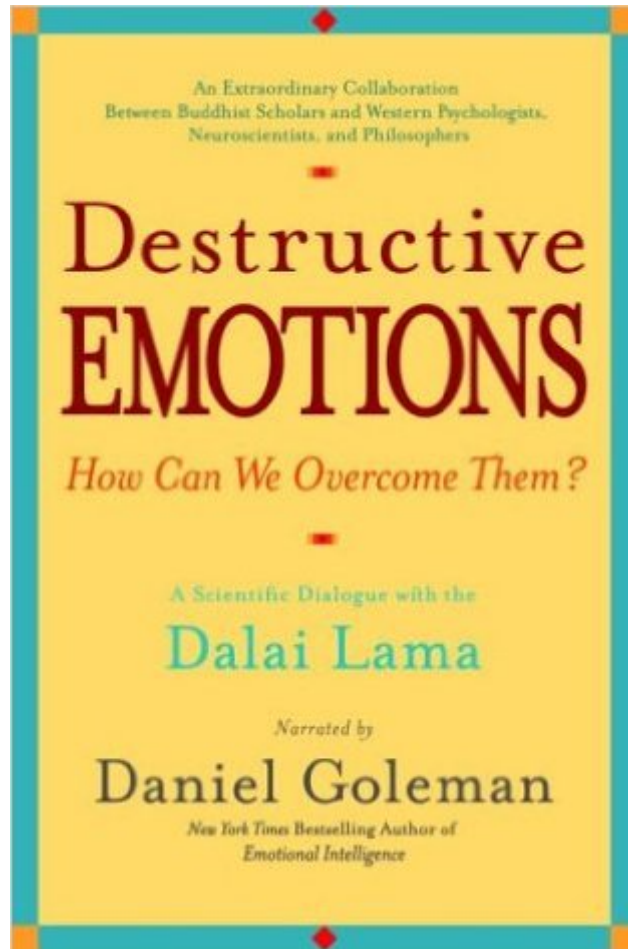


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Destructive Emotions: A Scientific Dialogue With The Dalai Lama



Synopsis

*Why do seemingly rational, intelligent people commit acts of cruelty and violence? *What are the root causes of destructive behavior? *How can we control the emotions that drive these impulses? *Can we learn to live at peace with ourselves and others? Imagine sitting with the Dalai Lama in his private meeting room with a small group of world-class scientists and philosophers. The talk is lively and fascinating as these leading minds grapple with age-old questions of compelling contemporary urgency. Daniel Goleman, the internationally bestselling author of Emotional Intelligence, provides the illuminating commentary and reports on the breakthrough research this historic gathering inspired. Destructive Emotions Buddhist philosophy tells us that all personal unhappiness and interpersonal conflict lie in the three poisons: craving, anger, and delusion. It also provides antidotes of astonishing psychological sophistication--which are now being confirmed by modern neuroscience. With new high-tech devices, scientists can peer inside the brain centers that calm the inner storms of rage and fear. They also can demonstrate that awareness-training strategies such as meditation strengthen emotional stability and greatly enhance our positive moods. The distinguished panel members report these recent findings and debate an exhilarating range of other topics: What role do destructive emotions play in human evolution? Are they hardwired in our bodies? Are they universal, or does culture determine how we feel? How can we nurture the compassion that is also our birthright? We learn how practices that reduce negativity have also been shown to bolster the immune system. Here, too, is an enlightened proposal for a school-based program of social and emotional learning that can help our children increase self-awareness, manage their anger, and become more empathetic. Throughout, these provocative ideas are brought to life by the play of personalities, by the Dalai Lama's probing questions, and by his surprising sense of humor. Although there are no easy answers, the dialogues, which are part of a series sponsored by the Mind and Life Institute, chart an ultimately hopeful course. They are sure to spark discussion among educators, religious and political leaders, parents and all people who seek peace for themselves and the world. The Mind and Life Institute sponsors cross-cultural dialogues that bring together the Dalai Lama and other Buddhist scholars with Western scientists and philosophers. Mind and Life VIII, on which this book is based, took place in Dharamsala, India, in March 2000.

