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Notation of Figures: these are related to the Sections in the article. So, for example, there is no Figure 1 as there are no Figures in Section 1 (Introduction).

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:

Feelings arise as a result of the state of the body-brain at any moment, and these may be driven by the activation of specific emotional neural circuits, such as FEAR and RAGE on the one hand, or Separation Distress, CARE and PLAY circuits on the other.

Noticing and recognising the feeling will be associated with activation of the Middle Pre-Frontal Cortex and the Orbito-Frontal Cortex, and the distress (or otherwise) of the feeling will gradually settle down¹ [Siegel 2007 pp 41-44; 337-345; de Rivera 2018 p114], especially if this is in the context of Mental Training such as Meditation / Autogenic Training [Creswell et al 2007; and B12 on website].

However, in the case of distressing feelings, we often do not allow ourselves to feel these; rather, we tend to deny or ignore them – or go down the path of negative ruminations about them. Such distressing ruminations may activate our defensive flight / fight systems; and this creates a feeling that is the opposite of feeling safe [Porges 2011; 2017].

2. Consequences of not allowing ourselves to feel the feeling:

The consequences of blocking emotions, of not allowing ourselves to experience them, are not good, as the unfelt feelings tend to activate three different neuro-circuits. These are:

- a) The hypothalamus, with the resultant activation of our flight and fight system, in terms of the Sympathetic Nervous System (e.g. adrenaline – from the adrenal medulla), and via the Hypothalamic-Pituitary Adrenal Axis (resulting in the production of cortisol from the adrenal cortex).
- b) The motor cortex, resulting in unconscious movements – such as becoming fidgety.
- c) The Frontal Lobe, resulting in muddled / unclear thinking.

These consequences of blocking feelings are illustrated schematically in Figure 1 on the next page.

¹ The related web articles, F 5A and F 5B, address these matters specifically in a Meditation called Feeling the Feeling.

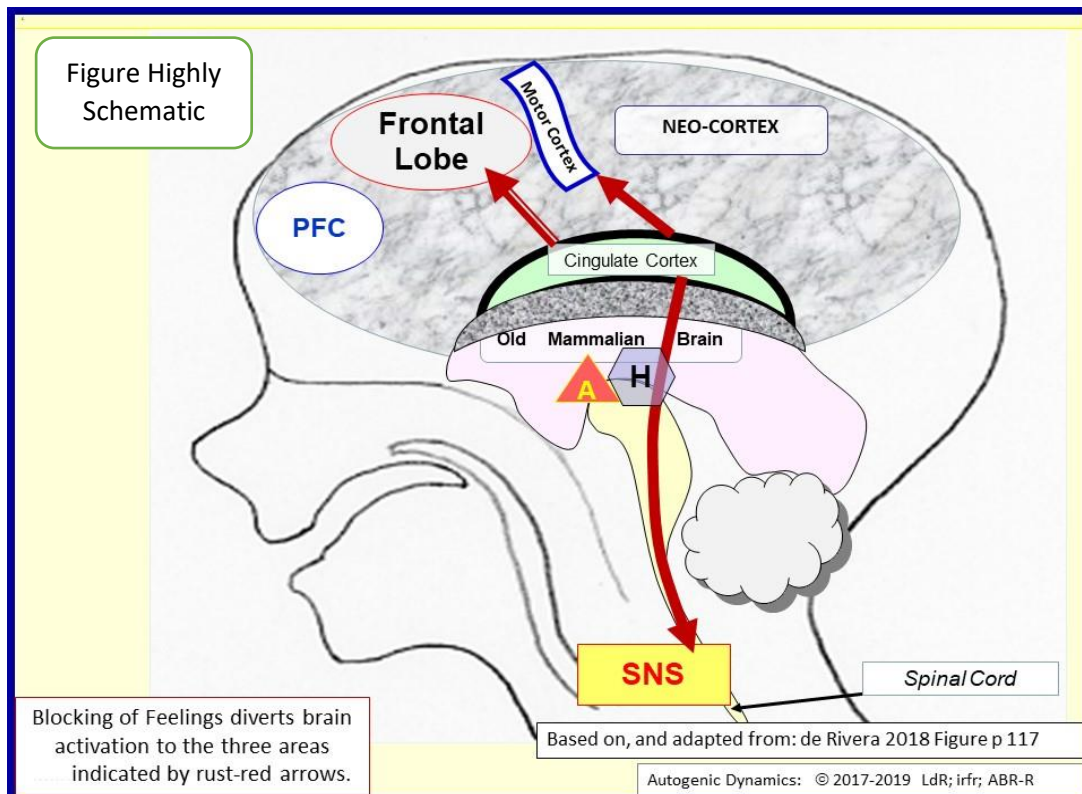


Figure 2.1

Neuro-physiological consequences of blocking feelings

Blocking of Feelings diverts activation away from the Pre-Frontal Cortex / Orbito-Frontal Cortex to the areas indicated by rust-red arrows.
 Based on Luis de Rivera 2018 p 116-117

Legend:

A: Amygdala; H: Hypothalamus; PFC: Pre-Frontal Cortex;
 SNS: Sympathetic Nervous (efferent) System output to body

Comments on Figure 2.1

Blocked feelings result in neural impulses being diverted to three particular areas of the brain:

- i. To the hypothalamus, activating the SNS efferent fibres which can result, for example, in
 - a) Increased blood pressure
 - b) Increase heart rate.
 SNS activation can itself lead to confused / unclear thinking;
- ii. To the motor cortex, resulting in, for example, restlessness and / or physical activities / behaviours (such as fidgety fingers; banging on walls).
- iii. To the frontal lobe. Now, the frontal lobe is *not-good* at dealing with emotions in a wholesome manner. The result may be, for example, one or more of the following:
 - a) Difficulty in concentrating / forgetfulness;
 - b) Negative Ruminations in which we go over and over the upset (the "[Second Arrow](#)"); and /or
 - c) Plotting to overcome the distress; for example, in extreme cases, plotting to do away with the cause of the distress.

Efferent nerves: transmit impulses from the brain to the body / organs**

**As indicated in the above comments, blocking our feelings can activate SNS Efferents, the nerves that take SNS impulses from the brain to the body. This will result, axiomatically, in increased SNS Afferent – from body to brain – activity which, in turn, is associated with increased negative affect [Craig 2015], such as fear and anger.

These dynamics can result in, for example, Tension Headaches and Non-cardiac Chest Pain, and [Medically Unexplained Symptoms](#) [Dobbin & S. Ross² 2012].

These consequences are clearly unhelpful. Figure 2.2 depicts them in a more diagrammatic format.

