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Thanks to Annie Sturgeon and Michael Ross for their proof reading and most helpful suggestions. As usual, any errors / omissions are, of course, my responsibility.

1. Introduction:

1.1 Overview

In the web article F 4: “Some Consequences of Blocking Feelings.....of not allowing ourselves to feel the feeling”, we review some of the consequences of not allowing ourselves to feel the feeling. Damasio describes, or notates, feelings as the subjective awareness that arises out of an underlying emotion [Damasio 1999; 2003].

In childhood, we may have been brought up to believe that emotions are unwholesome and not to be trusted – and so come to “despise emotions and emotional people”¹ [de Rivera 2018 p 109 (2017 p 107)]. This formulation that emotions are “dangerous” or to be despised is not helpful; they developed during eons of evolution to protect us – and they are there to give us information. Our emotions are therefore crucial for our Well-Being, whatever they are, including, for example: anxiety, fear, jealousy, envy, anger, sadness. Meditation on our distressing feelings, whatever they are, can result in us “taking on board”, as it were, the information that these raw emotions are highlighting for us: this is done in such a way that we do not then act out the distressing emotions.

1.2 Historical Context of Feeling the Feeling Meditation

This essay is based on Luis de Rivera’s approach to Feeling the Feeling Meditation, and he acknowledges the original source of Feeling the Feeling Meditation as going back to the original Buddhist psychology [de Rivera 2018 p 119; see also Hanh 2006]. In the ancient text, feeling is described not so much as the consequence of an emotion, but rather as the feeling that underlies the emerging emotion. Three types of feeling are described: Pleasant; Unpleasant; and Neutral; [Nyanaponika Thera² 1962 pp 68-71 and 121-122; Anālayo 2003 p 157-172; Hanh 2006 p 65].

While these discussions embrace both feelings and emotions, it may be helpful to be aware that we may simply be experiencing a pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feeling *without* a specific emotion manifesting – or *us* being able to name what the underlying emotion is [de Rivera 2018 p 120]. It is probably true to say that in evolutionary terms, such pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feelings will have predated emotions³.

1.3 /

¹ De Rivera regards ‘Despising emotions and emotional people’ as the first mistake that we may make about emotions – as a result of cultural assumptions that percolate into us as we grow up. The second mistake he suggests is to see emotions in terms of being good or bad, positive or negative. The important thing is to realise that the emotions arise to give us important information as to what is going on within us; we can then, through mental training, respond to this information in a mindful way [See Web article: D 1: Reflections on foundations for Mindful Living].

² Nyanaponika Thera uses the term indifferent rather than neutral.

³ Or at least pre-dated the non-Primary Process Emotions. Primary Process Emotions are: FEAR, RAGE, SEEKING, LUST, Separation Distress (PANIC / GRIEF); CARE (nurturing), and PLAY [Panksepp 1998; Panksepp & Biven 2012].

1.3 Feelings and the information they are carrying

One of the main aims of Feeling the Feeling Meditation is to acknowledge and recognise the feeling with Mindful Awareness, stay with the feeling: this allows the feeling to run its course – just as a rainstorm has a beginning, middle, and end. We are then left with the information that the feeling was intended to give us [de Rivera 2018 p 108].

*** **

1.4 Blocking feelings is generally unhelpful for Well-Being

In Feeling the Feeling Meditation we focus on a specific form of meditation in which we observe⁴ the feeling in the feeling. Luis de Rivera calls this Feeling Meditation. This is the reverse of blocking the emotion / feeling.

We can represent blocking feelings schematically thus:



Figure 1.4A

Blocking feelings denies us useful information

Now, nature has provided us with emotions / feelings for good reasons. This means we need to allow the feeling, and live experience it. Feeling the Feeling Meditation greatly aids in this process:

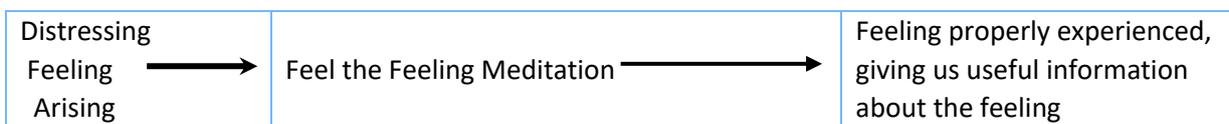


Figure 1.4B

Feeling the Feeling Meditation allows us to gain useful information regarding the feeling

Blocking our feelings is not healthy and tends to have negative outcomes.

- Feeling the Feeling Meditation is an antidote to blocking such feelings.
- The Three Minute exercise⁵ is a good preparation for what follows.

2. Feeling the Feeling Meditation

2.1 Preamble

This exercise can be a very helpful approach to distressing feelings once we have completed the basic Autogenic Training course. For this reason, it is not introduced until Session 8 or later.

⁴ See [Participant Observer](#)

⁵ See Section 7: Appendix 1

Feeling the Feeling

Here, we meditate on the feeling that we are having, or have recently had. We first of all acknowledge the feeling, and accept that this is how we are feeling ([Mindful Acceptance](#)⁶), even if we do not like the feeling – i.e. as in the Rumi Poem: The Guest House⁷. And, at the next appropriate opportunity⁸, we can properly address the matter with a Feeling the Feeling Meditation, in which we consciously observe the Feeling in the Feeling⁹. This is only appropriate once we are regularly practising the Six (Schultz) or Ten (de Rivera) Autogenic Standard Exercises.

Further background comments on Observing the Feeling in the Feeling

- A. As indicated above, it is suggested that we do not adopt this practice until we have become proficient in the Autogenic Standard Exercises (or other “equivalent” meditative practices). Why this stipulation?
- i. Observing the feeling in the feeling may initially be unpleasant.
 - ii. Distressing feelings are generally associated with activation of the flight / fight system and the Sympathetic Nervous System, and the release of, for example, adrenaline and cortisol.
 - iii. Before embarking on becoming curious and examining our distressing feelings, it is very helpful if we have developed our skills in a form of “calming” meditation such as Autogenic Training; this will be associated with an activation of the Para-Sympathetic Nervous system (myelinated vagal part¹⁰) and informational substances [Pert 1997] such as oxytocin and endorphins.
 - o The activation of this Natural Healing System facilitates, and is the basis of:
 - a) Feeling safe [Porges 2017];
 - b) Being able to relate to others in a healthy and wholesome way (Social Engagement) [Porges 2011];
 - c) Activation of CARE (nurturing) and PLAY circuits [Panksepp 1998].
 - iv. The dynamics of iii. above act as antidotes to distressing feelings / emotions [Panksepp 1998; Hanh 1998 in the context of [changing the peg](#) pp 207-208].
 - v. Without an ability to enter into, more or less at will, this Natural Healing System, the Feeling the Feeling meditation can be problematic.
- B. It is suggested that, to start with, we focus on day to day upsets / irritations and not major traumas / upsets (e.g. going back to childhood). These are best left till we have developed skill in Feeling the Feeling Meditation, and / or have found an appropriate psychotherapist who is experienced in such matters.

