

Emotions The Bridge between Mind and Soul

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We all know people who are basically happy most of the time, and others who are downright miserable. We probably come into contact with people who are prone to anger, such as those with road rage, and yet others who are quietly grieving following a personal bereavement. Human beings are complex creatures, and one aspect of our humanity is feeling emotions. Emotions help define us as individuals.

Tibb has long recognised this fact. Emotions in general are considered to be of immense importance in the health-disease scenario. There are two good reasons for this: first, the role of emotions in maintaining good health, long derided as being non-scientific, is now being shown more significantly to be an undisputable fact. We now know that uncontrolled or excessive emotions can have a devastating effect on our health, and conversely, that a sound mind is needed for a healthy body. Tibb regards emotions as the bridge between mind and body.

Second, emotions play an important part in a person's temperament. This is a core feature in the Tibb approach to the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease. Temperament, a major pillar of Tibb, brings together our physical form, our behaviour, and our personality into one description or profile. This includes our inherent emotional make-up - whether we are a worrying type, or inclined to anger, or drowning in misery, or rather laid back. Temperament is an indicator of our uniqueness.

But what are emotions, and what is so significant about them? Like the term beauty, it is difficult to define although we all know what they are. Simply put, emotions are feelings, and they describe how we respond in mind and body to a particular situation. There are emotions like anger and aggression which are outward-directed; and others like anxiety and grieving that are inward-directed.

How many emotions are there? Although most emotions have different names, the consensus is that there are five basic emotions - joy, fear, anger, grief and love. There are of course many variations of each of these: for example, anger also masquerades as hatred, hostility, resentment, rage, violence.

Emotions are part of the normal fabric of everyday life. Obviously, people experiencing the normal gamut of emotions that attend daily life do not need any support such as counseling. It is only when anger morphs into hatred, violence and rage, or anxiety into fear or panic, that we have a problem. Similarly when sadness translates into depression, or grief into extreme bitterness then we would need to address and channel these emotions in a healthier manner.

The problem arises when any emotion becomes excessive and escapes control, thereby damaging the person, his family or community; or becomes so intense, that it encourages the development of diseases like migraine, blood pressure problems and even cancer.

But how can emotions affect our health? We know of several ways. Some emotions are aggravated by unrelenting stress, and this increases the release of damaging hormones, such as adrenaline. Also, unresolved emotional conflicts can lead to low-level inflammation in the body. This we know increases the risk of Alzheimer's, cancer and some heart diseases. In addition, the risk of heart disease in people unable to handle specific emotions can rise, due to a damaging impact on internal organs. Finally, emotions can affect personal behaviour, leading to greater use (and abuse) of drugs, alcohol and food, and so to an unhealthy lifestyle.

Tibb has long recognised the adverse effect that poor emotional control has upon a person's well-being. This is why it was promoted into the major lifestyle factors (in company with healthy eating, proper breathing, appropriate exercise, adequate sleep and toxin removal). Emotional imbalance is viewed as a major risk factor in Tibb. It can have a seriously upsetting effect on the bodies' innate ability to heal. The consequence is, amongst other effects, lowered resistance to microbe infection or cancer progression.

Until recently, modern medicine has downplayed and possibly overlooked the role of emotions in the onset and progress of diseases. However more and more hard clinical evidence is building up supporting the importance of emotions. For instance:

Anxiety, brought on by high stress levels, leads to early onset of several diseases

Pessimism is linked to an increased rate of dying from a heart attack;

Hope and optimism have been shown to improve healing processes;

Emotional support for cancer sufferers is known to prolong survival time;

After a heart attack, a person's mental attitude is a better predictor of survival than blood pressure, cholesterol levels and artery damage.

Generally, a powerful way of preventing disease (and body injury!) is managing emotions properly: dealing directly with hostility, anxiety, loneliness, depression, pessimism, etc.

The Tibb approach to neutralising the effects of uncontrolled or excessive emotions is based on reversing the changes in qualities brought up by the particular emotion. The negative emotions, which generally pose most health problems, are counteracted by encouraging positive influences through various routes - diet, avoidance of toxins, exercise and other lifestyle options, herbal medication, and specific therapies.

It seems that emotional experiences can have positive or negative roles in maintaining the inner harmony that determines personal wellness. Excessive or uncontrolled emotions, over the long term, can, and will, have serious repercussions. However, there are several accessible ways to deal with these, and should be considered before lasting health issues arise.