

Paul Solomon Lectures

Emotions

Emotions and Feelings and How They Work

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The word 'emotions' and the word 'feelings' are used pretty much interchangeably in our culture, but we want to make a differentiation between them to note that they mean slightly different things.

In all of the animal and plant kingdoms, living things are capable of feeling changes in their environment. When the feelings are processed by an intelligence, a consciousness, they take on meaning.

Emotions are feelings with meaning. It is not an emotion until you have assigned meaning to it – until it means something to you. That means that it has to have an interpretation; it has to have an inference of something else that is going to or has happened. It has to be assigned an importance by an intelligence.

Emotions are different from sensory feelings. Sensory feelings are a result of physical senses responding to the physical environment. The moment that a sensory feeling is given meaning, it goes beyond feeling into emotion

Some Examples;

All animals and perhaps plants, feel hunger. They feel hunger because a physical mechanism is triggered. The second that the plant or animal adds a sense of fear to the hunger: "Maybe my hunger won't be satisfied," that sensory feeling now has meaning. It has an inference that is more important than the sense itself. The fear of not being fed is a greater stimulus to the plant or the animal than hunger and has more effect on what they decide to do next than the hunger itself. The fear of not being fed is more powerful than the hunger that triggered it. Meaning can be arbitrarily assigned or assigned by a belief system, and the meaning can overwhelm its source. The result is greater than its cause.

Emotions are phenomena, which have a result greater than their cause because there is a consciousness involved. This consciousness is capable of drawing deductions, conclusions, inferences, and assigning meanings, and the meaning that is assigned can, and often does, become more important than the trigger that produced the sensation, the sensory response. Even when the feeling first comes, the reaction to it may be stronger than the stimulus so that the stimulus may even be forgotten; the meaning, the belief, the fear involved, the meanings assigned to it, overwhelms it.

But all emotions may not be sensory in origin. Emotions can be felt, experienced, and expressed even without sensory stimulus. The only thing we need in order to have emotions is a meaning and a willingness to respond to that meaning. It doesn't even have to have a stimulus apart from our own conscious ability to process our own belief system. We can have an emotion rising out of absolute nothing coming out of our ability to process meanings and beliefs.

So we have two kinds of emotions, one, a result response to the stimulus and another that comes from nothing more than processing beliefs and meaning. We have given importance to ideas. The processing of those ideas can produce emotions.

I stated earlier that in order to have an emotion about something, it has to be assigned meaning. If we make an assumption about plants, for example, we are still learning more about the way that plants think, but let's say for the purpose of argument for the moment, that plants are not reasoning beings. That means they still have appetite; they have to be fed; they are capable of experiencing the need for food. We are not going to call this need "hunger" in plants because in order to experience hunger, the plant needs to assign some meaning to its need for food. As soon as this need is rationalized or thought about, it becomes hunger or appetite. Then the plant is capable of wanting. We don't know whether plants are capable of wanting or not, but if they are not reasoning beings, and if they don't assign some fear or a sense of pleasure to receiving food, then the need for food is a simple organic, bio-chemical process, and we can't call it an emotion.

More recently, plants have been hooked up to polygraph machines which show that they react to a person coming into a room. If there is a love bond between the person and the plant, the plant will actually put out energy when the person walks into the room. There is a suggestion there of emotion, of very basic meaning attached to something that has to do with the need of the plant. Now if the analysis of these polygraphs is correct, even the plant kingdom, which we think of as being the most fundamental life process on our planet, other than the mineral kingdom, actually has feeling, wants, needs, actually has emotions. There is a physical stimulus; there is importance attached to that stimulus. There is not only life; there is a desire to have life and to sustain life.

In the case of humans, there is a desire for a higher quality of life. It would appear that plants and animals are reasonably satisfied with their surroundings. They wake up, hunt food and satisfy their needs and then they sleep. In most cases they don't reconstruct their environment to make it more comfortable, except to make themselves a place to sleep.