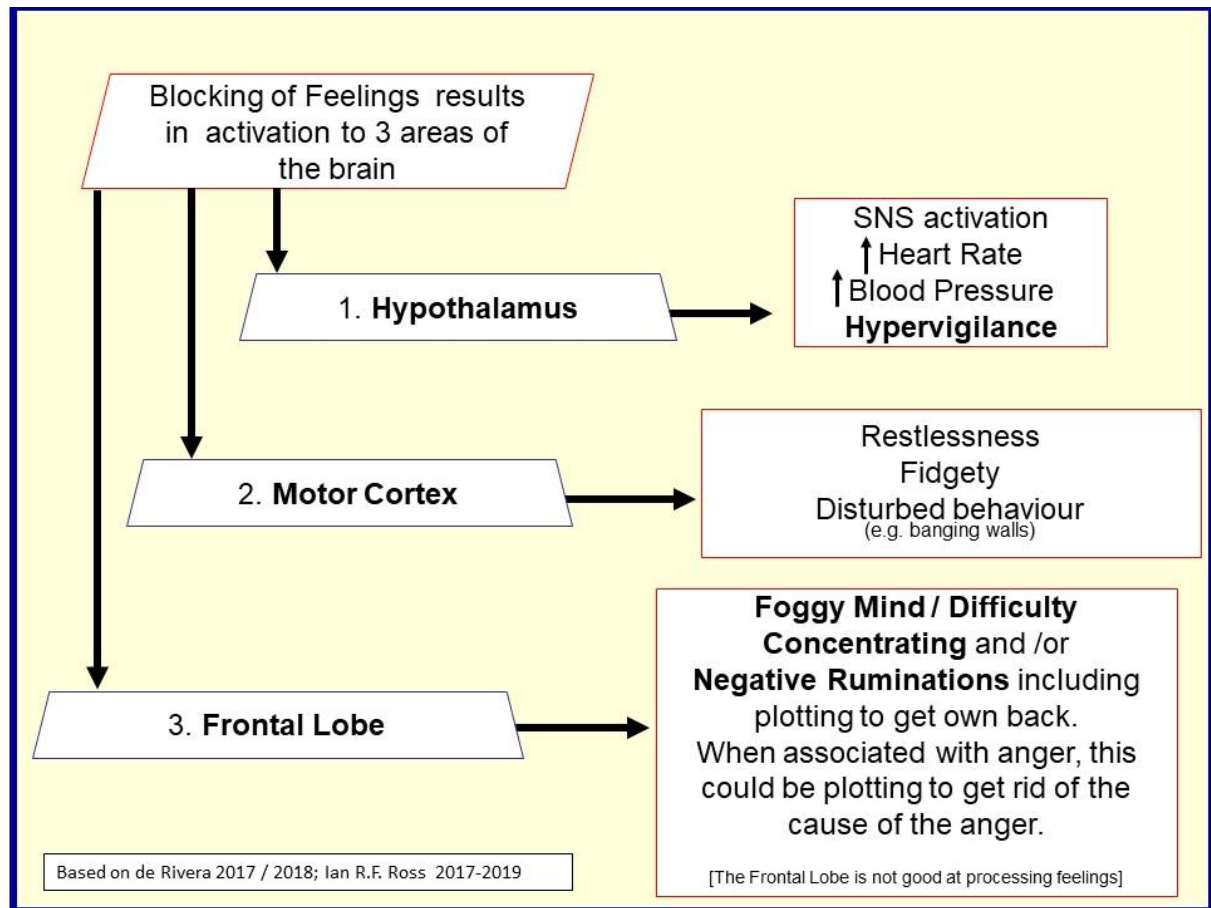


Figure 2.2

Some consequences of the Blocking of Feelings

Based on Luis de Rivera 2017 / 2018

3. Manifestations of blocking emotions

There are various ways that we can block our feelings, or not allow them to be expressed, or not realise that the emotion has triggered an unresolved matter from the past. These may include the following examples.

- i. We are upset at the loss / death of someone close to us; yet the emotional expression is blocked for some reason, and so, for unconscious reasons, we cannot express it. This is well exemplified in a moving passage from Susan Hill's "In the Spring Time of the Year", which is a novel that explores the life of a young widow following the death of her husband at work.

² No relation

"Without any warning, the tears rose up and broke out of her, and Potter sat on his chair, saying nothing, and yet being a comfort to her, taking some of her grief on to himself.

She wept as she had never wept before in front of any human being and it was a good thing to do, it was of more value than all the months of solitary mourning. It brought something else to an end..... "

Hill 1974; p 135

☸ While reading over this penultimate draft on 1st June 2019, it occurred to me that, in this moving description, the young widow was able to let go of aspects her great grief partly because the dynamics of the situation with Potter were such that she felt safe – and so the tears flowed freely [Porges 2011; 2017].

- ii. We simply do not express our feelings – say to our partner or a friend. We bottle them up. This may be a habit that we developed in childhood, and in this case can be seen as a negative manifestation of a [Habit Energy](#).
- iii. We become annoyed / angry with our partner / husband / wife, and we are convinced that the problem is with them. However, it may in reality be nothing to do with them, but rather a remark / action by them may have triggered a pre-existing complex within us (e.g. a mother complex). Such complexes need to be addressed – e.g. through psychotherapy³.
- iv. One morning we feel tense and irritable, yet we cannot work out why this is. Here there may be some underlying emotion that has not been recognised / acknowledged. In effect, the tense feeling that we are experiencing is the body telling us something important – so we need to look into this (e.g. through Feeling the Feeling Meditation – F 5A on website).
- v. We go into distressing ruminations about something, and may enter a downward and unproductive spiral. The “negative” ruminations may actually be an unconscious way of us blocking the underlying feeling. Again, the Feeling the Feeling Meditation may be a way of getting to the underlying information that the feeling is trying to give us [F 5A].

In all of the above examples, there may be an unacknowledged tendency in us to not really allow ourselves to feel the emotion – to feel the underlying feeling. Regular meditation, the [Three Minute Exercise](#)⁴, and [Feeling the Feeling Meditation](#) can help in us getting to the information that the bodily sensation / emotion / feeling is alerting us to.

4. Unexpressed / blocked /

³ Jung once said of complexes: “We do not so much have complexes, as they have us.” i.e. the dynamics are working at an unconscious level, and so we do not even realise that these processes may be at work – unless we begin to examine them and our life. Cf.: “The unexamined life is not worth living” [Socrates / Plato in [Apology](#)].

⁴ Three Minute Exercise [Segal et al 2002 pp 184; 241]; see also Appendix 2.

4. Unexpressed / blocked feelings may originate in past events and / or in our imagination

If we are distressed / annoyed with our boss at work, an ex-partner, or have experienced some childhood trauma, then we are carrying this as an unexpressed feeling as with Po in the Story of Li and Po [See Appendix 1]. Such unexpressed feelings will activate the pathways described in Section 2 above. Figure 4A illustrates such issues.