⁶ Luis de Rivera calls this Passive Acceptance. We simply accept that this is the feeling we have in this present moment, without judgement – and become open to the information that it may reveal to us.

⁷ <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/guest-house/>; also see Segal et al 2013 p 273.

⁸ i.e. when we are e.g. back home and / or in a safe place

⁹ This approach overlaps with the ancient Buddhist teachings of the Four Foundations (Establishments) of Mindfulness [Hanh 2006 ; Nyanaponika Thera 1962; ; de Rivera 2018 p 119]

¹⁰ Porges 2011; 2017

2.2 Outline of Method

- i. We embark on this meditation as soon as we can after we have noticed a strong and distressing feeling arise [de Rivera 2018 p 118].
- ii. We are going to meditate on this specific *feeling* that is distressing us right now, or at the first opportunity after experiencing the distress.
- iii. We need extra time for this meditation; perhaps up to twenty to thirty minutes or so.
- iv. Initially, I suggest that we start with a *single* Autogenic Standard Exercise sequence¹¹.
- v. Then we focus on the feeling itself by allowing ourselves to really experience the feeling in the feeling:
 - Without judgement;
 - With acceptance;
 - Experiencing the live-experience right now of the feeling (e.g. anxiety; anger; jealousy).
 - We stay with this present-moment feeling;
 - We can gently name the feeling (quietly out loud when appropriate).
 - ❖ If we do not quite know what the feeling actually is, that is ok, simply feel the feeling (without specifically naming it).
 - If and when the mind wanders, we simply return to the feeling once we realise the mind has wandered.
 - We keep our focus on the feeling in the feeling, or the bodily awareness of the feeling, wherever it may be in the body¹².
 - We continue this for some ten minutes or so, until it alters in some positive way – or diminishes in intensity.
 - A distressing emotion, if accepted without judgement, can be described in terms of a rainstorm, with a beginning, middle and end [Hendricks 2000 p 47], as illustrated schematically in Figure 2.

Three requirements for Feeling the Feeling Meditation:

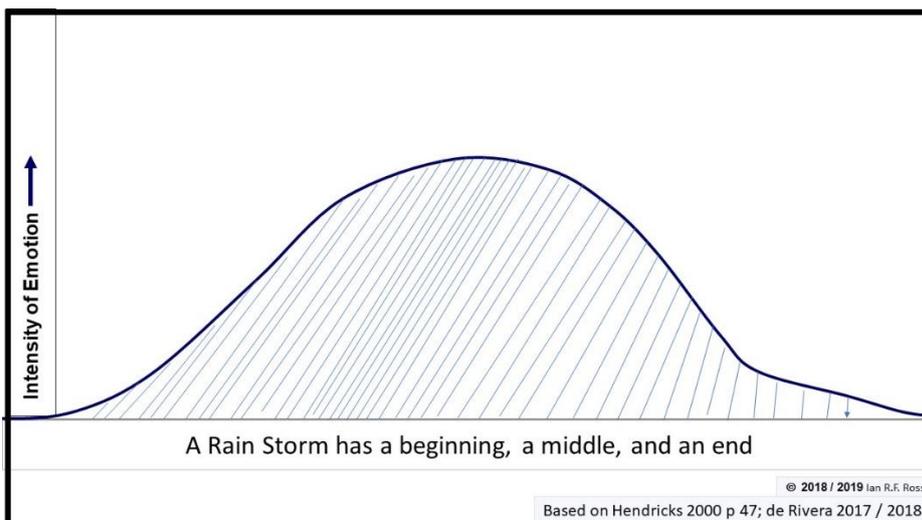
- i. Good grounding in Somato-Sensory Meditation;
- ii. Understanding of the concept of transformation of emotion / feeling into useful information;
- iii. Unbending Intent to practise and master the method¹¹

¹¹ and not the usual three. Once we are familiar with the method, we can, if we like, simply settle down in an appropriate place, in the armchair position, and directly start the feeling the feeling meditation. I have also found that it can be refreshing to do this exercise when quietly walking outside (e.g. in a park, on a quiet road, or when out in the country).

¹² However, do not focus on bodily sensations such as restlessness or palpitations; rather return the focus of attention to feeling the feeling [de Rivera 2018 p 118].

¹¹ See de Rivera 2018 pp 118 and 210 notes 67 & 68. Unbending Intent is an “extremely well defined purpose not countermanded by any conflicting interests or desires” Carlos Castañeda: *The Power of Silence*. Also see: “firm intent” [Frawley 2000 p 7]

Figure 2
Schematic
illustration of
Rainstorm



- vi. We complete the meditation by writing down our experience of it in our training diary / journal.

3. Some further reflections on the meditation

- a) The meditation is on the experience of feeling itself; we allow ourselves to observe the feeling in the feeling.
- It is not about negatively ruminating on the feeling, which simply inflicts the [Second Arrow](#) deeper.
- b) Luis de Rivera comments:

“Full processing of the feeling requires living the feeling without resistance, with all its nuances and intensities, until...” the intensity of the feeling begins to subside. At this stage it is as though the feeling is becoming more like information that we are tuning into, without the distressing affect. “When the feeling becomes simply information, you are able to process this information further by reasoning¹³, and then act appropriately if the circumstances are actual” or letting go if they are imagined* / obsolete.

Adapted from de Rivera 2018 page 126
Quotations direct from de Rivera

- c)* A problem with imagined threats or emotions is that they can still set in motion the physiology of a real threat / emotion. In this sense they can be just as damaging. “A [mental representation](#) produces a physiological change in the body-brain, whatever it is” (paraphrasing de Rivera 2018B). See also:
- B1: Bears, Imagination, and Well-Being in Autogenic Dynamics part of: www.atdynamics.co.uk .

¹³ At this stage, we may begin to sense / understand the feeling in the feeling. Let us say, for example, that we have become irritated / angry. The meditation may at this stage lead to a realisation that the roots of our anger (the anger within the anger) may be, for example, transgenerational Habit Energies, part of a Parent Complex, the “surrounding environment”, hidden resentment and / or misunderstanding / ignorance [Hanh 2006 e.g. pp 80-93].

- d) The essence of the meditation is to keep the focus, our mindful attention, on the Feeling; we notice / observe the feeling in the feeling. As the meditation progresses, various awarenesses may come to mind about the feeling and the situation which are quite unexpected; these may give us a new perspective on the feeling: for example, in the form of insights regarding ourselves and others.
- e) As we focus on, or *observe*, the feeling in the feeling, it can happen that the original feeling morphs into another feeling or awareness – in which case we need to recognise and own the feeling, and reflect on it in due course. This may include a subsequent Feeling the Feeling Meditation on the new feeling – for example, anger arising following a Feeling the Feeling Meditation on shame.
- f) Each of us will experience this type of Meditation in a somewhat different way. The observations given in this article are just that, examples and / or metaphors for the exercise. We can only get the true feel of this meditation through the [vivencia](#), the live experience, of doing it.
- g) And remember:

This form of meditation may at first seem difficult. Many things in life can be difficult – especially to start with. For example, learning to swim, learning to ride a bicycle, and learning to walk; in the latter two, we may frequently fall down or fall off: yet, with encouragement, and perseverance, we mastered these skills. It is the same with Feeling the Feeling Meditation: we need to keep practising and then, like other skills, it becomes easier and more effective. Also, Luis de Rivera encourages us to keep up an attitude of curiosity to any emotions we experience in general, and to this Feeling the Feeling Meditation in particular [based on de Rivera 2018 p 122].