What we have in the human condition would appear to be either a blessing or a curse. If we interpret it as a blessing, we look at the fact that we have consciousness. The ability to think and to reason gives us the right, opportunity, and the ability to assign extra importance to particular experiences. We can take an experience that isn't important of itself from a biological-chemical point of view, and we can make it more important.

An example is, "Does she like me or doesn't she like me?" Whether she likes me or not may not have biological effect on the length of my life or even the quality. It may not have any physical effect. It may not have any physical stimulus. But if I want her to like me, then I can attach meaning to the way that she looks at me, the way she responds to me. I interpret the way she looks or responds. I can assign meaning to facial expressions to certain body movements. In fact, it is not at all uncommon for a group of young men to sit around and interpret the way that women respond to their presence. It is certainly not uncommon for young men to see something in the movement of the woman and in his fantasy, interpret that to mean that she is attracted to him.

We are capable of building the most enormous fantasies. Not only are we capable of believing that certain actions mean she's attracted to us, we also have the ability of interpreting away the fact that she is attracted. The difference is to do with our belief about ourselves. If our belief is that we don't deserve her attraction, we may overcompensate and try to convince ourselves that she is attracted when all evidence says that she's not. Or we may condemn ourselves and not believe that she is attracted when she goes so far as to say that she is. Even saying it, we might not believe it. The difference in the communication in the relationship is the difference in our own belief systems.

Emotions are the expressions of belief systems sometimes in response to external stimuli, but not always. It doesn't require an external stimulus for us to feel something or to experience or express an emotion. The moment that we give meaning to a belief and entertain that belief we experience an emotion.

Emotions and Belief Systems

When does an emotion become an emotion and not just a belief system? When is it triggered beyond the belief system into being an emotion? Is it when we add meaning?

No. It is when we dwell on the thought.

We can't give a mathematical formula here that says one second that thought is just a thought and the next second it is just an emotion, but it is just about that fine. When the possibility occurs in our mind of feeling hurt, jealous, angry, fearful or any other emotion, when this occurs, it should then be labeled "temptation." The possibility has occurred. The second that we confirm that possibility and say, "Yes, I am afraid." "Yes, I am angry," then it is no longer temptation. It is emotion.

Emotion is dependent upon our response. Emotion requires a response.

Learning to discern the difference between the temptation and the act itself is a confusing issue. The temptation is the presentation of a possibility. The perpetration of the emotion is responding or reacting to the possibility. I look at a situation and there is an instantaneous, a fraction of a millisecond, a spark which says, "I could be jealous." In the next second, if we decide, "Yes, I am jealous," our muscles will move. The movement of those muscles is faster than we can throw a baseball, and pitchers can throw baseballs at very high velocity. We are talking about the firing of neurons in the brain, it happens in a split second; the temptation to perpetration is so fast that it can't be seen. It's like the speed of light.

What makes the difference? Can I think it out in that period of time? Can I decide to have an emotion or not have an emotion? Probably not. I cannot decide in the moment the temptation is triggered. Most likely I cannot process my decision through all of the analysis that my brain is capable of to decide whether I am going to have an emotion or not. It happens too fast to process it in the moment.

Can We Do Anything About It?

So are we simply victims? Do we have to feel everything that we feel? Can we do anything about it? We can do something about it by setting up the programs that produce the results that we want in our lives.

While one person can go from the temptation to the act in a millisecond, it will not produce the same result in another person. Another person will reject the possibility and say, "No. I am not jealous." without having stopped to reason it out. It's not a matter of thinking things through. The difference is that they have wired their circuitry differently before that moment of temptation. The person who doesn't react with jealousy has decided, "I do not want to be a victim of these incidents." They have thought it through at some time. They have made an evaluation, "This is important. This is not important. This is important, but not enough to have this kind of reaction."

