

Emotion is Your Co-Pilot

By Brian Germain

I am an adventure sports addict. I admit it. I deliberately do things that put me in danger. I have discovered that I truly like the person I become when I am in such circumstances. I am forced to be a hero. If I do not act without fear, I will die.

I have realized that fear looks over our shoulders closer than ever when we are in jeopardy. Like a horse feels the trepidation of a nervous rider and becomes unruly, life seems to carry out the feeling that we are fixating upon and shows us what is in our minds with an ever-increasing magnitude. It reflects our angst. Consequently, when we act in a state of fear, things tend to go badly.



It would appear that the emotional aspect of our experience is not the insignificant force that we once thought it to be. This evidence would suggest that our ability to control our emotions is the most pivotal factor in our lives. One might therefore conclude that the best approach is to let go of all of our negative thoughts, whatever they are, and focus our minds on constructing our world the way we want it by focusing on where we want to go. This is only partly true in my experience.

Although we must get onto the job of doing what we want to do by directing our minds in a positive direction, negative emotion has a wisdom all its own. Think of the word negative. It means to repulse. If we do not figure out what the emotion was trying to get us to repel or avoid, we have lost the essential message that our bodies went to all that trouble to get us excited about.

When you begin to feel something other than happiness, there is something that you need to do. Something in your reality is askew in some way. Something is threatening your well-being, and your inner self is letting you know in the only way it can. It speaks in the language of the body. You will feel physically unpleasant. You will feel unhappy. You will lose your sense of humor and your ability to be creative.

When this happens, we tend to take one of two actions. Either we avoid the emotion and all of the thoughts associated with it and focus on something positive, or we allow ourselves to dwell on the negativity and we continue to feel bad. From this place we cannot create the change that is necessary to get us back to the state of happiness.

There is another possibility that we do not often consider. We can ask the most important question of all: "What is the emotion trying to tell me?" In other words: "What is the meaning of the feeling?" When we discover this hidden truth, we can do something about it. We can get on with our lives by taking deliberate action to make things better, one situation at a time.

If you are feeling fear and hesitation, perhaps the emotion is trying to tell you that you are going someplace you have not been before, and you do not know if your skills are up to it. If this is so, you need to abort the flight or reduce your level of perceived danger. This is often the case, but the way you are feeling may just be a neurotic impulse to contract from novelty and the increased risk of failure. You may be allowing your habit of doubt to affect your rate of expansion. If this is the case, you need to remember how to have a good time and lighten up. You must then envision the best-case scenario and work toward making it happen.

When we listen to the emotional co-pilot in our heads, we receive information that our logic alone cannot offer it us. Rational thought is only trustworthy up to a point. Like science, logical processes help us to realize that which can be measured with the instruments we have, via the hard evidence that can be gleaned from such inquiry. This is only part of the puzzle, of course, as there is always more than we can see at first glance.

This is where the emotion enters the equation. The seemingly unstructured, unscientific ways of the subjective feeling part of our experience comes to its conclusions by way of completely different processes, and can often take into account things that the linear ruler of logic can never illuminate. It reminds us of things that we forgot, and helps us to realize our actual ability. All too often it is our perceived ability, skewed from truth by our egos, to which we compare our current situation.

Pilots often speak of the "Gut Check" as part of their aircraft preflight process. If you do not feel good about the flight, you need to stop and assess why this is so. There is often a psychological momentum driving us forward toward a premature take-off, but if we take the time to slow down when we do not feel good, we may discover that there was some very good reason not to proceed; at least not with things in their current status.

Sometimes this just means that we need to take a moment and mentally prepare for the flight. Sometimes it means that we forgot to put fuel in the airplane. Either way, we must use the emotional information to guide us to what we need to hear at every juncture.

The way that things unfold when you go into danger, or anything else in life for that matter, is all about preparation and considering all of the possibilities. One perspective is never enough. Our first consideration, the initial envisioning of action, is only the first step. If we are to survive and thrive in all that is before us, we must examine the meaning of our emotions before we move forward, and again and again as life continues. The process of consulting the co-pilot never stops.

Emotion is a second opinion from a part of the brain that works very differently than our cold, logic thinking. Nevertheless, it has invaluable intelligence about the truth of any situation that we might find ourselves in. Without it we are lost in the darkness of our current mindset, limited to the possibilities that have occurred to us thus far by our logical thought processes. In between our thoughts is the truth of what we truly think, and what we want to experience. When we listen to our feelings, a greater reality comes to light and we realize our own inner wisdom. We become a balanced individual that has incorporated all that we are into who we are being. Any that, my friends, is where the fun really starts.

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