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Ethical Frameworks in Buddhism and Psychotherapy The Nature & Nurture of Good Conduct

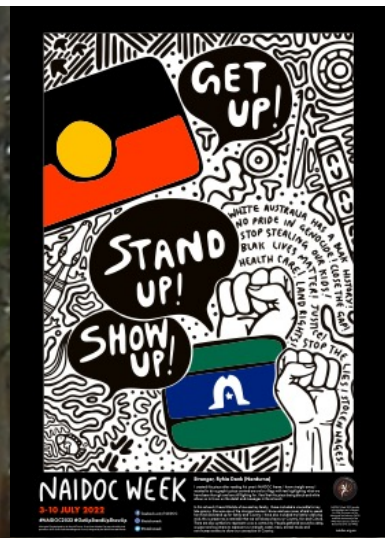
Ethics, Neurobiology, the Shadow

Bhante Sujato & Francine Bartlett

Buddhism and Psychotherapy Professional Training Course 5 Module 2

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Day 2



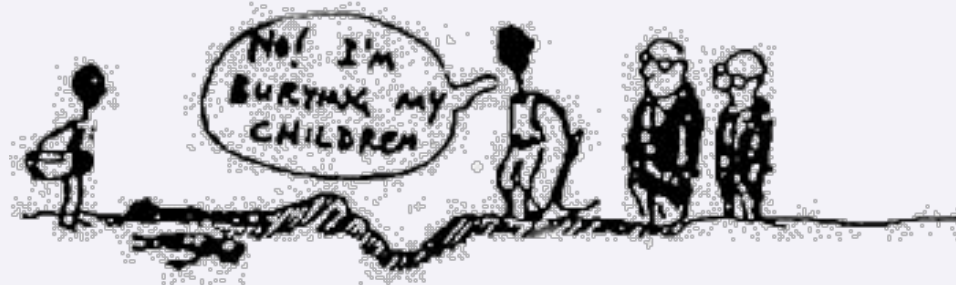
people behave badlywar



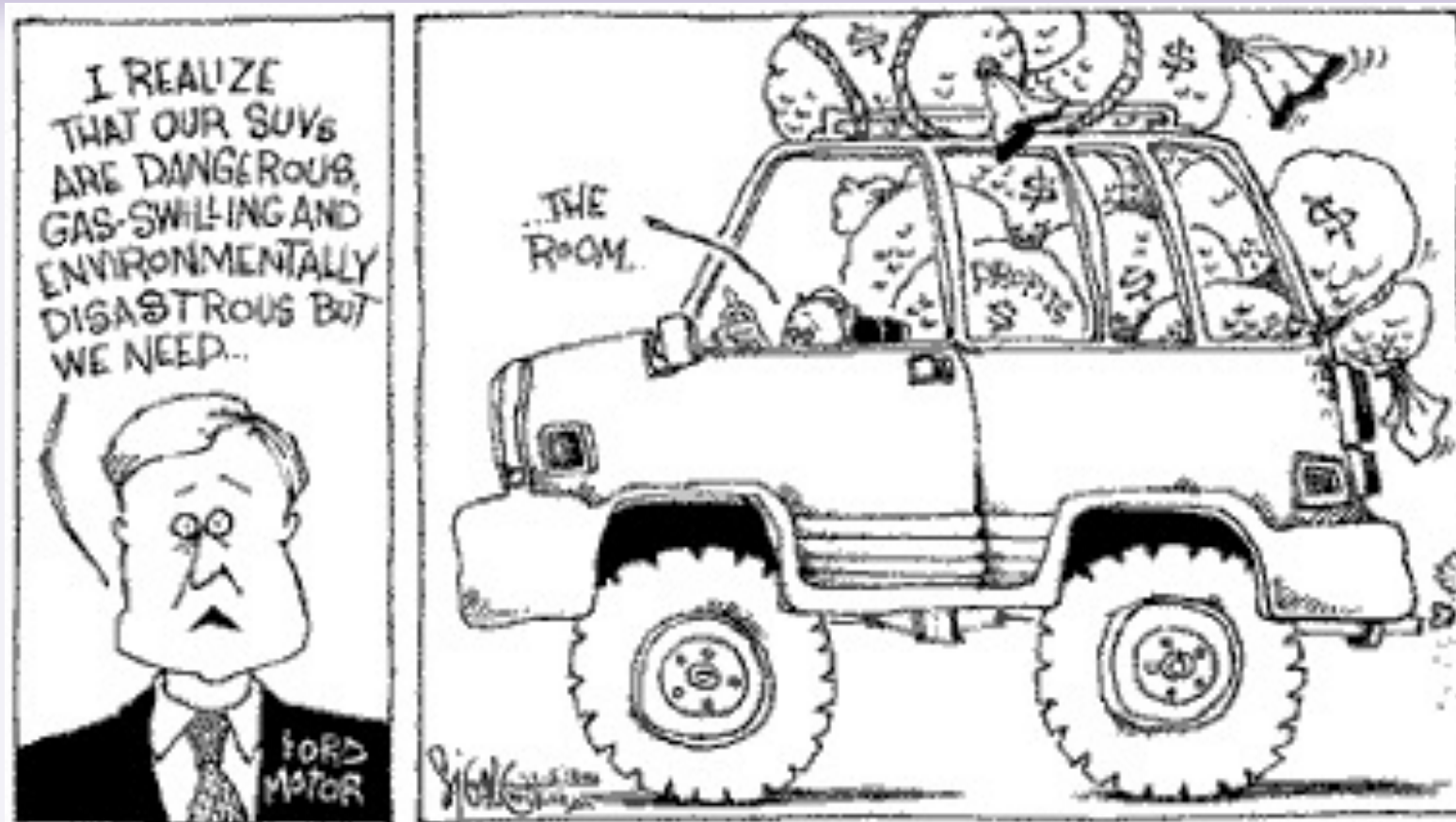
people behave badlyenvironmentally



people behave badlyexploitation



people behave badlycorporate greed



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why do good people do bad things?

Human nature

- unconscious drives, self interest,
- natural tendencies needing to mature/develop

- Genetic
- 98% “junk” genes - source of adaptability
 - epigenetics - intergenerational heritage

Acculturation

- modelled, parenting, culturally entrenched expectations
- mores of good/bad, gender roles, “normal” etc....
- forces of marketing, education, institutions, media
- necessity - survival

- Trauma
- prenatal stress, childhood neglect/abuse, isolation
 - shapes bio-psycho-social template
 - unintegrated hurt can lead to inflicting hurt

Buddhist View
Role of right view



Neurobiology is useful - Brain in the Hand

(Rick Hanson)



an integrated, wholistic system.

- Reptilian brain
 - ancient, survival, regulates basic functions, balancing hormones etc
- Mammalian brain/Limbic System
 - amygdala (alarm); hippocampus (memory); emotional processing (along with Vagal NS); emotions - attractive (empathy, sex, social connection) - aversive (fear, anxiety)
- The Executive brain
 - reason, reflect, plan, decide, consider, articulate, communicate, execute plans,

All talk to each other, can affect the operation of the other layers, **AABCAP**
can work together harmoniously.



CHITTA = heart mind AND - GUT BRAIN LINK



Trauma and Neurobiology



Adversity increases inflammation, reduces immune strength, changes neurobiology, impacts cellular and genetic levels & is heritable.

- **Triggers** survival mode; long term developmental changes; child abuse history characteristic - psychiatric hospitals & gaols
- Quality of **early relationships (especially abuse)** affects life span - **later** ethical decisions, impulsivity, delay gratification, self regulation
- **Social context of upbringing** - domination, control increase survival mode. “Power-over” basis of parenting, education, institutions, therapy, politics (fear increases conservatism, tribalism)
- **Injury to the brain** (can limit access to prefrontal cortex & keep people in survival mode)

