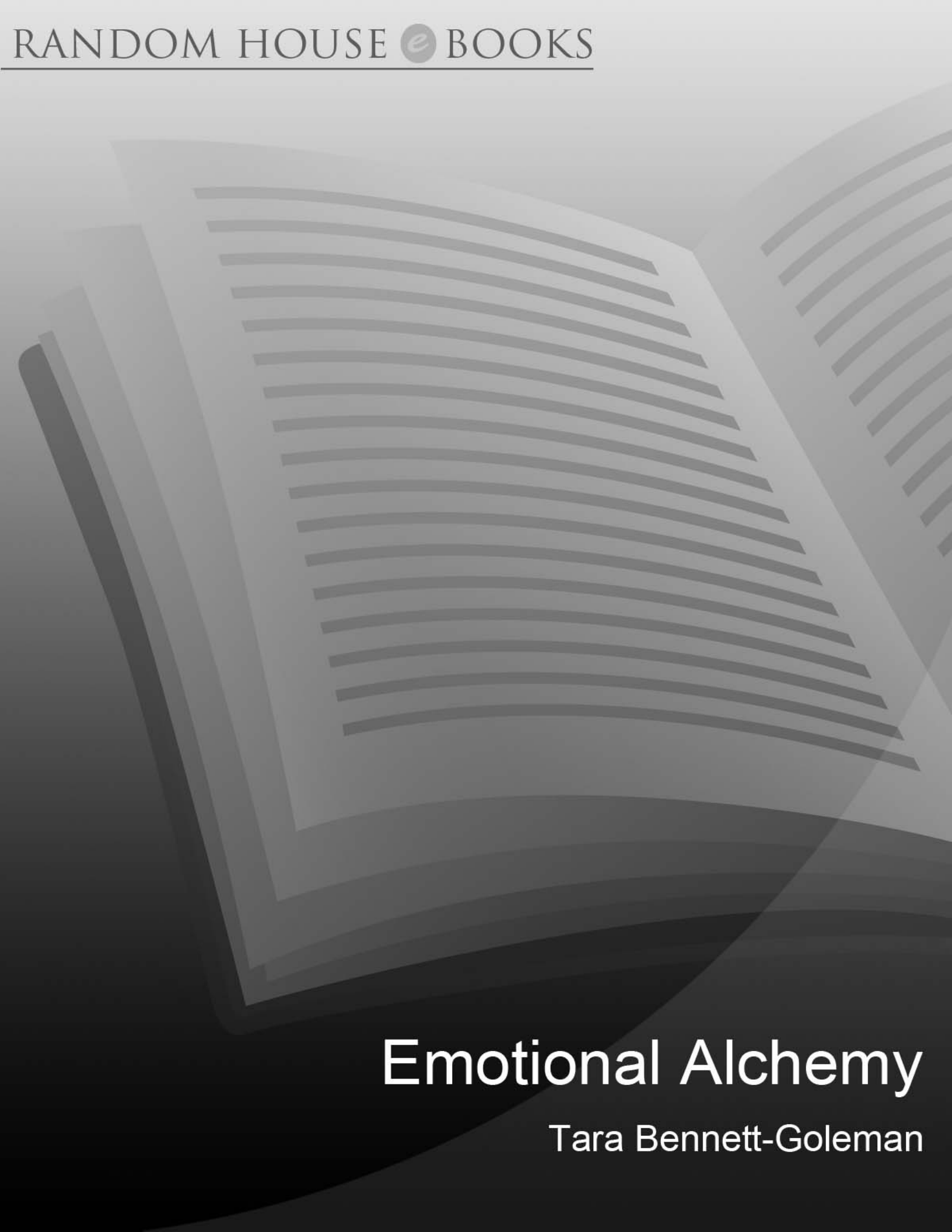


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Emotional Alchemy

Tara Bennett-Goleman

About the Author

TARA BENNETT-GOLEMAN, M. A., is a psychotherapist and teacher who has developed emotional alchemy, an innovative integration of mindfulness meditation and Buddhist psychology with a new dimension in cognitive therapy. For the last decade she has taught workshops on this approach with her husband Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*. Bennett-Goleman has studied for more than two decades with Buddhist masters from Tibet, Nepal and Burma. Her postgraduate training, at the Cognitive Therapy Center of New York, was in schema therapy, which focuses on changing self-defeating emotional patterns. Her humanitarian projects have included working for Tibetan causes and counselling the elderly and terminally ill. She is a longtime student of Japanese flower arranging and tea ceremony, as well as Kathak Indian dance. She lives in Massachusetts, where she affectionately spoils her two horses.

