



Heeding Our “Emotional” Heart

We hear statements such as “He has a broken heart”, “My heart is sad”, “That is a heartache” and we understand that a person is going through a sad and hurtful experience. We associate our heart with emotions; painful, sad, and joyful. Does our heart really break or are we expressing an emotional state which we associate with the heart? Why is the heart, of all the body parts, connected to the feeling of emotions? Much research is being conducted to better understand the connection between our emotions and our bodies, especially our heart.

Rollin McCraty (MindHeart Institute) writes:... “researchers found: “The rhythmic patterns generated by the heart are not only reflective of emotions, but actually appear to play a key role in influencing moment-to-moment emotional perception and experience. In short, through its extensive interactions with the brain and body, the heart emerges as a critical component of the emotional system.” Remarkably, we now know that the heart sends more neural traffic to the brain than the brain sends to the heart.” (Rollin McCraty, Ph.D. HeartMind Institute)

To help ourselves in times of sadness and distress, as well as to professionally support those we serve through a variety of fields; medical, education, social services, therapy, etc, we need to better understand the “emotional” heart and how to support people experiencing heart “ache” and the methods of healing. To be more empathic we can draw on both our personal experiences and on the research being conducted.

Our own personal experiences tell us that when a sad and traumatic event occurs in our lives we feel an actual pain in our chest in the region of our heart.. an ache which impacts our ability to move, interact, communicate and engage in everyday activities. Our heart seems to slow down thus slowing down our whole body. When this occurs it is important to listen to our heart, to our body’s messages and change our actions to a slower pace. This allows us to focus on the emotional distress we are experiencing. When we direct our attention and our actions to the trauma and distress we are experiencing we begin to process the trauma, the first step to healing.

As professionals we need to support those we serve in doing the same thing; help them focus on the trauma and distress they are or have experienced, help them face and accept the pain and its impact on them both physically and emotionally. This will help them start the healing process.

Unfortunately, our society today is not accepting of individuals and groups trauma and distress. In business, education and in society, as a whole, we expect continued performance, attendance and participation at the level prior to a traumatic experience. We do not allow time for the natural pain, the slowing down of the heart and body nor the steps necessary for healing. When we are not accepting of our own healing process to trauma nor that of others the trauma is intensified and the healing process is delayed.

It is important, as individuals and professionals, that we share the research and findings on the “emotional” heart. We need to be the leaders of a new approach to addressing and accepting the trauma we all experience in our lives. We can model ways of being focusing on the messages from our “Emotional” heart when it tells us to slow down, focus on the trauma and process the experience to begin healing. We can create home, school and work environments which teach us all to be aware of and accepting of our “emotional” heart and the messages it sends us for our own well- being and the well-being of others.

“Your heart is the Beacon, your heart is the storm. Dare to embrace it; you’ll never be torn” Vanna Bonta; Shades of the World