4. Résumé of essence

To recap the essence of observing the Feeling in the Feeling:

Feeling meditation begins by allowing the transformation of emotions into feelings. Continues by letting the feeling evolve without interference into the many varieties of the feeling experience, with all its associations, combinations and shades of nuance and intensity. And finishes when the emotions have completely lost their compelling quality, and the feelings leave the information they intended to deliver from the very beginning.

de Rivera 2018 p 108

Comment on Letting the Feeling Evolve:

- o de Rivera comments that in this meditation we focus on feeling (verb = the process of perception), and not (the) feeling as a noun (e.g. the anger). This meditation involves “keeping the perception (that is, the accepting attention) stable and clear, regardless of the contents”.

de Rivera 2018B 06-03-2018

Luis de Rivera’s comments here are very close to the teachings of Hanh when he discusses the Four Establishments (Foundations) of Mindfulness [Hanh 2006].

There are three sorts of feelings: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. The teaching of this Exercise is to identify and be in touch with these feelings as they arise, endure, and fade away.

Hanh 2006 p 65 in Section on “Exercise for Observing the Feeling.”

Hanh goes on to suggest that we imagine we are by a river:

☸ “To observe the feelings is to sit on the bank of the river of feelings and identify each feeling as it arises, matures, and disappears” [Hanh 2006 p 66].

Feelings are impermanent, like a river¹⁴.

Figure 4A illustrates some of the above processes schematically.

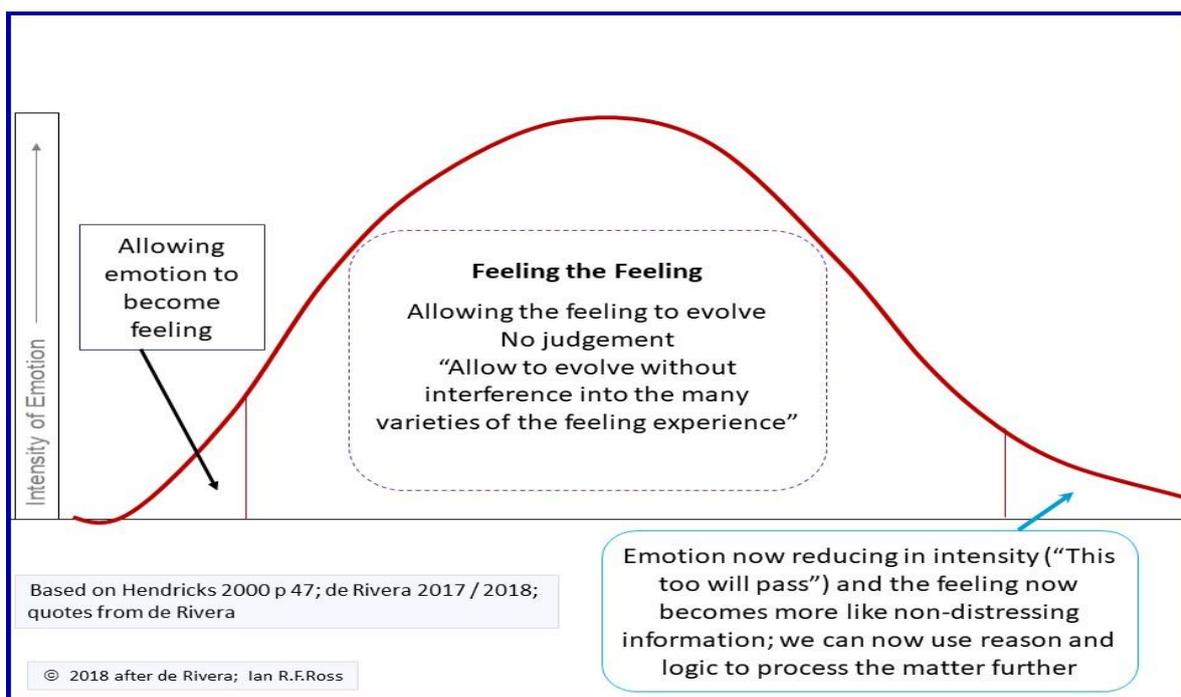


Figure 4A
Diagrammatic Representation of
Feeling the Feeling Meditation

We can reframe /

¹⁴ Cf. Heraclitus: “You can never cross the same river twice.” [Heraclitus of Ephesus circa 535 – c. 475 BPE]

We can reframe Figure 4A in terms of the transformation from:

- the emotion and our urge to (consciously or otherwise) act immediately; to:
- observing the feeling in the feeling, and the underlying information this can then give us.

These dynamics are illustrated in Figure 4B.

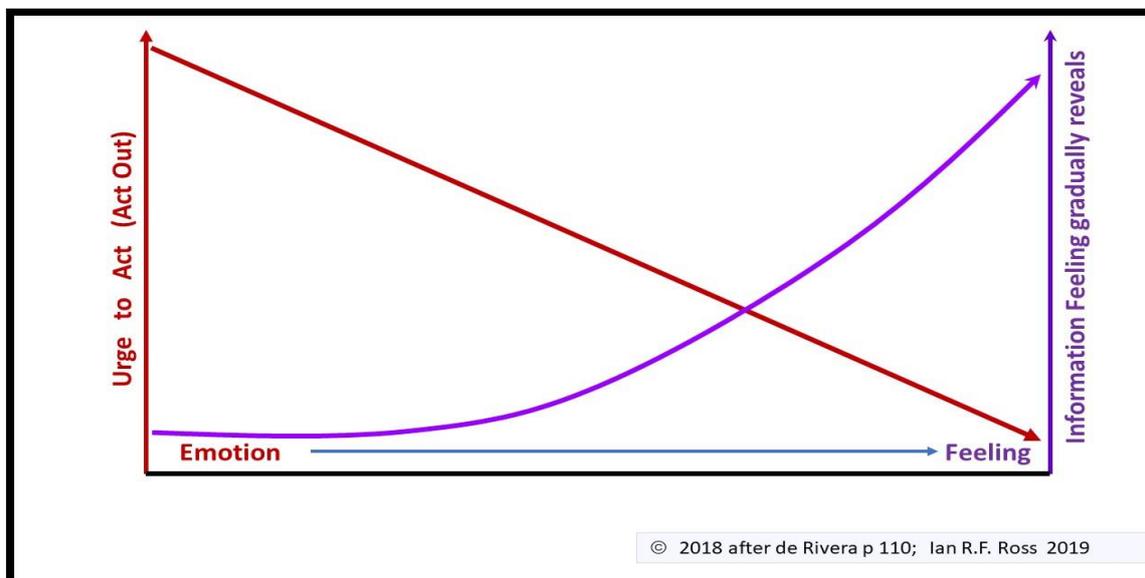


Figure 4B

From emotion and our urge to act, to the feeling manifesting as information for us

Legend:

- emotion and urge to act: →
- information feeling is giving us: →

5. Postscript

This form of meditation may require some practice, and to start with we may find it difficult and upsetting. For example, during the exercise the intensity of the experience of the feeling may increase to uncomfortable levels – a bit like a dark cloud getting darker and darker, to be followed by a great downpour and release (see Figure 2)¹⁵.