Praise for *Emotional Alchemy*

‘May this very important and enticing book find its way into the hearts of readers near and far so that it can perform its mysterious and healing alchemy for the benefit of all. Tara Bennett-Goleman has done a great service in describing in such inspiring and precise ways how meditative practices can liberate us from the patterns of emotional reactions that, unexamined, lead invariably to suffering and harm.’

Jon Kabat Zinn,
author of *Wherever You Go, There You Are*
Professor of Medicine at Umass Medical School

‘A rare accomplishment, bringing the synthesis of Western psychology and Buddhist Mindfulness practice to an entirely new level. Much more than theory, it is a wise and pragmatic guide to emotional freedom. Tara Bennett-Goleman weaves together with consummate skill the wisdom teachings of the East, the latest understandings of cognitive therapy and neuroscience, and the innumerable personal stories that bring all of it to life.’

Joseph Goldstein,
author of *Insight Meditation*

‘Gliding effortlessly from personal reminiscence to the latest in neuroscience, from meditation instruction to the intricacies of cognitive therapy, Tara Bennett-Goleman invites us to be part of her journey. In showing us how to use our minds to heal our emotions, she heals our minds with her heart.’

Mark Epstein, M.D.,
author of *Thoughts without a Thinker* and *Going to Pieces without Falling Apart*

‘A wonderfully clear, compassionate and insightful guide to freeing ourselves from difficult emotions. Tara Bennett-Goleman illuminates a path of transformation, blending meditative, scientific and therapeutic perspectives, that will invite, encourage and inspire any reader.’

Sharon Salzberg,
author of *Lovingkindness*

‘A very accessible and practical guide to transforming emotions. If you wish to know how your emotional habits can be changed, this book is for you.’

Richard J. Davidson,
Director, Wisconsin Center for Affective Science,
University of Wisconsin

‘*Emotional Alchemy* is an amazing feast of knowledge of East and West, traditional and current. It shows how everyday emotions can be transmuted as a means of healing. All the principles of the alchemy of mind explained in one book – a must read handbook.’

Tulku Thondop
author of *Healing and the Mind*

‘Written with humour, warmheartedness in lively prose, . . . a landmark step forward for us all.’

Naomi Wolf
author of the *Beauty Myth*

EMOTIONAL ALCHEMY

How Your Mind Can Heal Your
Heart

Tara Bennett-Goleman

Foreword by H.H. The Dalai Lama



RIDER

LONDON · SYDNEY · AUCKLAND · JOHANNESBURG

This eBook is copyright material and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author's and publisher's rights and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

Epub ISBN: 9781409003298

Version 1.0

www.randomhouse.co.uk

3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Copyright © 2001 by Tara Bennett-Goleman

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

Tara Bennett-Goleman has asserted her right to be identified as the author of this Work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in the United States in 2001 by Harmony Books, an imprint of Crown Publishing Group, Random House Inc., USA.

First published in Great Britain in 2001 by Rider.

This edition first published in 2003 by Rider,
an imprint of Ebury Press, Random House,
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA

Random House Australia (Pty) Limited
20 Alfred Street, Milsons Point, Sydney,
New South Wales 2061, Australia

Random House New Zealand Limited
18 Poland Road, Glenfield,
Auckland 10, New Zealand

Random House South Africa (Pty) Limited
Endulini, 5A Jubilee Road,
Parktown 2193, South Africa

The Random House Group Limited Reg. No. 954009

Papers used by Rider are natural, recyclable products made from wood grown in sustainable forests.

