



the power of emotion



INSTITUTE OF HEARTMATH[®]
Connecting Hearts and Minds



The Power of Emotion

Welcome to The Power of Emotion, an e-booklet in The HeartMath® Empowerment Series. All material contained in this document is copyrighted by HeartMath and any unauthorized use is strictly prohibited.

Our intention in presenting this aspect of HeartMath's material is to share practical information and useful techniques with people who are looking for a more satisfying and fulfilling life experience.

We appreciate and support your interest in the HeartMath System, and in learning how to use your own heart's intelligence as an efficient source of intuition and answers to apply to all areas of your life.

For additional e-booklets and recordings or to learn more about the Institute of HeartMath:

Please call 1-800-711-6221

- Or write to Institute of HeartMath
14700 West Park Avenue
Boulder Creek, California 95006
- Or, for an immediate overview of HeartMath, visit us online at:
- www.heartmath.org

HeartMath and Cut-Thru are registered trademarks of Institute of HeartMath. Freeze-Framer and Quick Coherence are registered trademarks of Quantum Intech, Inc. Notice and Ease, Heart Soak, emWave and Personal Stress Reliever are trademarks of Quantum Intech, Inc.

The Power of Emotion

In this booklet, you will learn about emotions that lead to judgments and blame, and emotions that take us beyond the “blame game” to insight and resolution. The “blame game” runs society, causing untold stress. With a little understanding of how to direct the power of emotion, we can find new solutions to our problems and more joy in life.

Part 1: Experiencing Emotions

To begin, we’d like you to think about this: What would it be like if you somehow managed to climb to the top of a beautiful mountain but couldn’t feel the exhilarating rush of excitement? What if you spent time with family or close friends, but couldn’t feel the love between you? Our emotions are such a natural part of our existence that we take them for granted. They allow us to experience the textures and colors of life. Without them, we can still climb a mountain and spend time with our family and friends, but what’s the point? Emotion gives meaning to our lives.

As human beings we have a wonderful capacity—the capacity to feel a myriad of emotions. From elation to sorrow, from passion to peace, from satisfied to wanting, we can “feel” in ways that no other living thing can. We experience the world not through just what we think but especially through how we feel.

The power of emotion is amazing. It can enrich our lives beyond measure, but when we don’t use emotion wisely it can destroy us just

as easily. Like fire, emotions can warm us or burn us. Emotions drive many of our decisions and actions, for better or worse. They build energy assets to add to our quality of life or create energy deficits that rob us of vitality. During the course of any day, we experience an emotional adventure or in some cases, a roller coaster ride.

Emotions are, in fact, complex, which is why they are often difficult to understand. Emotions come and go very quickly in an almost endless stream of overt and subtle forms. Depending on circumstance, we can feel many different emotions in just a few short minutes.

Here's an example. You're at a social gathering and someone compliments you about how great you look. You feel uplifted and buoyant. Then, as you are scanning the room to see who you know, you catch a glimpse of someone you've had a conflict with. You instantly feel uncomfortable and resentful. Next, you engage in a conversation with a neighbor who tells you a good friend is very sick. You feel shocked by this news and sink into a feeling of sadness. As you are reflecting on this bad news, an old friend whom you haven't seen in years comes up and gives you a big hug! Your emotions quickly shift from the sadness you were just feeling to excitement and joy.

All of these emotions from sadness to joy, resentment to excitement, have taken place in a matter of minutes, each one coloring perception, adding or subtracting from the quality of the moment.

This example illustrates both the good news and bad news about the power of emotion. The good news is that we have the gift of being able to experience a complex array of feelings, which give us an extraordinary way to relate to life. The bad news is that we are often at the mercy of our emotions, experiencing them as reactions to external events rather than conscious choices. As a result most people live on an emotional roller coaster. If we're going to have balanced, enjoyable lives we need to focus more on learning how to consciously adjust our emotions. It's not just a good thing to do. It's essential in this era of high-speed change.

At HeartMath, we believe the next frontier of human awakening is about understanding how to better use the power of emotion to enhance the quality of our life experiences, improve health, and ultimately find solutions to personal and societal problems.