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Trauma and Neurobiology

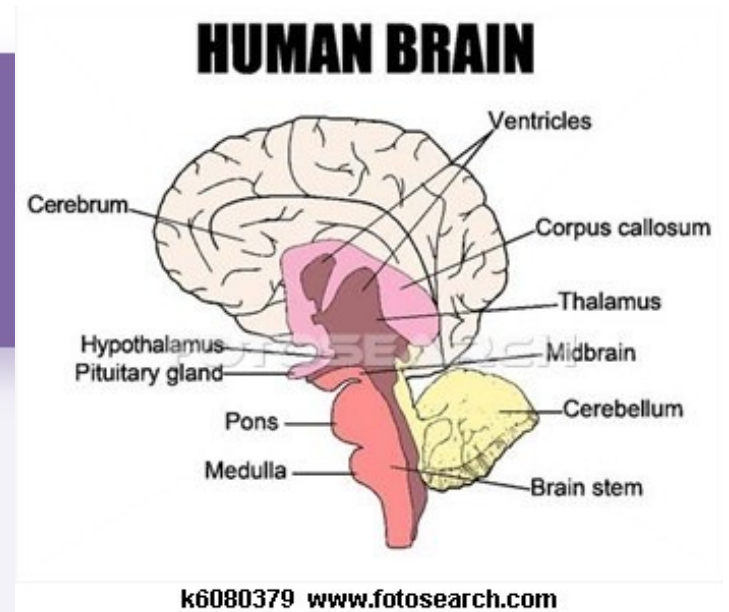
Trauma increases

- sensitivity to threat - amygdala bigger
- hyper-reactivity
- defensive or aggressive or dissociative responses
- self-interest as survival

Trauma inhibits access to prefrontal cortex making it harder to

- have reflective self awareness
- manage emotions, relationships, daily life
- reflect on one's life - access memories, learning (hippocampus shrinks)
make meaning, life narrative
- see whole picture
- make long term plans

MEDITATION CHANGES THE BRAIN



other systems

Mirror neurons discovered in 1990's

- physiological foundation of empathy & empathic attunement
- enables neural map of another's intention - theory of mind, "read" mind

Attachment & Vagal Nervous System

- wired for sociability; attachment, affection. companionship.
- first drive is to belong - affiliative drive NOT for aggression

Neurons that fire together wire together

- Plasticity, change your mind to change your brain

Negativity bias



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Negativity bias

“... your brain preferentially scans for, registers, stores, recalls, & reacts to unpleasant experiences... it's like velcro for negative experiences & teflon for positive ones... even when positive experiences outnumber negative ones, the pile of negative implicit memories naturally grows faster.”

ANTIDOTE: Learn to take in the good

1. Let good facts become good experiences
2. Savour the experience (> 10 secs = *in long term memory*)
3. Sense the experience sinking into you

From Rick Hanson 'The Buddha's Brain'

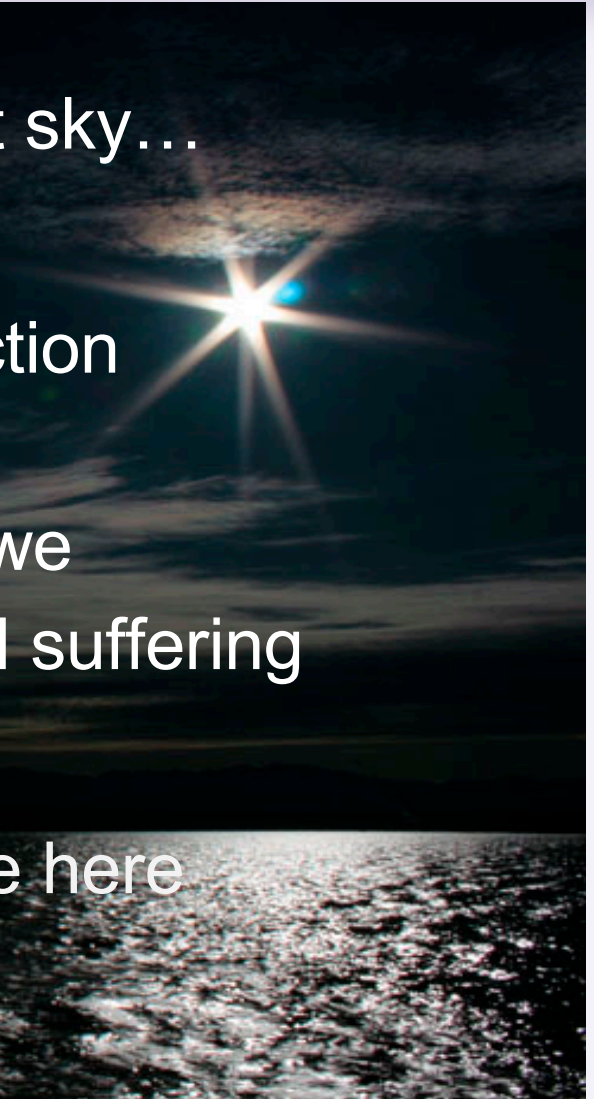
Carroll & Shaw's table of 'gifts' and 'warning signs'

Brain	Gift	Warning Sign
Reptilian	Keeping safe	Me-only
Limbic	Relational	Collusive
	Communication	Identified with
	Experience	No systemic thinking
	Emotions	My group only
Executive	Rational	No emotions
	Imaginative	The present
	Reflective	Mindless
	Language	Manipulation
	Long term	[lose touch with the present]*
	Manages emotions	[over rationalises/or inhibits emotional intelligence]*

The role of Ideals

ideals are like a guiding star in the night sky...