Page design by Barbara Sturman
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Bookmarque Ltd, Croydon, Surrey

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 1-8441-3045-2
ISBN-13: 978-1-8441-3045-0

*For the light of wisdom
within everyone*

Contents

Foreword by the Dalai Lama

I

Emotional Alchemy

- 1 • An Inner Alchemy
- 2 • A Wise Compassion
- 3 • The Healing Qualities of Mindfulness
- 4 • A Model of the Mind

II

Things as They Seem

- 5 • Emotional Habit
- 6 • Schemas in the Larger World
- 7 • How Schemas Work

III

A Mindful Therapy

- 8 • The Many Uses of Mindfulness
 - 9 • Breaking the Chain
 - 10 • Changing Habits
 - 11 • Working with Emotions
- 12 • You Don't Have to Believe Your Thoughts
 - 13 • Relationships
 - 14 • The Circle of Life
 - 15 • Stages of Healing

IV

Spiritual Alchemy

- 16 • Perceptual Shifts
- 17 • Investigating the Mind
- 18 • Reframing Suffering
- 19 • May Confusion Dawn as Wisdom

Guide to Resources

Notes

Acknowledgments

Foreword

by the Dalai Lama

We all desire happiness and do not want suffering. Because the very purpose of life is to be happy, it is important to discover what will bring about the greatest degree of happiness. Whether our experience is pleasant or miserable, it is either mental or physical. Generally, it is the mind that exerts the greatest influence on most of us. Therefore, it is extremely worthwhile to try to bring about mental peace.

Although material progress is important for human advancement, if we pay too much attention to external things and give too little importance to inner development, the imbalance will lead to problems. Inner peace is the key: if we have inner peace we will be able to deal with situations with calmness and reason. Without inner peace, no matter how comfortable our life is materially, we may still be worried, disturbed, or unhappy because of the circumstances.

When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us. When our community is in a state of peace, it can share that peace with neighboring communities and so on. When we feel love and kindness

toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for but also helps us to develop inner happiness and peace.

As a Buddhist I have learned that what principally upsets our inner peace is what we call disturbing emotions. All those thoughts, emotions, and mental events that reflect a negative or uncompassionate state of mind inevitably undermine our experience of inner peace. All such negative thoughts and emotions as hatred, anger, pride, lust, greed, envy, and so on have the effect of disturbing our inner equilibrium. They also have a taxing effect on our physical health. In the Tibetan medical system, mental and emotional disturbances have long been considered causes of many constitutional diseases, including cancer. Scientists and health professionals in the West increasingly share this point of view, too.

Disturbing emotions are the very source of unethical conduct. They are also the basis of anxiety, depression, confusion, and stress, which are such a feature of our lives today. And yet, because we so often fail to recognize their destructive potential, we do not see the need to challenge them.

In this book, *Emotional Alchemy*, Tara Bennett-Goleman offers a method to calm the mind and free it from disturbing emotions: a practical application of mindfulness in the realm of emotion. Based on personal experience she has drawn together insights and methods from cognitive and brain science, from psychotherapy, and from Buddhist psychology and mindfulness practice. She shows people how they can use mindfulness to loosen the hold of mental and emotional habits that prevent them from being happy.

A great Tibetan teacher of mind training once remarked that one of the mind's most marvelous qualities is that it can be transformed. I offer my prayers that readers of this book who put the advice it contains into practice may indeed be able to transform their minds, overcome their disturbing emotions, and achieve a sense of inner peace.