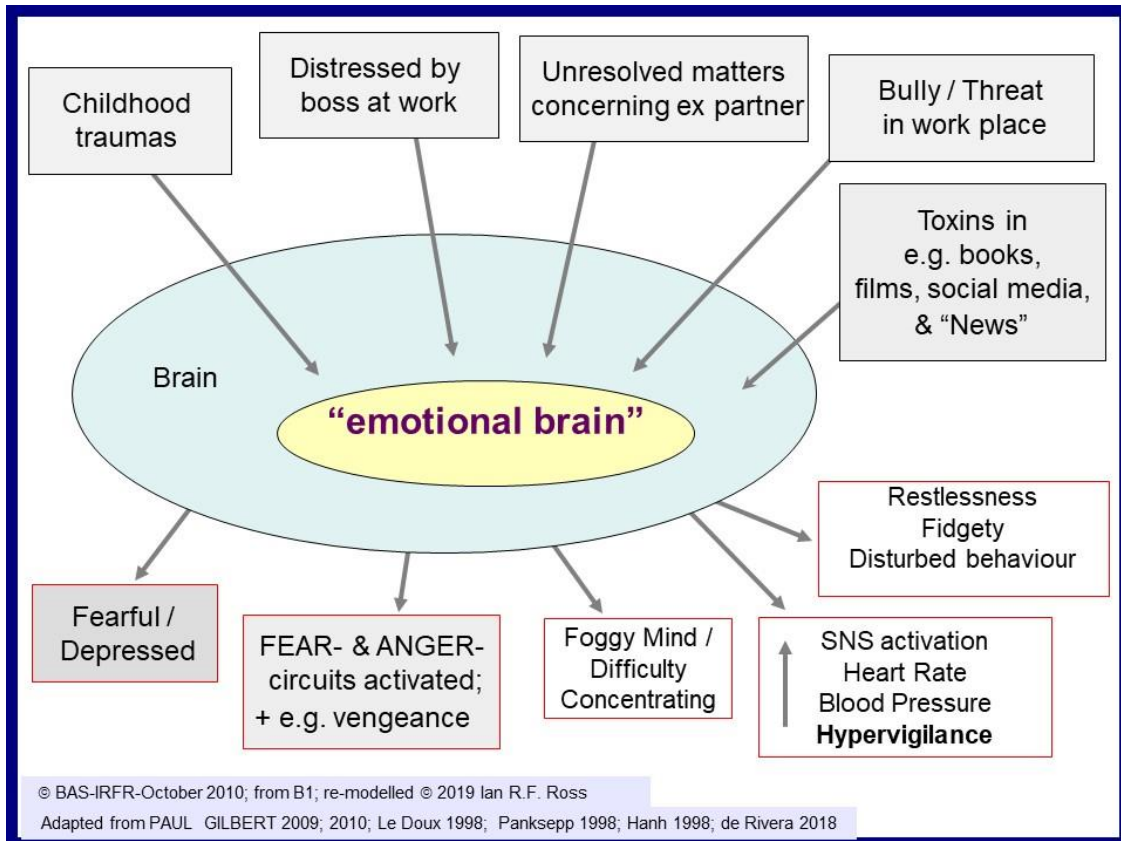


Figure 4A
 Effects of un-expressed feelings from “external” events
 Adapted from Figure 4 in B1 on Web
 Based on Gilbert 2009 / 2010

Comments on Figure 4A

- i. Various “external” events are illustrated, and these are processed by the “Emotional Brain” [Le Doux 1998] in the limbic system / amygdala area. As indicated, such external “events” may include distressing ruminations on childhood memories, which still feel as if they are external, real, live events (e.g. childhood traumas).
- ii. However, in this illustration the processing is inadequate and / or the feeling is blocked. This results in an activation of the SNS system, which is associated with flight and fight dynamics – which in turn activates our FEAR and RAGE (Anger) circuits [Panksepp 1998], and the modalities discussed in Figures 2.1 and 2.2.
- iii. Such activation may be one of the factors that leads to [Hypervigilant States](#) and subsequent [Medically Unexplained Symptoms](#).
- iv. Further negative / distressing ruminations may lead to neo-cortical elaborations such as a wish for revenge – which can further activate the flight / fight SNS system (see below).

Events, including traumas, are not the only things that can trigger disturbances in body and mind. Memories, imagining⁵, and catastrophising can set off these same defensive neuro-physiologies, as illustrated below.

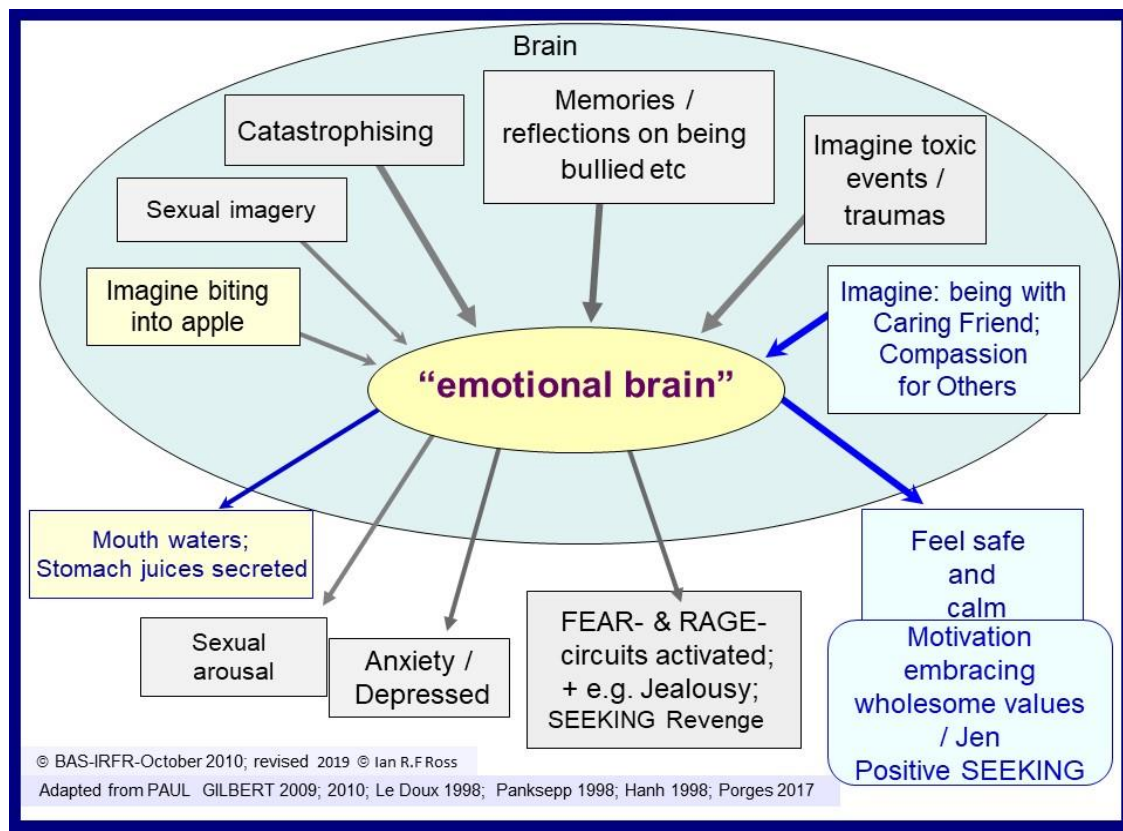


Figure 4B
 Effects of Mental Representations on Body and Mind
 (i.e. internal modalities)
 Extrapolated from Gilbert 2009 / 2010; and
 Panksepp 1998; Porges 2017; de Rivera 2018

Comments on Figure 4B

- Any and every [mental representation](#) will have effects on our bodies.
- For example, if we imagine that we are biting into a juicy apple, our mouths may water.
- On the other hand, recollecting a distressing memory can activate our flight and fight system (Stress Response), in the same way that the original event may have activated our Stress Response.
- Further distressing / “negative” ruminations can then result in such neo-cortical elaborations as jealousy and / or a desire for revenge⁶.
- /

⁵ Positive mental representations such as visualisations, imaginings and compassion can, of course, set in motion nurturing / positive neuro-physiologies related to the Relaxation Response, Social Engagement, and feelings of safety [Porges 2011; 2017] – as indicated in Figure 4B.