For example, there are people who have been sensible enough to say, "I am capable of feeling jealousy, but I do not want to experience something which breaks down my muscle tone, destroys my physical body creating ulcers or other illnesses. Therefore when I see this kind of look or that kind of action, I am not going to respond with this kind of emotion because it is not worth it."

The process we are describing is not one of thinking through all of them. It is a matter of humans making judgments and evaluations. "This is my set of values and when my system of values is threatened, I will react."

Two Kinds of Humans

There are basically two kinds of human beings. There are self-destructive human beings- this includes about 99.9% or more of all human beings on earth. These human beings are the ones who have given everybody else the right and the ability, and in their own mind even, the responsibility, for whether they feel good or bad, whether their health is good or whether it is decaying. They have assigned that responsibility externally to other humans and to their environment. The evaluation of whether we are going to be self-destructive or self-supportive is generally made by age 3. All of the studies about it would suggest that parents have a lot to do with how the judgment is made, but they also suggest that parents cannot determine whether that child will be self-destructive or self-supportive. They can't actually determine it, but they can influence it. Where a child has a sense of self-importance, and particularly where a child has a sense of responsibility for self, he will build a supportive construct.

This is a very difficult thing for parents to do. The very nature of parenting is, "I want to believe that I am this important, protective, teaching being with this tiny, helpless thing dependent upon me." That belief is enormously supportive to parents. They exist on it. "Now, if I teach that tiny little infant, this helpless little being, that he or she is responsible for his own welfare, his own feelings, I make myself useless." Parents don't like to do that. Parents teach dependency to children. Children have the option of believing that dependency if they want to. If they don't, what they get is the enormous weight of the responsibility for themselves and most children don't make that decision. They don't want to feel responsible for their own feelings. They want mommy and daddy to decide whether they should or shouldn't. They grow up wanting mommy and daddy to make their decisions and then resent it if they don't make the decision that met their appetite at the moment. Even after they become adults, they still spend the rest of their lives wishing for mommy and daddy and asking other people to make decisions in their lives – there is nothing wrong with that. It simply creates vulnerability.

What can we do with it? If emotions are triggered in a millisecond, if they go from temptation into actual perpetration or experience in a millisecond, how can we change that?

The task of life and the task of enlightenment is one of rewiring our computers. It is as simple as that. And enlightenment itself is the act of responding to reality as it is without assigning arbitrary meaning.

If one responds to the environment as it is, to reality as it is, without assigning meaning, the only emotions and feelings a person will ever experience are those supportive to the sustenance of life. Only those and nothing more. To feel emotions that are not supportive to life, to survival, is to stimulate the instrument, to feel things unnecessarily. I am not suggesting that this process is bad. What I am saying is that it has a lot of amplitude, a lot of volume. It puts a lot more meaning into life than life has.

Now that can be a choice. A master, or an enlightened being, can make the choice to respond with a lot more response than is necessary for survival. Responding with more response than is necessary for survival is the opportunity that is given to every creative being. The blessing is that we can exercise that opportunity. On the other hand, when we exercise that opportunity as a victim, it is a totally destructive force and all it means is that we are out of control. It doesn't mean that we are enjoying life. To respond as a victim is the very opposite. It is the destruction of life. It is torment. It is Hell itself. It is what Hell is.

The difference between them is intent, purpose, meaning and deliberation. If we assign meanings to situations which do not serve us, or act on implications which do not deserve it, then we set ourselves up to be victims. Being a victim means more than having our feelings hurt. It can mean loss of property, loss

of life, loss of opportunity for the freedom of expression. It can mean loss of relationships. That is the difference between positive, joyous emotions and negative destructive emotions.

Be Emotional & Love It

In spite of the fact that we go from temptation to emotion in a split second, there is still the opportunity to be deliberate, to make choices about emotions. Between the stimuli that produce emotional responses... or to say it another way, between one lesson and another, there is time given.