So what are emotions? Emotion is "energy in motion." The word itself is derived from the Latin verb meaning "to move". Emotional energy is really neutral. It adds power to your thoughts. Thought by itself doesn't consume much energy. It's our emotions that amplify thought. If you are irritated about something and then add emotional energy, the irritation becomes anger. On the other hand, if you feel benevolent toward someone and add emotional energy, the benevolence transforms into a much deeper feeling of compassion or kindness. In essence, our emotions give our thoughts power.

Emotional energy works at a faster speed than the speed of thought. This is because the feeling world operates at a higher speed than the mind. Scientists have repeatedly confirmed that our emotional reactions show up in brain activity before we even have time to think. We evaluate everything emotionally *as* we perceive it. We think about it *afterward*.

At a biological level the process of *experiencing* an emotion is both biochemical and neurological. It involves the heart, brain, nervous and hormonal systems, and sensory organs. Scientists used to think that emotions were produced only in the brain. However, sophisticated instruments now show that emotions are the product of an ongoing dialogue between the body and the brain. So it's really a combination of feeling sensations, associated mental thoughts, and biochemical reactions that shape our emotional experience, in gradations from very pleasant to very painful.

In order to effectively utilize the amazing power of emotion, we need to become very conscious of which emotions add quality to our lives and which ones don't. Psychologists categorize some emotions as "positive" and others as "negative". Emotions like anger, anxiety, hate, jealousy and sadness are some of the more negative emotions. Emotions like love, compassion, appreciation, care and joy would be classified as positive.

We can easily tell the difference between positive and negative emotions in our body. Anxiety and anger can tighten our necks and

shoulders; fear can be a churning in the stomach. By contrast, love, appreciation, compassion and kindness relax us, allowing our body's communication systems to flow with greater harmony and efficiency.

This is not to say that any emotions are bad. All of our emotions play an important part in how we experience life. They are like the colors on an artist's palette that we use to paint our picture of life. We are not advocating repressing our emotions, never feeling sad or frustrated. We are simply noting that some emotions are more beneficial for us in the long run than others.

You can think of emotions like food. Many people devote a lot of attention to discerning what to eat. We watch our calories, our intake of fatty foods, salt, sugar, and so on. Some foods taste great but need to be eaten in moderation. For example, chocolate cake is certainly not bad but if that's all you ate for a week you can bet that your body would notice and there would be consequences.

It's the same with our emotions. We also have an *emotional diet*—the emotions we allow ourselves to experience with regularity. We have more ability than we know to choose what we want to experience in our feeling world—just like we do when we choose the food we eat.

If we want to live on a diet of negative emotions—angry at other people and the world, down on ourselves and anxious about everything—we can. Again, the body will notice and there will be a consequence affecting our mental and physical health, and the overall quality of our

lives. On the other hand, if we choose to feel appreciation, care and love more often, it would have a different, more beneficial effect. The power of emotion is to be respected as it has a lot to do with how well we perform, how we relate to others and even our health.

Part II: How Emotions Affect the Body

Let's look at how emotions affect the body. Here's an interesting fact. A cascade of 1,400 different biochemicals is released by the body as soon as it senses a stressful emotion. These hormones and neurotransmitters affect how you perceive and feel. Negative emotions keep your system bathed in stress hormones, which speeds up your biochemical aging clock, draining emotional buoyancy and physical vitality.

All of us, of course, are going to feel negative stressful emotions at times. We need them to warn us of impending danger or when something needs our attention. It's when we let stressful emotions become a habit that they lead to many psychological and biochemical problems, such as anxiety disorders, depression and heart problems. In fact, researchers have found that emotional stress is one of the strongest risk factors for heart disease and sudden cardiac arrest, as much or more so than smoking or a sedentary life style.

One hormone to pay close attention to is adrenaline. Strong emotions, like anger or fear, release a lot of adrenaline into your system. Adrenaline gives you a boost, like a cup of coffee. This can be useful in some situations; but too much adrenaline can lead to high blood pressure and burnout.

Another hormone that gets released when we are feeling stress and negative emotion is cortisol. Cortisol is a necessary hormone. If it didn't naturally peak about in the early morning, you might not wake up on time for work. However, when you chronically produce more than you need, it can lead to a host of problems. Over time, excessive levels of cortisol can cause loss of bone mass and osteoporosis, ulcers, redistribution of fat to the waist and hips, and fat buildup in the arteries. Negative emotions fuel higher cortisol levels. This means that every time you are anxious or angry, or even rehash a stressful situation, your brain signals your glands to pump more and more cortisol into your system.