⁶ That is, the primary limbic system / amygdala emotion of e.g. FEAR and / or RAGE is neo-cortically elaborated into such unwholesome emotions as jealousy / hatred etc.

- e) When we are distressed, feelings of safety can arise by imagining we are with a friend; or by imagining we are in a safe mental space (mental room) – as advocated in Positive Mental Training⁷. Feelings of safety are associated with increased myelinated vagal activity – and so with positive Social Engagement [Porges 2017].
 ☸ In turn, this can give rise to wholesome SEEKING, which is a basis for wholesome values, positive motivation and [Jen](#).

Distressing memories of the past are ‘played’ in real time now; however, in another sense they are not real – just as a film projected onto a screen is not real. This is well illustrated by Hanh:

Suppose we’re in a movie theatre and a film is being projected on the screen. Sitting in our seat and looking at the film, we may believe this is a true story. We may even cry. The suffering is real; the tears are real. But the experience isn’t happening right now, it’s only a film. If I invite you to come up close to the screen with me and we touch the screen, we can see that no one is there, there’s only a light flickering on the screen. We can’t talk to the people on the screen, we can’t invite them to have tea with us, because this is a fictive story, something unreal. Yet it can create real suffering, real depression.

Hanh 2010A p 29

Summary of mental representations and body states

An external event will have an effect upon us, as will “internal dynamics” such as memories and imaginings and a feeling of being unsafe [Porges 2017]. These in turn will affect the body.

- Distressing mental representations will tend to be associated with flight / fight dynamics and the SNS / adrenaline and cortisol response – and this may manifest in, for example, clenching of the jaw and or fists, or tensioning in the shoulders.
- On the other hand, nurturing / wholesome mental representations will tend to activate the myelinated Para-Sympathetic Nervous System – and so engender a sense of safety, feeling safe and positive / constructive Social Engagement [Porges 2011; 2017].

5. Some approaches to becoming in touch with (blocked) feelings

Blocked feelings do not bode well for our health or Well-Being. Mental Training such as Mindfulness and Autogenic Training can greatly facilitate releasing blocked feelings, and in getting in touch with feelings that we did not know were blocked. The Autogenic Standard Exercises, as with other forms of mental training, change the dynamics of the pre-frontal cortex in a wholesome direction. For example, the Nine Middle Pre-Frontal Cortex Functions associated with Mental Training / Mindfulness described by Siegel [Siegel 2010 pp 337-345; see also: C2 on the website].

Somato-Sensory Autogenic Training⁸ helps us to get in touch with our bodies. All emotional states have bodily / neuro-physiological correlates. As we get more in touch with our bodies, we are paving the way to get more in touch with, and owning, our emotions.

In addition there are various specific skilful means that we can develop which will help us to get in touch with the information that the emotion, whatever it is, is trying to give us. These include:

⁷ Positive Mental Training as developed by Dr Alastair E. Dobbin and Sheila Ross – see <http://www.foundationforpositivementalhealth.com/listen-now/download-our-app-feeling-good/>

⁸ The form of Autogenic Training (Autogenics 3.0) described by de Rivera [de Rivera 2018].

- a) Affect labelling [Creswell et al 2007; Lieberman et al 2007; and see B12 on website], or the phrase that I prefer, “naming and taming” [Siegel 2010B pp 116 & 246].
- b) The Three Minute Exercise – as discussed in : “Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression” [Segal et al 2013 e.g. pp: 208;238 - 240; 196 - 198]; and see Appendix 2 of this article.
- c) Feeling the Feeling Meditation [de Rivera 2018; see also web article F-5A, which is based on Luis de Rivera’s model].
 - Feeling the Feeling Meditation allows the feeling to be processed in the Pre-Frontal Cortex region, and this lets distressed feelings subside naturally [de Rivera 2018; Siegel 2007].

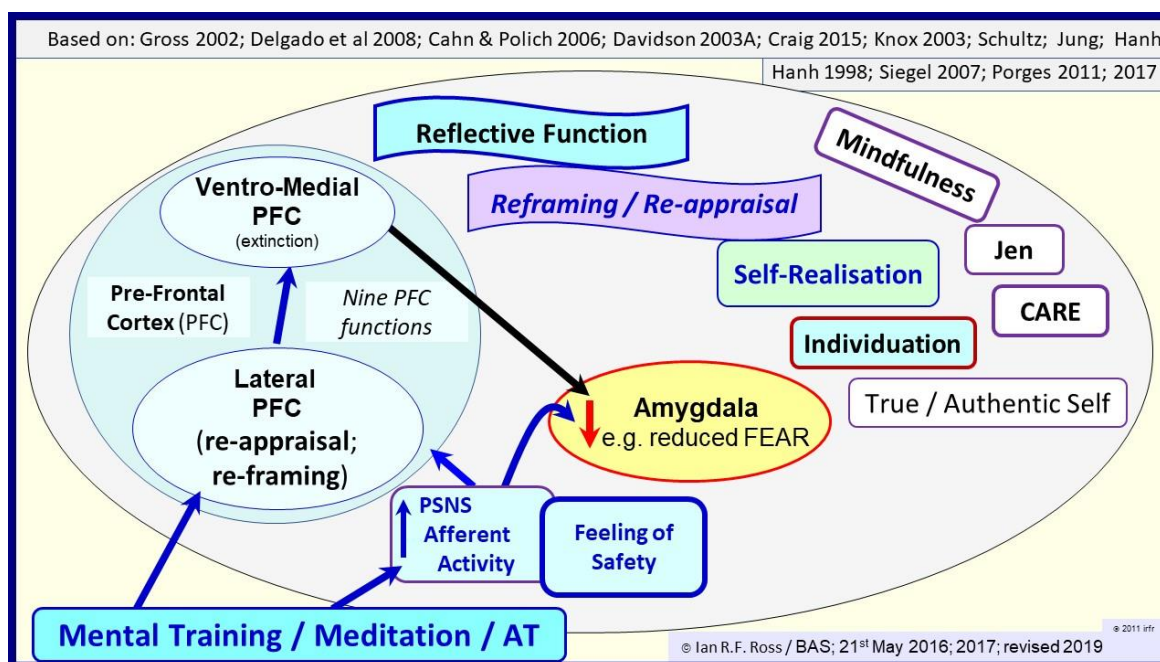
Regular Mental Training / Autogenic Training changes the dynamics of the Pre-Frontal Cortex, allowing for the development of Mindfulness and our [Reflective Function](#), [Knox 2012] and downregulating (reducing) distressing primary emotions in the Amygdala / Limbic System area. In addition, such approaches facilitate the development of nine essential middle pre-frontal cortex functions as described by Siegel [op. cit. Siegel 2007; and C2 on web; and F3 due out later this year - 2019].