That free time, which we use or waste just biding our time, that time is available for us to process our system of values, to think about life. Thinking about life and producing evaluation, images, reasons, purpose, and philosophy of life, that time is what produces poets, artists, priests, priestesses, magicians, and even kings. That free time between the challenges is used to reflect on life, to meditate.

When we look at a landscape after a rain, we can look at it and take it for granted. We can just take in what is there, and even without judgments, colorations or meanings, it is pleasant just as it is. When we begin to think, "I'm fortunate to see this," we amplify the pleasure that is available. That didn't come from outside. That came from a decision from inside of ourselves.

That is the first step in magic. The instant we think that way, we have begun to give to our environment a power that it did not a second ago have. We have given it more power.

Now if we add to that power, increase it and multiply it with our own thoughts, projecting our consciousness out there into that scenery, we give it the power to rejuvenate our body. What will happen as a result is that the electrical currents in our body will be stimulated and we will be healed.

That will happen because of the way we thought in response to our environment. We took a door and opened it, and in one terminology, the free negative ions that were created by the thunderstorm and that are available in the atmosphere, were welcomed into our system and we breathed in the prana, the vital essence of life by the way that we thought. We opened the door and allowed the magic to take place.

Now another person sitting right beside us, looking on the same vista, can say, "What a hell of a thing to happen. We didn't need rain today. Terrible weather. It makes my bones ache. I can't stand this kind of weather..." That person is slamming doors shut, depriving himself of the prana of life.

It isn't as simple as positive thinking and negative thinking. I am talking about projecting self into matter, and taking advantage of what is there, and then processing that through our thinking system. The entire body is a thought system and it extends into the force field around the body outside the physical perimeter.

The little tributaries, which reach out from our body into the environment, to respond to it, are dilated or closed by our attitude towards the environment. We are built that way. The tributaries, the little feelers, the subtler sensory devices, which extend beyond the physical body into the aura and reach out into our environment are there for the purpose of warning us about the subtler feelings in the environment. They can warn us about emotions that have taken place in this physical environment in the past. Situations have taken place here in which positive emotions or negative emotions have been experienced.

For example, when I go into a sacred place where sacred acts have occurred, there is a beauty in the energy. When we walk into that place these nerve endings, these subtler nerve ganglia (if they can be called that) open up and drink in the sacred energy of the place, and we feel the energy of a hallowed ground. When we enter a place where something awful has happened, those same little sensory devices withdraw and pull up into us and pull away from the environment. It is through those responses we experience psychometry. We feel good or we feel bad when responding to the environment around us.

If we dislike being so sensitive to our environment, at a very early stage in life we can use the force of our will to say to those sensitive little extensions, “Don’t react. I don’t want to feel these ups and downs and changes in amplitude with my environment.” And so these little extensions become coarse and solid and non-reactive, and we can say, “I’m not psychic.” We have killed a natural ability of our body to sense what is going on in the environment. Sometimes very young children do that in response to abuse, the child builds a wall of protection. Now he not only shuts out the abuse, he also shuts out the warmth of the environment and he has to live within himself. That person can become hard and calloused. He gets to use a left-brain, logical mind to deal with the world. If there are storms or ups and downs of emotion, they all happen inside that shell he has built around himself. That kind of person is explosive. They can go so long bottling up emotions and then, suddenly and without a reason, those emotions erupt simply because the container can’t hold them in any longer.

So we have these several different kinds of people, some who are ultra-sensitive to their environment. They are the ones whose little feelers creep out around every corner feeling everything. Sometimes they are delighted to experience everything that they experience, but sometimes these very sensitive people feel pain everywhere they go because the feelers that they put out are assigned the job by their own mind of looking for pain everywhere. This happens because they are afraid. So these very sensitive psychic people only experience warnings, disasters, and negative psychic energies around them. The problem is they can detect it anywhere because it is omnipresent. There is always pain on the earth. People who seek out, sense, respond to, mourn about, and are preoccupied with pain can always find it. They tend to be bitchy, cranky, sick, and griping, and finding life a great displeasure. And no one can say they are wrong. What they are finding in life is really there.

