

# Why Are They Our Enemies?, Part II

## THE LIMBIC SYSTEM: FRIEND AND FOE

David Seaman, DC, MS, DABCN

Editor's note: Part I of this two-part series appeared in the 3-13-95 Southeast Forum of "DC."

Part I of this series suggested that our external enemies are probably different than what we think; that we each have an internal enemy which we tend to ignore. Also discussed was the topic of disease-care legislation without representation, our perceptions of this situation, and what to do about the problem.<sup>1</sup> The article discussed different aspects of our perceptions and behaviors which we have as chiropractors, as citizens of the United States, and as human beings in general. Also mentioned was the existence of Machiavellian activity which greatly influences all of our perceptions and behaviors.

Ultimately our internal and external enemies are our own limbic systems and the limbic systems of others. However, paradoxically, the limbic system is also our friend because it is the limbic system that provides the motivational drive behind all human actions.<sup>2</sup> Our emotions are limbic reactions,<sup>3</sup> which act as motivational drives. An emotion is defined as a "mental state or feeling such as anxiety, fear, hate, love, anger, grief, or joy arising as a subjective rather than as a conscious effort."<sup>4</sup> We must learn to make a conscious effort to discriminate among the various limbic reactions by using our prefrontal cortex to logically interpret their meaning, and then respond with an appropriate external action. Without such conscious discrimination, we can be easily swayed, by our personal and subjective emotions, to act in a fashion that is contrary to reality and not beneficial for the involved parties. This article will briefly discuss how the limbic system functions and how our limbic system reactions can best be utilized.

The following quote regarding the limbic system comes directly from Guyton's Basic Neuroscience:<sup>2</sup>

"Almost everything that we do is in some way related to reward and punishment. If we are doing something that is rewarding, we continue to do it; if it is punishing, we cease to do it. Therefore, the reward and punishment centers undoubtedly constitute one of the most important of all the controllers of our bodily activities, our drives, our aversions, motivations."

As indicated above, for the most part, we function via a stimulus response mechanism, very much like all other animals including hamsters, rats, tigers and dogs. All animals do everything they can to avoid pain and accentuate pleasure. You may say, "Wait, man is endowed with the faculty of reasoning, so we are not stimulus response oriented like other animals." This statement would be true if we utilized and cultivated our higher faculties, but very few of us do this beyond the level of maintaining adequate social graces for the sake of appearance.

Guyton explains how people act if they do not have use of their prefrontal cortices via lobotomy.<sup>2</sup> Do

you know people who 1) are unable to string together sequential tasks to reach specific goals, and in general, lose all ambition; 2) are unable to learn to do several parallel tasks at the same time; 3) can talk and comprehend language, but they are unable to carry through any long trains of thought, and their moods change rapidly from sweetness to rage to exhilaration to madness; and 4) can perform most of the usual patterns of motor function, but often without purpose? Guyton also tells us: "Persons without prefrontal cortices are easily distracted from the central theme of thought, whereas persons with functioning prefrontal cortices can drive themselves to completion of their thought goals irrespective of distractions."<sup>2</sup> After reading this chapter in Basic Neuroscience I checked my head for scars. I thought that maybe I could blame my problems on an operation I had without my knowing it took place. No such luck, my cortex is still intact.

On a very serious note, most of us can see that at times, we truly do act as if we are devoid of a prefrontal cortex. In other words, we do not consciously invoke our frontal cortex to inhibit our inappropriate outward actions that are driven by internal emotional reactions occurring in the limbic centers. Dr. Kenneth Pelletier describes this state in the following manner:<sup>5</sup>

"The limbic system regulates emotions, such as fear, hate, passion, rage, and euphoria. If control were not exercised over this area by higher centers in the cortex, individuals would tend to react in an incessant vacillation of emotional extremes."

An hour in front of CNN will verify that Pelletier's description is true. A logical question is, "Why are we like this?" Before an answer to this question is attempted, I should mention that all of mankind has this problem, including chiropractors (straights and non-straights) and medical doctors. Unfortunately, space does not permit an exhaustive explanation of why the limbic centers so powerfully rule our actions. A brief discussion of this topic will follow in the next few paragraphs.

Earlier in this article, the pleasure and punishment centers of the limbic system were described. Guyton also tells us: "It is particularly interesting that stimulation in the punishment centers can frequently inhibit the reward and pleasure centers completely, illustrating that punishment and fear take precedence over pleasure and reward."<sup>2</sup> In other words, all of our brains are programmed so that we avoid pain and punishment, and instead seek pleasure. We, of course, experience pleasure via our five senses. We should also realize that pain does not mean only that derived from physical injury. Rather, pain should be viewed more from the perspective that it is an unpleasant feeling that can be activated whenever we recall times when we acted in a less than noble fashion, which is a scenario common to all of us.