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Customer Reviews

This book is a remarkable culmination of what the Dalai Lama and Dan Goleman have long sought: That is, a genuine meeting of East and West. This is a chronicle of the most recent scene in the unfolding drama between great yogic, "inner" scientists and western-trained scientific counterparts. The dance between the two sides began of course some time ago, but now it's getting really interesting. They've learned to tango so well it's getting hard to tell the dancers apart! Each side now speaks the other's language, and has mastered the other's methodology to an astonishing degree. Westerners meditate with the best of the yogis and speak Tibetan, a mind like that of the Dalai Lama, who figured out that the world must be round, even though his teachers said it was flat - all are willing to challenge their own assumptions, share their findings, yet not neglecting the contributions of Plato, or Aristotle, Kant, Einstein, William James, and earlier pioneers. The focus here is in examining those emotions that cause us so much trouble as individuals, and which collectively lead us to even greater madness, or war. The dialogue works because each participant, an "expert" in his or her field - is more concerned with finding the common truth - which frees us, rather than be proven "right". This is very good news. Goleman reports on a five-day conference which we find is actually the fruition of the life-works of those taking part. In some ways the book has it over being there, as the narration sketches in how individuals in their own lives were motivated to make the often quite amazing leaps to get to where they got. It's not important that no final conclusions are reached as to the causes of the emotions which make us run amok or that full understanding of them eludes as yet. It's important that we are looking, finally, together, and with the best and most sophisticated equipment - also well explained in the book. I felt, in reading this, a lot of my hopes and assumptions and efforts to get to the place of truth and real happiness were not

so far off track. The findings here give me great confidence. It's becoming ok, even scientifically, to be happy, even though we see more work ahead of us. And why shouldn't science be both fun and useful? For me, the high water mark in human understanding, reported here, reflects the great yearning we feel to get to the bottom of our difficulties. Few among us will become experts in mapping the circuitry of the brain, nor do we all need to have our heads examined by fMRI. Yet we can all benefit from this work. It affords us a better glimpse of what might be possible - not just for the Dalai Lama and the "high-achievers" among us, but for the "ordinary" as well (like myself). It's clearly not too late to learn, and to learn HOW to learn. Our brains are not at all what I was taught to believe. I've been looking for some time in my own way, and I suspect you have too to be reading this. I've taken some 'wild goose chases' to find the answers, but hasn't everyone? I got very happy reading this book, I got it that the people in it were very happy sharing their work and mapping out the way to even greater future discoveries. I gave this book five stars but please keep an open mind and cultivate the real spirit of investigation. You may surprise yourself.

This book is a sort of "narrative transcript" of a recent conference that took place in Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama's home in exile. The conference takes the form of a series of presentations and dialogues between the Dalai Lama and some of the top Western researchers in the science of the mind. The writer, a participant in the conference, acts primarily as an editor of the material, presenting the "transcripts" in a prose style and interspersing them with biographical sketches of the key players. The approach is simple, but it works very nicely. The book will give you some insight into how Buddhism views emotions and how modern science studies them. Whether your approach to the nature of mind is "left-brained" or "right-brained", this book has a lot to offer. It is a fascinating primer on the latest science of the mind. As well, it is an excellent discourse on how the East-West dialogue, which has been a hallmark of the Dalai Lama's work for years, can impact education, social programs and our ability to get hold of our own destructive emotions. I am a lifelong armchair scientist, as well as an avid reader of religious history and philosophy. I always appreciate a well-presented book that seeks to harmonize these different approaches to understanding reality. Definitely recommended.

I have been practicing meditation for over thirty years and teaching for twenty eight years. My experience has made me much more familiar with the art of meditation than with the science of it. I found this book to be an extraordinary contribution, helping elucidate the tremendous importance of ancient meditative tools to modern life. In a world where fear and grasping and anger and a sense of

isolation from others seems to be predominating, this book, starting right with the title, *Destructive Emotions*, moved me, interested me, and made me think. Having been at a similar conference with the Dalai Lama some years ago, I know how hard it is to capture the magic of this kind of encounter: the amazing openness of the Dalai Lama's mind; the pioneering sense of adventure on the part of scientists and educators as they explore meditation in the labs and translate its essence for a far-reaching audience; the depth of compassion that underlies this dialogue from all sides. I think Daniel has done a remarkable job. Because of the effort that has gone into it, I think this book could be of value whether you have meditated for decades or have not yet begun.

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