

Introducing The Work of Byron Katie using a Buddhist and Neurobiological Framework
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Drawing extensively from the article entitled [Buddhist and Psychological Perspectives on Emotions and Well-Being](#) as a primary reference, I will attempt to explain how The Work may work using a Buddhist and Neurobiological framework. This article arose out of meetings with the Dalai Lama about destructive emotions. It is authored by Paul Eckman, Richard J. Davidson, Matthieu Ricard, and B. Alan Wallace.

First, let me outline some of the main points in the article:

- The authors propose that current findings in neurobiology support Buddhist views on emotion. There is no word for “emotion” in Pali, Sanskrit, and Tibetan. Neuroscience has found that “every region in the brain that has been identified with some aspect of emotion has also been identified with aspects of cognition. The circuitry that supports affect and the circuitry that supports cognition are completely intertwined; an anatomic arrangement consistent with the Buddhist view that these processes cannot be separated”.
- The definition of Sukha is defined as “a state of flourishing that arises from mental balance and insight into the nature of reality”. Rather than a fleeting emotion or mood aroused by sensory or conceptual stimuli, sukha is an enduring trait that arises from a mind in a state of equilibrium and entails a conceptually unstructured and unfiltered awareness of the true nature of reality”.... It is a deep sense of well-being, a propensity towards compassion, reduced vulnerability to outer circumstances, and recognition of the interconnectedness with living beings. It is a trait versus a temporary state and permeates and pervades all living experience and behavior.
- Dukha (Sanskrit) is often translated as ‘suffering’. It is “not simply an unpleasant feeling. Rather, it refers most deeply to a basic vulnerability to suffering and pain due to a misapprehending the nature of reality”.
- The initial challenge in the Buddhist approach is to allow destructive mental states into awareness so they can learn to transform them through years of meditation. This is done by introspectively monitoring their mental activities with meditation and contemplation.
- In psychology emotions are considered from an evolutionary point of view and are of considerable focus in therapy. Although emotions are categorized in positive or negative they are only thought to be harmful in excess. Also, the goal of psychotherapy is usually to not to rid oneself of an emotion but it regulate experience and action once an emotion is felt...in other words, to gain control.

Buddhism and psychology do agree that hostility is destructive to ones health and that impulsive chronic violence is dysfunctional and pathologic. Also, the only situations psychology recommends changing emotions is for what it defines as psychopathological states. Currently there is no approach in Western culture that entails a long term persistent effort that involves complex learning skills in the changing of enduring emotional states unlike training for athletics, higher learning and chess. Buddhism does

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have a system for this and it takes decades of training to reach these highest stages of consciousness. Buddhism excels at understanding the states and stages of meditative development, It does not have a method for dealing directly with the actual content of stressful thoughts. Western psychological approaches have focused upon a socratic questioning of the mind as it relates to stressful thoughts and has been an excellent tool for the reduction of suffering as it relates to “destructive emotions”.

Buddhism and TW have something in common: the motive to find peace and reduce suffering. The Work is a innovative and uniquely configured cognitive tool that uses a set of questions and turnarounds that uses the minds innate ability to introspect, perceive and interpret bodily sensations. The emphasis on bodily felt experience with and without the thought is often associated with more significant change than if the understanding was purely intellectual.

The effect of doing TW as described by those who use TW as mental practice is sometimes described similarly to an experience of “sukha”. Like meditation, TW also requires a “monitoring of the minds internal activities” with the addition of using the questions and the turnarounds. The mind witnessing the effect of the stressful thought in the third question “how do you react when you think that thought?” is “dukha”. The fourth question, “who would you be without the thought?” creates a contrast that offers the mind evidence of life without the stressful thought. The “turn arounds” rebalance the mind attachment to one untrue thought by utilizing the minds ability to find additional thoughts that are more true and less stressful using multiple and opposite perspectives. This reduces cognitive dissonance with great effect and efficiency. Also when people find their own turnarounds and examples, they have greater impact than if supplied by someone else as in therapy or by a philosophical teaching.

TW appears to enable the doer of TW to be able to experience a release from painful enduring affective traits very rapidly. This phenomenon repeated sufficiently can result in profound state and trait changes due to the brain’s neuroplasticity or inherent ability to remodel itself using awareness, attention and intention. The Work illustrates a new understanding of how the mind, and, more specifically, our thinking, can be the root and cause of suffering, pain, confusion and illusion and how we can become free of the effects of these stressful thoughts. The simplicity, depth, speed and power of The Work is unprecedented in the history of tools available to people in Eastern meditative and Western psychological traditions. Any mind that is able to truthfully answer these four questions and the turn-arounds will notice that their lives change in a peaceful direction. The Work is not self-help, therapy, or positive thinking. It is a new paradigm available to everyone and can used in the field of education, therapy, or parenting (oneself or others).

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Theoretically TW could also be used to enhance meditation practice as well as traditional and transpersonal psychotherapeutic approaches that utilize awareness or insight to promote healing and growth. The Work can be used in individual and group psychotherapeutic, educational and or prison settings. It can also be done effectively on the telephone or interactively with a computer program.

To truly understand the power and effectiveness of TW it must be experienced firsthand. In my opinion, Science should not have a problem validating what is empirically evident to me and many other practitioners of The Work regarding it's efficacy.