

# Violence: Emotions, Behavior and Neuroscience

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While the evening news feasts on stories of violence, a new norm of aggressive behavior seems to be evolving. Many of the mass-shootings are not by terrorists, but by children and adults. There is no reliable predictor of violence, especially in a person with no such history. Why does someone with a non-violent upbringing snap?

"Ahimsa", the non-violence espoused by Mahatma Gandhi, also refers to social and psycho-spiritual violence which also seems to be increasing. This includes bullying, racism, road rage, businesses harming their employees and the environment, bankers harming their investors, clergy abusing children, and addiction, a form of self-violence.

## The Neuroscience of Violence

Brain functions can be categorized as old or new. The older functions evolved to enhance survival, while the newer functions enable complex communication, abstracting, planning, and adapting to the environment. The emotional system is hard-wired to the old brain. Emotions cause motion or action in response to pain or pleasure. Emotions drive us toward or away from certain experiences.

Behavior is organized in priorities. When we are gasping for air, thirsty, hungry or horny, all systems are geared toward survival and procreation. Sensations are altered—for example, smells and sights of food become more enticing when hungry.

When the emotional system is triggered, the helm is taken over, like in the Disney movie "Inside Out". We watch ourselves being controlled by our emotions while our intellectual/linguistic self comments, criticizes, and rationalizes the behavior. While we have the illusion of control, the truth is that intellect follows the action. This can help explain how presidents and the pious can violate the most fundamental principles of human decency

Intellect can only control behavior in advance by directing sensation before emotion is triggered. Eating before food shopping or going for a walk when hungry are examples. Not thinking about elephants doesn't work—one has to focus on something positive to capture attention.

## Neurochemistry

The functions of the brain have a chemical correlate. "Neuro-transmitters" are the chemicals that brain cells ("neurons") use to communicate with each other and the rest of the body. There are hundreds, if not thousands of chemicals that neurons utilize in communication. These chemicals come from the gut (including the stomach, intestines and liver), hormonal systems, and virtually every other tissue of the body. Our thoughts and emotions change from moment to moment and hour-to-hour based on the complex symphony of these chemicals, and the related electrical activities of the brain.

## Overcrowding and Industrialization of the Earth

Our planet cannot feed an exponentially growing population—mass produced food is deficient in several

essential nutrients. Simultaneously, industrialization creates increasing toxic loads within our bodies. Global warming and international travel enable epidemics of new infections, enhanced by the deficiencies and toxicities that impair immune function. These factors in themselves are stressors, to which we add sleep deprivation, injustice, and the increasing time in front of displays that alter neurological function. Brain dysfunctions are almost guaranteed!

### Possible Factors Involved in Violence

Impulse control dysfunctions
Deficiency of "brain nutrients"
Increasing body burdens of toxins
Chronic infections directly and indirectly affecting the brain, including Lyme, Strep, Epstein Barr, and Candida/Yeasts
Long-term effects of psychotropic medications and their inconsistent use
Lack of three-dimensional experience (i.e. dominance of electronic media)
Genetically programmed self-culling

## Connection and Social Technology

A separate article with this title discusses the effects of digital media on the brain. In summary, our three-dimensional world is being replaced with two-dimensional displays devoid of movement, touch, smell, and variety. The brain changes its shape and chemistry in response to such imbalances.

## Conventional and Holistic Approaches

Conventional medicine continues to seek pharmaceuticals for the anxious, depressive, impulsive and social dysfunctions that are epidemic. However, these agents have limited utility and often worse long-term consequences. In addition, many people on these medications abruptly stop them. This factor is rarely explored when the media produce back-stories of mass murderers.

In the early 1900's, hundreds of thousands of people died of pellagra, a disease caused by deficiency of vitamin B3.

This disease caused mental dysfunction, which today would be diagnosed as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Well-respected scientists were engaged to solve this problem; but their conclusions were ignored for up to 20 years by some governments. Current deficiencies, toxicities, infections and stressors have proven negative effects on brain dysfunction.

Cells, the basis of life, have a process called "apoptosis" that causes the cell to self-destruct. Cancer is in part caused by failed apoptosis. When a person with a gun or bomb kills others, and often themselves, is it possible that nature is acting to cull our population? Is it possible that our emotional system is programmed to kill when it senses an internal and external environment that is unhealthy?

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1. **This educational material may not be used to influence medical care without supervision by a licensed practitioner.**
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3. Dr. Cheikin's website has related articles such as "Neurotransmitters", "Yoga and Kids' Brains" and others.

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