



# Utilising emotions,

Dealing Positively with Emotions from a psychotherapeutic standpoint for Personal and/or Spiritual Development – A Unity in Duality approach.

*Teachings by Tarab Tulku, as presented by Lene Handberg*

*Lene Handberg<sup>1</sup>,*

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<sup>1</sup>*Educational Director, Tarab Institute International*

Correspondence: info@tarab-institute.com

## **The Nature of Emotions**

From the Buddhist perspective emotions arise due to attraction and rejection. We are attracted to that which we need in order that our entity and the present identity/self-reference can survive and we reject anything, which seems to threaten the continuity of this identity/self-reference. This applies to everything, which has come into dual and samsaric existence.

The vast spectrum of emotions and feelings evolve and arise solely on the basis of our individual identities/self-references and it is only at the point of higher evolutionary development like ours this instinct for survival may develop into emotions.

Emotions are bound up with the three types of mind: Conceptual mind, Feeling mind and Image mind. Emotion itself is an expression of the feeling mind. But when we speak about emotions we often fail to differentiate between the feeling and the conceptual idea about, which projects conceptual reality of the “bad” other. And we often confuse our experience through the image mind with its conceptual projection of the “bad” object with what we actually perceive through our physical eyes.

When emotional it is the dynamic of these three functions of mind, based on a vulnerable feeling of myself, that makes the original feeling arise and develop into a fully blown emotional reaction. Conceptually telling the person is “bad” further establishes the bad experience/situation.

Furthermore, when we are fully identified with the mental image experience rather than the sensory actuality, then the mentally created appearance becomes reality for us. Probably every one of us had said, “But I saw it with my own eyes” as the final proof. This solidifying of the “bad” aspects of the situation - as though they were “the truth and nothing but the truth” - fuel the emotion which then develops stronger and stronger feeling with its inevitable reaction.

## **Usefulness of Emotions**

In our ordinary life, however, it does seem as though a certain amount of emotional energy also could bring success. If we observe the leading figures in our society we see that many of them have apparently discovered how to use passionate emotional energy in a constructive way. From the spiritual viewpoint, in Tantra practice the basic energy of emotions is utilised in a very specific way in order to progress on the spiritual path. So both in our ordinary life experience and in spiritual Yogic experience the basic energy of emotion, whether we call it positive or negative can be very useful.

## **The Core**

What is it, from the Buddhist perspective that gives rise to the emotion in the first place? As has already been said, negative emotions arise from the perception of a lack in that which one needs to



uphold one's entity and identity/self-reference or from experienced threat or attack.

We have many types of identities/self-references and some of them are firm and therefore not easily attacked whereas others, being conceptually based and therefore superficial, need much more re-enforcement and support in order to sustain their identity. We have created many strategies to sustain these vulnerable identities/self-references, some of which can be traced back to early childhood.

While we identify with any one of these vulnerable identities/self-references we become sensitive. Small things "get on our nerves" and we can easily become emotional. However, because we fail to see the influence of our own vulnerabilities we react as though the situation had arisen entirely "outside" and we therefore project the whole problem onto the perceived outer cause, the person who makes me jealous or the situation which makes me feel angry, etc.

From the U.D. point of view emotions are natural and protective of that with our existentially felt centre with which we identify in this moment. But if we could manage to slow the emotion - the physical and mental feeling - and feel it, then it could lead us back to the core or the problem, the wounded self-reference.

### **Utilising Emotions**

According to U.D., instead of blowing up emotionally we have other far more constructive possibilities available to us. These range from "staying with" the feeling to a total transformation of the underlying vulnerable or wounded self-feelings - which will poison our life experience until we can appease them or root them out.

The first step is to stay with the original feeling experience of being prevented or attacked and allowing this negative feeling to get in proximity. We can only do this if we no longer give credence to our conceptual idea of the external situation. Failing to do this would in any case simply repress the original emotional feeling instead of releasing it.

As we cannot name everything but inevitably have to be selective when using words, when driven by an emotion the conceptual mind automatically only names the negative aspects of the situation. On this basis an inadequate and partial image becomes food for the arising

emotion. Staying with the physical feeling allows us to contact the body-sense, which allows us the lens through, which can re-frame our perceived reality that caused us distress and inappropriate expression in action.

In other words, grounding by means of the body sense is a very useful tool to break the vicious spiralling of the developing emotion. We have the sayings, "Take a deep breath", "Count to ten", "Come down to Earth" and "Come back to your senses" which relate to the same thing.

In accordance with Unity in Duality psychology, the second step is to give attention to the body sense during the prevention/attack experience and to return to the mental feeling underlying the vulnerable identity/self-reference. If we can do that then we can, in fact, use the negative emotion or "bad self-referential feeling" to discover one of the fundamental imprinted structures, which is "making my life miserable". When in contact with this vulnerable self-referential structure it is possible to use either dual or non-dual methods for its transformation.

### **Dual transformation**

Dual transformation can either use inner or outer resources. Using external resources refers to the first level of Deity practice within Buddhism, such as receiving Love/Compassion, Strength/Support and Wisdom from the Deity. It also refers to meditations on any religious representation or symbol with the qualities of Love/Compassion, Strength and Wisdom. If one does not have any active personal religious source of Love and Compassion one might have a dear friend or a love of nature or any person - real or imaginary - or even an animal - which could bring one into contact with a deeper inner strength and support - specially the more subtle qualities of love.