What you seek you find. There are people who assign to their sensors the job of looking for wonderful things in everything that happens. They might be completely insensitive to a negative warning. I can’t say that’s good either. If we take everything in reality and say, “That’s wonderful. I wouldn’t change it,” then we are not going to be an activist and do something about negative situations. We will gloss them over as if they weren’t there.

A master is not someone who pretends that bad is good. A master is not someone that finds bad in everything and must do everything over. A master is the someone who experiences all things as they are and allows them to be as they are, knowing that he can take action to change things, he can amplify the experience of them and make them more if he wants to, or he can turn off the experience and make them less important at will.

In short, a master is one who is not a victim, he is someone who makes decisions. A master is one who has learned to think as quickly as these responses to the environment – microseconds. He or she is one who takes deliberate actions and is responsible for every emotion.

Options in Response

Now, any time a thought, a stimulus, comes from the environment, or a thought pops into the mind and there is an opportunity for experiencing an emotion in the next second, there are several things that can be done.

One of the things that people do is to give in to the emotion. Every time there is the temptation or the possibility, it turns automatically into perpetration simply because we are living with whatever comes up. Whatever that is, we react to it and feel completely helpless to do anything about our emotions or feelings. This is being a very feeling person. That is one possibility.

Then there is the option of suppression. The difference between suppression and transformation is this. When there is a feeling or an emotion that pop up into the mind or consciousness, we can actually

experience that emotion in the next second, and after already experiencing the emotion we can decide, “I can’t afford to feel this way,” or “I can’t let anyone know that I feel this way.” And we can suppress it. Then we act differently. We act as if we are not experiencing the emotion that we are experiencing. That can be a useful decision. It’s not wrong.

If the possibility of an emotion or a feeling pops up and we react to it in the next second, we take action. This action may be as simple as moving a muscle around our mouth or eyes, or we may have a tiny, little change in our facial expression, or move a couple of muscles in our shoulders in the split second between the temptation and the actual emotion.

Playing the Role

When an emotion comes up and we make the slightest muscle change, that change reinforces the alrightness of the emotion. The next time that temptation comes, the muscle change will happen more quickly because we accepted it once. If we accept an emotion one time, it is reinforced as a pattern of acceptance for the next time. If we experience it a third time, that emotion becomes more automatic and we become more helpless against it. Every time we react, that action emphasizes or supports the stimulus.

There are two theories that have come up regarding this. One says, “Action follows thought.” And an old psychological model, “If you think, then you act.”

A new psychological thought is that “Thought follows action.” This means if we make a face, use our muscles of expression to look as if we’re experiencing fear, the thought of fear will come into our mind. Actors use this “thought follows action” idea most frequently in a system called Method Acting. What actors do is study the body posture and facial expression of a particular emotion and mimics it in order to feel that emotion. This means that actors on stage cannot just pretend to feel emotion, they actually feel and project the emotions, and they become what is called “believable actors.” A believable actor is one who is so much into the role that he is projecting the psychic energy of the thoughts and emotions of the role.

It looks like magic, and it is magic at its height. It is occultism. They take the emotions of the audience and they carry them through the actions they are portraying on the stage. That is real sorcery. It can move a group of people into battle; it can produce a plague or an epidemic; or it can produce a stock market crash. It can do amazing things to the human psyche because these are people who are taking the energy of life and amplifying it through particular modes of expression. They are creating with their muscles, with their physical body, and with the instruments around them. Not just the muscles, but they are the fiber through which this energy is pushed to reach out into the audience and cause a sympathetic response.

The split second then, that we react to an emotion, we reinforce that that emotion is appropriate to that circumstance. We make it harder to respond differently in the future. Every time we react with anger, we make it harder not to react with anger in a similar circumstance in the future.

