

Title: Emotions? Are they more rational than what we give it credit for?

People tend to justify their actions with logic and facts. We persuade ourselves and the ones around us with these reasons. A logical reason will never appeal to emotions. Logic can never win over emotions and emotions on the other hand always win over logic. Just the way imagination has an upper hand over reality.

Two separate gears, rotating in opposite directions, tend to create motion. Many among us tend to assume that decision making process is similar to gears. Emotional/Impulsive and Rational/Intelligent way of thinking. Common thoughts say, emotional decisions are more impulsive and they tend to seduce us into taking a wrong decision. Whereas, the rational decision, which is the path of intelligence guide us into taking the right route out. But the truth is both are inseparable.

In many occasions, decisions based on emotions and intuitions could be far more efficient than a well thought out intellectual one. A study conducted at the University of California at Santa Barbara indicates that in situations in which we are moderately angry our ability to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant claims in disputed issues is sharpened. Another study reveals that an individual's inclination towards anger in a situation is higher when one benefits from anger. To simplify, there is logic in emotion and emotion in logic.

“When dealing with people, let us remember we are not dealing with creatures of logic. We are dealing with creatures of emotion, creatures bristling with prejudices and motivated by pride and vanity.”

— Dale Carnegie

Emotions create an energy which in turn creates a prospective action. The prospective action can be positive or negative. The challenge remains in trying to get our emotions to see logic. In many situations, people react based on emotions. People tend to justify their actions with logic and facts. We persuade ourselves and the ones around us with these reasons. A logical reason will never appeal to emotions. Logic can never win over emotions and emotions on the other hand always win over logic. Just the way imagination has an upper hand over reality.

So, what stirs up logical decisions? Are we as a human race rational? Do we always follow logic? Do we act only if it feels right? Do we always want facts before we act? Let me draw your attention to a simple exercise here. Lizards! Many fear them! For a fact, all know there is not much harm that the tiny creature crawling on the wall can do. But still, logic fails when the emotion of fear takes over. Try talking logic to the person who is engulfed in the flames of fear upon seeing that tiny creature on the door. It would make no sense to them! It's useless trying to use logic and persuading this individual, that their fears and actions don't make sense. This person remains convinced that there is a problem.

There is a new theory that has come into light now, that says, the human brain relies on two separate networks. One that determines the risks vs. rewards, individual choices and ultimately a clear reflection of how one behaves. Behavior here is the key word. Our behavior, attitude, habits and responses to situation control our thinking and thought process.

Logical decisions are made when there is enough evidence produced. And Irrational decision is commonly evident during 3 different emotional conditions. Depression, Anger & Frustration. It's commonly known that depression is often triggered (and maintained) by fundamentally irrational thoughts. Many thoughts and feelings associated with depression are parallel to the fundamentals of irrationality. Guilt, hopelessness, worthlessness are patterns in the belief system that assumes it can never be a part of real word.

Rationality is a habit. Which in a nutshell means it works in accordance to the facts and the reality! The alternative to this remains acting by the spur of the moment. Which will result in a domino effect causing undesired consequences though the consistency remains vital here. Actions that are based on belief systems in particular effect relationships. This however will not occur if the relationship remains invalid.

Another consequence of acting irrationally, labels you as a person who is not capable of acting rationally in the future. Choosing to act irrationally is like a confession. You confess that you do not believe your own mind. Our brain is like a puppy. The more you do something, the more the brain gets used to it and it slowly becomes a habit. You believe in what you practice. You accept your mind is impotent and cannot make the decisions that are rational and right. It cuts away the perspective of a reason, which is optimal for human survival.

Fantasies. What are they? Why do we tend to live in a zone where everything is super illuminated? What happens to our thoughts at that moment? What do we feel? One more exercise here. Think of the first day you walk into an office? You meet your trainer at the induction. The trainer looks amazing with corporate attire and demeanor that says I am confident. You on the other hand, hypothetically speaking can be timid, reserved and not too spoken. You mind starts to fill up with images of you dressed and behaving like your trainer. What goes on in your mind at that point and how long you hold on to that image creates an aura around you. So what am saying? Are fantasies good? Or, are they bad?

