, or avoid.

Stressors can predispose us to aggression [Verona et al 2008]; we all tend to be more irritable when under stress. The psychological shift [Schultz & Luthe 1969 p 1] allows for a shift from SNS dominated afferent activity to PSNS dominated afferent activity, and this can thus act as an antidote to the stressors of life. It is possible that the *Intentional* Off-Loading of aggression (as taught and advocated by Luthe), in the context of on-going Autogenic Standard Exercise practice, may be beneficial.

At the same time, it is important that we are aware that making, for example, an angry face sets in motions the physiological correlates of anger [Ekman 2003A p 103; Ekman 2003B pp 17-37; also see Ross 2005 p 14]. It is probably not possible to carry out an intentional anxiety or anger off-loading exercise without increasing SNS afferent activity – which will per se be associated with increased negative affect [Craig 2015].

In the long term, we need to let go of the corrosive quality of aggression, and move towards compassion and understanding of the source of the aggression. Such an approach is discussed further in the related web-article E-03 in Appendix E, particularly Section 16.5-4: “A Mindful Psychotherapeutic approach.”

Regular (daily) Autogenic practice will facilitate increased PSNS afferent activity and the associated CARE circuits, which are linked to nurturing and compassion for ourselves and others.

⁹ In their research, Bushman et al were aware that suggesting to the research subjects that venting anger may have beneficial outcomes might then become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as the subject might then strongly believe that their expressed aggression would help. However, this was not the case: “We found that the pro-catharsis message led to higher levels of interpersonal aggression, even after people might have achieved catharsis by hitting the punching bag” [Bushman et al 1999 p 373].

Negative Habit Energies / Procedural Learned Tendencies can be overcome by Mindful practice which links in compassion for our suffering self with the suffering of our ancestors. This can then bring about transformation, and links in with the whole concept of Inter-Being¹⁰. [For a moving description of this see Hanh: 2012A: A Pebble for Your Pocket *Mindful Stories for Children and Grown-ups* pp 38-48 ; see also: D11 in this series.]

Diligence includes being diligent about our present mental /emotional / feeling state, and being compassionate with ourselves. This is part of mindfulness:

Mindfulness is not there to suppress. Mindfulness is there to welcome and recognise.... "Hello, my little anger, I know you are there....."
 "I am aware that I'm angry, and I'm aware that anger is in me." So, mindfulness is touching, recognising, greeting, and embracing. It does not fight or suppress. The role of mindfulness is like the role of a mother, embracing and soothing the suffering child. You have to take very good care of it. When it is recognising anger, mindfulness is there. "Hello there, my anger, I know you are there. I will take good care of you, don't worry." The moment mindfulness is there, you are safe, because the energy of compassion** is born in you.

Hanh 2001A pp 118-119

** in original, "the Buddha" rather than compassion - IR

This is a good example of changing our perspective, and so indirectly of changing the peg. The concept and efficacy of changing the peg is underpinned, neuro-physiologically, in significant areas of research, including the work of Panksepp [1988], Porges [2001; 2011] and Craig [2015].

5. Mental Training /

¹⁰ Inter-Being is an ancient understanding that everything in the cosmos is interlinked [Hanh 2012B]. As human beings, we are full of non-self elements; such as the sun, iron, clouds, and oxygen. Without these we could not be. It is this concept that gave rise to the notion of empty-ness. Empty of what? Empty of a permanent, separate, self; for our self can only come to be with non-self elements.

"Interbeing" is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix "inter" with the verb "to be", we have a new verb, "inter-be". If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and the sunshine inter-are.

Hanh 2012B pp 55-56

5. Mental Training and Diligence

Mental Training such as Autogenic Training can facilitate both mindfulness [D1 on website] and diligence. Some of the neurophysiological underpinnings for this are depicted schematically in Figure 5 below.