Assuming that right now you are feeling good, try to remember a time when you felt really bad. Can you do it? Yes, you can. Now, try and remember a time when you did something you really regret. When you were face to face with the pain associated with that regretful action, was it possible to remember a time when you felt really good? The answer is no. Furthermore, when we really feel bad, we often say to ourselves, "I feel so bad, I wonder if I will ever again feel good." Many people, when in such a state, deny that they actually ever did anything that was good. Thus, in real life, it really is true that when the pain and punishment centers are activated, there is inhibition of the pleasure centers.

One of the most difficult things for human beings to do is to think of ourselves as being less than noble. None of us want to consider, on a deeper level, that we have problems. Other than on a very superficial level, admitting and dealing with problems is very painful. Consequently, we view ourselves

as okay and the others, well, they have the real problems. In this regard T. S. Elliot wrote:<sup>6</sup>

"Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve; nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of oneself."

Consequently, we all hang around people who are like us, because we think they are good and righteous. The people we don't hang around are flunkies and bad for the chiropractic profession or some XYZ profession. We say, "They are bad, wrong and self-righteous, while we are good, right and noble." "The straights are destroying chiropractic!" "No, the mixers have destroyed chiropractic!" Let me provide a real life example of this wonderful behavior:

"That enemy," said Goodin, "is the element within your own profession which sees chiropractic as purely a commercial enterprise." He told the audience, "The hucksters, the wild-eyed philosophers, the polyester weirdos within your ranks who have subordinated real science to messianic appeals to cultism ... are dragging you down, cheapening what you have labored for so long to learn, and bringing a cherished and honored profession down to the ranks of some kind of traveling medicine show ... your profession has, to date, been largely unsuccessful in dealing with its share of charlatans and quacks."<sup>7</sup>

These fabulously pointed, yet mostly inaccurate, statements were made during a recent New York Chiropractic College graduation ceremony. Apparently this address received an enthusiastic, "They are wrong, we are right" applause and a standing. "They are wrong, we are right" ovation. This pointless and offensive attack clearly implies that straight chiropractors are the "wild-eyed philosophers, the polyester weirdos within your ranks who have subordinated real science to messianic appeals to cultism." It is my personal experience (I have spent many hours at Sherman College) that straight chiropractic does not represent an insidious disease that desires to drag the chiropractic profession into a dung heap, seeking "the lowest common denominator as its foundation."<sup>7</sup> I would be incensed by these statements if I were a proponent of straight chiropractic. Unfortunately, many straight chiropractors assume the erroneous position that the above quote is ACA policy, which it is not to my knowledge.

Equally absurd remarks from limbic-driven straight chiropractic mouthpieces can also be characterized as insulting at best. "We must condemn the ACA for its acquiescence to medicine's regimes of immunization and antibiotic therapy for our children."<sup>8</sup> "To them (the ACA) we are just another profession of manipulators who condone the medical concepts of disease, immunization, drugs and surgery."<sup>9</sup> "I often say to chiropractors, thick or thin, short or tall, exercise daily or not at all, eat at McDonalds or dine at the Ritz, it makes no difference, subluxation free you are healthy."<sup>11</sup> I cannot imagine why any rational chiropractor, straight or non-straight, would take this last quote seriously, which by the way, was written by a chiropractor who professes a "vitalistic" philosophy. Not only is this statement ridiculous, it also contradicts a description of vitalism as found in Practice Guidelines for Straight Chiropractic: "Dissatisfaction with the mechanistic concept has resulted in a vitalistic resurgence emphasizing proper nutrition, exercises, meditation as well as a reaffirmation of the innate healing ability of living things."<sup>11</sup> Clearly, certain vitalistic mouthpieces do not understand the concept of vitalism. Like the non-straight mouthpiece quoted earlier, straight mouthpieces also claim that the enemy is within our own profession, and that the mixers are the ones who should do the changing.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps we should tell all of the different mouthpieces to "shut up" with their boring "poison arrow" opinions, so the rest of us can think about what is really going on. It seems to me that it is the ignorant mouthpieces on each side of the profession that help stir up limbic reactions within each of us, to the point where we are at each other's throats for no good reason. On this point, what words might an observer use to describe our behavior? How about hatred, jealousy, selfishness, anger, dissension and discord? These words seem quite accurate. It just so happens that these are some of the words which are used in the Bible (Galatians 19-21) to describe the sinful nature of the flesh (i.e., the limbic system). On the contrary, the fruit of the spirit is described as love, joy, peace, kindness, patience and self control (Galatians 22-23), all of the traits we seem to manifest far too infrequently. Galatians 25-26 states: "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk also in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." Unfortunately, history dictates that we instead selfishly following the "self preservation" orders of the limbic system, while we speak and dress as if we do not.