Not only will they then be happier in themselves, but they will undoubtedly contribute to greater peace and happiness in the world at large.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. W. H.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

June 3, 2000



Emotional Alchemy

1

An Inner Alchemy

From the window of my London hotel room Big Ben displays itself, a prominent, elegant presence amid the vista of river, billowing clouds, and spreading jumble of skyline. Big Ben has a grandeur as a piece of architecture, but I find my eye drawn more to the broad, open expanse of sky and river. • The panorama above and below Big Ben's rounded bluntness includes a resplendence of steeples and bridges that occupy the central view from my window. I notice how my mind, at first glance, takes in the spaciousness of the cloud-filled sky and the soothing expanse of the river below like a regal oil painting by some turn-of-the-century landscape artist, or like a postcard-perfect snapshot. • But as I gaze more carefully, with a sustained attention, I notice that the still snapshot-like rendering of this scene dissolves into a whirl of constant motion, a continuing series of tiny movements that add up to a vastly altered picture. There are tiny successive changes in the shape of clouds as they glide across the sky, sometimes opening up patches of sky through which rays of sunlight spill along the landscape, illuminating shadows into patches of light. There's the

translucent shine of buildings and roads and bright red buses as they momentarily bathe in the glow. The scene before me shimmers with kinetic energy. • And so it is with our inner landscapes. This shift in my perception mirrors how the mind works: the tendency to assume it has got the whole picture on first glance, to rush on without a closer look, and the sometimes startling fact that if one continues to look more carefully, there is always more to be discovered beyond those initial assumptions. Too often we take our first impressions, the conclusions from a first hasty glance, as the lasting truth of the moment. • But if we keep looking and noticing, we become aware of greater detail and nuance, of changes and second thoughts, and much more. We can see things more as they actually are, rather than as they appear to be. We can bring a more precise understanding to the moment.

If we sustain our gaze within, sometimes our probe may detect pain behind the masks we wear. But if we continue to look, we can see how the patterns of pain hold that very mask in place, and as we investigate further we see even these patterns shift and rearrange themselves. We see how our reactions to our emotions can keep us at a distance from ourselves. And if we sustain our focus, allowing ourselves to open more honestly, our awareness penetrates further, unraveling and dissolving, peeling away the layers as we look still further. We begin to connect with more genuine parts of ourselves, at first in glimpses. Then, as we sustain our gaze, we connect with a source that breathes awareness into every layer of our being.

This book is about seeing ourselves as we genuinely are, not as we seem on first glance as viewed through the filters of our habitual assumptions and emotional patterns. We will explore how through the practice of mindfulness—a method for training the mind to expand the scope of awareness while refining its precision—we can reach beyond the

limiting ways we see ourselves. We will see how to disengage from the emotional habits that undermine our lives and our relationships. We will discover how a precise mindfulness can investigate these emotional habits, bringing an insightful clarity to distinguish between the seeming and the actual.

The Power of Mindfulness • I've seen the power of this distinction in the lives of my clients. One client found herself obsessed by self-recrimination for not having done something well enough. Though highly successful in her career, she was her biggest critic. She told me, for example, "Last week I had to give a very important presentation—lots of people were going to be there whose opinions really matter to me. So I prepared more than usual and thought I had done a pretty good job. Afterward, several people complimented me. But one person said, 'You did a terrific job. It could have been a little shorter, though.' That was it. For the last several days that's all I can think about—how I went on too long. I wake up in the middle of the night worrying about it."

This was no isolated event. The feeling that she never did things quite well enough haunted her—in her work, in her marriage, in caring for her children, even in her cooking. It was a constant preoccupation, one that marred her closest relationships and made the smallest challenge an occasion for self-doubt or self-criticism.

A more systematic investigation led her to realize that at the root of this preoccupation was a hidden emotional pattern, the deep conviction that no matter how well she did something, it would never be quite up to her own impossibly high standards. This mistaken conviction distorted her perceptions, so she overlooked the evidence of how well she actually did accomplish things. And it led her to drive herself

far too hard, so that she cheated herself of time for life's meaningful pleasures. Mindfulness helps us to identify such hidden emotional patterns, bringing them into the light of awareness so that we can begin to free ourselves from their hold.

One couple had fights that threatened their relationship. A mutual mindful awareness allowed them to detect the hidden patterns that caused them to have essentially the same argument over and over. Whenever she started to feel insecure about his affection for her, she would become needy. He would feel that she was controlling him and withdraw in anger. The result: a stormy fight. By looking closely at what had happened after they both calmed down, they were able to see how his angry withdrawal and her anxious clinging were both emotional reactions to an underlying symbolic reality.

