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Extreme Emotions Take Away Menuchas Hanefesh

When do our feelings and emotions destroy our *menuchas hanefesh*? The answer is, whenever they are extreme.

This is not only true when we experience extreme emotions for evil, such as getting excited to do a sin, but even getting excited over a *mitzvah* can be extreme, thereby, destroying one's *menuchas hanefesh*.

How can even good emotions and feelings be bad for us?

A person's main positive quality can be a source of anxiety

One way extreme "good" emotions are really bad for *menuchas hanefesh* is when a person has a particular quality that is more extreme than his other qualities. Everyone has a major positive quality that others do not have, as well as a major weakness that others do not have. Both contribute to a lack of *menuchas hanefesh* because they are both extreme.

For example, it is a very good quality to be a caring person, but very often this good quality is a person's downfall. When one is "extremely" caring, he thinks all day about others and he doesn't have any *menuchas hanefesh* of his own. It's nice to care about others, but such a person can overdo his caring and destroy his own *menuchas hanefesh*. The Gemara (Pesachim 113b) says that an overly caring person's life is not a life. He is being extreme, and anything extreme destroys *menuchas hanefesh*. An overly caring person will feel an inner anxiety in spite of all his spiritual gains.

Becoming Too Emotional Causes Anxiety

Another example of an extreme is when a person has too many emotions at once, for instance, when a person becomes too emotional when he shouldn't. Some people never get emotional and they will never have this problem. However, others can become very emotional, becoming a pot of disarray. Our discussion here is for those who have a very emotional world, not for those who don't know what it means to be a feeling person.

People who feel deeply suffer a lot internally from being so emotional. (The Kotzker Rebbe said that our feelings and emotions are a great source of pain for us, but that we also can't live without them, because we derive vitality from them).

Only someone who is emotional can understand the pain that emotional people go through. A very intellectual person who lacks emotion doesn't understand what an emotional and more feeling person experiences.

If a person gets too emotional and wants to find help for himself, he cannot learn about his feelings from the outside, such as reading a book. Nor can he go to a psychologist who isn't a feeling person, who only knows about the emotional world because he has read books on them. A non-feeling person doesn't understand emotions, because he doesn't experience them, so how can he help one who gets emotional?

Many times a person who is in emotional pain goes to a psychologist or a friend for help, and he is told, "What's the big deal? Just don't feel that way." His feelings are negated. A non-feeling person views feeling people as being disillusioned and overly imaginative. A person who is a more feeling person cannot disconnect from his emotional world and become a non-feeling person.

What can he do to help himself find *menuchas hanefesh*?

A person needs to achieve an inner balance in spite of all his various emotions. He should identify his main emotion that is dominant. His dominant emotion can be love or fear, or any of the seven root emotions (See the book "*Getting To Know Your Feelings*"). When he discovers what his main emotion is, he can see how everything else is simply its branches.

By finding out what his main emotion is, he becomes more self-aware and won't consider himself to be just a mix of emotions.

This will give him *menuchas hanefesh* from his feelings, because he arranged all his feelings by becoming aware of his main emotion, and how everything else he felt are all its branches.

Sudden Fears That Paralyze A Person

Another deterrent to inner peace with one's emotions are sudden fears. Fears can paralyze a person and destroy his *menuchas hanefesh*. Sometimes, these fears come from one's soul and it is a sign that one needs to do *teshuvah*.

But many times, these are deep fears which we have that we need to get rid of. These fears cause a lot of anxiety. What is the solution?

If it's a fear that comes very suddenly and quickly, a person should try to think what he was thinking before he got these scary thoughts. A person needs to become aware of his thoughts. Once he checks his previous thoughts, he may discover that he was just imagining something, and that is what caused him to think of something scary.

But some fears, like we mentioned, come from one's very soul. This is when our soul sees something and grows afraid. There is no way to deal with this other than to be prepared to give up one's soul to sanctify Hashem's Name. Once a person does this, his soul will be calmed.

Thoughts Balance The Feelings

There are three kinds of people – people that are mainly action people, people that are mainly feeling people and people that are mainly thinking people.

We are discussing those who are mainly feeling people. This type of person is sensitive to emotions. A very feeling person can tell when someone hates him or is jealous of him, because he is sensitive to emotions.

How can mainly feeling people achieve *menuchas hanefesh*? How can mainly feeling people become more stable with their emotions? The power of thought in a person can stabilize the emotions.

Some people live so deeply attached to their feelings that they go insane from all their anguish. Others close themselves off from their emotions and suppress themselves, as a response to all their emotional anxiety. However, there is a way for a more feeling person to live a more emotionally healthy life, through the use of the power of thought.

Thoughts are stronger than feelings. We see many times that a person can hold back from an improper impulse if he uses his mind, for instance, if he starts thinking about the consequences. Through connecting to our thinking process, we leave our emotional world and become more thinking and intellectual - and more stable thinkers.

This is really the meaning of *"If not for the Torah my desire, I would go lost in my pain."* The Torah is the ultimate way to use our thinking minds. Dovid Hamelech is saying, If not for our thinking process, we would go crazy from our unstable emotions! Thinking stabilizes the emotions.

Don't Think Too Much

However, it's detrimental as well for a person if he thinks too much. When a person only thinks and doesn't have emotions, he closes off his emotions, which is also unhealthy. There must be a balance between how much a person feels and how much a person thinks. A person shouldn't think all the time. Over thinking is also extreme and unstable.

What we are suggesting is that when a person feels his emotions overtaking him, he should get busy with his mind, permitting his thoughts to overpower the emotions.

Our Gedolim

Our Gedolim listen every day to everyone's problems. They live with others' pain. How do they avoid going insane from all the anxiety they hear about? Whenever our Gedolim feel that they can't handle the emotional anxiety anymore, they leave their feelings and enter into a higher mode of themselves, the thoughts of Torah. The true world of thought is the Torah.