- help us orient to and find the right direction
- if we try to grasp or 'become' that star we set ourselves up for disappointment and suffering
- look to the star - then to the ground, the here and now - this is the terrain to navigate as best we can.



Truth vs Ideals

Setting up ideals for ourselves can create a huge chasm between how we view and experience ourselves and how we would 'like to be' or 'should be' in an ideal world.



Ideals activity - 10mins

We have 3-4 core values that tend not to change; they will guide our commitments, life choices, decisions, consciously or unconsciously

Take a moment and jot down 1 or 2 values/ideals that guide your life

DYADS

What are the down sides of each of those values? In Life or Therapy

In what situations are they inappropriate?



idealism and the shadow



**"Have no fear of perfection,
you'll never reach it"**

- Salvador Dali

TwistedSifter.com

BUT some **obsessed** with 'being wrong', 'imperfect', '**self-loathing**',
neurotic, stuck, can't move on - very difficult mind states



The Shadow

“Whatever we deem evil, inferior or unacceptable and deny in ourselves becomes part of the shadow ” Diamond

The territory where guilt and shame thrive

cited in: Essential Secrets of Psychotherapy: What is the "Shadow"? Understanding the "dark side" of our psyche.
Published on April 20, 2012 by Stephen A. Diamond, Ph.D.

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/evil-deeds/201204/essential-secrets-psychotherapy-what-is-the-shadow>



Buddhist view of the shadow

The Shadow

- ESSENTIAL for psychological, ethical & spiritual maturity
- A gift challenging us to grow, to seek therapy or a spiritual path
- In any spiritual endeavour, we will eventually meet our shadow
 - the 'Dark Night of the Soul'
 - the journey through the proverbial desert or wilderness
 - Existential angst
 - the deep valleys of 'morbo inferiore' (tests / loss of faith)

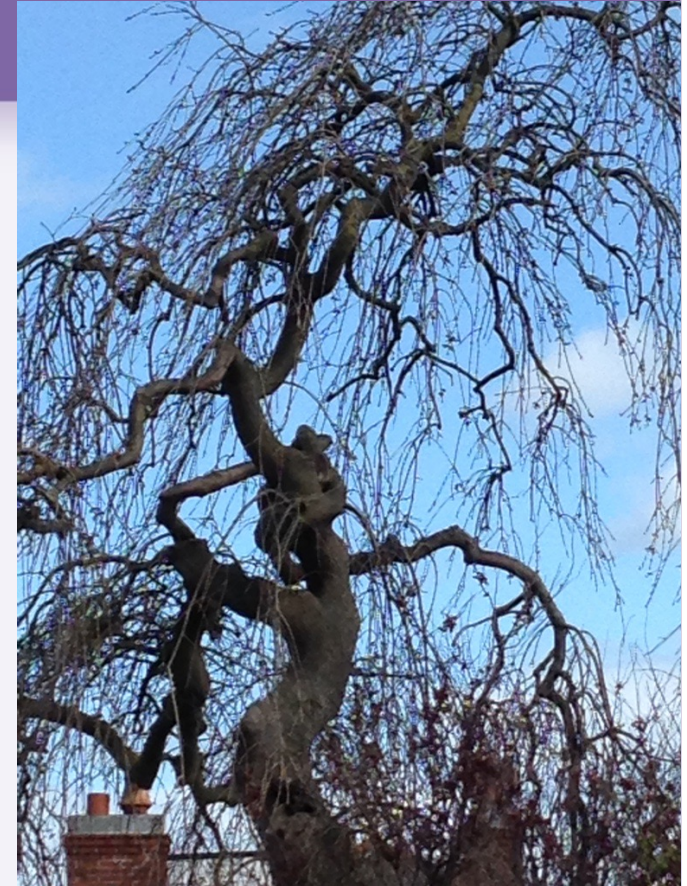


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Guilt - Regret - Remorse - Shame