6. Dealing with/

6. Dealing with distressing feelings: Mental Training and the Pre-Frontal Cortex

When distressing feelings arise, or we feel a vague uneasiness in our being / body, the first essential is to recognise and acknowledge the feeling. This is crucial; if we do not do this we will be blocking / denying the feeling in one way or another. This has been the teaching in many traditions, including Buddhist psychology [Hanh 1998]; Rumi's wisdom (e.g. in the poem The Guest House); and more recently in the practice of Affect Labelling [Creswell et al 2007; Lieberman et al 2007]; and Naming and Taming [Siegel 2010B pp 116 & 246].

Recognising and noticing distressing feelings mindfully becomes considerably easier if we are practising a regular form of Mental Training. This then has a wholesome and positive effect on many dynamics within the Pre-Frontal Cortex, as illustrated in Figure 6 on the next page.



Comments on Figure 6

Mental Training brings about changes in the dynamics of the body and the brain. These are illustrated in the figure, and include:

- i. Specific Effects on the Pre-Frontal Cortex. These include:
 - a) Changing the dynamics of the ANS, so there is a shift towards increased myelinated Para-Sympathetic Nervous Activity (PSNS) – including the Vagus Nerve, with the following outcomes:
 - Modulation of the heart rate (usually slowing);
 - Increased PSNS afferent activity, as a result of which we feel more at ease and this is associated with a feeling of safety [Porges 2011; 2017].
 - Increased Social Engagement.
 - b) /

Comments on Figure 6 continued

- b) Changing the dynamics of the Lateral Pre-Frontal Cortex, and so facilitating re-appraisal / reframing.
- c) Subsequently, changing the dynamics of the Ventro-Medial PFC; this can facilitate the “extinction” of previous memories (e.g. traumatic) [Gross 2002; Delgado et al 2008; Cahn et al 2006].
- d) Facilitating the activation of nine Middle Pre-Frontal Cortex wholesome functions such as increased insight, attuned communication, emotional balance and empathy [Siegel 2007 pp 337-345; and see also C2 on website – page 2].
- ii. The above PFC dynamics tend to down-regulate (reduce) amygdala activity in terms of flight / fight emotions such as FEAR and RAGE [Panksepp 1998].
- iii. Other effects are represented out with the PFC in the diagram (though this is not necessarily anatomically correct), and these include the following dynamics:
 - a) Our [Reflective Function](#) [Knox 2012], which overlaps with reframing.
 - b) [Self-Realisation](#), a term used by Schultz in connection with some of the benefits of Autogenic Training [Wallnöfer 2000].
 - c) Reframing / re-appraisal, which is essential for personal growth, and as indicated, the initial processing of this is within the Lateral Pre-Frontal Cortex [Gross 2002; Delgado et al 2008; see also Ross 2010 pp 211-213; 265-266].
 - d) Reframing is inter-linked with [gene expression](#), beautifully expressed by Ernest Rossi:

We now really know that “every recall is a reframe.” That is, whenever we recall an important memory, nature opens up the possibility for us to reconstruct it on a molecular-genomic level within our brain. That is, we are constantly engaged in a process of creating and reconstructing the structure of our brain and body on all levels, from mind to gene.

Rossi 2002; p xv

- e) In addition, a more recent article by Dusek et al [2008] indicates that mental training (through the Relaxation Response) changes gene expression relating to “long term physiological effects.”
- f) Individuation, a term used by Carl Jung to indicate the process of development of the individual (in a non-egocentric sense) in a life which embraces integrating the shadow side of ourselves and complexes (this includes, in more recent terminology, our negative [Habit Energies](#) and [Procedural Learned Tendencies](#)).
- g) [Jen](#), a term used in ancient China to describe what was regarded as one of the highest qualities of a human being: human-heartedness.
- h) Our CARE and nurturing circuits [Panksepp 1998; Panksepp & Biven 2012].
- i) Our True Self (in contrast to False Self) [Winnicott 1960]. This overlaps with Luthe’s concept of the Authentic Self [Luthe, W. 1983].

The above dynamics and outcomes can come about through regular mental training / AT. Like physical exercise, if we are to keep mentally fit, such meditative practices are to become a regular and life-long practice.



7. Epilogue

This article has focused on the effects of blocking feelings. If we are feeling stressed / threatened, we may unconsciously block our feelings, with the effects already described. The increased SNS activity can then lead to [Hypervigilant States](#) and [Medically Unexplained Symptoms](#).

We will be unable to address these matters effectively while we are feeling unsafe. Feeling Safe inter-is⁹ with activation of our myelinated vagal system (Para-Sympathetic Nervous System) [Porges 2011; 2017]. Wholesome mental training downregulates the SNS system, and activates the above PSNS and so Social Engagement [Porges 2011; 2017].

Mental Training (e.g. AT) facilitates Mindfulness and the nine wholesome functions of the Pre-Frontal Cortex described by Dan Siegel [Siegel 2007]. Thich Nhat Hanh says a remarkable thing about Mindfulness: it has two main functions.

- a) To get in contact with the wonders of life, of the world.
- b) To recognise, notice, and acknowledge the distressing feelings / emotions that we have [Hanh 2010T pp 84-86].

At this stage, the distressing feelings that we have may not have manifested yet as an emotion; rather, we are aware of distress within the body (such as tension in the neck or stomach). It could be argued that [Hypervigilant States](#) are manifestations of unresolved emotional issues within us, which may go back to our childhood, and are now manifesting as distressing [Habit Energies](#) / [Procedural Learned Tendencies](#).

Getting in touch with the distress within ourselves is fundamental to becoming whole, and developing compassion for ourselves and others. There can be no light without darkness. Stillness within is only possible because there is the opposite of this: non-stillness / perturbation.

The lotus flower is a most beautiful flower. Where does the lotus flower emerge from? Where are its roots? The roots are in the mud; without mud, there cannot be the lotus flower. Mud and the Lotus inter-are⁸.

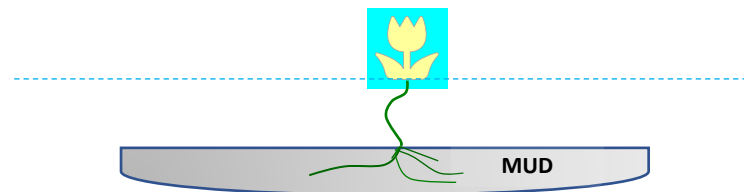
⁹ See [Inter-Being](#) in glossary

In the same way, we can only flourish if we have embraced the distressing feelings within (the “mud”). This has to be processed. Some garbage, when allowed to, becomes compost: and compost allows the flowers of next year to spring into beauty.

Mental Training changes the dynamics of the PFC, and allows us to embrace the mud so that we can become whole.

I would know my shadow and my light,
 So shall I at last be whole

Tippett 1941: A Child of Our Time



© after de Rivera 2017 / 2018

Ian R. F. Ross:
 52 Hopetoun Terrace,
 Gullane,
 East Lothian,
 EH31 2DD
 Scotland

November 2017 – February 2018; April-July 2019



8. Appendix 1

The Story of Li and Po

This story comes from the Zen tradition

One day long ago two monks, Li and Po, had a long journey to make to a far away monastery. They left early on a beautiful morning in May; the sun was just rising, the birds were singing and winging, and they felt in good spirits. After an hour or two they came to a wide river. They saw a young woman looking distressed – as she needed to cross the river but was fearful of its speed and depth.