The evidence is clear: experiencing a steady diet of negative emotions has a detrimental effect on our health. But, there's another side to this story. The power of emotion can also be used in ways that improve our health not to mention our enjoyment of life. Positive emotions have an "undoing effect" on negative emotions. They loosen the hold that negative emotions gain on your brain and body.

When you are feeling emotions like appreciation or care, your body produces biochemicals that are regenerative and beneficial. One of these is a hormone called DHEA. DHEA is the most prolific hormone in the human body and has been called "the anti-aging hormone." When you produce large quantities of DHEA, you feel vitalized and this hormone offsets the production of the stress hormone cortisol. Positive emotions increase production of DHEA, which promotes emotional vitality and slows the aging process.

Experiencing positive emotions on demand in today's stressful world is certainly not easy; but new understanding supported by advanced scientific research is now offering solutions to this challenge.

For the last thirty years HeartMath's founder, Doc Childre, has been developing the HeartMath System's research-based tools and techniques that are especially useful for regulating emotions. The core of Doc's system focuses on the heart, both energetically and physically, as a powerful source of innate intelligence.

Over the past twenty years, neurocardiologists have decisively established that the heart is not just a muscle. It's also a sensory organ and a sophisticated information processing center. The heart actually has its own nervous system which gives it the ability to sense, learn, remember and make functional decisions independent of the brain. In fact, the heart sends powerful messages to the brain and the rest of the body in four different ways—neurologically, bio-physically, hormonally and energetically.

In the early 90's, HeartMath researchers discovered a critical link between emotions and the heart. Their results clearly showed that the heart is part of the emotional system and that the heart plays an important role in how we feel and think.

An important breakthrough came when HeartMath scientists found that emotions are reflected in the patterns of our heart rhythms. For example, negative emotions, such as irritation, frustration and anger

lead to a disordered and *incoherent* pattern. On the other hand, positive emotions like appreciation, care, compassion and love lead to a more ordered and coherent heart rhythm pattern. The brain monitors and responds to these heart rhythms. As we change them we trigger different emotional responses. In other words, an incoherent heart rhythm can trigger a feeling of anger or anxiety, while a coherent rhythm can activate more pleasurable emotions like care, appreciation or love.

Once the influence of heart rhythms on the brain had been scientifically documented, the HeartMath team went on to develop techniques that help you shift your rhythms from chaotic to coherent. These techniques were incorporated in learning materials, training programs and software, which teach people how to use the heart to manage the emotions. Controlled studies, using these heart-based methods, were done with thousands of people in multi-national corporations, hospitals, and other organizations. The results showed significant, lasting changes in emotional behavior.

This research further confirmed and demonstrated that as we learn how to shift our heart rhythms we have a much greater ability to change our emotional state. We can start calling the shots more often on what emotion we want to feel, rather than simply being caught up in negative emotional reactions. We can build new emotional habits and start to change our emotional diet. We certainly understand that it can be difficult to arrest negative emotions. There are so many things that can easily trigger them. We have learned, however, that by shifting attitudes

and connecting with the power of the heart, people can neutralize a lot of undesirable feelings and increase the amount time spent experiencing positive emotions. Every small effort made is an important step towards making the most of the power of emotion.

Part III: Engaging the Power of the Heart

With a little practice using the HeartMath techniques, you can learn how to engage the power of the heart, shift heart rhythms and change how you are feeling. Here are a few simple techniques to get you started.

An important first step is to become more aware of how you feel. Many people go through the whole day registering emotions only on a surface level, unaware of the emotional undercurrents affecting their thoughts and perceptions.

In order to gain new insight about your emotions you need to become more aware of what's going on in your *feeling world*. This isn't hard to do, but does require slowing down from time-to-time and taking stock. Try this. Periodically throughout the day simply pause and notice how you feel. It takes only a few seconds to ask, "What am I feeling right now?" Don't judge whatever you are feeling—just observe what's flowing through your emotions. You'll discover new things about your emotional patterns and what triggers less desirable emotions in you. This new emotional self-awareness provides the foundation for learning what needs to be shifted.