Their constant battles, on closer investigation, had little to do with the situation at hand, and much to do with the symbolic meanings of what had happened: his fear of being controlled and her oversensitivity to signs of rejection because of a deep feeling that she was being emotionally deprived. Learning to identify these habitual emotional reactions as they began to take hold allowed the couple to avoid fights and to communicate more skillfully.

A dedicated meditator who had tried to relieve the distress of her lifelong feelings of disconnection by going on long retreats found herself obsessing even more about these very feelings while meditating at a retreat center. As she put it, "Your madness follows you on your spiritual path." But learning how to see these seemingly formidable emotional reactions as transparent and temporary allowed her to use them as fuel for her practice, deepening her compassion for herself as well as for others.

This transformation begins with refocusing the lenses of our conditioning to see things more clearly, as they actually are. You might wonder, Who am I, if I am not my usual

pattern of assumptions and self-definitions? This question can be asked from both a psychological and a spiritual perspective—a process of inner discovery that I hope this book will inspire.

The Metaphor of Alchemy • “Each thing has to transform itself into something better, and acquire a new destiny,” Paulo Coelho writes in his novel *The Alchemist*. Coelho describes the world as only the visible aspect of God, with invisible spiritual forces at play that remain largely unknown to us. Alchemy occurs when the spiritual plane comes into contact with the material plane.

I was given Coelho’s book by a client, who told me, “This reminds me of our work together.” Indeed, alchemy offers an apt metaphor for the process I will be describing.

Alchemists, the tales go, sought to use a magical philosopher’s stone to transmute lead into gold. But lead and gold, in the more philosophical school of alchemy, were metaphors for internal states: the alchemist’s discipline was one of psychological and spiritual transformation. Alchemists realized that the mystery they sought to solve was not outside but in the psyche.

Some alchemical schools liken our ordinary state of mind to a lump of coal and compare clear awareness to a diamond. There would seem to be no greater contrast in the material world than that between coal and a diamond, and yet the two are but different arrangements of the identical molecules of carbon. Just as a diamond is coal transformed, so clear awareness can arise from our confusion.

What intrigues me about the metaphor of alchemy is not the gold—some grandiose goal—but rather the importance it places on the *process* of transformation. One client, an acupuncturist who has studied Chinese medicine, told me that the word “alchemy,” better than any other word,

describes the process of integrating mindfulness with emotional work: “Alchemy is accepting everything in the pot without trying to reject or correct it—seeing that even the negative is part of the learning and healing.”

Mindfulness means seeing things as they are, without trying to change them. The point is to dissolve our *reactions* to disturbing emotions, being careful not to reject the emotion itself. Mindfulness can change how we relate to, and perceive, our emotional states; it doesn’t necessarily eliminate them.

The warmth of sunlight dissolving the moisture of clouds—nature’s alchemy—echoes the warm fire of mindfulness melting the emotional clouds covering our inner nature. The effects of such periods of insightful clarity may be fleeting and momentary, lasting only until the next emotional cloud forms. But rekindling this awareness again and again—bringing it to bear on these inner clouds, letting it penetrate and dissolve the haze in our minds—is the heart of practice, a practice we can learn to sustain.

I believe that, given the right awareness tools, we all have the potential to be inner alchemists, with the natural ability to turn our moments of confusion into insightful clarity. Gradually, as we practice doing this with our troubling feelings, we can gain an understanding of their causes.

For the most part these insights are psychological, especially at first. But if we continue this process we can gain insights into the workings of the mind itself that can be spiritually liberating. It’s as though there are two levels of reality in our lives: one dominated by these deeply ingrained emotional patterns and another that is free from conditioned patterns. Mindfulness gives us breathing space from this conditioning.

Emotional alchemy allows for the possibility that our bewilderment and turmoil might blossom into insightful clarity. “In almost every bad situation,” says Nyanaponika Thera, a Buddhist monk, “there is the possibility of a

transformation by which the undesirable may be changed into the desirable.”