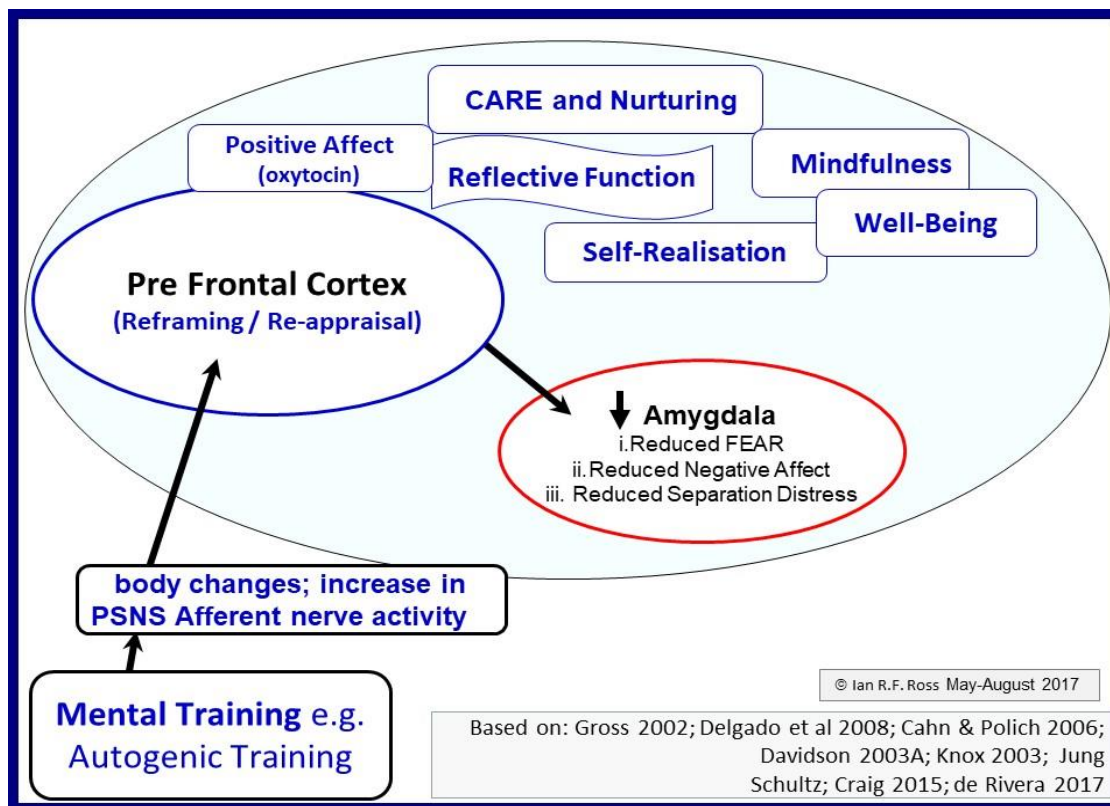


Figure 5

Some neuro-circuits associated with diligence

Comments on Figure 5

- i. In order for us to develop diligence, we need to train the mind – just as an athlete trains the body.
- ii. Wholesome Mental Training transforms our underlying neuro-physiology, with an increase in PSNS afferent activity.
- iii. This in turn alters the dynamics of the Pre-Frontal Cortex, as a result of which we are better able to re-appraise / reframe situations [Gross 2002; Delgado et al 2008; Cahn & Pollich 2006].
- iv. PFC activity in this context:
 - a) decreases amygdala activity in terms of anxiety and anger, and reduces SNS afferent activity;
 - b) facilitates the release of oxytocin – and the linked CARE and nurturing circuits (for both self nurturing and our nurturing of others);
 - c) increases our Reflective Function [Knox 2003]; and so we can increasingly form a coherent narrative¹¹ of our own childhood;
 - d) increases movement towards Self Realisation [Schultz; quoted by Wallnöfer 2000] and ethically based mindfulness [de Rivera 2017 p 25; see also B19 on website].

¹¹ Coherent Narrative of our Childhood: “The best predictor of a child’s security of attachment is not what happened to his / her parents as children, but rather how his parents made sense of those childhood experiences.” [Siegel 2010B p 171]

Virya Paramita is an extraordinary and deep practice; and indicates that the greatest minds of millennia ago were the Newtons and Einsteins of their day. Human beings can very easily water the negative seeds in themselves and others – including other nations. This can lead to increasing resentment, anger, war and great suffering. Negative Ruminations and “pursuing the past” [Hanh 1990] are aspects of watering the negative / toxic seeds within, and can be regarded in terms of “inappropriate attention” – because such attention can make matters worse by allowing the second arrow¹² [Hanh 2012B pp 117-119] to penetrate deeper and deeper.