To help with this try the *Notice and Ease™* tool.

Notice and Ease is the basic tool for identifying and neutralizing unwanted emotions. You can learn to release a lot of disturbed feelings and stop their energy drain by doing the following simple steps:

Step 1. Notice and admit what you are feeling

Step 2. Try to name the feeling

Step 3. Tell yourself to e-a-s-e as you gently focus in your heart, relax as you breathe, and e-a-s-e the stress out.

- In the first step, to simply notice and admit what you are feeling requires slowing down and taking stock.
- In the second, try to name the feeling—like anxious, depressed, frustrated, a vague discomfort, and so on. Just naming the feeling to yourself helps you to admit what you are feeling.
- Lastly, as you tell yourself to *ease* in your heart, relax and ease the stressful emotion out, just feel as if the unwanted emotion is leaving your system. Don't force it out; just ease it out.

Here's another effective technique you can use— the *Quick Coherence®* Technique. It's one of the easiest to learn and apply. This is a universally applicable technique for shifting moods and attitudes fast. Although some emotions can be hard to shift in the moment, this technique will help you stay more emotionally balanced and build

new emotional habits. *Quick Coherence* creates more coherent heart rhythms and takes the fire out of negative emotions so they have less fuel. Here's how to do it.

Quick Coherence is comprised of three steps:

- Heart Focus
- Heart Breathing
- Heart Feeling

Step One is Heart Focus. Focus your attention on the area around your heart, the area in the center of your chest. Place your hand there if you'd like, to help keep your attention in the heart area.

Step Two is Heart Breathing. Breathe deeply but normally and feel as if your breath is coming in and going out through your heart area. As you inhale, feel as if your breath is flowing in through the heart and as you exhale feel it leaving through this area. Counting slowly to five or six as you inhale, and slowly to five or six as you exhale can help you gain a deeper, healthier rhythm. Continue to breathe with ease until you find a natural inner rhythm that feels good to you.

Step Three is the most important step. It's called Heart Feeling. While maintaining your heart focus and heart breathing, activate a positive feeling. One of the easiest ways to generate a positive, heart-based feeling is to remember a special place, the love you feel for a close friend or family member, or maybe a pet. It can be anything that feels good to you. The important thing is that you *feel* the emotion associated

with the event you choose. A visual memory, without the feeling connected to it, won't work nearly as well. Hold that feeling for about 20 seconds. Just keep practicing the three steps—heart focus, heart breathing and heart feeling.

You can use the *Quick Coherence Technique* anytime or anywhere. In less than a minute, it creates positive changes in your heart rhythms, sending powerful signals to the brain that can improve how you're feeling. It's especially useful when you start to feel a draining emotion like irritation or frustration. Using *Quick Coherence* at the onset of less intense negative emotions can keep them from escalating into something worse. This technique is also very useful after you've had an emotional blow up to bring yourself back to balance quickly.

Of course, there are times when emotions just won't shift quickly. These emotions can be coming from long-standing issues or current challenges that have a lot of significance for you. When your emotions won't shift with *Quick Coherence*, try another HeartMath tool, *Heart Soak™*.

The goal with this tool is to soak and relax any disturbed or perplexing feelings in the compassion of your heart. This exercise allows the power of the heart to do its work. By holding your attention in the area of the heart and just relaxing and soaking your emotions for a while, you can balance and soothe the nervous and hormonal systems. It helps to take the significance out of things and allows for new perspectives to emerge.

You know about soaking, whether it's dirty dishes, clothes, silverware, anything. You can take a stain that won't come out and soak it overnight in a solvent, making the cleaning job a lot easier because the initial density has been taken out. Your emotional problems can be dealt with in the same way when approached sincerely from the heart.

Here's how to do it. When feeling upset or disturbed:

- Focus your attention in the area of the heart.
- Then feel as if you are taking the uncomfortable emotions into the heart and just "soak" them there for a few minutes.
- Next, try to feel compassion for yourself until you begin to feel a release.
- After soaking for a while, gently begin to ease the disturbed emotions out letting the heart do the work for you.
- As the mind wanders and you start to want to replay the uncomfortable feelings or begin to re-live the experience that triggered them, just re-focus your attention in the heart, relax and remember to have compassion for yourself.