Li immediately understood her predicament, gently picked her up and carried her across the river, and then gently put her down on the other bank.

The two monks went on their way; despite the earlier singing of the birds, there was no further singing between the monks that day. Po was irritated and gloomy – and not walking with his usual rhythm and flow. Li was perplexed.

Towards the evening, when they were in sight of the monastery, Li eventually said to Po: “What is bothering you today; when we started out in the early morning you seemed to be so happy.” Po replied: “What do you mean what is bothering me? You should know. It is against our doctrine and teachings to talk to a woman, let alone touch her – especially such a young beautiful woman.”

Li smiled, and gently replied: “My dear Po: the most fundamental aspect of our teachings is to have compassion for all beings. I simply picked up a woman in distress, carried her across the river, and put her down. However, it seems that you have been carrying her ^(in your head) all day.”

Adapted from Zen Flesh Zen Bones. A collection of Zen and Pre-Zen writings – compiled by Paul Reps (1957); and from Kumar 2008.

9. Appendix 2: Three Minute Exercise

The Three Minute Exercise is a little like the Partial Exercise and the Short Stitch Exercise in Autogenic Training; it is a brief exercise that can allow us to become centred whatever our underlying thoughts / feelings are 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 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.
- 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 unwanted¹⁰: 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. 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 upper 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 upper 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

¹⁰ Putting Feelings into words is sometimes described as Affect Labelling (Lieberman 2007), or naming and taming [Siegel 2010B].

10. Glossary

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Allostatic Load</p> <p>Adapted and abbreviated from Ross 2010 Glossary; and B20</p> <p>Allostatic Load can also be seen in terms of the Polyvagal Theory in the context of a narrowed Window of Affective Tolerance. See Ogden 2018 and B 17 on web.</p> <p>Also F 3 planned for later this year (2019)</p> | <p>The build-up over time of inappropriate physiological responses to external or internal stressors; these may then lead, sooner or later, to physical (and mental) pathology. Blocking feelings is a potent catalyst for such inappropriate physiological responses.</p> <p>Allostatic Load can also be described as: "The wear and tear that results from chronic over activity or under activity of Allostatic systems."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A term used by McEwen (McEwen 1998; McEwen & Lasley 2003) to denote a permanent change in the body's physiology / biochemistry brought about by stressors. In effect, the stressors are transduced into dis-ease; disease; and possibly early death. [An analogy can be found in the physics of metals: if a metal is stretched beyond its "elastic limit" it becomes permanently deformed.] ○ Selye [Selye 1956; Selye 1974] had already suggested that the Stress Response could result in damage to the organism if the stressors were excessive or prolonged: this results in the Chronic Stress Response, which overlaps with the concept of Allostatic Load. <p>Children who have had stressful / traumatic childhoods will be particularly prone to Allostatic Load [see also Felitti; and Ross 2010 pp 61-61; and B19 and B20 on website].</p> |
| <p>Amplified State of Consciousness Induction ASCI (after Luis de Rivera)</p> <p>From Glossary of F1</p> <p>See also eu-molecules</p> | <p>"ASCI principle: passive concentration induces an Amplified State of Consciousness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benson's Relaxation Response is identical to the autogenic state described by Schultz and co-workers, so we could name this principle the Relaxation Principle. ○ I prefer ASCI (Amplified State of Consciousness Induction) because it conveys better the notion that, besides the psychophysiological changes, there is an amplification of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the mental field, b) inner world perception and c) self-discovery. <p>The standard exercises work on this principle."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[de Rivera 2017 /2018B] Bullet points etc added - IR</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 welcoming term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Naming and Taming" [Siegel 2010B pp 116 & 246]. <p>For further information, see</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ B12: Affect Labelling, Autogenic Training, and reducing Emotional Distress |
| <p>Feeling the Feeling Meditation</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. 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See F 5A on website for further details. |
| <p>Eu-molecules /</p> | |

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| <p>Eu-molecules</p> <p>Eu-: Greek for good / positive</p> <p>Adapted from glossary of Ross 2010</p> | <p>Similar in concept to Selye's Eustress [Selye 1956; 1974]. A term coined by IR (originally Ross 2005 and 2007B – unpublished) to describe the cascades of life-enhancing informational substances that flow through the body when we are in a state of harmony; when our thoughts are positive and / or nurturing; and when we are in a positive mental state / emotion (affect). If we smile gently, that will be associated with cascades of informational eu-molecules. (Compare with Mal-molecules - see below in glossary.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note that molecules are, obviously, not in themselves good or bad. ○ However, on-going cascades of informational substances that flow through our body when we are in harmony and / or in a positive mood / affect will have beneficial effects on our health and being. ○ In such a context these informational substances are called eu-molecules. <p>Eu-molecules are associated with the Relaxation Response (or, in de Rivera's expanded concept, Amplified State of Consciousness Induction - ASCI [de Rivera 2018 p 17; 200]), and the activation of the myelinated (supra-diaphragmatic) vagal nerve system – a feeling of safety, and the associated Social Engagement circuits [Porges 2011; 2017; Porges and Dana, 2018].</p> |
| <p>Eustress</p> | <p>The term used by Selye [1975] for positive, life enhancing stress. [Eu- : Greek for good.]</p> |
| <p>Gene Expression</p> <p>Adapted from glossary of Ross 2010 p 278</p> | <p>A shorthand for Gene-Expression-Protein-Synthesis Cycle (GEPS). Genes can be switched on or off by messenger molecules. If they are switched on, they will set in motion a series of (chemical) reactions resulting in the production of a specific protein – <i>as a result of which certain physiological and psychological changes may occur</i>. In addition, these proteins may have a role to play in the development of new synapses and neurones in the brain (Rossi 2002; 2004). This GEPS may be for good or ill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GEPS cycles are discussed specifically in Ross 2010 – Essay 3: <i>Biological rhythms; Gene Expression; and Healing</i> – especially section 3.5. See also Negative Gene Expression and Life Enhancing Gene Expression below. |
| <p><i>Negative Gene Expression (NGE)</i></p> <p>and</p> | <p>If we are distressed and / or not in harmony – or constantly ignore our ultradian healing cycles (Basic Rest Activity Cycles) [Rossi 1991] – this can be associated with what we could term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative Gene Expression (NGE) <p>..... and this would be linked in with cascades of mal-molecules** over time [Ross 2010] – which could thus lead to further negative affect and possibly Allostatic Load [Bird 2015 (pp 172-173 "Allostasis and Allostatic Load by Ian Ross)].</p> <p>If our feelings are blocked, as indicated in this article, then there will be consequences: and these will in part be mediated through NGE.</p> |
| <p><i>Life-Enhancing Gene Expression (LEGE)</i></p> | <p>If we are in a positive mental state, this will be linked with what we could call Life-Enhancing Gene Expression (LEGE); and this would be linked with cascades of eu-molecules** [Ross 2010].</p> <p>If we acknowledge, and deal appropriately with, blocked / distressing feelings, this will liberate us from the unwholesome consequence of blocking feelings and the related NGE; and the liberation will be associated with LEGE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This analysis has been given further support in a 2008 article by Dusek et al in which they analyse the gene expression as a result of the Relaxation Response. They say: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☼ “Our results suggest consistent and constitutive changes in gene expression resulting from RR (Relaxation Response) may relate to long term physiological effects.” [Dusek et al 2008 p 1 (from Abstract)]. |