Come back to read more about how fantasies, depression, anxiety and anger rule your rational thinking zone.

Title: CAN WE CONSIDER FANTASIES ARE NOTHING MORE THAN SIMPLIFIED HALLUCINATIONS? – A continuation from Part 1

Does being rational mean we are perfectionists? Absolutely not! Being rational does not mean you spend time in evaluating every idea that across your mind. Fantasies can give you a sense of achievement fueling what your mind wants you to believe. Too much of this can leave you in a state of deception.

The category of emotions covers a disputed territory, but clear examples include fear, anger, joy, pride, sadness, disgust, shame, contempt and the like. Such states are commonly thought of as antithetical to reason, disorienting and distorting practical thought. However, there is also a sense in which emotions are factors in practical reasoning, understood broadly as reasoning that issues in action. At the very least emotions can function as 'enabling' causes of rational decision-making (despite the many cases in which they are disabling) insofar as they direct attention toward certain objects of thought and away from others. They serve to heighten memory and to limit the set of salient practical options to a manageable set, suitable for 'quick-and-dirty' decision-making.

(Greenspan 2002, p. 206)

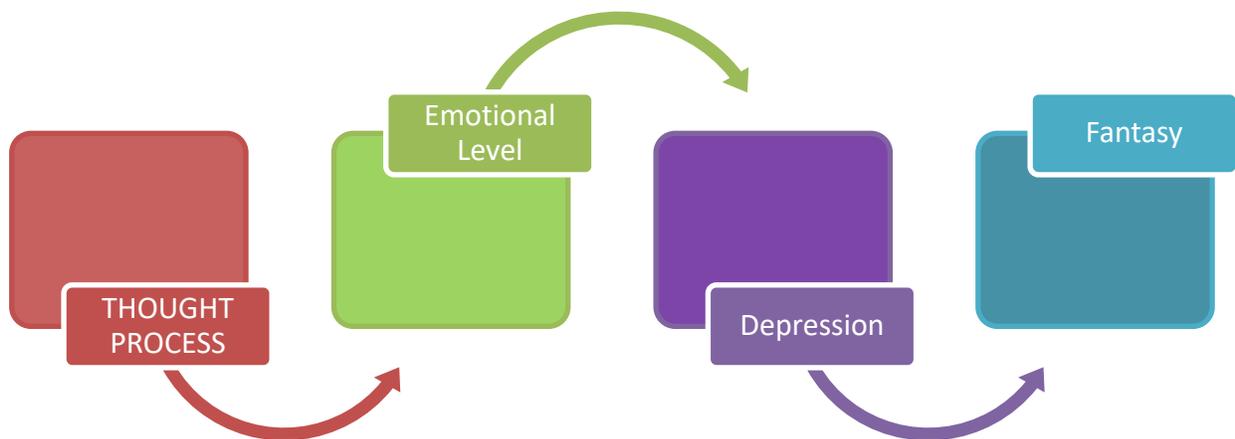
Rationality is a habit. Which in a nutshell means it works in accordance to the facts and the reality! The alternative to this remains acting by the spur of the moment. Which will result in a domino effect causing undesired consequences though the consistency remains vital here. Actions that are based on belief systems in particular effect relationships. This however will not occur if the relationship remains invalid. Does being rational mean we are perfectionists? Absolutely not! Being rational does not mean you spend time in evaluating every idea that across your mind. It does not mean you learn every subject in consideration to the core of being an expert. It only means you act in accordance with reasons. Accepting and believing only that which you have a reason for. A valid reason! It means using logic to ween away any contradictory thoughts or beliefs. When you are in a situation where you

need to accept another individual's judgement, go ahead and use your mind to evaluate if you should believe in their judgement.