- GUILT - behavioural, internal view; empathic, group, survivor guilt. I did something bad > Sorry I **made** a mistake
- REGRET - motivates to avoid punishment, pain; wish I hadn't..
- REMORSE - motivates to avoid harming others, taking responsibility, confessing, true apology
- SHAME - focus on person not deed; how seen by others - impulse to hide, cover face. I am bad > sorry I **am** a mistake



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Alice Miller on Guilt

"Many people suffer all their lives from this oppressive feeling of guilt, the sense of not having lived up to their parents' expectations....no argument can overcome these guilt feelings, for they have their beginnings in life's earliest period, and from that they derive their intensity."

the feelings of guilt instilled in our minds since childhood reinforce our repression

Alice Miller, *The Drama of Being a Child* (1995) p. 99-100



Erikson on Guilt

- "initiative vs. guilt" a life task during 3 to 5 years
- excessive blocking of natural leadership and initiative creates guilt, inhibits playfulness & initiative
- can create adults unable to express or be themselves without experiencing guilt and shame



Pathology

Guilt is associated with:

- obsessive-compulsive disorder (xi)
- anxiety
- depression
- self-harm



Psychopathy/sociopathy lacks any true sense of guilt or remorse for harm they may have caused others (xii)

- rationalize, blame, or deny
- low emotional intelligence – (read/understand emotions of others)
- inability to evaluate situations in a moral framework
- inability to develop emotional bonds with others

Shame - the swampland of the soul

Grows in silence, secrecy, harsh judgement/punishment

Core beliefs: Never good enough or who do you think you are?

Correlated with

- Addictions
- Violence
- Bullying
- Suicide
- Depression
- Aggression
- Eating disorders

Guilt inversely correlates to these things

Crippling impact on sense of self & worthiness

ANTIDOTE: Empathy and self compassion



The Highest Moral Significance

“Bringing the shadow to consciousness,” writes Liliane Frey-Rohn (1967), “is a psychological problem of the highest moral significance.

It demands that the individual hold (him)self accountable not only for what happens to him(/her), but also for what (s)he projects. . . Without the conscious inclusion of the shadow in daily life there cannot be a positive relationship to other people, or to the creative sources in the soul; there cannot be an individual relationship to the Divine.”

cited in: Essential Secrets of Psychotherapy: What is the "Shadow"? Understanding the "dark side" of our psyche.
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The Shadow

When integrated through conscious awareness, tolerance of the polarities within, being embraced, the shadow becomes a source of

- *Creativity*
- *Growth*
- *Healing*
- *authentic spirituality*

“Authentic spirituality requires consciously accepting and relating properly to the shadow as opposed to repressing, projecting, acting out and remaining naively unconscious of its repudiated, denied, disavowed contents - a sort of precarious pseudo-spirituality. ”

Diamond (v)

behaving well - cultivate ethical maturity

- Reptilian brain - care for safety, self care, basic bodily functions.
When safe and at ease can be open RELAXED, WELL BEING
- Limbic brain - receives internal and external signals; connect, interact, belong, compassion, empathy, non-defensive
 - SOCIAL CONNECTION
- Executive brain - reflect, consider, communicate, execute plans, choose positive memories/thoughts, actions to soothe, activate brain stem & limbic system ACTION

Barbara Fredrickson in conversation with Dalai Llama

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/EMicgxw5VqPzmljvxLfnJDTjgwmJXnfr?compose=new&projector=1>

A photograph of a forest scene. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating rays of light. The scene is reflected in a body of water in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the image.

Buddhist view
cultivating Sila
integrating the shadow

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION - APPLICATION



Behaving well has benefits

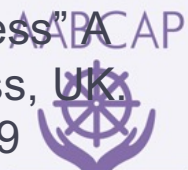
Dalai Llama says

- Doing good improves cellular, health MORE than Feeling good ie kindness, giving, compassion, purposeful action, metta meditation
- Karuna is a mental state which when translated into action for the wellbeing of others deepens and generates even greater happiness
- Emotions and connections in daily life lead to discernible health benefits additional to time meditating



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METTA to loved one, stranger, enemy counters this tendency

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