The practice of Diligence leads to watering the positive seeds / affects in ourselves and others, and so can facilitate well-being for each of us, society, and the planet. Diligence inter-is with “appropriate attention” [Hanh 2012B pp 115-117].

Wholesome Psychological Practices and Therapies axiomatically require an ethical basis. Approaches that promote individualism at the expense of others are not wholesome, and have fuelled consumerism, greed, and non-care for the planet during the last several decades [see also Curtis 2002]. In this sense they can unconsciously activate the Toxic Trio¹³.

The practices of Dana Paramita and Virya Paramita have an implicit ethical basis in that they embrace wholeness for each person, society, and mother earth.

¹² Second Arrow: a Buddhist concept that reframes afflictions. The first arrow is the negative stimulus, such as an angry remark by another person; the second arrow is the self-inflicted arrow that we can inflict upon ourselves by negatively ruminating / interpreting the event / feeling (first arrow). See D8 on web.

¹³ Toxic Trio [Extract adapted from Glossary of revised (2017) E-03 on web].

Human suffering is deeply rooted in both our neuro-physiology and in the assumptions that we make about the world. Ekman [Ekman et al 2005¹³] wrote a wonderful succinct article about human suffering (dukha) which focused particularly on what is regarded as the Toxic Trio, which are:

- Hatred and Ill-will towards others
- Craving
- The delusion that we have a permanent separate self – in the sense that nothing exists in isolation.
 - ☉ Such a delusion dissolves with the realisation of Inter-Being, and that we ourselves are full of non-self elements. Everything is interlinked with everything else. (Also see below).

Hatred and ill-will towards others can be seen in terms of neo-cortical elaborations of the Primary Process emotions RAGE and FEAR [Panksepp 1998] – and see Glossary Figure G-10 in web article E-03].

Craving, in the sense of ego-motivated craving, can be seen in terms of a toxic manifestation of the SEEKING system.

In Buddhist psychology, it is considered that the idea that we have a permanent separate self is a delusion. This can be a slippery and difficult concept to grasp. Behind this is the idea that we are full of non-self modalities like the sun, the clouds, rain, and elements from long-extinct stars (e.g. the iron in our blood / haemoglobin). So if we are full of these non-self aspects of our planet and the cosmos, then this means we are empty of a separate self. We inter-are** with everything else.

**See footnote 10 (page 12) in present document.

6. Thematically Linked themes on web: www.atdynamics.co.uk

B1	Bears, Imagination, and Well-Being
B12	Affect Labelling, Autogenic Training, and reducing Emotional Distress
B6	The Effects of Positive Imagination on Anxiety and Affect [Based on Holmes 2009]
B17	Windows of Affect Tolerance – <i>Reflections on Childhood Distress, Procedural Learned Tendencies, and the Therapeutic Dyad in the context of Primary Process Emotions and the Polyvagal Theory</i> [based on Ogden]
B18	The Space to Choose – reflections on the gap between the stimulus and the response
C2	Resonance Circuits, Mirror Neurones, and Mindfulness
C12	Presence in Mind – <i>Autonomic Afferents and Well-Being</i>
D1	Reflections on foundations for Mindful Living
D3	Store Consciousness and Watering our Positive Seeds
D8	Duhkha II: The Second Arrow and Sympathetic Afferents [2017]
D9	Duhkha III: Reducing Duhkha, Experiential Modes, and Intuitive Working Memory [2017]
D11	Sukha: Paths of Well-Being, PSNS Afferents, and Inner Warmth – <i>from Duhkha to Sukha</i>
E-03	Look at the Cypress Tree – <i>Autonomic Afferents and Well Being</i> (BAS Annual Lecture 2016)

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¹⁴ Extract from Wikipedia: '*The Century of the Self* is a 2002 British television "documentary"^D series by filmmaker Adam Curtis. It focuses on the work of psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud, and PR consultant Edward Bernays. In episode one, Curtis says, "This series is about how those in power have used Freud's theories to try and control the dangerous crowd in an age of mass democracy." It goes on to look at the way the growth of consumerism in the west has been fueled by psychologically manipulated advertising in which the primary aim is profit for companies; and how similar techniques have been used to win elections.

➤ ^D Please also see footnote 7 on page 9.

¹⁵ No relation to Ian Ross

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