A Matter of Decision

I am not saying you should force a different facial expression. If we feel ourselves experiencing an emotion and say, “I don’t want to feel this,” we can try to make our face like a mask, and even though we are feeling one way, we can pretend to feel another. That is suppression. The difference between suppression and transformation is the effectiveness of a decision. If we decided to feel differently, but do not convince ourselves to actually feel that way, we will suppress. It is a decision made without conviction.

If on the other hand, we change an emotional response and affirm that we do want to feel differently, if that is a complete decision, it is not suppression, it is transformation.

The difference is in the wholeness of the decision. If we really believe it and really want to change it, we experience transformation.

If we believe, for example, "I am acting the way I am acting because I am supposed to," and the belief about that is that that is imposed upon me from without, "I am acting this way because it is proper," then it is not our own decision. It is not whole, and we are suppressing.

Emotions and feeling, ideas and beliefs that are suppressed in that way have to come out at some time in some place. Ulcers, cancer, emotional and mental breakdowns, mental illness – all of these things are made from suppressed emotions.

But the fact that we got angry and didn't act angry does not necessarily mean that we suppressed. It may mean that we transformed if we saw from an observer space that the reaction that we were having was not serving us and we want out of that situation, we can realize that there is another kind of response that we feel good with and that meets all our criteria for responding to the situation. When we can see ourselves in that new response, when we can project it and it feels good, it feels whole, then we experience transformation instead of suppression.

It is consciously possible to think so fast that you can resist the temptation before actually emoting. Yes, it is possible to stop the reaction and make a different choice, but not unless we take the whole of our life and process it, look at our value system, and be deliberate about what we are feeling.

The first step is to move from a victim space into an observer space. The next step is to become a director, a producer, and create the production of new emotional responses. Once we have created, accepted, and acted on a belief, we are in charge of how we feel under all circumstances.

We are constantly responsible for how we feel and we don't want not to be responsible. This belief system builds a wiring that is so fast that we will respond to every discharge of energy that would have produced emotions. We will have an emotion when we want to and not have an emotion when we don't want to. That is a dynamic responsibility that most people don't even want, let alone consider possible.

In order to do that, we have to have some point of reference in our background. The point of reference for most people initially comes from their parents. There have been experiments where a laser beam light has shined into a baby's eye and bounced off the retina in order to reflect an image out and see what the baby is looking at. What they found from watching babies eyes is that from the earliest few days the baby watches his mother's body. Not just any body, but the mother, as long as she is in range of eyesight. As the baby gets a little older, he actually focuses on her eyes. The patterns of the baby's eye focus don't just center on the face.

From watching the mother's eyes, the baby gets his basic expressions. Before he can even talk, he registers recognition of approval and disapproval. These are the first two expressions that we learn to recognize.

There are very few things that are universal. Language is not. Facial expressions are. When we see a facial expression, we have to interpret it.

People in all different cultures register shock, fear, anger, hurt and joy or happiness in basically the same way. There are some small differences and these give people personality characteristics. We can notice that a person smiles differently, but it is still a smile. A baby learned to first recognize approval and disapproval, and then learned to recognize shock. Another interesting thing about this is that when adults come into the presence of a baby, they do two things. They raise the pitch of their voice, and they

exaggerate their expression. They don't just smile. They smile ten times bigger than they would ever smile at an adult. Both males and female do that. It is an automatic response to babies. Babies drink that in, and they learn to recognize the whole variety of different expression. While they are learning to recognize them, they give meaning to them.

Giving meaning to facial expressions is a survival tool. That was demonstrated in tests where babies were brought to the edge of a drop off to see whether babies would either crawl across it or recognize death as a danger. What every baby did first was to look at the drop off, and then at the mother's face. If the mother registered encouragement and approval, they might reach out to touch it. If the mother registered shock or fear, they backed off.

Interpreting facial expressions is a very basic survival technique. Step one is the ability to recognize the expression. Step two is to give the expression a meaning. Step three is when they decide what to do about it. If we see an expression of disgust or disapproval on another's face towards us what do we believe that means for us? Do we want to run away from the other person or change the other person's mind about us? Or does it mean we want to take a look at our own actions.