Luis de Rivera comments on a patient he once saw, a nun, who came to him with a history of severe bouts of depression. De Rivera asked her what effect the depression was having on her meditation, and she said that since her depression she had not been able to meditate. Subsequently, de Rivera started her on Autogenics 3.0 Meditation, during which the woman experienced anger. Luis de Rivera comments:

She immediately interrupted the meditation, and she explained to me that she should not feel angry, that anger was against her Buddhist beliefs and that she should always feel love and compassion.

de Rivera 2018; 121

¹⁵ Well-Being and flourishing are only possible if we address our pain and suffering. There is no lotus blossom without mud [Hanh 2014].

Concepts and ideas and ideals can be dangerous. “Feelings are not voluntary, they happen as they happen....” [de Rivera 2018 p 121]. The nun had been blocking her feelings because of a misunderstanding of Buddhist teaching[⊗]. Thich Nhat Hanh emphasises again and again that we must acknowledge and recognise our feelings (without judgement); otherwise we are not being mindful.

⊗ The nun had a preconceived idea that she must never feel anger but always feel love and compassion for all – and that anger is not an acceptable emotion. Yet anger (RAGE) circuits are part of our evolutionary heritage; if anger arises, that is a fact which we need to acknowledge, recognise, and not suppress. Suppression had led to a breakdown of her ability to meditate.

De Rivera went on to introduce the nun to Feeling the Feeling Meditation, and her anger gradually faded away.

Feeling the Feeling Meditations help us to deal effectively with distressing feelings / emotions. In the long run, it is good if they can be integrated with Meditations on Constructive Feelings (e.g. F 6.1 and F 6.2 on web). In Thich Nhat Hanh’s exposition of the “Four Establishments of Mindfulness”, he discusses what is really Feeling the Feeling in terms of anger [Hanh 2006 pp 80-87 – in Exercise 14], and goes on to review the merits or otherwise of “pillow bashing” approaches:

Usually when people are angry, they say and do things that cause damage to others and themselves. These people who speak and act in this way wound others. They believe that doing so will release the field of angry energy that is burning in their heart. They shout and scream, beat things, and shoot poisoned arrows of speech at others. These methods of release are dangerous¹⁶.

Sometimes people try to find ways to express their anger in a less dangerous way. They may go to their room, close the door behind them, and pound a pillow with all their might. Naturally if you beat a pillow until your energy is exhausted, your anger will subside¹⁷, and you’ll probably experience a temporary feeling of relief – exhaustion is easier to bear than anger – but the roots of the anger remain untouched – and when the conditions are right, the same anger will arise. Therefore, the method of mindful observation in order to see and to understand the roots of our anger is the only method that has lasting effectiveness.

Hanh 2006 p 84

¹⁶ Dr Alice Greene has said, in connection with the ‘Intentional Anger Off-Loading Exercise’:

- "This exercise is not an excuse for ‘therapist-sanctioned’ outbursts against others. The idea is that we are working to clear our own backlog. It is our stuff to deal with. The long term benefits are greater understanding of self and others, compassion, forgiveness, better communication, the opening of tenderness, gentleness and vulnerability and also the ability to protect ourselves and others, say no and yes when appropriate; increased self-esteem, and respect for the needs of others and one-self. Only the person who has dealt with her / his anger can face conflict in others without fear, assert calmly the facts of the situation and uphold a sense of impartial justice.....”

Greene 1994 p 24 (slightly modified)

¹⁷ This is not dissimilar in principle from the idea that if a small child is distressed at night-time, and they are left, then the upset will settle: proved by the fact that sooner or later they stop crying. Actually they stop crying on account of exhaustion – with the potential of a daily deepening of their Separation Distress [Sunderland 2016].

Hanh significantly follows the exercise on anger with an exercise on love, equivalent to a Constructive Feeling Meditation (e.g. F 6.1 and F 6.2 on web]. In the Hofmann approach to unresolved anger issues with a parent, the anger work is followed by an experiential exercise that facilitates a transformation towards compassion for the parent, enabling a true letting go of these distressing feelings to emerge.

One further comment from de Rivera:

In my clinical experience, the most common entirely repressed feeling, probably even more than rage, is longing for love..... Many people get stuck on feelings of sadness, loneliness, and depression because they fail to perceive their connection to the need for love.

de Rivera 2018 p 125

Feeling the Feeling meditation can get us in touch with the underlying blocked / unrecognised emotion / feeling: and that can be the start to profound healing, when integrated with a regular Meditative Practice (such as AT), in which we are regularly (on a daily basis) tapping into our CARE and nurturing circuits.

De Rivera's Chapter 8 of Autogenics 3.0 on Feeling the Feeling Meditation (Feeling Meditation) contains great wisdom, and is recommended further reading.

Ian R. F. Ross
 October 2017; January - April 2018;
 March – May 2019
 52 Hopetoun Terrace,
 Gullane,
 East Lothian,
 EH31 2DD
 Scotland
ross425@btinternet.com

6. Thematically related articles on web /

Thematically Related Themes on web: www.atdynamics.co.uk

(article notated thus, pending)

A1	The Stress Response, the Relaxation Response, and the Tend-and-Befriend Response
A 7	Porges and the Polyvagal Theory – reflections on clinical and therapeutic significance
A 8	The Polyvagal Theory and a more sympathetic awareness of the ANS
A 9	Emotions, Well-Being and Immune Function <i>Awe and Shame as modulators of Being – for good or ill</i>
B1	Bears, Imagination, and Well Being
B 12	Affect Labelling, Autogenic Training, and reducing Emotional Distress
B 16	Antidotes to Threats our Minds Create – the Soothing and Contentment System
B 17	Windows of Affect Tolerance Reflections on Childhood Distress, Procedural Learned Tendencies, and the Therapeutic Dyad in the context of Primary Process Emotions and the Polyvagal Theory [based on Ogden]
B 18	The Space to Choose – reflections on the gap between the stimulus and the response
B 19	Reflections on a Secure Base – <i>Bowlby, Ainsworth, Attachment and Well-Being</i>
B 20	Separation Distress – <i>Neuro-physiological reflections on developing a Secure Base</i>
D 1	Reflections on Foundations for Mindful Living
D 3	Store Consciousness and Watering our Positive Seeds
D 10	Look at the Cypress Tree (the original article before E-03 of 2016)
D 11	Sukha: Paths of Well-Being, PSNS Afferents, and Inner Warmth – <i>from Duhkha to Sukha</i>
D 12	Diligence and Well Being
E-03	Look at the Cypress Tree – Autonomic Afferents and Well Being (BAS Annual Lecture 2016)
F 1	A general introduction to Autogenics 3.0 – based on the work of Luis de Rivera
F 2	Autogenic 3.0: an approach to the 10 Standard Exercise format for those familiar with, and practising, the Six Standard Exercise format
F 3	Basic Principles of Autogenic Training
F 4	Some Consequences of Blocking Feelings – <i>of not allowing ourselves to feel the feeling</i>
F 5A	Feeling the Feeling Meditation I (this article)
F 5B	Feeling the Feeling Meditation II
F 6.1	Introduction to Constructive Feeling Meditation: Constructive Feeling Meditation I: Calm
F 6.2	Constructive Feeling Meditation II: Existence
F 6.3	Constructive Feeling Meditation III: Zest
F 6.4	Constructive Feeling Meditation: IV: Love and Self-Nurturing (especially in context of low self-esteem)
F 6.5	Constructive Feeling Meditation: V: Inter-Being
F 6.6	Constructive Feeling Meditation: VI: Compassion and Joy (the four immeasurables)
F 7	Meditation on Five Sounds that can Heal the World (after Hanh)
F 8	Meditation embracing Joy, Happiness, Inner Distress and Healing
F9	Transmutation ^(Transformation) of distressing feelings into positive feelings (after de Rivera)

