

Trusting Emotions

Are We Safe in Them?

by Alan Harris

HAVE YOU NOTICED that some people distrust joy? If they find themselves feeling joyful, they will ask themselves: "Now what calamity is about to happen which will undermine this joy I'm feeling?" Some people who are currently enjoying good fortune will playfully (yet fearfully) knock on wood for good luck.

Distrust of joy is usually less intense than our common distrust and dread of depression, fear, or anger. However, I suggest that even these negative emotions need to be trusted. They guide the little boat of our personality through strange and dangerous seas--albeit with occasional inaccuracy, unpredictability, and inefficiency--yet, emotions as a whole keep our lives afloat.

A root question about existence might be "Are we safe?" And if we are, a secondary question would be "Can we have emotions without distrusting them?" My own intuition persuades me that we are ultimately and completely safe. We seem to be held close to the breast and beating heart of a Benevolence that is concealed in, yet revealed by, every emotion we have--of whatever quality. My body may be destroyed in an accident, or I may die from a slow disease or some other awfulness, but my emotions remain emblems and conduits of a mysterious underlying safety.

Animated mannikins we are not. Our bodies seem rather like the outer garment of something infinite. Robots and mannikins, for example, don't go innerly moist in the presence of tears shed, whereas any human facial expression goes all the way down to the fathomless Root of our safety. As humans, not robots, we are able to reach for a life of joy, and find it. Yes, subsequent events may cause a plunge into introspection or sorrow--but then we work with and through those emotions, gaining strength and wisdom as we reach again for a state of joy. In the gamut is the glory; in the reaching is the teaching.

There are some, perhaps many, who (whether by nature or from having been "burned") choose to stand back from their emotions as being untrustworthy or dangerous. They might agree that emotions are necessary to help us manage our lives, but to them, emotions feel too murky and uncontrollable. To those people I would suggest, without proof, that safety at our deepest level is a universal spiritual "given." Many contexts and degrees of safety are possible, but I can imagine nothing--not death, demons, nor my own stupidity--nothing which could take away my essence, snuff out that spark which somehow wears my body and personality like an overcoat, and which will later cast them aside when they are worn out.

Something in you and me is here to stay. The here and the now will never not be. In us, and as us, the enduring "spark that we are" never becomes less alive nor less evolved, but gradually and patiently through the eons accumulates awareness through experience. I make these assertions on no authority except my heart, but I invite your heart to weigh them as working hypotheses.

When we are upset or depressed or threatened or confused, we don't "feel" safe--but that illusion later subsides, whereupon we again may grow to feel safely held in the

arms of Mother Everything--in a safety not physical or emotional, but an inestimably profound "soul safety."

If we could only feel the spiritual safety beneath our emotions, then we might also feel safe when they swirl within us. Emotions are the windstorms of who we are, and not inconvenient slush or guck to wade through until we "get better" or "get there." Emotions, like winds, may bring us the aroma of flowers or the stench of sewers. They may bring heavy, depressing rains as well as new growth. But for us to detach from our emotions would be like excising our heart.

Through emotions a mysterious instructional force talks to us right where we live. No enemy is this force--it is none other than our infinite Friend.

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