If we catch someone looking at us, particularly a stranger, one of the things we will almost automatically do is look at our clothes to see what is wrong. We will look to see what they are looking at. In our culture, it is polite to look away. If a person doesn't look away, we assume they are looking at something. Then we think, "Why are they looking at me?"

Just a look is loaded with implications. It could be a sexual come on, or disapproval, or interest, or a whole variety of possibilities. Depending upon whether or not we want to impress someone, it is either taken as a compliment or an invasion of privacy. If we have a lot of self-confidence, it is likely to be taken as a compliment. If we feel unworthy or disapproved of, and if we were disapproved of as a child, particularly with stern looks from our parents, then we will melt under that look feel accused and angry and want to make that person look away.

The meanings that expressions have are already stored primarily as a survival mechanism. We then interpret the meaning of that expression, which could either be right or wrong. We can think it means one thing when it means something else entirely to the person who is expressing.

Subtleties of expressions are not that universal. Basic expressions are. Fear is a universal expression, but there are subtleties of expressing fear. What we call "culture" is our ability to refine those basic expressions and disguise them to be sophisticated. The more sophisticated the culture, the more deceptive the facial expressions and body language. The same is true for the person. We learn that it is good manners to disguise certain features of body language in order to deny that we are thinking what we are thinking. This censorship increases the likelihood that we will misinterpret an expression.

We see an expression. We recognize it. We interpret it. The critical step is, "What does that mean about me?"

If a person is ruled by fear and has a negative self image, they will always tend to think the worst first. If a person feels good and self confident, they will tend to think the best about themselves. So the key is in discovering what we feel, think, and believe about ourselves. If we can replace fear with love, love will rule our life and our interpretations and actions will be based on love.

We Can Change Our Minds

We are not mechanical beings. We are not predictable beings. For example, parents can do everything 'right' and the child will turn out 'wrong.' The parents could do everything 'wrong' and the child will turn out 'right.' Every child, every baby is an individual expression. If all our emotions were programmed

mechanisms and if we could say, “When you do this, that results,” if we could make it that simple, there wouldn’t be any point in writing a book on emotions because everybody would have the same emotional response to the same stimulus. Why write about that if it is automatic?

We are decision makers and we can decide to respond differently to the same stimuli that we have responded to in a particular way in the past. We can change our minds. When we change our minds in the moment, we make a dent in our belief system. When we change our mind in response to a stimulus several times, we begin to alter that belief system. When we change our mind and respond in a new way long enough for it to become a habit, we have totally reprogrammed our belief system. For most people, that takes about thirty days of using the new expression. It takes thirty days of repetition for most people to form a habit.

In order to form a belief, we have to believe it. Our mind is jammed full of beliefs that we wouldn’t believe if we examined them. They are not believable. Things like, “If you call me a name, that can do something to my mother’s purity.” That is not a believable belief.

Or if we believe that when a person says a particular thing or looks a certain way, we should hit him or punish him.

There are beliefs that are childhood beliefs. They are childish. They get stuck in there from childhood. As adults, we don’t get rid of them or change the beliefs. We just alter our response to it and we act more adult and more proper. We no longer hit Johnny when he looks at us this way. We just think, “I would like to hit him.”

The secret to making our personality over and taking responsibility for our character is to get it out there where we can see it. If we have an emotional reaction to anything, anything in this world, we have a belief about it. What do we believe about it? Do we believe that it can harm us? Do we believe that it shouldn’t exist or that such things are not nice or dirty? What do we think about it?

State it in some manner and if you see that your statement turns out to be ridiculous, change it. Say, “That’s not what I believe. That’s not what I want to believe.”

If we remind ourselves of this and we stop responding with a particular emotion, then we will form a new emotional response-, which will take about thirty days to make automatic.