7. Appendix 1 /

7. Appendix 1: The Three Minute Exercise

The Three Minute Exercise is a little like the Partial Exercise and the Short Stitch Exercise; it is a brief exercise that can allow us to become centred whatever our underlying thoughts / feelings at that moment. Research suggests that whatever our feelings, whether happy or sad, depressed or stressed, tearful or joyful, it is important to acknowledge whatever our present mental state is. (Paradoxically, this means that when it is a negative or distressing feeling or thought or bodily sensation, not pushing it away or trying to suppress it).

Acknowledging or accepting our present mental state is not the same thing as being resigned to it. So if we are feeling a bit low or out-of-sorts right now, for example, we can simply notice and acknowledge that this is the case; this involves allowing and letting be. The three-minute exercise can be helpful in increasing our ability to recognise and appreciate our present state. It can be particularly helpful when we are troubled in thoughts or feelings or bodily sensations.

1. Awareness of present state

- i. Adopt an erect and dignified posture, such as the Arm Chair Position (not Simple Sitting).
- ii. We gently focus our awareness on what is going on within, becoming aware of our thoughts, feelings, & bodily sensations by asking ourselves: "What am I noticing right now in thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations?"
- iii. Acknowledge, own (register) and describe these experiences, even if unwanted¹⁸: mentally put these experiences into words (for example: "A low feeling is here"; "A feeling of anger is arising"; "Sickly feeling in tummy"; "Self-critical thoughts are here").
- iv. Now notice the part of the body that the thoughts / feelings seem to gravitate towards.

2. Re-directing Attention to breathing

- i. We now gradually re-direct our attention to our breathing, becoming aware of each in-breath and each out-breath – "so that we know when the breath is moving in, and we know when the breath is moving out" [Ex Segal et al 2013 p 197].
- ii. Continue to follow the breath in this way for several breath cycles.

3. Expanding Attention to include (some of) the following.....

- i. For the last minute or so, we expand our attention to notice the whole body.
- ii. In particular, to any area where there is a sense of "discomfort, tension, or resistance".
- iii. If such sensations are present, we take our awareness there by "breathing into them".
- iv. As we breathe out from those sensations, we can:
 - Imagine the sensation *softening*.....
 - Perhaps saying something like: "It's OK"; "Whatever the feeling, it's OK"; "Let me feel it"; "feeling softening".
- v. We now become aware of our posture and facial expression.....adjusting them if we feel the need.
- vi. For the last three or so breaths we can expand the breathing to the whole body:
 - Breathe into the arms and down to the tips of our fingers; breathe out with a gentle longish out-breath. For the next breath we.....
 - Breathe into our legs and down to our feet and toes; breathe out again with a gentle longish out-breath. Then we....
 - Breathe into our face – perhaps allowing a *gentle (inner) smile as we breathe out*.....
 - *Finally we may like to expand our awareness to the coming moments.....and on to the rest of the day.....and gently close the exercise.*

Note: this exercise is adapted from Segal et al 2002; 2013

¹⁸ Putting Feelings into words is sometimes described as Affect Labelling (Lieberman 2007), or naming and taming [Siegel 2010B].

8. Appendix 2 : Blocking Feelings contrasted with Feeling the Feeling

Figure 5 below illustrates some of the dynamics of Feeling the Feeling, and contrasts this with possible outcomes if we block the feeling.