Soaking in the heart is a gentle process. Don't look too hard for something to change. Depending on how charged the emotions are, it may take a little time and you may need to use this tool more than once. If the uncomfortable feeling comes up throughout the day, just gently repeat the process. In time you will experience an emotional shift.

Use *Notice and Ease*, *Quick Coherence* and *Heart Soak* individually or in combination when you find yourself feeling tense, edgy, overwhelmed, worried, angry, anxious, or bored. After you get the hang of it, you can begin to take on long-standing emotional issues that are more deeply rooted. Every effort yields new freedom and allows you to increasingly experience more rewarding emotions like love, care and appreciation. Your *emotional diet* changes and this will give you much greater power to manifest goals while increasing enjoyment and fulfillment in your life.

So in summary: We have an amazing gift—the ability to experience emotions.

The power of emotion can enrich our lives beyond measure; but it can destroy us just as easily. Understanding the power of our emotions is essential, in order to have a fulfilling, healthy life.

No emotion is bad, but some are classified as negative and some positive—some take away from the quality of life and some add quality.

You have an emotional diet and you have a great deal of choice over this diet. If you choose to dwell on negative emotions like anger and overwhelm, you will flood your body with excess hormones like adrenaline and cortisol that harm you. When you choose to experience positive emotions like care and appreciation, you increase beneficial hormones like DHEA that revitalize you.

New research has shown that the heart can send powerful commands to the brain that help to regulate our emotions and create new emotional patterns. A key lies in learning how to change our heart rhythms from chaotic to coherent.

Observing our emotions and then practicing simple heart-based tools and techniques like *Notice and Ease*, *Quick Coherence* and *Heart Soak*, help to change our heart rhythms and give us a new ability to reduce negative emotions and replace them with ones that are more positive.

Emotions don't have to be a mystery and looking at them does not have to be an uncomfortable process. With a little courage, which comes from the heart, you can embark on an adventure—the exploration of the power of emotion. Add some genuine intent, which also comes from the heart, to replace less desirable emotions with ones that serve you, then things will start to change quickly. The process gets easier and easier; you accumulate more power as you go; and soon you start to *feel* the rewards of your sincere efforts in very tangible ways.

Next Steps

In this e-booklet, we have described why gaining a greater ability to regulate your emotions is so important. You now have three simple HeartMath tools to help harness the power of emotion and shift emotional state. There are additional tools in the HeartMath System that can also be very helpful for transforming your emotions.

Doc Childre has written several books that have helped people gain a new level of emotional self-management. We'd like to recommend two of them: *Transforming Anxiety* and *The HeartMath Solution*. Both of these works take a detailed look at emotion and help you develop your capacity to better regulate emotion. One important tool found in both books is the *Cut-Thru*[®] Technique. You've learned a portion of this powerful technique in this e-booklet, the *Heart Soak* tool, but we recommend studying and practicing this six step process of *Cut-Thru*. It is designed for re-patterning habitual emotional responses and clearing out old, long-standing emotional issues.

Some of the very best offerings we have for managing emotions are found in our technology products, *emWave2*[®] and the *emWave*[®] *Desktop*. As you read earlier, emotions are reflected in the patterns of our heart rhythms. The *emWave2* handheld mobile device, and the *emWave Desktop*, a comprehensive system that works on both PC and Mac computers, show you how emotions are affecting your heart rhythms in real-time. More importantly, they guide you on how to shift out of chaotic, negative emotions into coherent, regenerative ones. Using either of these tech tools provides a fun and a powerful way to build your power to shift emotional state. They are being used for exactly this purpose by many thousands of health professionals.

Lastly, you learned about the *Quick Coherence*[®] Technique. To help you apply it, we suggest you download a copy of the *Coherence Coach*.

This simple software program takes you through the steps of the *Quick Coherence* Technique, provides a breathing pacer to help with heart focused breathing, and then offers five different moving visual images to help with finding and sustaining a heart feeling. This is a great tool you can use to master the technique.

To learn more about tools, techniques, resources and training programs that can help you reduce stress and cultivate a state of greater emotional balance, please visit our web site at www.heartmath.org or call us toll free at 800-711-6221.

Take care!