There is a simple but ingenious judo in this emotional alchemy: to embrace all experiences as part of a transformative path by making them the focus of mindfulness. Instead of seeing disturbance and turmoil as a distraction realize that they too can become the target of a keen attention. “In that way,” Nyanaponika notes, “enemies are turned into friends, because all these disturbances and antagonistic forces have become our teachers.”

Refining Awareness • Physics tells us what happens when moisture builds up and clouds develop into a density so thick that, at first, the light of the sun can’t penetrate them to evaporate the moisture. Initially the light literally bounces off the droplets of water, each a little spherical mirror, scattering the light in all directions. But as the sun’s steady presence warms the water droplets that make up the cloud, the moisture slowly starts to evaporate. Eventually the clouds dissipate.

This parallels emotional alchemy—a transformation from a confusing, dense emotional state to clarity and lightness of being. Mindfulness, a refined awareness, is the fire in this inner alchemy. Again, this doesn’t mean that the mental fog will lift every time we become mindful of it. But what *can* shift is how we perceive and relate to the various mental states that we encounter.

Mindfulness is a meditative awareness that cultivates the capacity to see things just as they are from moment to moment. Ordinarily our attention swings rather wildly, carried here and there by random thoughts, fleeting memories, captivating fantasies, snatches of things seen, heard, or otherwise perceived. By contrast, mindfulness is a distraction-resistant, sustained attention to the movements

of the mind itself. Instead of being swept away and captured by a thought or feeling, mindfulness steadily observes those thoughts and feelings as they come and go.

Essentially, mindfulness entails a new way of paying attention, a way to expand the scope of awareness while refining its precision. In this training of the mind we learn to let go of the thoughts and feelings that pull us out of the present moment, and to steady our awareness on our immediate experience. If distractedness breeds emotional turmoil, the ability to sustain our gaze, to keep looking, can bring greater clarity and insight.

Mindfulness has its roots in an ancient system of Buddhist psychology, little known in the West, that even today offers a sophisticated understanding of the painful emotions that sabotage our happiness. This psychology offers a scientific approach to inner work, a theory of mind that anyone, Buddhist or not, can draw insights and benefit from. When we apply this approach, the emphasis is not so much on the problems in our lives as on connecting with the clarity and health of mind itself. If we can do this, our problems become more workable, opportunities to learn rather than threats to avoid.

Buddhist psychology holds a refreshingly positive view of human nature: our emotional problems are seen as temporary and superficial. The emphasis is on what is *right* with us, an antidote to the fixation of Western psychology on what's wrong with us. Buddhist psychology acknowledges our disturbing emotions but sees them as covering our essential goodness like clouds covering the sun. In this sense, our darker moments and most upsetting feelings are an opportunity for uncovering our natural wisdom, if we choose to use them that way.

Mindful attention allows us to delve deeper into the moment, to perceive finer subtlety, than does ordinary attention. In this sense, mindfulness creates a "wise" attention, a space of clarity that emerges when we quiet the

mind. It makes us more receptive to the whispers of our innate intuitive wisdom.

The Emotional Alchemy Synthesis • Through my own inner work, as well as in my work as a psychotherapist and workshop leader, I have found that combining a mindful awareness with psychological investigation forges a powerful means to penetrate dense emotions. This meditative awareness, I've found, can bring us a remarkably subtle understanding of our emotional patterns and so help us find ways to unravel deep fixations and destructive habits.

This synthesis draws from many sources: from Buddhist psychology and the tradition of mindfulness meditation, from Tibetan Buddhism, from cognitive science and cognitive therapy, and from neuroscience. Key among the scientific discoveries behind emotional alchemy: that mindfulness shifts the brain from disturbing to positive emotions, and that the brain stays plastic throughout life, changing itself as we learn to challenge old habits. Neuroscience also reveals that we have a crucial choice point—a magic quarter-second—during which we can reject a self-defeating emotional impulse. I put all these findings to practical use.