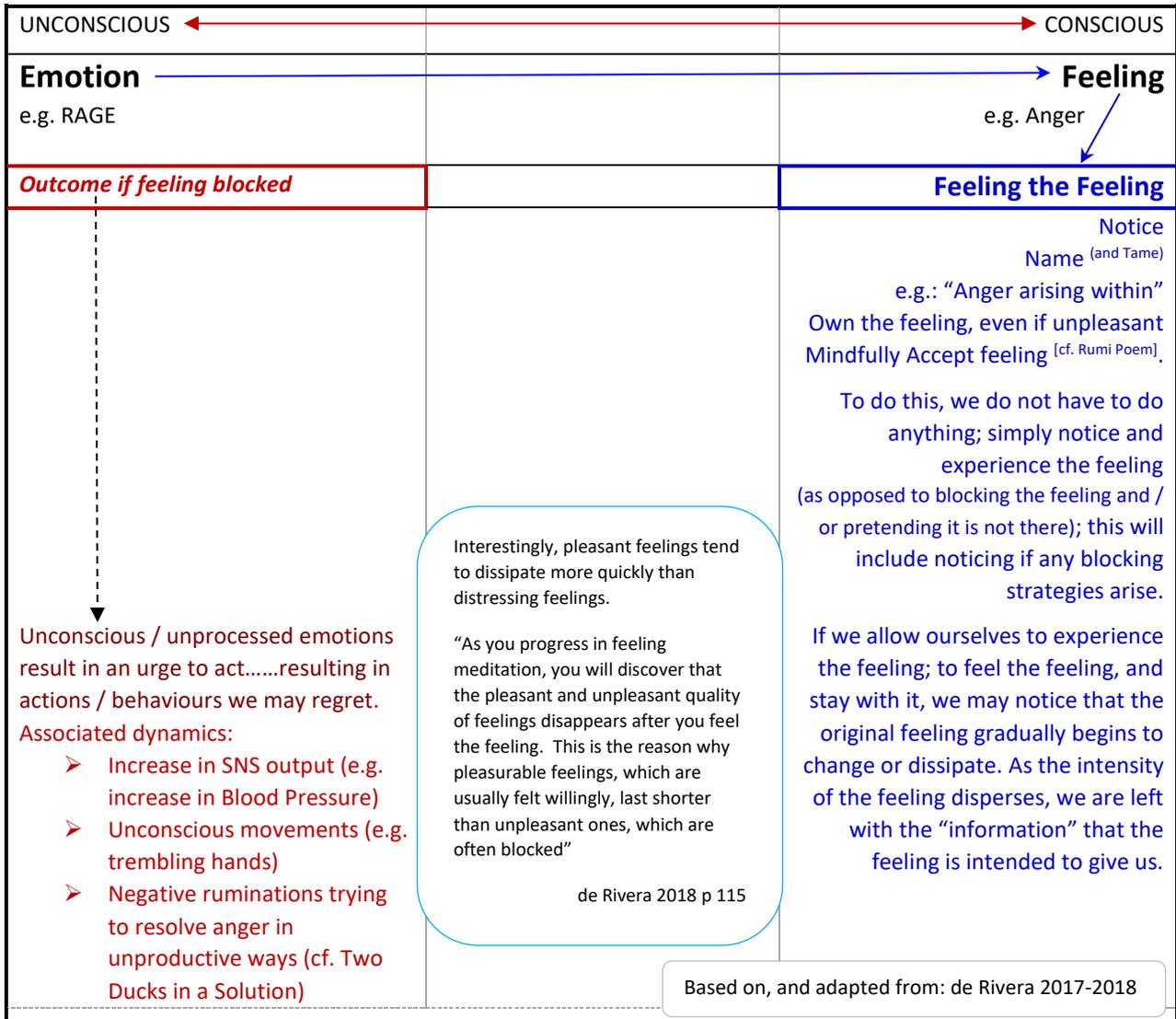


Figure 8
Effects of Blocking Feelings compared with Feeling the Feeling

- Note: the unconscious – conscious continuum is a generalisation; it can be that we consciously block our feelings; if so, there is still, in the long run, the same negative outcome. Many feelings can be blocked at an unconscious level – for example, as a result of [Procedural Learned Tendencies](#) [Ogden 2009] / [Habit Energies](#) [Hanh 2010].

9. Glossary

<p>Active Concentration</p>	<p>A term frequently used by Schultz and Luthe to indicate a form of concentration when we are focused on striving to get a particular result / solution to a problem; this means that Active Concentration is goal directed.</p> <p>Widespread research indicates that if AT students adopt such a striving, goal-orientated approach to the Autogenic Exercises the results will not be moving towards “neutral or pleasing / relaxing” states [see Luthe 1970 Volume 4 Table 2 page 16].</p> <p>Cf. the non-striving approach in Autogenic Training, which is generally called Passive Concentration. Wallnöfer (2014) uses the term Autogenic Concentration.</p>
<p>Affect Labelling</p>	<p>A technical name given in research to study what the effect is of labelling an emotion (silently to ourselves) when it arises [Creswell et al 2007; Lieberman et al 2007]. Daniel Siegel calls this by the more welcoming term: “Naming and Taming” [Siegel 2010B pp 116 & 246].</p> <p>For further information, see</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ B12: Affect Labelling, Autogenic Training, and reducing Emotional Distress
<p>Changing the Peg</p> <p>This section is extracted from the Glossary of Ross 2010.</p> <p>For a fuller review, see glossary of E-03.</p>	<p>A concept from Buddhist psychology. It is suggested that negative mind states, including both destructive and negative emotions, can best 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.</p> <p>Interestingly, Spinoza developed a similar concept in which he stated that we can only overcome a negative affect not by reason alone, but by “reason-induced-emotion” (Spinoza 1677; Damasio 2003 p 11-12; Ross 2005X p 30-34; Ross 2010 p 272).</p> <p>Studies in neuroscience support this concept; positive affects tend to act as anti-dotes to the informational substances associated with such negative mind states as anxiety, grief, and anger (Panksepp 1998; Ross 2005X p 31-32).</p> <p>In addition, meditation, and so by extrapolation the AT state, activates the Left Frontal Lobe (pre-frontal cortex) region of the brain, and this in itself reduces amygdala activity (especially fear / anxiety circuits) and in any pre-existing negative affect (Davidson 2003B pp 212-338; Ross 2006A)</p>
<p>Duhkha</p> <p>Adapter from D 11</p> <p>Note: Spellings depends upon source:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sanskrit: Duhkha ◆ Pali: Dukkha <p>For a somewhat fuller account of Sukha, please see D 11</p> <p>See also Gaffney 2011</p>	<p>A term fundamental to Buddhist Psychology.</p> <p>Duhkha is often translated simply as suffering. This is not very helpful, as it may lead us to assume that the whole of Buddhist psychology is about suffering, and this is grossly misleading.</p> <p>Sakyamuni recognised what can be regarded as the unsatisfactory nature of life, our tendency to crave for things that we cannot have, and to negatively ruminate about what has happened in the past and what may happen or not happen in the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If we are not careful / mindful, this sort of mental chatter can occupy us much of the time, so that we fail to be in the present moment; we fail to see the raindrops on the branch, the glint of sunlight on snow crystals, or the smile on a child’s face. ○ A mental doing mode takes over, and we become divorced from Being; and Being in the Present Moment. <p>The above is part of Duhkha.</p> <p>Sakyamuni was perhaps the first Human Being to really recognise this; after having experimented with various very strict teaching disciplines, he realised that the way to Sukha, to a state of Flourishing [Ekman et al 2005] was through what he called the middle path of mindful practices, and that these practices could greatly reduce dukkha for ourselves and those we are with.</p> <p>If we are trapped in distressing ruminations, we will not experience a state of flourishing and Sukha.</p>
<p>Feeling the /</p>	

<p>Feeling the Feeling Meditation</p> <p>From glossary of web article F 4</p>	<p>Feeling the Feeling Meditation is a form of meditation developed by Luis de Rivera [de Rivera 2018 pp 107-128] in which we meditate on a distressing feeling that we have (recently) being experiencing – <i>in the sense of allowing ourselves to really feel the feeling</i>, without analysing it, and keeping our attention on this feeling itself. As we do this, we may begin to become aware of the underlying information the feeling is alerting us to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is all done in an accepting, non-judgemental way: and from this may arise a deeper understanding of what the emotion / feeling was / is really telling us.
<p>Habit Energy</p> <p>Adapted and abbreviated from B20 on web</p>	<p>As we grow up, we take on certain patterns of behaviour and attitudes from our parents, teachers, and ancestors. Some of these may be helpful, some may be neutral, and others may be dysfunctional. In Buddhist psychology, these are termed Habit Energies [e.g. Hanh 2010 pp 24-26], and overlap with Procedural Learned Tendencies [Ogden 2009] and Complexes.</p> <p>Negative Habit Energies result in dysfunctional patterns of behaviour which, if not addressed, can become transgenerational - and cause much suffering.</p> <p>The concept of inter-being is fundamental to Buddhist psychology. The realisation of the inter-relatedness of all things acts as an anti-dote to the toxic trio. A modern realisation of inter-being can be found in the Systems view of life [Capra & Luisi 2016].</p> <p>In the context of wholeness and Well-Being, Autogenic Training needs to be seen in terms of the personal, the social, and the ethical. Otherwise it can be misused – see Simpson 2017.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Note also that negative Habit Energies will axiomatically be associated with distressing / negative Mental Representations.
<p>Inter-Being</p> <p>From Glossary of B 20 on web</p>	<p>A term coined by Thich Nhat Hanh [Hanh 1998 e.g. pp 24-27; 2012 pp 55-61].</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #00aaff; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>“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.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[Hanh 2012B pp 55-56]</p> </div> <p>In the same way, all humans inter-are with their ancestors, clouds, and mother earth.</p>
<p>Jen</p> <p>From B 20 glossary</p>	<p>In ancient China there was a human quality regarded more highly than any other virtue: higher, for example, than righteousness, courage or benevolence.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #00aaff; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>This quality was known as Jen, which can perhaps best be translated as human-heartedness (Watts 1995; page 25).</p> </div> <p>In Indian culture, it was – and still is – customary when two people meet for each to put their palms together and gently bow to the other, saying: “namaste” ** [Kornfield 2008 p 17]. This is in essence a recognition of the Jen quality within the other. (In Buddhist psychology, this is called our original nature).</p> <p>**Namaste (derived from Sanskrit): ‘I honour the divine within you’.</p>
<p>Mental Representations /</p>	

