



Destructive Emotions: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama

By Daniel Goleman

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*Why do seemingly rational, intelligent people commit acts of cruelty and violence?

*What are the root causes of destructive behavior?

*How can we control the emotions that drive these impulses?

*Can we learn to live at peace with ourselves and others?

Imagine sitting with the Dalai Lama in his private meeting room with a small group of world-class scientists and philosophers. The talk is lively and fascinating as these leading minds grapple with age-old questions of compelling contemporary urgency. Daniel Goleman, the internationally bestselling author of **Emotional Intelligence**, provides the illuminating commentary—and reports on the breakthrough research this historic gathering inspired.

Destructive Emotions

Buddhist philosophy tells us that all personal unhappiness and interpersonal conflict lie in the “three poisons”: craving, anger, and delusion. It also provides antidotes of astonishing psychological sophistication—which are now being confirmed by modern neuroscience. With new high-tech devices, scientists can peer inside the brain centers that calm the inner storms of rage and fear. They also can demonstrate that awareness-training strategies such as meditation strengthen emotional stability—and greatly enhance our positive moods.

The distinguished panel members report these recent findings and debate an exhilarating range of other topics: What role do destructive emotions play in human evolution? Are they “hardwired” in our bodies? Are they universal, or does culture determine how we feel? How can we nurture the compassion that is also our birthright? We learn how practices that reduce negativity have also been shown to bolster the immune system. Here, too, is an enlightened proposal for a school-based program of social and emotional learning that can help our children

increase self-awareness, manage their anger, and become more empathetic.

Throughout, these provocative ideas are brought to life by the play of personalities, by the Dalai Lama's probing questions, and by his surprising sense of humor. Although there are no easy answers, the dialogues, which are part of a series sponsored by the Mind and Life Institute, chart an ultimately hopeful course. They are sure to spark discussion among educators, religious and political leaders, parents—and all people who seek peace for themselves and the world.

The Mind and Life Institute sponsors cross-cultural dialogues that bring together the Dalai Lama and other Buddhist scholars with Western scientists and philosophers. *Mind and Life VIII*, on which this book is based, took place in Dharamsala, India, in March 2000.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Destructive Emotions: How Can We Overcome Them? A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama forcefully puts to rest the misconception that the realms of science and spirituality are at odds. In this extraordinary book, Daniel Goleman presents dialogues between the Dalai Lama and a small group of eminent psychologists, neuroscientists, and philosophers that probe the challenging questions: Can the worlds of science and philosophy work together to recognize destructive emotions such as hatred, craving, and delusion? If so, can they transform those feelings for the ultimate improvement of humanity? As the Dalai Lama explains, "With the ever-growing impact of science on our lives, religion and spirituality have a greater role to play in reminding us of our humanity."

The book's subject marks the eighth round in a series of ongoing meetings of the Mind Life Institute. The varied perspectives of science, philosophy, and Eastern and Western thought beautifully illustrate the symbiosis among the views, which are readily accessible despite their complexity. Among the book's many strengths is its organization, which allows readers to enjoy the entire five-day seminar or choose sections that are most relevant to their interests, such as "Cultivating Emotional Balance," "The Neuroscience of Emotion," "Encouraging Compassion," or "The Scientific Study of Consciousness." But the real joy is in gaining an insider's view of these extraordinary minds at work, especially that of the Dalai Lama, whose curiosity, Socratic questioning, and humor ultimately serve as the linchpin for the book's soaring intellectual discussion. --*Silvana Tropea*

From Publishers Weekly

In May 2001, in a laboratory at the University of Wisconsin, a Tibetan Buddhist monk donned a cap studded with hundreds of sensors that were connected to a state-of-the-art EEG, a brain-scanning device capable of recording changes in his brain with speed and precision. When the monk began meditating in a way that was designed to generate compassion, the sensors registered a dramatic shift to a state of great joy. "The very act of concern for others' well-being, it seems, creates a greater state of well-being within oneself," writes bestselling author Goleman (*Emotional Intelligence*) in his extraordinary new work. Goleman offers this breakthrough as an appetizer to a feast. Readers will discover that it is just one of a myriad of creative and positive results that are continuing to flow from the Mind and Life dialogue that took place over five days in March 2000 between a group of leading Western scientists and philosophers and the Dalai Lama in his private quarters in Dharamsala, India. This eighth Mind and Life meeting is the seventh to be recorded in book form; Goleman's account is the most detailed and user-friendly to date. The timely theme of the dialogue was suggested by the Dalai Lama to Goleman, who took on the role of organizer and brought together some world-class researchers and thinkers, including psychologist Paul Ekman, philosopher Owen Flanagan, the late Francisco Varela and Buddhist photographer Matthieu Ricard. In a sense, the many extraordinary insights and findings that arise from the presentations and subsequent discussions are embodied by the Dalai Lama himself as he appears here. Far from the cuddly teddy bear the popular media sometimes makes him out to be, he emerges as a brilliant and exacting interrogator, a natural scientist, as well as a leader committed to finding a practical means to help society. Yet he also personally embodies the possibility of overcoming destructive emotions, of becoming resilient, compassionate and happy no matter what life brings. Covering the nature of destructive emotions, the neuroscience of emotion, the scientific study of consciousness and more, this essential volume offers a fascinating account of what can emerge when two profound systems for studying the mind and emotions, Western science and Buddhism, join forces. Goleman travels beyond the edge of the known, and the report he sends back is encouraging.

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From Library Journal

Eradicating violence throughout the world is at the core of contemporary social thought and international justice. To that end, Goleman (psychology, Rutgers Univ.) shares relevant discourse from an international symposium between the Dalai Lama and experts in Eastern philosophy and Western science on the topic of emotions. The best of both schools of thought is brought together for the first time to establish a viable "mental gym" program aimed at developing the average person's range of healthy feelings. Training the brain to develop such feelings through the regular use of simple meditation techniques and conflict resolution skills causes our behavior to shift constructively toward other humans, the panel found. The flow of the discussion here operates at a deep level and is suitable primarily for psychology and psychiatry students. Notably, though, the contributors' wise decision to help people strengthen themselves emotionally not for moral reasons but for reasons of health and happiness will ultimately have mass appeal. It is also a practical step toward ending world violence. Recommended for academic libraries.

--Lisa Liquori, M.L.S., Syracuse, NY

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Karyn Turner:

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