Dual transformation using an inner resource implies contacting whatever experience of oneself, which brings one in touch with a deeper and more grounded self-referential feeling. If one can get in touch with a positive body-sensation, especially towards the centre of the body or in connection with the spinal cord, this will enable one to contact a stronger and more authentic feeling of oneself. If one could contact one's core energies, or a feeling of love in connection with the Heart Chakra area, then that will bring one in



touch with a stable and fearless experience of oneself. There is good reason why the Heart Chakra is so strongly emphasised as a spiritual resource in any culture.

If one wants to deepen the dual transformation of the vulnerable self-referential feeling, then again it is important to distinguish between the feeling mind and the conceptual mind. We need the conceptual mind to tell us what to do and maybe how to do it, but to actually transform the vulnerable self-referential feeling we need to rely on the experience by the feeling-mind – otherwise we keep at a distance of the actual core to be transformed. The same way one uses basically feeling mind for meditation – the other types of mind being helping tools. Anybody who has tried to meditate knows the problems of the interference, which the conceptual mind brings when dominating - distancing us from the object with which one is trying to create a “feeling” relationship.

After having done this practise for some time we will begin to realise that each time a specific and unpleasant feeling arises, - one that we identify with – I am unable to judge the situation correctly. We see that we have immediately projected a lot of negativity upon the “other” and understand that we had better stay with the feeling and do dual transformative work before acting. The realisation of the interrelationship of subject (mind) and object (reality) is priceless. Understanding the relationship between the vulnerable self-reference - I identify with in the moment - and the way in which I experience the object, the situation or my reality, gives me the power to change the whole experience. This is the beginning of being able to regain command of one’s life. Gaining an inner command over one’s life rather than the way in which we are usually pulled by external events.

### **Non-Dual Transformation**

Non-dual transformation is the main spiritual method used in Tibetan Buddhism. In accordance with Mahamudra - every mind has a basic pure nature and especially the feeling-mind. To be absorbed into this pure nature of feeling mind by using non-dual methods, leads to the basic “nature of mind”. It is similar to the Dzogchen teaching where the nature of existence is rigpa, which one attains by using non-dual methods. Rigpa is at the

same time the highest practice, the highest realisation and the highest goal. Similarly, the ‘void’-nature of existence, being no different from rigpa nature and the “nature of mind”, is also reached by means of non-dual methods.

Within Tantra the way that the non-dual method is used resembles the death process. It is very frequently used in the higher Tantra practises such as Mandala practices and the Six Yogas. Generally within Tantra, when changing state - that is from a normal state to a meditative state and from one meditative state to a more subtle meditative state. Or from the waking state to the dream state and from the waking state to the “clear light” state (resembles the death state) - the yogi/yogini is going through a death-like process of the self-reference, the identity which he or she wishes to leave, in order to manifest on a more subtle and pure level. Mastering this non-dual transformation is the key to Tantra practise.

According to U.D. we use non-dual transformation for personal development using the death process, a little in line with Tantra practices. In this context we are not concerned with a change of states but are simply intending to transform the disturbing vulnerable self-reference by allowing it to die. In an imagery state, staying with the self-referential feeling, which one wants to transform, it will be attacked. Still staying with it the attacks become more and more severe until the vulnerable self-referential feeling literally falls apart and dies.

However, non-dual transformation used for personal development presuppose the acquaintance and practise with dual methods, because one needs training in one-pointedness to be able to stay with the body sense and with the feeling of the vulnerable self-referential feeling. It also requires a certain amount of knowledge and insightful experience in the interrelationship between the subject and the object, (as has been mentioned above), without which it is not possible to stay with the vulnerable self-referential feeling when the attack gets stronger - which it will during the process of non-dual transformation. It requires some practise to stay with this natural process of destruction, without retreating into defence of the self-reference – especially when it is a vulnerable self-reference as in this case. As soon as we go into defence mode then the process stops.



The dual transformation can be effected within an actual situation - although to begin with it usually requires work with former situations at an imaginary level. It is not possible to go into non-dual transformation on the spot. Non-dual transformation can only be dealt with at the imaginary level, in meditation states or in the lucid dream state, the latter when knowing oneself to be dreaming. It needs training and usually it needs a guide to be able to reach a profound level of non-dual transformation for personal development. Also, to be on the safe side the guide should be fully trained and able to work with these approaches.

***Summing up:***

Dealing with emotion, by either changing the self-referential feeling or by taking one through death process of the vulnerability, could transform the emotion. From being a destructive element - as it normally is when we support it in defence of our vulnerable self-reference - it can become the means whereby we gain access to those fundamental problematic structures which usually, and in an unconscious fashion, rule our lives. In this way negative emotions can be freed, giving space for creative, constructive and transformative ends.

TARAB TULKU RINPOCHE (1934-2004), Lharampa Geshe, Dr. Phil. the 11th incarnation of Tarab, lived and taught in the West for more than 30 years. On the basis of his great knowledge and deep insight, Rinpoche developed the Unity in Duality comprehensive system, comprising Unity in Duality Inner Science of Mind and Reality, Art-of-Relating, Personal and Spiritual Development as well as a Unity in Duality Psychotherapeutic Means.

LENE HANDBERG, S.T.R. / Highest degree of Unity in Duality. Assistant of former Tarab Tulku Rinpoche and was by Rinpoche given the line of continuation of Unity in Duality Education and Research. She is President of the Tarab Ling and of Tarab Institute, Denmark and Educational Director of Tarab Institute International.

**Website:** [www.tarab-institute.org](http://www.tarab-institute.org)