

**Destructive Emotions; How We Can Overcome Them: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama by Daniel Goleman**



Review by: Daniel Zoltani

“Destructive Emotions” is a scientific and Buddhist exchange of views between the Dalai Lama, renowned Tibetan monks, and a group of psychologist, philosophers, and neuroscientists. The eighth Mind and Life dialogue, held in March 2000, in the Dalai Lama’s private quarters in Dharamsala, India, was transcribed to book form. It provides an interesting deliberation from intellectual minds as they confront questions such as; ‘What are the root causes of destructive behavior? Can we learn to control the emotions that drive these impulses? Why do seemingly rational people commit acts of cruelty and violence?’

In a detailed narrative by Daniel Goleman, the main theme of human behavior is used as a foundation to discuss personal insights and scientific findings on how we can recognize destructive emotions such as anger, greed, and delusion. The discussions are scientific based with Buddhist experiences and interpretations intermixed. Negative emotions often play a big part in the behavior of individuals and groups that cause much suffering both for the individuals as well as in communities around the world. Therefore developing further thoughts around such a field is important and warrants a multi-perspective approach. The fundamental message in the book is being aware constitutes action in vanquishing destructive emotions that pose a danger to our collective and personal futures.

Destructive Emotions is definitely a book of academia and although difficult to get through at times, incorporates many interesting topics for thought including exploration of science, religion, and cross culture perspectives on a common and specific subject. The Dalai Lama gives a remarkable performance, transforming from the compassionate persona he commonly exhibits to an inherent scientist as well as an intelligent and testing interrogator. With the Dalai Lama’s participation and support, further scientific studies of emotions, both positive and negative, continue to make headway in an effort to foster human well being and conscious thought.

**“Distinguishing between constructive and destructive emotions is right there to be observed in the moment when a destructive emotion arises-the calmness, the tranquility, the balance of the mind is immediately disrupted. Other emotions do not destroy equilibrium or the sense of well-being as soon as they arise, but in fact enhance it, therefore would be called constructive.”** -14th Dalai Lama; Destructive Emotions