

The Essential Rationale for Shame as the Core Emotion of Heart Center

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I've been following with great interest the different explorations of the core emotion of the Heart Center in the last two issues of the *Nine Points Bulletin* (*NPB*). Thanks, Bea, for inviting this discussion among Enneagram teachers. In the Riso-Hudson teachings shame is the core emotion of the Heart Center, which arises inevitably when we consider the core emotions as a direct result of the loss of connection to Essence as experienced in each Center.

The three Centers are not only associated with what David Daniels refers to in his response article as “aversive emotions,” but even more importantly, they show us the ways that Being, our True Nature, manifests in us—through the belly/body, heart, and head. When Being flows unobstructed through all three Centers, the aversive or core emotions may arise as natural responses, but they do not drive the type. It is when this flow is distorted or blocked in some way that they arise and motivate the ego personality to take action. As Don and Russ say in *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*: “Each of these Triads [Centers] represents a range of Essential capacities or functions that have become blocked or distorted. The personality then tries to fill in the gaps where our Essence has been blocked...” (p.58)

The Body Center shows us how Being lives in and animates our bodies. This is related to how our spiritual and biological life-force energy flows through us—how balanced, centered, strong, engaged, grounded, alive, vital, aligned, full of integrity, inhabiting the body we are. It is about our capacity to be Present, here, in this body, in this moment.

When this spiritual and biological life-force energy is obstructed, when we feel cut off from it, the personality tries to recreate that connection by creating a sense of MY life, MY body, MY energy, MY autonomy, creating boundaries along with the arising of anger. When it is flowing freely, anger dissipates again naturally; however, when the flow is blocked or distorted, we see the typical ego reactions of the three Body Center types—overemphasizing anger (8), ignoring our anger (9), and sublimating or channeling anger (1).

The Head Center teaches us how Being knows through us. When we are awake, our knowing is direct, clear, insightful, vast, spacious, illumined, receptive, silent, and still. This is the capacity of Presence in the mind—an openness to Quiet Mind.

When we feel disconnected from Quiet Mind, from free-flowing Knowing, fear arises, and the personality jumps in quickly to try to figure out how to know, what to believe, which way to go, what will be safe, where to find guidance, what to trust...If this fear is allowed to flow freely, it will pass, but when the personality grabs on to it, the familiar ego responses of the Head Center types dominate the show—withdrawing into the mind to master fear (5), being alternately driven or paralyzed by fear (6), and seeking satisfaction in the world to avoid the fear (7).

In the Heart Center, Being sees itself in the mirror of the Human Being, feeling and experiencing through us. The Sufis say that the heart is the “taster of Truth”—we know our True Identity as Being through our hearts and experience it as sweet, loving, delicate, precious, impressionable, deep, intimate, and beautiful. This is our capacity to be Present in our hearts, tasting the Truth of who we really are.

Feeling cut off from the flow of our True Identity, we do not know who we are. Perhaps I was wrong and I am nothing—perhaps I have no love, no preciousness, no identity... So my ego personality seeks ways to get back to these qualities by trying to feel and appear loving and caring (2), precious and valuable (3), or deep and unique (4). But in so doing, I am creating a mask, a false image. Shame arises as the primal shame of my soul, knowing that this image is not the True Self, even as I try to create the image in a “wrong-turn” attempt to return to what I know is my True Nature. Even shame, as anger and fear, can arise and dissolve, but when the ego is driven by it, the Heart Center distortions have taken over.

In summary, while the suggestions from other teachers all relate to the Heart Center emotions in one way or another, I fully agree with the Riso-Hudson teaching that shame is the most meaningful, rich, and comprehensive choice for the core emotion of the Heart Center. Not only does it clearly connect with the Heart Center issues of “being seen,” but it is consistent with the ego compensation for the felt loss of Being as it is experienced in all three Centers. If I am identified with the ego self (and we all are to some extent), then I always risk the feeling of shame because part of me knows that this ego identification is not who I really am.

Understanding the relationship between the core emotions and the Essential Qualities of the Centers corresponds not only to what my teaching partner Dave Hall articulated about the motivating power of the core emotions in his response article in the last *NPB*, but also aligns with his follow-up article in this issue about their biological underpinnings. We see how Essence and biology come together to understand our type manifestations through our various Levels of Health.

When we are more in touch with the Essential Qualities of the Centers, the core emotions arise and become distorted less frequently, as we have more of our ground in Being (Instinctive Center), are more aware of Who we are (Heart Center), and trust more deeply that the Knowing needed to live on this earth will arise as needed (Head Center). As Rumi says, “You are the truth from foot to brow. What else would you like to know?”