People in general tend to fantasize. Somewhere one needs to understand how far they can. Problems arise when the individual starts to live in a world of fantasy and forgets to come down to reality. Take into consideration the following extract from a real life extract.

Here is an individual who feels unsatisfied in the current relationship. Let's call this character X. X is not satisfied with life! Bored, feels low and is left yearning for some excitement and adventure in life and the present relationship with the partner is exhaustive. Admitting to a friend that there is no bonding, or emotional attachments as they both feel closed. Like they have a locked a cupboard and threw the key away. An invisible wall! (We all go through this phase in our life! Where we refuse to snap out of an old experience and continue to expect that in the present!) The sense of detachments. X also admits that the slightest problem in the relationship will break them apart more and neither would look at mending it. Saying this they also say, "I wish! I only wish there was some amount of spice in our lives! Remember my partner 2 years back? That! That spice!" Saying this X sense's that this thought bothers the mind leaving X to wonder why they are not able to accept reality? Why is there so much attachment over a relationship from the past! They have not heard from this person in a very long time. The relationship was one where the other was deeply involved and held what is called a stormy relationship. But still, fact remains that the relationship would have lasted a month if tied in with a wedding knot. X misses the same passion from the past relationship with the current partner.

Food for thought! Why do we live fantasizing about something so much that we refuse to accept reality? Fantasizing about something blocks our mind to a point where we start believe what our mind hallucinates. Hallucinations can feel very real! Is fantasy a kind of hallucination? Love is distinguished in many ways. Healthy, Unhealthy, Mature, Immature, Infatuation, Romantic, Rational! X here believes in romantic love, and not finding it in her current relationship, X is denying the chance to find a healthier, longer lasting rational love with her partner. Continuing to relate to the fantasy of her past relationship and perpetually denying the present tends to push X into a state of depression.



Our thought process is a direct link to our emotional levels which can lead us to the heights of Depression or Fantasy. When one is lead into the zone of peak fantasies, expectations from real life tend to get hijacked. So can we say that positive fantasies can lead to depression somewhere down the line leading to an irrational thought process?

Let me take you through a simple everyday occurrence. I am going to draw your attention to the simple fun game FarmVille. This game has quite a few followers. My study revolved around the mindset of that segment of the population that relates to these games. During the course of my study, I interviewed and analyzed 60 people who were practically addicted to the game. Most among the 60 under observation were people whom we would call unsuccessful middle aged and a few among them were people who wanted to achieve a lot and kept fantasizing. These individuals derived pleasure in seeing virtual money in dollars accumulate in the game. It gave them a sense

of achievement and fueled their fantasy of reaching heights economically. A recent study also proved that most of these individuals who play online games end up in depression a few years down the line. Not saying that is a fact. But it definitely is an analysis that can't go unnoticed.

A couple of years back, my curiosity to understand why emotions can play hard on our rational decision making capability opened up an avenue to conduct a social experiment. A group of 40 College going kids supported by a leading business school from Hyderabad were given a questionnaire to fill and maintain daily diaries, recording their feelings at a specific time everyday. The questionnaire captured their thought process and how they handled situations.

The result from this exercise gave me a great perspective on the subject we are talking about now. I will capture the results in my next blog. Hoping to see you back again.

Say Cheers and Stay Happy.

Title: Can fantasies lead to Depression hijacking ground reality? – Continuation of Part 2

An individual indulging in excessive fantasies considers it a source of protection against factors that pull his or her self-esteem down. But they fail to understand that this is only a short-term relief. Our circumstances don't make us who we are. We become what we are today based on how we have reacted to situations and circumstances. Our attitude to the outlook of life.