In this work, I've found two methods to be especially potent for detecting and transforming emotional patterns: mindfulness meditation and a recent adaptation of cognitive therapy, called schema therapy, which focuses on repairing maladaptive emotional habits. Both of these methods—one ancient and one modern—bring awareness to destructive emotional habits, and that is the first step toward healing them.

Becoming aware of these emotional habits is the first step, because unless we can catch and challenge them as

they are triggered by the events of our lives, they will dictate how we perceive and react. And the more they take us over, the more they'll keep coming back, complicating our relationships, our work, and the most basic ways in which we see ourselves.

Early in my work as a psychotherapist I trained with Dr. Jeffrey Young, the founder of the Cognitive Therapy Center of New York. He was then developing schema therapy, which focuses on healing maladaptive patterns, or schemas, like the sense of emotional deprivation, or relentless perfectionism. In working with my own therapy clients, I began to combine mindfulness with schema therapy, as they seemed to work together so naturally and powerfully.

Schema therapy gives us a clear map of destructive habits. It details the emotional contours of, say, the fear of abandonment, with its constant apprehension that a partner will leave us; or of feelings of vulnerability, such as the irrational fear that a minor setback at work means you will end up jobless and homeless.

There are ten such major schemas (and countless variations); most of us have one or two principal ones, though many of us have several others to some extent. Other common schemas include unlovability, the fear that people would reject us if they truly knew us; mistrust, the constant suspicion that those close to us will betray us; social exclusion, the feeling we don't belong; failure, the sense that we cannot succeed at what we do; subjugation, always giving in to other people's wants and demands; and entitlement, the sense that one is somehow special, and so beyond ordinary rules and limits.

A first application of mindfulness is learning to recognize one or more of these patterns in ourselves—it's helpful simply to recognize how these patterns operate in our lives. And the very act of being mindful loosens their hold on us. Then the way is open for us to use the tools of schema therapy to further unravel these destructive fixations.

Mindfulness Applied • Let me give an example of how mindfulness works as the catalyst in emotional alchemy. Early on in my practice one client, whom I'll call Maya (all client names herein have been changed), came to me for help in her battle with chronic ulcerative colitis. As a part of her therapy I introduced Maya to mindfulness, which she had already been interested in and now began to practice regularly. I had been practicing mindfulness myself since 1974, and using it in work with the dying. I had participated in an intensive hospital-based training program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School with Jon Kabat-Zinn, who developed an inspiring application of mindfulness to help patients heal stress-related symptoms.

My work with Maya extended beyond her health concerns to the arena of deeper emotional issues. As she observed her reactions with mindfulness, she started to notice that her attacks were associated with a particular emotional pattern: a relentless perfectionism, the sense that nothing she did was ever quite good enough—it had to be perfect. We then expanded the scope of our work together to include being mindful of these patterns. After several months the colitis symptoms faded.

By then Maya had cultivated the habit of being mindful during distressing moments throughout her day. One of the ways she applied mindfulness was in her struggle with overeating; her binges on rich foods did little to help her colitis. So Maya decided to use her very desire to eat as the focus of her mindfulness. Every time she felt an urge to munch, she restrained herself and instead became mindfully aware of all the sensations, thoughts, and feelings in her mind and body. She closely observed the discomfort in her body that accompanied the strong desire to satisfy her craving for food.

A habit like overeating can veil underlying emotional issues. One day as Maya was mindfully investigating this

desire, she suddenly saw how, at its height, her craving for food was actually masking her need for emotional nurturance. As her mindful investigation of this craving became more precise, she realized the feelings actually were not about food at all but stemmed from an underlying longing to fill an emotional void within. Her sense of *emotional* deprivation—that she would never get enough love or caring—was a major issue for her. And it was driving her to crave food.

That insight alone was powerful. But Maya sustained her efforts. As she carefully experienced those thoughts and feelings—observing them without identifying with them or judging herself—she watched them fade and eventually dissolve. As these impulses faded, her desire to eat eventually faded, too. And as she went on to practice this consistently, whenever she felt an urge to overeat, she discovered a new strength in herself as her awareness became stronger than her craving. That freed her to find healthier ways to receive the nurturance she was truly craving.