<p>Mental Representations</p> <p>Adapted from glossary of F1 on web.</p>	<p>Any and every mental representation – such as a thought, feeling, idea, emotion, plan – produces changes in the brain and the body. Those mental representations that recur frequently will have long term consequences on how we feel, act, and behave; and, to a large extent, will determine our overall Well-Being and state of flourishing.</p> <p>In the context of therapeutic approaches and well-being, the following considerations are of import.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Positive Mental Representations will generally be associated with positive outcomes. Such representations will usually be associated with activation of the PSNS – and our Natural Healing Systems [Nat-H-Sys]. This activates the middle Pre-Frontal Cortex (PFC), and is associated with inhibition of FEAR and RAGE circuits in the amygdala. B. Negative Mental Representations, on the other hand, will tend to have the opposite effect. They will usually be associated with increased SNS activity, and so the Flight / Fight Response. The result will often be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Increased negative affect [Craig 2015] ➢ Reduction in wholesome / creative PFC dynamics [Siegel 2007] that facilitate Well-Being. C. Therapeutic encounters in which the client does not feel at ease / safe with the therapist [Porges 2017] will activate the former’s SNS system, and in these conditions, any recalling of traumatic / distressing events may actually result in the original distress / trauma being exacerbated. This will therefore be associated with a series of negative Mental Representations with similar outcomes to B above. D. The implication of this in the context of psychotherapy / counselling is that conditions are created for the client to move towards a feeling of safety, and being safe. This will largely depend on the nature of the developing therapeutic relationship, which can be enhanced by introducing skills to the client that facilitate the Relaxation Response [Benson 1975; Porges 2017; Ross 2017B].
<p>Mindful Acceptance</p> <p>Adapted from E-03 and F1 on website.</p> <p>The F1 glossary covers these phrases more systematically</p>	<p>In the Autogenic Training literature, the phrase <i>Passive Concentration</i> is used to describe the focused awareness during an AT sequence. I have never found the term particularly helpful in reflecting the mental state of such focused awareness. For this reason, I adopted the term Mindful Concentration. Wallnöfer includes the alternative phrase of <i>Autogenic Concentration</i> (to Passive Concentration) [Wallnöfer 2014].</p> <p>Luis de Rivera keeps the expression Passive Concentration, but distinguishes this from Passive Acceptance [de Rivera 2018 pp148-149]. In view of the somewhat problematic use of the word Passive in this context, an alternative notation suggested is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Autogenic Concentration ○ <i>Autogenic Acceptance</i> [following Wallnöfer 2014].
<p>Participant Observer</p>	<p>In Autogenic circles, the phrases Active Concentration and Passive Concentration are well known. Passive Concentration is the term used for the <i>non-striving</i> focus on the Standard Exercise that we are focusing on at that moment in time. Luis de Rivera calls Autogenics 3.0 Somato-Sensory Meditation. This reflects the ancient traditions that we can argue AT has arisen from (consciously or unconsciously), and overlaps with vipassana meditation [de Rivera 2018]. Vipassana embraces the concept:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☸ To go deeply into that object to observe it [Hanh 2006 p 10].

	<p>Hanh goes on to say: “While we are fully aware and observing deeply an object, the boundary between the subject who observes and the object being observed gradually dissolves, and the subject and object become one.”</p> <p>In the Standard Exercise sequence, a similar state can arise. As we focus on the phrase, for example “solar plexus (core) warm”, we and the warmth in the tummy area become one: there is no distinction, no discrimination. We become, as it were, the warmth.</p> <p>We tend to see the observer as separate from what is being observed. Yet this assumption may preclude real understanding. Real understanding perhaps only comes about when we become one with the object, we inter-be (see also Inter-Being). [See also web articles D 10 and E-03]. From this perspective, we are not a separate objective observer: rather, we are the participant observer.</p> <p>Thich Nhat Hanh has pointed out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☸ “Nuclear scientists are beginning to say this also. When you enter the world of elementary particles you have to become a participant in order to understand something. You can no longer stand on the outside and remain just an observer. Today, many scientists prefer the word ‘participant’ to the word ‘observer’ ” [Hanh 2017 p 35]. <p>In the same way, as we become one with breath, the warmth, we are entering the participant observer domain.</p> <p>The first part of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness reflects on observing the “body in the body”: and in doing this we can become the “participant observer”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In many ways, this is just what we are doing (being) in the somato-sensory meditation of Autogenics 3.0 [de Rivera 2018; also see F1 and F2 on website].
<p>Procedural Learned Tendencies (PLT)</p> <p>Ogden 2009</p> <p>This is a brief extract adapted from the Glossary of E-03, D11, and B20.</p>	<p>Similar to the concept of Habit Energy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A term used by Pat Ogden [Ogden 2009] <p>As small children we are learning all the time; and we are learning how best to repond to the situation that we find ourselves in. Our brains respond to different situations / different family dynamics in different ways, and in terms of evolutionary perspectives this is an adaptive response. The adaptive response will be different in, for example, the following examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If we are born into and spend the early years of our life in a war zone ● If we are an orphan ● If we are born into a stable society with wholesome values ● If we are born into a family where one or other parent is abusive ● If we are born into a family with caring / nurturing parents and siblings ● If our mother / father dies when we are young. <p>While the adaptive responses may be appropriate at the time of development, they can become fixed responses / <i>Procedural Learned Tendencies</i> – which may be very dysfunctional for us as adults. They can be difficult to un-learn. They overlap with Jung’s concept of complexes (e.g. Mother complex, which can manifest in positive, neutral, and negative ways); they also overlap with the Habit Energies described in Buddhist Psychology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative / dysfunctional PLT will tend to feed the negative ‘destructive wolf’ within us [Fredrickson 2009 p 179], which is the equivalent to watering the negative seeds on our Store Consciousness [see D3 on web]. This will be associated with negative / destructive Habit Energies. ☸ On the other hand, wholesome and nurturing PLT will feed the ‘positive wolf’ within [Fredrickson 2009 p 179], and so water the positive and wholesome seeds within our Store Consciousness; this will be associated with positive / nurturing / wholesome Habit Energies.