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| <p><i>Life-Enhancing Gene Expression continued</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 150px; height: 150px; margin: 20px auto; text-align: center; padding: 10px;"> <p>The concept of NGE and LEGE may best be viewed as a model or metaphor for these inner processes</p> </div> | <p>Negative moods and life experiences may thus be associated with Negative Gene Expression and further negative affect. On the other hand, positive moods, (positive) novelty, life enhancing experiences and exercise can switch on Life Enhancing Gene Expression (LEGE) which will be associated with the laying down of new proteins in the brain, thus consolidating the positive experience (extrapolated from Rossi 2002; 2004).</p> <p>**Note that molecules are obviously not in themselves good or bad. However, persistent high or low levels of such molecules can have positive or negative outcomes.</p> |
| <p>Habit Energy</p> <p>A shortened and modified version of the glossary from B20, which gives a more detailed account</p> | <p>As we grow up, we take on certain patterns of behaviour and attitudes from our parents, ancestors, and teachers. Some of these may be helpful, some may be neutral, and others may be dysfunctional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In Buddhist psychology, these are termed Habit Energies, and overlap with Procedural Learned Tendencies [Ogden 2009] and Complexes (in a Jungian sense). ○ Negative Habit Energies need to be addressed, reflected upon within a safe mental space, and worked through so they can be dissipated, with the result that we can develop a more coherent narrative of our childhood; otherwise we are liable to pass them on to future generations. ○ A more coherent narrative of our childhood can also be facilitated by the Adult Attachment Interview. [See Siegel 2010B pp 171-175 for a helpful initial introduction to the AAI.] |
| <p>Hypervigilant State</p> | <p>A state in which we are neuro-physiologically in a flight / fight mode, with the concomitant increased Sympathetic Nervous System activity. This is a physically and emotionally draining state – especially if it is persistent / recurring. It can arise as a result of previous life experiences, and so manifest in terms of Habit Energies / Procedural Learned Tendencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ These in turn may result in Medically Unexplained Symptoms [Dobbin & S Ross 2012]. |
| <p>Informational substances</p> <p>From Glossary of Ross 2010</p> | <p>"Although peptide structures are deceptively simple, the responses they elicit can be maddeningly complex. This complexity has led to their being classified under a wide variety of categories, including hormones, neurotransmitters, neuromodulators, growth factors, gut peptides, interleukins, cytokines, chemokines, and growth-inhibiting factors. I prefer a broad term coined originally by the late Francis Schmitt of MIT - <i>informational substances</i> – because it points to their common function, that of messenger molecules distributing information throughout the organism."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Pert 1997; p 71</p> |
| <p>Inter-Being</p> | <p>A concept developed by the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh, that resonates with the new physics and the ideas explored in 'The Systems View of Life: A <i>Unifying Vision</i>' [Capra & Luisi 2014]. Behind the idea is that everything in the cosmos is inter-related. This means that nothing in the universe can truly have a separate existence, a separate self. All things and beings are full of "non self-elements".</p> <p>Hanh says:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">"If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without the cloud, there can be no rain; without the rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">" 'Inter-Being' 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: <i>inter-be</i>".</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Hanh 2012 p 35</p> <p>See, in due course, F 6.5 on web.</p> |
| <p>Jen /</p> | |

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| <p>Jen</p> <p>From glossary of B20</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 black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;">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 of them to put their palms together and gently bow to the other, saying: “namaste”, ‘I honour the divine within you” [Kornfield 2008 p 17]. This is in essence a recognition of the Jen quality within the other, and within each of us. (In Buddhist psychology, this is called our original nature).</p> |
| <p>Mal-molecules</p> <p>Adapted from Glossary of Ross 2010</p> | <p>A term used by IR derived originally from Selye's concept Eu-stress; hence Eu-molecules (see above in this glossary; and referred to in Ross 2005X – unpublished).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mal-molecules is a term used to describe on-going and persistent cascades of informational substances when we are stressed and / or when we are in a distressing / destructive mood or affect. For example, every time we recall a past event that still makes us angry, we are actually setting in motion cascades of (potentially) mal-molecules. Recurrent cascades of such mal-molecules can, over time, lead to Allostatic Load. Unresolved and unremitting persistent grief would be another example. <p>Note that molecules are, obviously, not in themselves good or bad. However, persistent and unremitting cascades of some informational substances (molecules) can lead to damage; and these we call mal-molecules.</p> |
| <p>Medically Unexplained Symptoms</p> | <p>In general medical practice, some patients may experience distressing symptoms, yet when investigated, nothing shows up. This does not mean that nothing is wrong; the patient may be experiencing very distressing symptoms such as tension headaches, non-cardiac chest pain, recurrent back pain, or Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). The common feature of these is often a hypervigilant state, which is associated with in-appropriate activity of the SNS [see, for example, Dobbin & S. Ross 2012]. The origins of such hypervigilant states may go back to childhood, and can be linked to negative Habit Energies / Procedural Learned Tendencies.</p> |
| <p>Mental Representations</p> <p>Adapted from F1</p> | <p>Any and every mental representation – such as a thought, feeling, idea, emotion, plan – produces changes in the brain and the body.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In the context of therapeutic approaches and well-being, the following considerations are of import.</p> <ol 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 myelinated Ventral Vagal^[PNS] and feeling safe [Porges 2017] – and our Natural Healing Systems. 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 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 [Porges 2017; Porges & Dana 2018]. This will therefore be associated with a series of negative Mental Representations with similar outcomes to B above. |