The exercise we spoke about in my earlier blog that involved 40 college going spread across 6 months. The reason the exercise was initiated to understand why there are dropouts, suicides and clinical depression setting in on a surge in society among students. The aim was to create an awareness and help those kids in need. The exercise showed us that irrespective of the age group, every individual fantasizes. College going kids, who admitted to fantasizing about their future had a considerably lower scale of depressive symptoms at that given moment or period. But, lead to an increase of depressive symptoms a couple of months down the line. The subject under emotional and behavioral observation slowly started to live out their fantasies starting to make repetitive mistakes. We then took into consideration the grades of those 40 kids from college. It turned out that most 32 from among them had lower grades which a few months down the line began to represent itself as the source for depression and making wrong choices yet again? We then took is these students for corrective therapy and over a period of 9 months slowly and gradually created a change in thought process and gave them a helpline number to call when in need of assistance. A study led by Oettingen revealed that people who idealize their future also diminish their work ethic.

An individual indulging in excessive fantasies considers it a source of protection against factors that pull his or her self-esteem down. But they fail to understand that this is only a short term relief. Its like popping a crocin for a headache. In my world I consider fantasizing as the Bermuda Triangle. Once you have hit it deep, you can never get out. Resulting in lower efforts, wrong choices, irrational decisions and lower rates of success.

Our circumstances don't make us who we are. We become what we are today based on how we have reacted to situations and circumstances. Our attitude to the outlook of life. I would relate irrational thoughts to a commonly used psychological term "Cognitive Distortion". Thoughts blown out of proportion can and will lead to irrational thoughts and behavior. These are common. But can be pretty hard to recognize if not looked into keenly. Most of the time these arise as automatic thoughts. They become a [habit](#). They become so much of a habit that the individual often fails to recognize they have the power to change it. Many tend to regard this as "This is how it is meant to be!"

Cognitive distortions or Irrational thoughts can leave a deep and scar on the person's emotional stability, leading to increase in stress, depression, and anxiety. When left unattended to, these automatic patterns in thought can remain etched and may influence the rational, logical way of making a decision in a negative manner.

A few common irrational thoughts could be:

1. Either / Or, - When one fails to see there could be a grey area
2. Self Blaming – I should have known this would happen. Its all my fault.
3. Selective Attention – Focusing only on those that give you a positive feel and ignoring the obvious.
4. Denial – Failing to recognizes symptoms deliberately and living in denial.
5. Fallacy of Permanence – Assuming that things are meant to remain the way they are.
6. Labeling – Marking out one situation and assuming that's how it would be forever in the future aswell.
7. I just cant stand it – Assuming things are worse than what it actually is.
8. Everything will be fine – Continuing to deny the obvious and telling self that everything will be ok. (This is good. Keeps you positive, but, denying to see the obvious will lead to a catastrophic disaster)
9. Emotional Reasoning – I don't feel positive so I will take a day off. Why? I don't know!
10. Jumping to Conclusions – Assuming you know it all about what the other person is thinking.
11. Double Standards – When you expect someone else to behave differently to a situation than what you do!
12. Self-Obsession – Focusing on yourself paying no attention to how things might affect others.

So what are irrational beliefs?

Towards Self:

1. I don't deserve positive attention.
2. I should never burden others with my problems or fears.
3. I am useless
4. I am not creative, nonproductive, ineffective, and untalented.
5. I am powerless to solve my problems.
6. I have so many problems, I might as well give up right now.
7. I am so dumb, I can never solve anything
8. I am the ugliest, most unattractive, unappealing, fat slob in the world.

Towards others:

1. No one cares about another person.
2. Everybody is dishonest and can never be trusted.
3. No one has a control over how things turn out.
4. People always use you.
5. People are so opinionated
6. You are bound to get hurt in a relationship
7. There is a loser in every fight, so avoid fights at all costs.
8. It's not who you are but what you do that makes you attractive to another person.
9. What counts in life is others' opinion about you.
10. Always remain in guard to avoid getting hurt.

Do these sound familiar in any way?

Stay happy, but start to think rationally.