The deep belief underlying Maya's problem was that she would never get enough caring or nurturance, that she would always be emotionally deprived. Such self-defeating beliefs about ourselves and the world are highly charged; whenever something triggers them our feelings flare and our perceptions become distorted. They trigger emotional overreactions such as out-of-control anger, intense self-criticism, emotional distancing, or, in Maya's case, bingeing. Such deep-seated patterns of thought, feeling, and habit are maladaptive schemas; I'll describe them in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5. These emotional habits operate as powerful lenses on our reality, leading us to mistake how things seem for how they actually are.

The Path to Transforming Emotions •

When I suggested that Maya use a mindful awareness in dealing with colitis symptoms and compulsive eating, I was extending mindfulness beyond its traditional uses as a meditation on our usual experiences, into intentionally exploring the realm of emotional issues and maladaptive patterns. This and similar cases marked a turning point for me in my own therapy work: it illumined the power of mindfulness to help clients see the otherwise invisible emotional patterns at the root of their suffering.

It became clear to me that adding mindfulness to psychotherapy could greatly enhance its effectiveness. I was struck by how much the therapy process was accelerated when a client practiced mindfulness. Through working with my clients, I have found that combining a mindful awareness with psychological investigation forges a powerful tool for cultivating emotional wisdom on a practical, day-to-day level.

Much time in psychotherapy typically entails bringing the detailed anatomy of emotional habits into the light of awareness so they can be investigated, reflected on, and changed. But mindfulness can make *any* system of psychotherapy more precise and attuned, letting us bring our own wisdom to the psychological unfolding. Instead of seeing the therapy or even the therapist as the cure, we can shift our focus to the healing qualities of our own inner wisdom. This wake-up call need not be set apart from our lives; it needn't be something we do only in isolated hours in a therapist's office. It can be part of life moment-to-moment with the application of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is synergistic with virtually any psychotherapy approach, not just schema therapy. If you are in psychotherapy, mindfulness offers a way to cultivate a capacity for self-observation that you can bring to whatever confronts you during the day. Combining mindfulness with

psychotherapy may help you use more fully the opportunity for inner exploration that your therapy offers.

Of course, you don't need to be in psychotherapy to apply mindfulness to your patterns of emotional reactivity. This approach is also an education in applying mindfulness with emotions, work I have taught for more than a decade to people in workshops. I've found that by practicing these methods people develop the capacity to be more aware, sensitive, and skillful in handling the emotional reactions that trouble them.

This book reflects the many dimensions and applications of mindfulness. Some readers may find inspiration in a shift of perspective, and so be drawn to seeing things in new ways. Others may be intrigued by the emerging integration of cognitive science and neuroscience with ancient principles of Buddhist psychology. Some people may be engaged by the psychological investigation of habitual emotional patterns, and with the work of changing these habits. Still others may be drawn to exploring the many applications of mindfulness, or the spiritual aspect of working with emotions.

We will explore a path that touches on each of these dimensions, a path that offers a gradual freedom from the hold of what Buddhism calls "afflictive" emotions. When it comes to the turbulent feelings that roil within us, it's not that we are able to wrap up our bewildering emotions in neat formulaic explanations but that we can use an ongoing inquiry to reach small epiphanies, insights that grow one on the other toward a greater clarity.

In a sense, our darker moments and most upsetting feelings are an opportunity for spiritual growth and uncovering our natural wisdom, for waking up—if we choose to use them that way. If so, our deepest insights can emerge from working directly—with awareness—with our own difficulties.

A strong emotional obsession or pattern is like the scene in *The Wizard of Oz* where Dorothy and her companions finally get to Oz. The Wizard is this powerful, looming presence that terrifies them—until the little dog Toto calmly goes over and pulls back the curtain to reveal an old man stooped over the controls, manipulating a huge Wizard image. Emotional fixations are like that—if you see them clearly, unflinchingly, for what they really are, you take the power away from them. They no longer control you.

Confusion dawns as clarity.