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| <p>Mental Representations <i>continued</i></p> | <p>D. Counsellors and psychotherapists are increasingly becoming aware of the central healing factor of the therapeutic relationship, and for this to be wholesome and healing it is vital that trust and a feeling of safety are established [Panksepp & Biven 2012; Porges 2017; Ross 2017B].</p> <p>In terms of the basic principles of Autogenic Training, mental representations are closely associated with the Ideoplastic Principle [de Rivera 2018B; and see F1 on web including the Glossary entry on Ideoplastic Principle; and in due course F3].</p> <p>It is important that AT therapists are aware of these dynamics if and when they are introducing the Priming (de-blocking) exercises** (i.e. the BAS named intentional Off-Loading Exercises such as Anger and Anxiety). [The above is based on de Rivera 2018B].</p> <p>** Note the deblocking of grief (“Crying Exercise”) is inherently pro-homeostatic.</p> <p>These matters are discussed further in F1.</p> |
| <p>Mindful Concentration</p> | <p>An alternative expression for Passive Concentration used by IR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Also described as Autogenic Concentration [Wallnöfer 2014]. ○ See also glossary of F1 for further comments on these terms. |
| <p>Procedural Learned Tendencies</p> <p>Ogden 2009</p> <p>This is adapted from the Glossaries of E-03, D11 and B20 on this website</p> | <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 subsequently become fixed / inappropriate responses (i.e. Procedural Learned Tendencies) – which can 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> |
| <p>Reflective Function</p> <p>Brief extract from Glossary of E-03</p> | <p>The Reflective modality of humans has been a crucial part of many spiritual traditions, going back millenia. Jung’s approach to psychology and individuation is to a large extent based on reflection; Knox highlights the importance of this approach for our well-being in a chapter of one of her books [Knox 2003 Chapter 6: “The Reflective Function”].</p> |
| <p>Safe and Feeling Safe</p> <p>Adapted from glossary of F6.1</p> <p>(A Sense of Feeling Safe)</p> | <p>Fundamental to Autogenic Training is the shift in physiological state that can bring about deep inner calm – that is sometimes reflected in the phrase “I am at Peace”.</p> <p>Schultz described this in terms of the “psycho-physiological shift” (<i>Umschaltung</i> – Schultz 1932; 1991; Luthe & Schultz; 1969; p 1) which can be seen in terms of a switch from an SNS dominated state to that of the rest, repair, recuperation modality of the PSNS.</p> <p>More recently, Porges’ work on the Polyvagal Theory has emphasised the role of the myelinated supra-diaphragmatic vagus nerve (part of the PSNS) [Porges 2011; 2017] in bringing about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☼ positive social engagement and nurturing (e.g. the in mother-infant dyad) that is crucial to our well-being. |

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| <p>Safe and Feeling Safe <i>continued</i></p> | <p>☸ This can be considered in terms of a feeling of being safe within [Porges 2017 pp 33-51 Ogden 2018].</p> <p>We can refresh our view of the “psycho-physiological shift” in terms of this concept of a feeling of safety within. In this psycho-physiological condition, even when external events are difficult / problematic, we can keep an inner equanimity if we allow ourselves to stay grounded in our AT practice (e.g. Standard Exercises, Partial Exercise(s), and the Three Minute Exercise).</p> <p>For an erudite essay on AT and feeling safe, see Barrowcliff 2019.</p> |
| <p>Second Arrow Adapted from F6.1 on web</p> | <p>A term borrowed from Buddhist Psychology to indicate our tendency as humans to negatively ruminate about a distressing event, thought, or feeling. The initial cause of this 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 (described as the second arrow).</p> <p>This <i>Second Arrow</i> 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>Feeling the Feeling Meditation can be seen as a skilful means to avoid the pitfalls of such negative ruminations.</p> |
| <p>Self-Realisation For a more detailed glossary entry, with associated diagram, please see web article B-20</p> | <p>A term used by Schultz which seems to very much overlap with Luthe’s concept of the Authentic Self.</p> <p>In the context of Autogenic Training, Schultz said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “In this sense our work leads towards the highest goal of psychotherapy (the highest stratum of existential values), to self-realisation.” [Quoted by Wallnöfer 2000 – see also appendix C in website article E-03]. |
| <p>Somato-Sensory Meditation /</p> | |

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| Somato-Sensory Meditation | <p>Luis de Rivera sees the Standard Exercises of AT in terms of Somato-Sensory Meditation. In this sense, he grounds AT firmly in the ancient traditions of Meditation [de Rivera 2018].</p> <p><i>What does Somato-Sensory Meditation mean?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Somato: relating to the body. (i.e. As in somato-psychic, or the more common description of psycho-somatic; both of these, in reality, inter-are.) [See Inter-Being – Hanh 2012B pp 55-56.] ○ Sensory: relating to our sensory system that embraces our sensory system in terms of our senses such as touch, taste, sound etc; our memories, thoughts, and our very consciousness; and the information that we receive from the body by the afferent nerves (nerves bringing information from the body to the brain). The heaviness and warmth that we realise are in our limbs is brought to the brain, and so to conscious awareness, by the afferent system of nerves – especially via the Autonomic Nervous System [Craig 2015]. ○ In the AT Standard Exercises, we use Mindful Concentration to focus on, and notice, what is going on in the body. For example, when we focus on Heaviness in the limbs, we are in time able to tune into the awareness of heaviness in the limbs. This is not imagination; our limbs are heavy because of gravity. Heaviness in the limbs is a fact of living on mother earth. All the Standard exercises are based on actual states of the body. Warmth deep inside the body is a fact of life and the living state of every cell within us; the metabolism (biological chemical reactions within the cell) creates the warmth. (In the same way, warmth / heat is created when something burns / is oxidised.) <p>It is through our Somato-Sensory Systems that Meditation (and most forms of consciousness) are possible.</p> |
| Three Minute Exercise | <p>A brief mental exercise described by Segal et al in their: “Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression [Segal et al 2002; 2013].</p> <p>During the last several years, I have introduced this exercise in my teaching of AT – as an addition / alternative to other short exercises. The feedback from this has been good.</p> <p>☸ See Appendix 2 (p 15) for a description of this exercise.</p> |

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 Ian R. F. Ross: November 2017 – February 2018
 April-July 2019
 52 Hopetoun Terrace,
 Gullane, EH31 2DD,
 Scotland

11. Thematically related articles on web

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| A1 | The Stress Response, the Relaxation Response, and the Tend-and-Befriend Response |
| A7 | Porges and the Polyvagal Theory – <i>reflections on clinical and therapeutic significance</i> |
| A8 | The Polyvagal Theory and a more sympathetic awareness of the ANS |
| A9 | Emotions, Well-Being and Immune Function – <i>Awe and Shame as modulators of Being – for good or ill</i> |
| C2 | Mindsight – our seventh sense and <i>nine associated pre-frontal cortex functions</i> |
| B1 | Bears, Imagination, and Well Being |
| B12 | Affect Labelling, Autogenic Training, and reducing Emotional Distress |
| B17 | 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] |
| B19 | Reflections on a Secure Base – <i>Bowlby, Ainsworth, Attachment and Well-Being</i> ^[2017] |
| B20 | Separation Distress and Well-Being – <i>Neuro-physiological reflections on developing a Secure Base</i> ^[2018] |
| E-03 | Look at the Cypress Tree – Autonomic Afferents and Well-Being (article based on Annual Lecture to British Autogenic Society – May 2016) |
| F 1 | A general introduction to Autogenics 3.0 – based on the work of Luis de Rivera ^[2018] |
| F 2 | Autogenic 3.0: an approach to the 10 Standard Exercise format for those familiar with, and practising, the Six Standard Exercise format ^[2019] |
| F 3 | Basic Principles of Autogenic Training |
| F 4 | Some Consequences of Blocking Feelings – <i>of not allowing ourselves to feel the feeling</i> (this paper) |
| F 5A | Feeling the Feeling Meditation I ^[2019] |
| F 6.1 | Introduction to Constructive Feeling Meditation: Constructive Feeling Meditation I: Calm ^[2019] |
| F 6.2 | Constructive Feeling Meditation II: Existence ^[2019] |
| F 6.5 | Constructive Feeling Meditation: V: Inter-Being |
| F 7 | Meditation on Five Sounds that can Heal the World (after Hanh) |

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12. References and Sources

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