We should all realize that the "self preservation" directive of the limbic system will not die until the body dies, so we are stuck with it. The question is: Should we selfishly direct the self preservation function at each other, or should we use it to help preserve others first, and in so doing benefit ourselves? Consider the following scenario. If it is difficult for us to keep our heads screwed on straight because of our active limbic systems, imagine how difficult it must be for certain politicians? These guys are elected to office for the sole purpose of serving and protecting the interests of their constituents -- us. Before long they, are spending tax dollars taken from our hard-earned income to serve their own selfish interests. The inner convictions of a politician are constantly tempted and tested by power, money and fame. These are tough temptations to resist for even the strongest individual, and most do not fair too well. In other words, the limbic systems of certain elected officials are in control, rather than the officials being able to control their limbic systems. In the previous paragraph, various activities of the sinful nature of the limbic system (i.e., flesh) were listed. The above list was taken from different versions of the Bible and is not complete. Below is the entire quote from The King James Version (Galatians 16-21):

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth after the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary, the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye are led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such the like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

These are certainly sobering words for all of us. The Bible clearly tells us that if we follow the whims of the limbic system, then our future will not be a bright one. With this in mind, consider the definition of a politician: "a seeker or holder of public office, who is more concerned about winning favor or retaining power than about maintaining principles."<sup>15</sup> By definition, a politician is one who absolutely lives to gratify the desires of the limbic system at any cost. Their very nature precludes them from being truly concerned about the best interests of the public. With this information in mind, how could it be possible that Clinton's health plan be in the best interest of the public? Furthermore, if it were such a great plan, then why are government employees not required to be part of it?

Generally speaking, all of us little guys, in all non-political or governmental professions, try very hard to properly serve the public. Unfortunately, like fools, we spend much of our precious time arguing with each other about who does it better, which is not logical and therefore limbic in nature. What we need to do is re-direct our limbic motivations to fight the real enemy, the out of control limbic systems of certain elected officials whose motto is, "Legislation without Representation." We must utilize the motivational drives of our limbic system to stop the political limbic drive that will ultimately result in a nation that is totally unfit for living and raising children. In this fashion, we can make our own limbic system an ally instead of our enemy, and by so doing, preserve our right to choose as provided by the Constitution of the United States.

#### A Scientific Approach to Vitalism: We're In Last Place

It seems to me that both factions in the chiropractic profession have aborted the vitalistic philosophy. Our actions clearly betray any spiritual considerations to which we lay claim. I would further say that both straight and non-straight chiropractors should change their views on the innate intelligence component of the philosophy of chiropractic. My personal opinion is that the straight chiropractic view of innate intelligence is very short sighted, and that non-straight DCs are foolish if they believe that innate intelligence is nonsense. I also believe that both sides should be equally disgusted with each other's limited perspective on the subject. I would recommend that both straights and non-straights seriously update their views on the subject and collectively agree on a logically described vitalistic component. We need to eliminate both our "dogmatism" and our "skepticism to the point of sterility," and meet somewhere in the middle and be practical. A recent article in USA Today,<sup>13</sup> "The Healing Power of Prayer: Research gives reason to believe," should help in this regard. The article describes a number of researchers who can be contacted for additional information. This article also recommends a book, *Healing Words*<sup>14</sup> by Dr. Larry Dossey, former Chief of Staff of Humana Medical City Dallas. We are told in *Healing Words* that the purpose of the book is to bridge, balance and harmonize the scientific and spiritual, the material and nonmaterial.

#### References

1. Seaman D. Who are our enemies and why are they our enemies, Part I. Dynamic Chiropractic, 3-13-95, Southeast Forum.
2. Guyton A. Basic Neuroscience (2nd ed), p.243, W.B. Saunders, Philadelphia, 1992.
3. Pert C. The wisdom of the receptors: Neuropeptides, the emotions, and body/mind. *Advances* 3(3):8-16, 1986.
4. Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary, p.581, F.A. Davis, Philadelphia, 1989.
5. Pelletier K. Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer, p.48, Dell Publishing, New York, 1977.
6. Elliot TS. Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca, 1927.

7. Goodin M. Closing address at recent NYCC graduation; the speech was reproduced in a recent issue of NYCC's Transitions.
8. Barge F. Enuf said. Dynamic Chiropractic, 12/7/93, p.41.
9. Barge F. The last and final straw. Dynamic Chiropractic 10/22/93, p.36.
10. Barge F. One Cause, One Cure, p.93, LaCrosse Graphics, LaCrosse, WI, 1990.
11. Practice Guidelines for Straight Chiropractic, p.99, World Chiropractic Alliance, Chandler, AZ, 1993.
12. Rondberg T. It helps (somewhat) to know we're not alone, The Chiro Journal, 8/93, p. 4,12.
13. Miller L. The Healing Power of Prayer: Research gives reason to believe. USA Today, 12/21/93, p.D-1,2.
14. Dossey L. Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and The Practice of Medicine, Harper Collins, New York, 1993.
15. The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (2nd unabridged ed), p.1497, Random House, New York, 1987.

*David R. Seaman, DC, MS, DABCN*  
*1210 Greenville Hwy*  
*Hendersonville, NC 28792*

JUNE 1995