

## **EMOTIONAL IMBALANCE**

**By Pierre Zimmerman**

Mental balance in Buddhism is understood to be comprised of four elements: attentional, conative, cognitive and emotional balance because our mind is very imbalanced and vulnerable to anger, anxiety, depression, loneliness, despair and other symptoms. This might be due to social conditioning and environmental factors but can be remedied through skillful means and continuous mental training.

Rather than cover up our imbalances, we can eliminate our lack of contentment by cultivating these four areas and achieve a decent state of sanity. What frees the mind deeply is letting go of afflictive tendencies and cultivating wholesome attitudes and perspectives, intentions and behaviors.

There are three kinds of imbalances: deficit, hyperactivity and dysfunction. An emotional deficit has the flavor of exhibiting cold indifference towards others and the world at large - or emotional deadness.

Emotional hyperactivity shows excessive and obsessive states of elation or depression, hope and fear, adulation or contempt, craving or hostility.

Emotional dysfunction occurs when our emotional impulses and responses are inappropriate to any presenting circumstances or experiences. For instance, one might delight in someone's misfortunes and behave in a manner that is uncalled for.

Our meditative practices of the four immeasurables: lovingkindness for oneself, empathy and compassion for others, equanimity in the face of any experience we encounter and empathetic joy for other's wellbeing are wholesome qualities to counter defilements. The defilements are craving, delusion, hostility, despair or indifference.

Our minds are not structurally unbalanced, only habitually, because of poor coping skills or unskillful means. Balance results from a state of wellbeing that is not contingent upon sensory, intellectual, aesthetic or behavioral stimuli but depends on our relationship to all stimuli. Welcoming the reality of "What Is" over and over will bring genuine happiness and spiritual maturity.

Pz/8/2/20 & 8/5/20