

## Biosong Blog 14 (August 31, 2022)      Emotions

I am a human being, so I sense there are strong forces of emotion flowing within my body and mind, but I also know that most of these occur beneath my conscious awareness. I know about them from my feelings that I may or may not choose to make explicit. The emotions are essential and powerful components of my 'life force' – the word, emotion, suggests a mysterious, moving, living process.

So it's no surprise that my right-brain attention is mainly where I recognise, understand and express emotions, as well as have awareness of my body. I not only know it is my wife's face – I can detect subtle changes of expression, especially around her mouth and eyes, that will affect our relationship in some way. I've already said that the emotions most conducive to our connectedness, such as empathy and kindness, originate in our right hemisphere. Because our left brain likes everything to add up, it is the main source of our anger and irritability.

So the most obvious reason I need emotions is to support my BELONGING. That includes recognising possible threats to my BEING. These two give us the simplistic, but also helpful, generalisation about two major domains of our emotional activity, referred to as FEAR and LOVE. There are also other strong emotions that carry the flow of my BEING, including my appetites for sexual activity, pleasure, and exploration – I am especially thankful to have the subconscious force that motivates me to explore a new challenge.

The power of our emotions is mostly hidden. A large part of our nervous system is purely involuntary (Autonomic) and designed for subconscious self-regulation. Everything we do is stressful to some extent, which serves to enliven our BEING. These hidden hormones act to speed us up when necessary and also to slow us down. The vagus nerve is pivotal for slowing down everything from heart rate to brain activity, so it has a special role in tempering our autonomous activity to achieve a healthy balance between BEING and BELONGING.

I said we are born into the **trust** of being **loved**. We are so undeveloped at birth that our caring emotions have evolved to meet the special needs of our species. And as adults, we enjoy an intimacy that seems to be unprecedented in evolution. This even altered our basic response to stress. Instead of fight-or-flight, we have the supportive conversation and emotions that enable us to cope mindfully with any situation.

In our relational space, some emotions are more obvious than others, but there are no thoughts that do not have emotions attached to them – despite what a left-brain bias might sometimes suggest. Loneliness is painful; it seems more prevalent today than ever before and is now recognised as a serious health hazard. Grief and loss are unavoidable. We need one another, both to survive and to flourish.

I suggest that **Love** is not primarily an emotion – although it may evoke strong feelings. Love is an attitude, so it determines my Attention. And Attention occurs only in each present moment. Love is the purest form of my Attention to the existence of something else. I love the birds and native flowers in my garden and I love the sandstone outcrops that stand amongst them. I acknowledge their involvement in the Co-Creation of my world.

But it is my love for another human being that seems to be the most fundamental substrate of my Intelligent mind. Maturana spoke of love as the way of legitimising another person – honouring his or her BEING alongside one's own – thereby attending to my BELONGING.