<p>Second Arrow</p>	<p>A term, borrowed from Buddhist Psychology, to indicate our tendency as humans to negatively ruminate about an event, thought, or feeling. The event / occurrence that caused this distress is implicitly the first arrow; but this first arrow is not the real problem. The real problem is what we then do, think, feel, or ruminate about the event / upset.</p> <p>The Second Arrow tends to take us into a downward spiral that (in this sense) is self-inflicted.</p> <p>Epictetus states a similar idea in his famous:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Men are not disturbed by things, but the view they take of things.” [Epictetus ^(55 – c 135 PE) was a Greek Stoic philosopher.] <p>Mental Training and Mindfulness help us to become aware of this second arrow, and develop skilful means for avoiding / minimising these pitfalls.</p>
<p>Sukha</p> <p>A State of Flourishing</p> <p>Adapted from D 11 on web</p> <div style="border: 1px solid purple; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>At the same time, we embrace the idea that there can be no Sukha without Dukkha – and vice versa.</p> <p>There can be no lotus flower without the mud its roots have their home in. The lotus flower and the roots inter-are.</p> </div>	<p>In many ways this can be seen in terms of the opposite, or anti-dote, to dukkha. In western psychology, it has been assumed that all emotions are normal in the sense that they have developed during evolution, and in that sense have a valid role to play in our lives. In Buddhist psychology, no such assumptions are made in that certain emotions are regarded as being inherently toxic (see for example the Toxic Trio). The Dalai Lama suggests that Happiness is the state that all humans seek [Dalai Lama & Cutler 1998]. As discussed in the relevant sections of the glossary, happiness is perhaps best seen in terms of Well-Being.</p> <p>Sukha can be developed through mindfulness and watering the positive seeds within. The concept embraces both Well-Being and a Sense of Flourishing.</p> <p>Ekman et al have this to say about happiness:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; border-radius: 25px; padding: 20px; margin: 20px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Buddhists and psychologists alike believe that emotions strongly influence people’s thoughts, words, and actions and that, at times, they help people in their pursuit of transient pleasures and satisfaction. From a Buddhist perspective, however, some emotions are conducive to genuine and enduring happiness and others are not. A Buddhist term for such happiness is sukha which may be defined in this context as a state of flourishing that arises from mental balance and insight into the nature of reality. Rather than a fleeting emotion or mood aroused by sensory or conceptual stimuli, sukha is an enduring trait that arises from a mind in a state of equilibrium and entails a conceptually unstructured and unfiltered awareness of the true nature of reality.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ekman et al 2005; pp 59-60</p> </div> <p>Behind this statement is the Buddhist concept that suffering, especially in terms of the second arrow (and D-8), comes about through ignorance of the true nature of reality and life – the overcoming of such ignorance embraces a realisation of the inter-connectedness of all things; which also implies that no one thing or person has a “permanent separate self”. Such ignorance dissolves with a growing awareness of the inter-being nature of all things.</p>
<p>Toxic Trio /</p>	

<p>Toxic Trio</p> <p>Abbreviated and adapted from glossary of B20 on web.</p>	<p>Human suffering is deeply rooted in both our neuro-physiology and in the assumptions that we make about the world. Ekman [Ekman et al 2005 ***] wrote a wonderfully succinct article about human suffering (duhkha) which focused particularly on what are regarded as the Toxic Trio, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hatred and ill-will towards others • Craving and • The delusion that we have a permanent separate self. Every phenomenon is full of non-self elements / modalities – see Inter-Being. [In reality, nothing exists in isolation; everything is interlinked with everything else – see, for example, Capra & Luigi Luis 2014.] <p>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]. Hatred and ill-will towards others may also develop as transgenerational negative Habit Energies [Hanh 1998] / Procedural Learned Tendencies [Ogden 2009] – especially if our parents have had such states passed down to them.</p> <p>☸ Feeling the Feeling Meditation can help us to get in touch with the origins of distressing feelings in a wholesome and healing way.</p>
<p>Vipassanā ^(Pāli) Meditation</p> <p>vipaśyanā ^(Sanskrit)</p>	<p>Vipassanā meditation is an ancient Buddhist form of Meditation based on what is regarded as insight into the true nature of reality, some fundamental concepts of which I would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Duhkha ○ Sukha ○ The idea that we are all full of non-self elements – from which we can extrapolate the idea of Inter-Being, and ○ Impermanence <p>Note that de Rivera has this to say at the end of Chapter 1 in Autogenics 3.0:</p> <p>☸ “In conclusion, nothing is conflicting between autogenics, yoga, vipassanā, and other forms of serious meditation. We are all working on the same human nature, training the same mental functions, activating the same parts of the brain. Autogenics 3.0 offers a most efficient, complete, and safe** way for Western Practitioners.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">de Rivera 2018 p 18 (An “a” has replaced a “the”.)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">**See also Porges 2011; 2017.</p>
<p>Vivencia</p> <p>Extract from Glossary of F1</p>	<p>A Spanish term used by Luis de Rivera that does not have an exact English translation [de Rivera 2018]. It is sometimes rendered as “Live Experience” with perhaps added associations of numinous.</p> <p>Such live experiences are the opposite of ‘left-brain’ analytical thinking. If we go out in the country at night and look at the starry heavens, or notice the emerging bud of a tree in spring, then we can have a live experience if we are there in that present moment.</p> <p>The non-striving focused attention of the Standard Exercises in AT allows us to tune into the live-experience of the body at that moment, and in each subsequent moment.</p>

	<p>Modern urban life, with all its hustles and bustles, may result in us having days on end without vivencia, without being in the present moment. Yet, whatever age we live in, this is also an attitude of mind.</p>
<p>Well-Being</p> <p>Adapted from F1</p> <p>See also Sukha (a stage of flourishing).</p> <p>See also: Gaffney 2011</p>	<p>A term that I find more helpful than the word Happiness.</p> <p>Dr Martin Seligman, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, has been one of the key players in the development of Positive Psychology in North America, which embraces the concept of Well-Being. However, in the context of the United States, this is often expressed in terms of “happiness”. Seligman suggests that we can regard happiness as embracing three components (see below).</p> <p>Angela Clow, Professor of psychophysiology at Westminster University, suggests that the concept of Well-Being may be a better word than happiness for British (as compared with North American) citizens. [Professor Angela Clow in a talk on "Stress, Health and Happiness" at the Edinburgh International Science Festival on 09.04.2006.]</p> <p>Dr Seligman's definition of happiness can be reframed as Well-Being as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasure / positive emotion; • Engaged, goal directed pursuits / occupations. i.e. we are involved in, and committed to, various pursuits / activities; thus, the construct of Well-Being is not one of a passive "happy" state, but one that also embraces engaged – and I would add mindful – activity. • Meaning; and / or having a connection to some larger purpose. (This might be, for example, the ecology of our planet in the context of climate change.) [See also Frankl 1946; 1952]. <p style="text-align: center;">(Based on and paraphrased from Davidson 2005; with some additions)</p> <p>Thus Well-Being, in its deeper sense, is clearly far more than an individual matter, and overlaps with the African concept of Ubuntu:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☸ “How can one of us be happy if all the other ones are sad?”</p> <p>UBUNTU in the Xhosa culture means: “I am because we are.”</p>

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